



Creating a Better Internet for All

Young people's experiences of online empowerment + online hate

Safer Internet Day

9th February 2016

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For more information see www.saferinternet.org.uk

Introduction from Will Gardner

Director of the UK Safer Internet Centre and CEO of Childnet



This Safer Internet Day the theme is **Play your part for a better internet** and we wanted to explore the role we all have in creating a kinder and more inclusive internet.

While it is encouraging to see that almost all young people believe no one should be targeted with online hate, and heartening to hear about the ways young people are using technology to take positive action online to empower each other and spread kindness, we were surprised and concerned to see that so many had been exposed to online hate in the last year.

Previous research into this area from the London School of Economics found that children's exposure to "websites where people publish hate messages that attack certain groups or individuals" rose from 13% of 11-16s in 2010 to 23% in 2013 (including 39% of 15-16 year olds).

Our research findings mark a significant rise again. While our research focuses on 13-18 year olds and is more wide-ranging than websites – exploring children's experiences on social media and games platforms too – it does suggest a trend that we cannot ignore.

It is a wake-up call for all of us to play our part in helping create a better internet for all, to ensure that everyone can benefit from the opportunities that technology provides for building mutual respect and dialogue, facilitating rights, and empowering everyone to be able to express themselves and be themselves – whoever they are.

The volume and range of support we've seen for this year's Safer Internet Day is truly inspiring. With activities taking place right across the UK and young people coming together to share their perspectives and ideas, Safer Internet Day is an opportunity for us all to stand together and show what kind of internet we want – where kindness is the norm and everyone is treated with respect.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Will Gardner".

Executive Summary

For Safer Internet Day 2016, 1,512 young people aged 13-18 years took part in an online survey conducted by ResearchBods to explore young people's attitudes, experiences and responses to positives and negatives online, particularly exploring the role of the internet in facilitating rights and promoting empowerment, while also potentially facilitating online hate.

The findings demonstrate both the positive and negative side of the internet, and the role that young people are playing in helping to create a kinder and more inclusive internet.

Young people want to see a kind and inclusive internet – and they are playing their part to help create that

Young people want a kind and inclusive internet: The majority of young people (94%) said that they believe no one should be targeted with online hate because of their gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, disability or transgender identity.

An estimated 2.1 million young people have taken positive action online in the last year to show support for targeted groups, with liking or sharing a positive post or page and changing their profile picture being the most popular forms of positive online action.

Young people's peer groups are on the whole very positive, supportive and inclusive: 93% said they had seen their friends posting things online that are supportive, kind or positive about a certain group, for example girls, LGBT people, disabled people or those of a certain race or religion, and more than a third (35%) said they see this kind of behaviour all or most of the time online.

The role of the internet in promoting rights – but also facilitating hate

The internet as a facilitator of both understanding and hatefulness: Young people recognise the positive ways the internet can help us to grow understanding and respect, with around 3 in 4 saying that the internet helps them understand different people's views and beliefs (76%). However, the majority (86%) also felt that the internet makes it easy for people to be mean.

Many young people are exposed to online hate – and it has a very real impact

The majority of young people have seen something hateful on the internet in the last year: 82% of 13-18 year old respondents said they have seen or heard something hateful about a certain group on the internet, with young people most likely to have seen online hate targeting a person or community on the grounds of religion, sexual orientation or race.

Online hate targets people or communities via the internet because of their gender, transgender identity, sexual orientation, disability, race, ethnicity, nationality or religion. It could be offensive, mean or threatening, and either targeted directly at a person or group, or generally shared online. In its most extreme form it can break the law and become a hate crime.

Young people are less likely to see their peers sharing online hate: 35% of 13-18 year old respondents said they had seen their friends posting offensive, mean or threatening things online about people of a certain group.

Offensive humour is particularly common among young people: Nearly 9 in 10 (89%) say they've seen people sharing funny things online that might be offensive to a certain group in the past year and almost three quarters (73%) say they've seen their friends do this. This is more prevalent amongst boys, with 78% having seen their friends sharing funny things that might be offensive, while only 69% of girls have seen this.

Young people are more likely to see online hate on the internet than in any other place: In total, 82% of young people have seen or heard something hateful on the internet, compared to 77% at school, 69% in other media and 54% face-to-face in other places.

1 in 4 young people said they have been targeted with online hate because of their gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, disability or transgender identity – rising to 38% of young people with disabilities.

Many young people are concerned and affected by online hate: Over a third (35%) of young people said that online hate is something they worry about. Young people who had been exposed to online hate reported feeling anger (37%), sadness (34%) and shock (30%) in response to it. While there were 1 in 5 (20%) young people who reported not feeling bothered by it, 1 in 25 (4%) reported feeling attacked or scared.

Online hate can have an impact on young people's freedom of expression: around 3 in 4 young people (74%) said that online hate makes them more careful about what they share online.

Empowering young people to take action over online hate

Young people do see counter speech in reaction to online hate: 84% have seen people responding to defend a certain group that is being targeted online, with more than a fifth (22%) saying they see this all or most of the time online.

However, ignoring online hate is the most common strategy among those who had been exposed to it: Most young people (55%) who had seen online hate said they just ignored it. This can sometimes be a positive strategy, particularly as what young people define as online hate may not always reach the threshold for breaking the law or breaking the terms of an online platform. However, it can often mean that behaviour goes unchallenged. Indeed, while more than two thirds (68%) of those who had witnessed online hate in the last year said they know how to report it to a social network, in practice just a fifth (20%) actually reported online hate to the social network, app, game or website where they saw it.

Many young people face barriers that prevent them from taking action: Among those who had been exposed to online hate in the last year, the majority (58%) said they wouldn't know when online hate breaks the law, and 45% said they would worry about standing up to online hate as they don't want to be targeted.

We need to empower young people with the knowledge, skills and confidence to ensure they are equipped to deal with online hate: Among those who had witnessed online hate, over a third (36%) said they would like more information about what to do about online hate, and the majority (75%) said that more needs to be done about online hate.

Methodology

Overview:

The survey was conducted online by ResearchBods between 8-20th January 2016 with a representative sample of over 1,500 young people aged 13-18 years olds in the United Kingdom. The young teens who completed the survey are part of the SurveyBods Consumer Access panel, which has a specialist youth section enabling young people under the age of 16 to directly complete surveys.

Design:

Including both quantitative and qualitative questions, the Safer Internet Day 2016 research was designed to help the UK Safer Internet Centre understand:

- young people's attitudes and opinions about how the internet should be
- young people's experiences online – both positive and negative
- how technology is being used to support and empower certain groups, including girls, LGBT people, disabled people and those of a certain race or religion
- young people's experiences of online hate targeted at or about people because of their race, religion, gender, gender identity, disability or sexual orientation
- young people's skills, knowledge and confidence to prevent and respond to online hate

The survey was designed by the UK Safer Internet Centre and in consultation with ResearchBods and other academics. The full survey is included in the **Appendices**.

In the research we defined online hate in the following way:

Online hate targets people or communities via the internet because of their gender, transgender identity, sexual orientation, disability, race, ethnicity, nationality or religion. It could be offensive, mean or threatening, and either targeted directly at a person or group, or generally shared online. In its most extreme form it can break the law and become a hate crime.

This research explores young people's exposure to what they perceive as online hate. It is worth bearing in mind that this is a subjective rather than objective definition, as young people are likely to differ in how they classify content as online hate and what they regard as offensive, mean or threatening.

Participants:

In total 1,512 young people aged 13-18 years took part in the survey. The sample is nationally representative and weighted for age and gender.

Table 1 and Table 2 show the number of respondents in sub-groups on which the findings in this report are based. Note that the error margin increases as the sample sizes decrease. The findings for young people with disabilities should be taken with particular caution. Due to the small sample sizes it has not been possible to report on trends based on young people’s religion or sexual orientation.

Table 1: Number of respondents by sub-group

	N
Boys	737
Girls	775
13-15	763
16-18	749
Young people with disabilities	115
Young people with no disabilities	1,355
Young people from white backgrounds	1,149
Young people from Black, Asian, Middle Eastern and other ethnic minority backgrounds	247

Table 2: Number of respondents by region

	N
England	1194
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North East • North West • Yorkshire • East Midlands • West Midlands • East of England • South East • South West • London 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 56 • 167 • 105 • 115 • 123 • 100 • 234 • 133 • 161
Scotland	116
Wales	90
Northern Ireland	112

1. Young people's experiences of online empowerment

Young people want a kind and inclusive internet – and they are playing their part to help create that

1.1 Young people's attitudes

Young people recognise the positive role the internet can play

Young people recognise the positive role the internet can play in enabling self-expression, developing understanding, bringing people together and respecting and celebrating differences, with the majority (75%) of young people saying they believe that the internet can be a positive place that respects and celebrates our differences.

Self-expression:

The majority (78%) of young people say that they can be themselves online.

However some young people feel less able to able themselves online. Around 1 in 15 (7%) young people say they are not able to be themselves online.

Girls are less likely to agree that they can be themselves online, with 74% agreeing with this compared to 82% of boys.

The findings suggest that young people with disabilities are less likely (69%) to say they can be themselves online compared to young people with no disabilities (79%), although a relatively small sample (n=115) of young people with disabilities means these findings must be taken as indicative only.

Understanding:

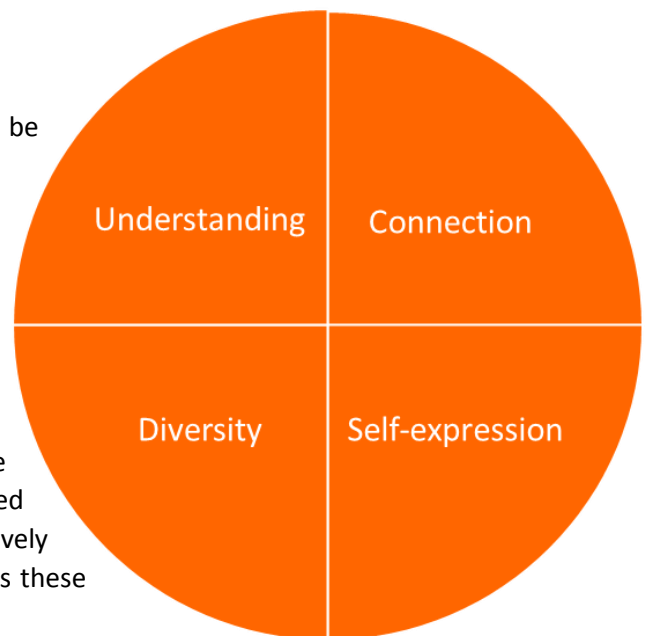
The majority (76%) of young people say that the internet helps them understand different people's views and beliefs.

Older teens appear to be more in agreement, with 81% of 16-18s saying the internet helps them to understand different people's views and beliefs compared to 71% of 13-15s.

Connection:

The majority (72%) believe that people their age can use the internet to bring different people closer together.

Girls and older teens are more likely to agree with this statement. 75% of girls believe this compared to 68% of boys, while 77% of 16-18 year olds believe this compared to 66% of 13-15 year olds.



Young people want to see a kind and inclusive internet

The majority of young people want to see a respectful and inclusive online community. 87% said that everyone should be able to be themselves online, and 94% said that no one should be targeted with online hate because of their gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, disability or transgender identity.

However, 1 in 7 young people (14%) said that people should expect to be targeted with online hate if they share personal information about their gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, disability or transgender identity on the internet. Boys are more likely to believe this, with 18% of boys saying online hate should be expected compared to 11% of girls.

Young people from Black, Asian, Middle Eastern and other ethnic minority backgrounds are also more likely believe that people should expect to be targeted with online hate if they share personal information about their gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, disability or transgender identity on the internet, with 22% agreeing compared to 13% of young people from white backgrounds.

1.2 Young people's exposure to positive technology use

Young people experience technology being used in supportive and kind ways; both by their peers and in their wider online communities

99% of 13-18 year old respondents have seen people posting things online that are supportive, kind or positive in the last year, with 46% saying they see this all or most of the time.

More specifically, 95% have seen people posting things online that are supportive, kind or positive about a certain group, for example girls, LGBT people, disabled people or those of a certain race or religion. 35% say they see this all or most of the time – rising from 27% of boys to 42% of girls; and from 29% of 13-15s to 40% of 16-18s.

Young people's peer groups are actively involved in this too, particularly among girls. 93% said they had seen their friends posting things online that are supportive, kind or positive about a certain group. 35% say they see this all or most of the time – rising from 29% of boys to 39% of girls.

Young people with disabilities appear to be particularly likely to see positive and supportive behaviour online. 42% of young people with disabilities said they see people posting things online that are supportive, kind or positive about a certain group all or most of the time, compared to 33% of young people with no disabilities. The findings also suggest that young people with disabilities are more likely to say that they see their friends posting this all of the time, with 15% reporting this compared to 8% of those with no disabilities.

93% have seen their friends posting things online that are supportive, kind or positive about a certain group. For example, girls, LGBT people, disabled people or those of a certain race or religion

[See Table in Appendix 1 for further detail]

1.3 Young people’s positive actions online

Young people use technology in supportive and kind ways – with an estimated 2.1 million young people taking positive online action this year

Young people told us that they are actively involved in promoting respect, kindness and inclusivity on the internet. 47% of young people said that in the last year they have done something online to show support to a certain group. This equates to 2.1 million young people across the UK. Girls are particularly likely to be using technology in this way, with 58% saying they had done this in the last year compared to 35% of boys.

Table 3: Groups that young people have shown support to online in the last year

Group shown support to:	All 13-18s	Boys	Girls
Girls/ Women	25%	11%	39%
Lesbian, gay or bisexual people (LGB people)	21%	11%	31%
People of a certain religion (eg Muslims, Jews)	16%	11%	22%
Black, Asian, Middle Eastern and other minority ethnic communities	14%	8%	19%
Disabled people	14%	11%	17%
Transgender people	12%	5%	18%
Travellers/Roma Gypsies	2%	1%	3%
Other	10%	9%	10%
Total who have shown support towards a certain group	47%	35%	58%
Total ‘I have not done this in the last year’	53%	65%	42%

Q3: In the last 12 months have you done anything online to show support to any of the following groups? For example, changed your profile picture, posted a supportive comment, joined an online campaign or group. Multiple Choice (Multiple Answers). Base: All respondents (1,512 young people aged 13-18 years)

Older teens are more likely to say they had shown support for these groups online, with 50% of 16-18s saying they had done this in the last year, compared to 43% of 13-15s. This age trend is more apparent for showing support to particular groups, for example showing support online for lesbian, gay or bisexual people (17% of 13-15s rising to 25% of 16-18s who said they had done this).

Young people with disabilities appear to be more likely to have shown support online, with 63% of young people with disabilities saying they had done this, compared to 45% of those with no disabilities. This trend is apparent across a range of groups that young people show support to, with young people with disabilities more likely to show support online to not only disabled people (36% vs 12%), but also women/girls (36% vs 24%), LGB people (39% vs 19%), transgender people (25% vs 10%), Black, Asian, Middle Eastern and other minority ethnic communities (21% vs 13%) or those of a certain religion (23% vs 15%).

Young people who were from ethnic minority communities were more likely to have shown support for Black, Asian, Middle Eastern and other minority ethnic communities (27% compared to 11% of those from white backgrounds) and towards those of a certain religion (28% compared to 14% among those from white backgrounds).

Young people use a range of online methods to promote respect and inclusivity

The 705 respondents who said they had shown support to a particular group provided further detail about exactly what they did. They showed support by:

- Liking or sharing someone else's post (61%)
- Liking/following a page or individual (54%)
- Posting a supportive comment, image or article (46%)
- Changing their profile picture or added a filter (45%)
- Signing an online petition (25%)
- Replying to someone who was posting negative things (18%)

"If it is offensive, then I usually report it. Or if it is positive, I like it and share it so more people are able to see it"

(Girl aged 16)

In a follow-up question, young people were invited to explain in more detail what they did to show support to a particular group.

The responses demonstrate that young people use social media in a range of ways to show support to certain groups, raise awareness and make a public statement of their beliefs and values – and promoting inclusivity can be as easy as a Like, Follow, Hashtag or Profile Photo Filter.

"I added a filter to my profile picture to celebrate gay rights" – **Boy aged 14**

"Using hashtags to represent a certain movement in order to bring awareness, or just add to the content. Mostly on Twitter." – **Girl aged 17**

"I added the rainbow filter to my Facebook page and Snapchatted my support"
– **Girl aged 16**

"I subscribe to a lot of people on YouTube who are girls, LGBT etc and support them by watching their videos, sharing etc" – **Girl aged 14**

"I support things online by 'liking' or sharing them to make the positive post more widely viewed"- **Girl aged 16**

They use social media to support peers and others online, and to help create a kind online community:

"Commented on a friend's post about coming out gay" – **Boy aged 13**

“I saw that one of my mates shared a link to this LGBT page and I liked it and I also shared it to show my support.” – **Boy aged 16**

“My brother is disabled, I help share and try to educate people about his condition by posting and sharing things from his online page” – **Girl aged 17**

They create things online to empower others:

“I made an Instagram account to spread female rights, LGBT++ rights, religious rights and more.” – **Girl aged 14**

“I found a YouTuber who revealed that he was gay. When he did, he was rejected so myself and some other people began a petition.” – **Boy aged 15**

“I run a LGBT support blog on Tumblr, making sure the positive message about acceptance circulates.” – **Girl aged 17**

Young people are also standing up to hateful behaviour online and supporting people being targeted with it:

“I posted a comment in support of someone who was being picked on for being Black”
– **Boy aged 15**

“A girl I know was being bullied online because of the way she walks so I responded to a negative comment and stood up for the girl. She later privately messaged me thanking me for what I did.” – **Girl aged 15**

“Whenever I see a hateful comment, usually by someone who is absolutely ignorant, I make sure I reply with something that will help them see things differently, especially in the case of hate against Muslims.” – **Boy aged 15**

“When I see hateful or hurtful things I report accounts and discourage that page from getting more views and attention.” – **Girl aged 15**

“I supported those who challenged hate or offensive comments” – **Boy aged 17**

“I try my best to only follow/friend etc people who only treat others with respect and kindness; if I saw that someone was abusive or bullying or posting hate, I would always unfollow them.” – **Girl aged 17**

1.4 Recommendations

Empowering digital citizens

- The majority of young people believe in an inclusive and respectful internet, and there is a fantastic opportunity to harness this sense of digital citizenship and help young people play their part in creating a better internet for all.
- While many young people are taking positive action online to empower others and spread kindness, the majority (53%) are not, and this is particularly true for boys.
- We need to empower all young people – and particularly boys – to feel able to stand up for rights and promote respect online, and we need to cultivate an online culture where it is cool to be kind.
- We need to give young people the skills, confidence and support they need to make the most of the fantastic opportunities offered by technology to promote self-expression, understanding and connection, and to celebrate diversity.
- This could be achieved through innovative social campaigns that engage young people to speak up for inclusivity online; or empowering young people in schools to act as role models to their peers. Whatever the route, young people need to be engaged and empowered to co-create the solution.

2. Young people's experiences of online hate

More than 4 in 5 young people have seen online hate in the last year, with 1 in 4 saying they had been targeted directly, as the internet is revealed to be the most common place for young people to come across hateful content and behaviour.

2.1 Young people's experiences of being targeted with online hate

A significant minority of young people report being targeted directly with online hate – particularly young people with disabilities

24% of 13-18 year old respondents said that people had targeted them with online hate because of their gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, disability or transgender identity, with 1 in 25 (4%) saying this happens all or most of the time.

There are no significant age or gender trends, but young people with disabilities appear to be particularly likely to have experienced being targeted with online hate, with 38% saying they had experienced this compared to 21% of those with no disabilities. Furthermore, 1 in 10 (10%) of young people with disabilities said they experienced this all or most of the time, compared to 4% of young people with no disabilities.

1 in 4 young people have been **targeted** with online hate

2.2 Young people's exposure to online hate

Many young people are being exposed to online hate

Many young people are exposed to online hate, with older teens more likely than younger teens to have experienced this.

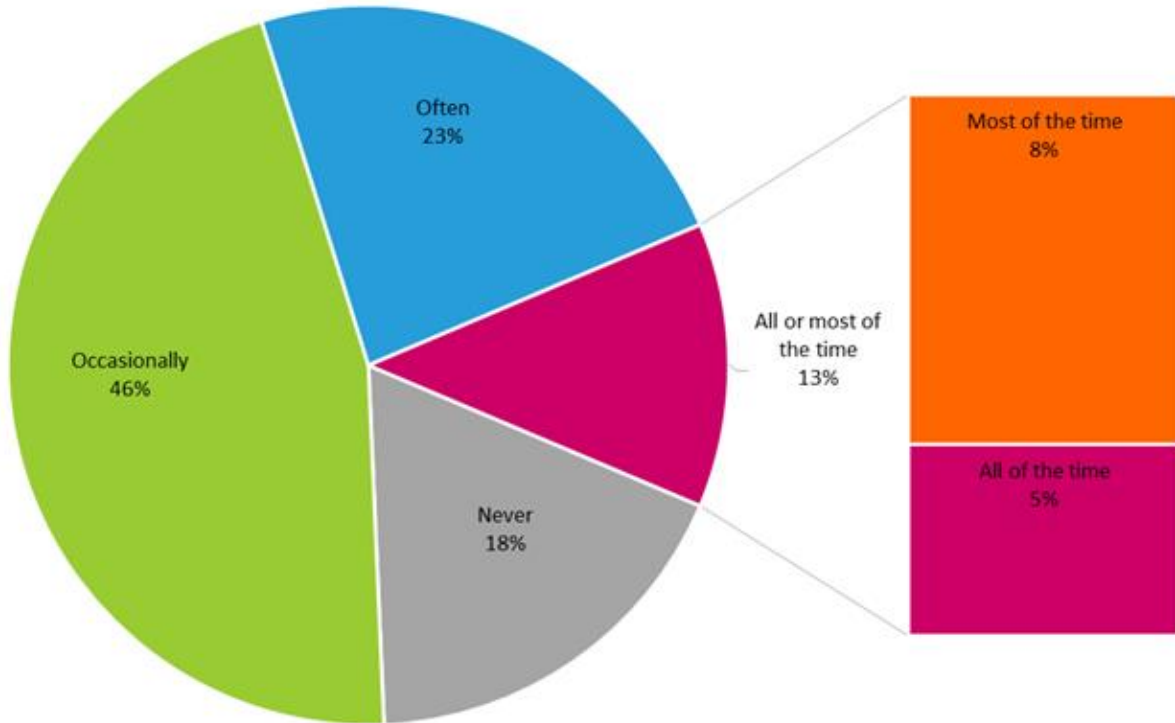
In the last year, 82% of 13-18 year old respondents said they have seen or heard something hateful about a certain group on the internet (i.e. potentially offensive, mean or threatening behaviour targeted at or about someone because of their race, religion, disability, gender, sexual orientation or transgender identity). This rises from 75% of 13-15s to 89% of 16-18s.

4 in 5 young people have been **exposed** to online hate

However, many young people only witness online hate occasionally

Many young people (46%) said they only witnessed something hateful about a certain group on the internet occasionally, while 23% said this happened often. A significant minority, over 1 in 10 (12%), said they witness online hate all or most of the time.

Figure 1: How often young people report being exposed to online hate in the last 12 months



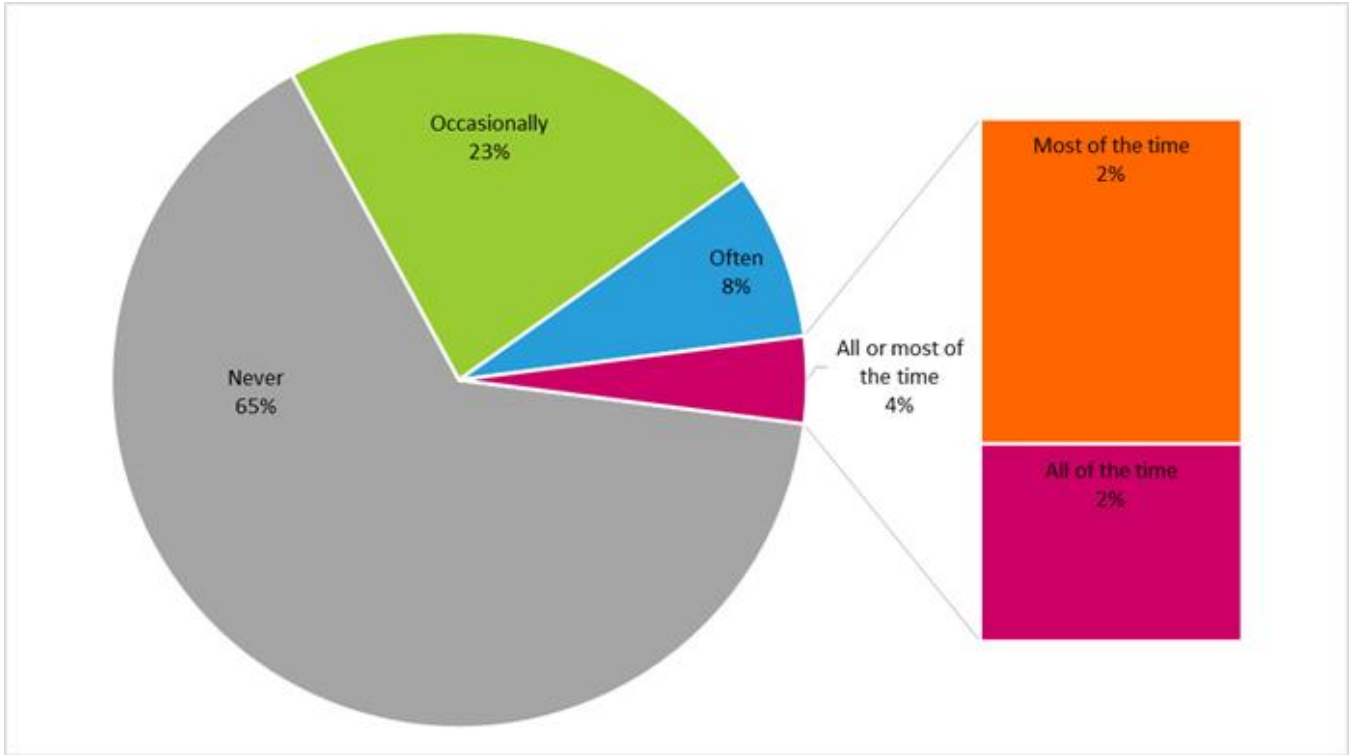
Q4: In the last 12 months, how often have you seen or heard something hateful about a certain group on the internet (for example, on a social network, app, website, online game)? For example potentially offensive, mean or threatening behaviour targeted at or about someone because of their race, religion, disability, gender, sexuality or transgender identity. Multiple Choice (Single Answer). Base: All respondents. (1,512 young people aged 13-18 years).

Young people are less likely to see online hate being shared by their peers

Two-thirds (65%) of young people say they never see their friends posting offensive, mean or threatening things on the internet about people of a certain group.

However, over a third (35%) said they have seen their friends doing this online in the last year, with a significant minority (1 in 25 young people) saying they see their friends doing this all or most of the time.

Figure 2: How often young people saw their friends posting online hate in the last 12 months



Q2: In the last year, how often have you seen or heard the following behaviours on the internet about a certain group, for example, girls, LGBT people, disabled people or a certain race or religion? 'My friends posting offensive, mean or threatening things online about people of a certain group'. Multiple Choice (Single Answer). Base: All respondents. (1,512 young people aged 13-18 years).

Offensive humour is common online – and young people do see their peers sharing it

89% said they had seen people sharing funny things online that might be offensive to a certain group, with 20% saying they saw this happening all or most of the time. This rises from 84% of 13-15s to 94% of 16-18s.

Almost three-quarters (73%) said they had seen their friends sharing funny things online that might be offensive to a certain group.

Girls are more likely to be exposed to online hate, while boys are more likely to see their friends sharing it

Girls are more likely to have seen or heard something hateful about a certain group on the internet in the last year, with 87% reporting they have experienced this compared to 77% of boys.

On the other hand, boys are more likely to see their friends sharing online hate. 41% of boys reported that they have seen their friends posting offensive, mean or threatening things online about people of a certain group, compared to 29% of girls.

Similarly, boys were more likely to see their friends sharing offensive humour. Over three-quarters (78%) of boys said they have seen their friends sharing funny things online that might be offensive to a certain group, compared to 69% of girls.

[See Table in Appendix 1 for further detail]

Young people with disabilities and young people from Black, Asian, Middle Eastern and other minority ethnic communities are more likely to see online hate

Some groups of young people appear to be more likely to see online hate all or most of the time:

- **20%** of young people with disabilities reported this, compared to 12% of those with no disabilities.
- **20%** of young people from Black, Asian, Middle Eastern or other minority ethnic backgrounds reported this, compared to 11% of those from white backgrounds.

Young people don't feel that online hate is reducing

The majority (80%) of young people say that online hate has not reduced in the last year.

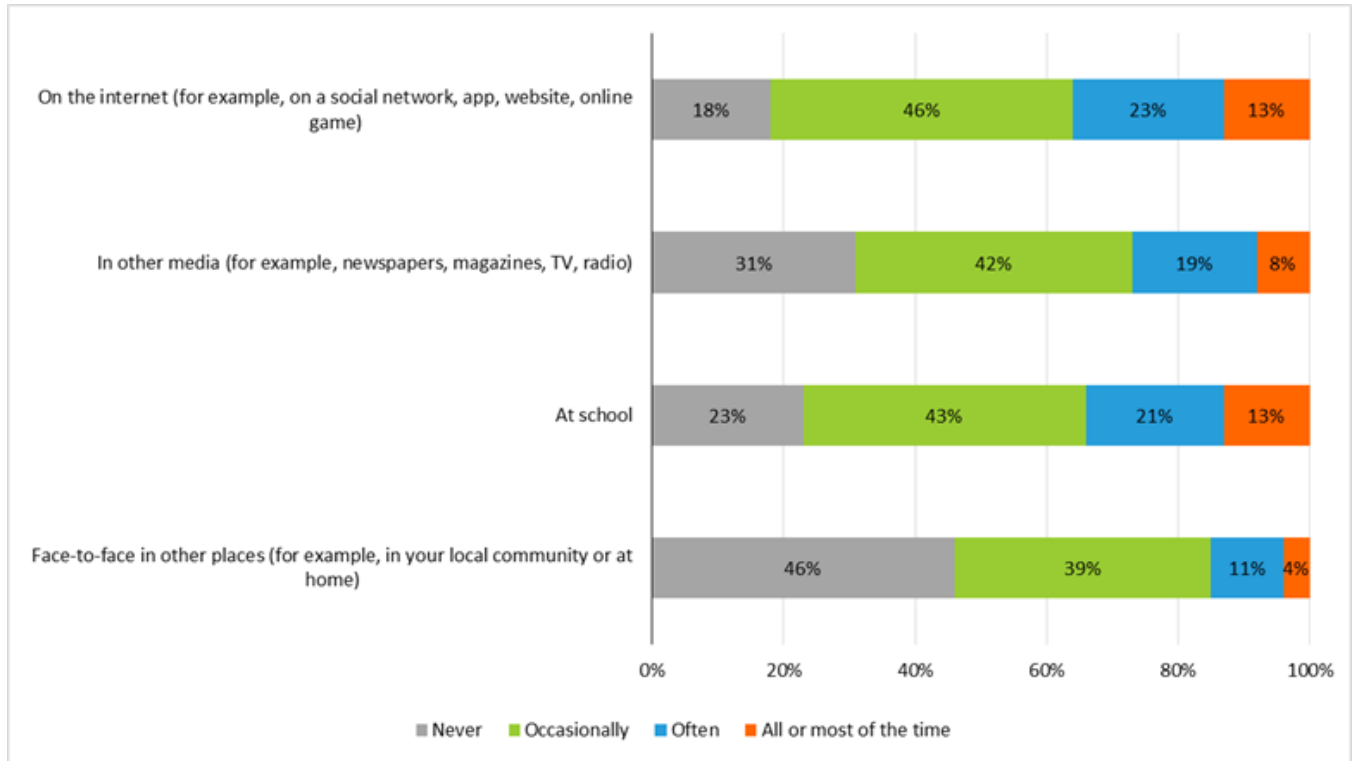
Just 8% said they felt there is *less* online hate now than a year ago, while 39% said there is the *same amount* of online hate and 41% said there is *more* online hate now than a year ago.

Young people with disabilities are more likely to say there is *more* online hate than a year ago (51%) as are young people from Black, Asian, Middle Eastern and other minority ethnic backgrounds (49%).

Young people are more likely to be exposed to hate on the internet than in other places

In total, 82% of young people have seen or heard something hateful on the internet, compared to 77% at school, 69% in other media and 54% face-to-face in other places.

Figure 3: Young people’s exposure to online hate compared to other sources



Q4: In the last 12 months, how often have you seen or heard something hateful about a certain group in any of the following places? For example potentially offensive, mean or threatening behaviour targeted at or about someone because of their race, religion, disability, gender, sexual orientation or transgender identity. Matrix Rating Scale (One Answer Per Row). Base: All respondents (1,512 young people aged 13-18 years).

2.3 Nature of online hate

Respondents who answered that they had seen online hate in the last year were asked a series of questions to explore in more detail the nature of their experiences.

Young people see both ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ online hate

Young people reported that they were exposed to both ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ online hate:

1. **Direct online hate:** Online hate targeted directly at an individual or community, for example cyberbullying or trolling that is targeted at someone because of their gender, sexual orientation, disability, transgender identity, race or religion. This can be targeted at you directly, to a friend, or to someone not known directly to you.
2. **Indirect online hate:** Online hate that is not targeted directly at an individual or community, but is potentially offensive, mean or threatening to a particular group.

Figure 4: Nature of online hate that young people were exposed to – direct vs indirect hate

Indirect Online Hate	Direct Online Hate
<p>48% Not targeted at anyone in particular</p>	<p>Known</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A friend or someone I know in person – 9% • Me – 2%
	<p>Unknown</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Someone online who I don’t know – 35% • A famous person – 16%

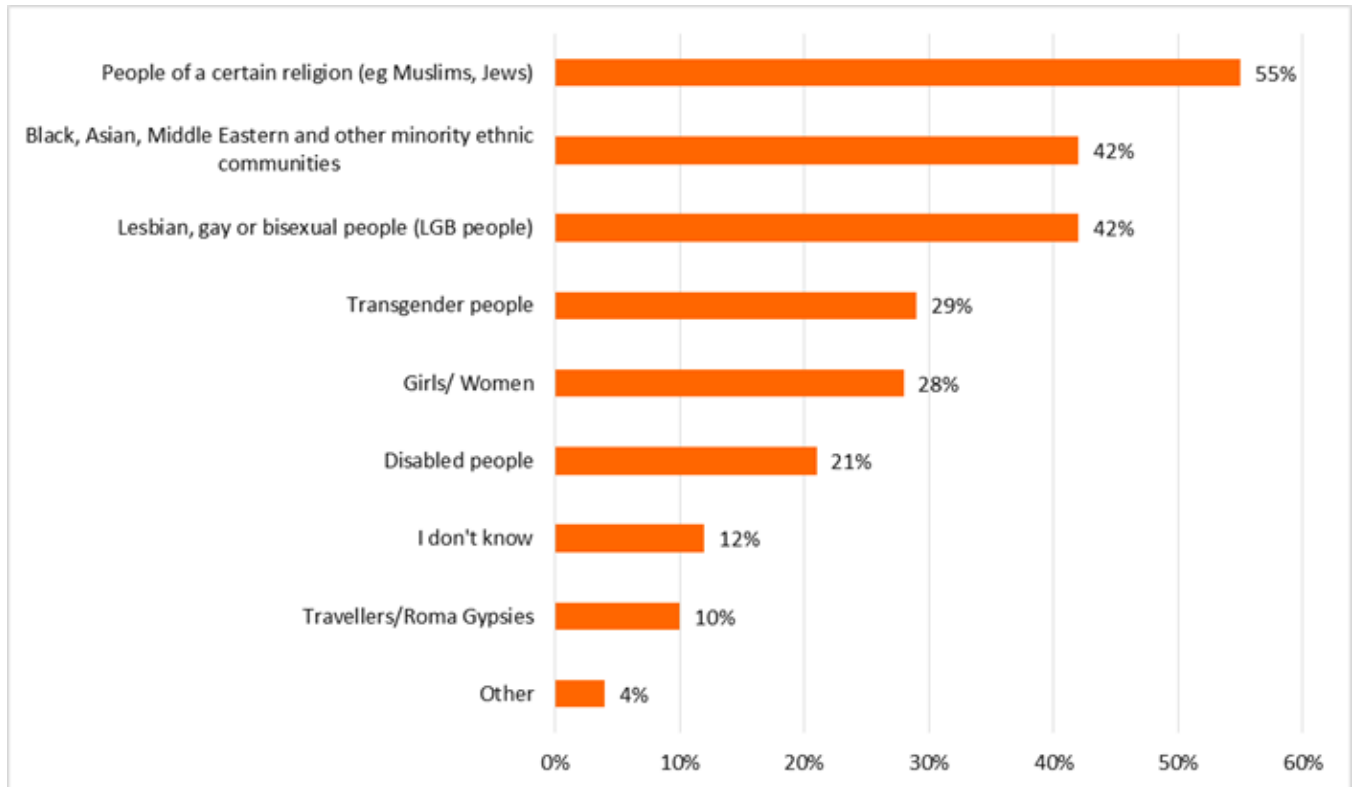
Q4b. Who was it [the online hate] targeted at? Multiple Choice (Multiple Answers). Base: All respondents who had reported they had seen something hateful on the internet in the last year. (1,241 young people aged 13-18 years).

It is interesting to observe that many young people are being exposed to online hate that is not directly targeted at themselves or a friend.

Young people often see online hate based on religion, sexual orientation or ethnicity

Young people see online hate targeted at various groups, and they are most likely to report seeing online hate targeted at people of a certain religion; lesbian, gay or bisexual people; and Black, Asian, Middle Eastern and other minority ethnic communities.

Figure 5: Nature of the online hate that young people were exposed to – groups targeted



Q4a. Which of the following groups have you seen being targeted with online hate? For example potentially offensive, mean or threatening behaviour on social media, online games or apps. Multiple Choice (Multiple Answers). Base: All respondents who had reported they had seen something hateful on the internet in the last year. (1,241 young people aged 13-18 years).

Older teens (16-18s) and girls were more likely to report seeing online hate targeted at these groups, compared to younger teens (13-15s) and boys.

There were particularly striking age differences for exposure to online hate targeted at:

- Girls and women (22% of 13-15s reported seeing this compared to 34% of 16-18s)
- Lesbian, gay and bisexual people (37% of 13-15s compared to 46% of 16-18s)
- Transgender people (22% of 13-15s compared to 34% of 16-18s)

- Black, Asian, Middle Eastern and other minority ethnic communities (36% of 13-15s compared to 48% of 16-18s)

The key gender differences were apparent with exposure to online hate targeted at:

- Girls and women (19% of boys reported seeing this compared to 36% of girls)
- Lesbian, gay and bisexual people (36% of boys compared to 47% of girls)
- Transgender people (18% of boys compared to 38% of girls)

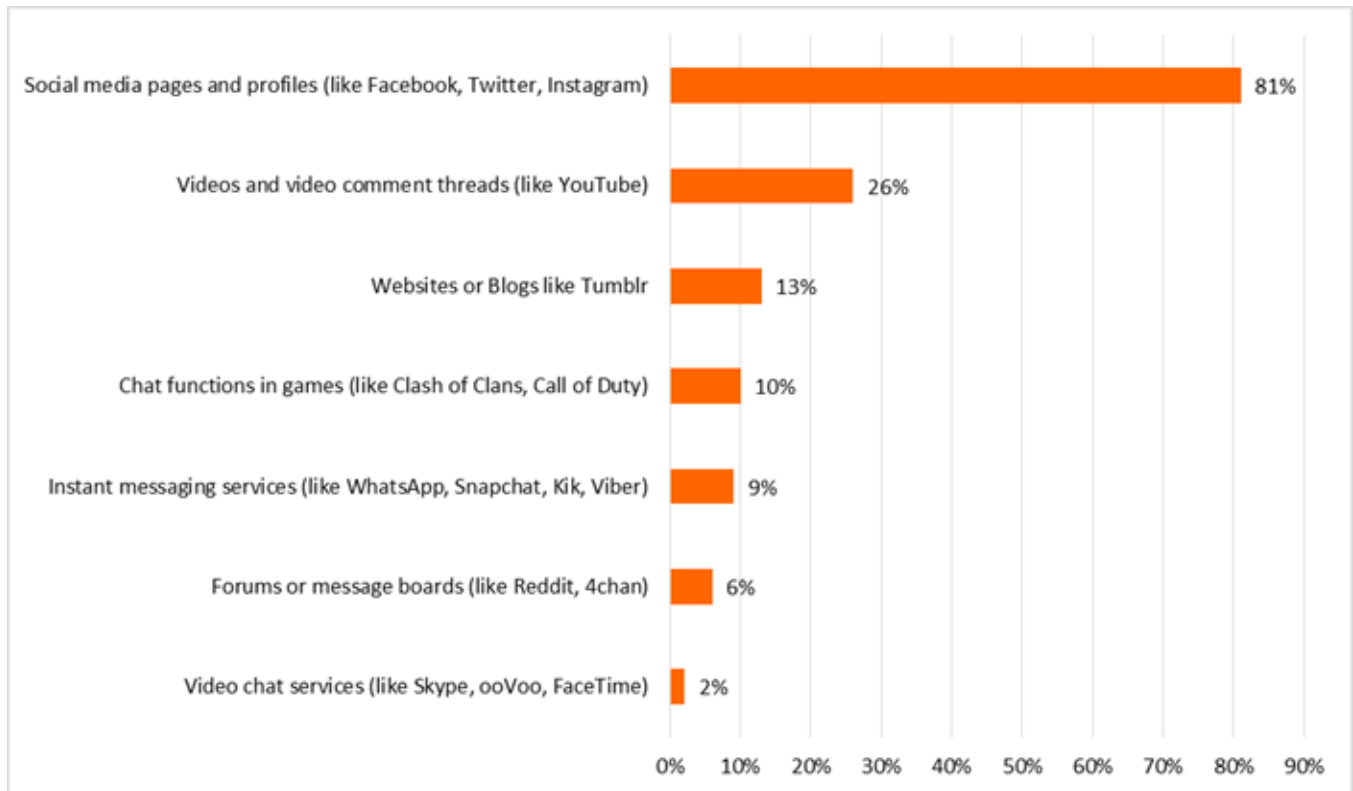
Young people with disabilities appear to be more likely to have seen online hate targeted at those with disabilities, with 35% reporting this compared to 20% of young people with no disabilities.

Young people from Black, Asian, Middle Eastern or other minority ethnic backgrounds are more likely to have seen online hate targeted at ethnic minorities (57% reported this compared to 39% of young people of white backgrounds) or those of a certain religion (66% reported seeing this, compared to 53% of those from white backgrounds).

Young people are most likely to come across online hate on social media

Overwhelmingly young people are being exposed to online hate on social networks, perhaps unsurprisingly given their popularity and the open nature of many of the most popular social networks.

Figure 6: Nature of the online hate that young people were exposed to – platforms involved



Q4c. Which platforms did you see or hear this [the online hate] on? Multiple Choice (Multiple Answers). Base: All respondents who had reported they had seen something hateful on the internet in the last year. (1,241 young people aged 13-18 years).

While exposure to online hate across these various platforms is broadly similar for 13-15s and 16-18s, there are some areas where older teens are more likely to come across online hate:

- Social media pages and profiles (77% of 13-15s compared to 85% of 16-18s)
- Videos and video comment threads (23% of 13-15s compared to 29% of 16-18s)
- Websites or blogs (9% of 13-15s compared to 16% of 16-18s).

Girls are more likely than boys to be exposed to online hate on social media (77% of boys compared to 85% of girls) and websites or blogs (9% of boys compared to 16% of girls).

On the other hand, boys are more likely to be exposed to online hate in chat functions in games (15% of boys compared to 5% of girls).

2.4 Impact of online hate

Many young people are worried about online hate – and it can stop them from expressing themselves online

For many young people, online hate is something they worry about. Over a third (35%) of young people said that online hate is something they worry about, rising to 38% of girls compared to 31% of boys. Young people with disabilities are even more likely to say that online hate is something they worry about: 45% of young people with disabilities agreed with this, compared to 34% of those with no disabilities.

3 in 4 say online hate makes them more careful about what they share online

It can also impact on young people's self-expression and use of technology. 74% of young people said that online hate makes them more careful about what they share online (rising from 71% of boys to 77% of girls).

1 in 3 also say that online hate makes them less likely to use social media. Young people with disabilities appear to be more likely to feel this (43%) compared to young people with no disabilities (32%).

Young people report feeling angry, sad and shocked after seeing online hate

Young people who had been exposed to online hate in the last year were asked to share how it made them feel. The most commonly reported emotions were anger (37%), sadness (34%) and shock (30%). While 1 in 5 (20%) reported not feeling bothered by it, 1 in 25 (4%) reported feeling attacked or scared.

Figure 7: Young people share how they felt after witnessing online hate



Q4d. How did it [the online hate] make you feel? Multiple Choice (Multiple Answers). Base: All respondents who had reported they had seen something hateful on the internet in the last year. (1,241 young people aged 13-18 years).

Young people who reported seeing ‘direct online hate’ – targeted directly at a person – were more affected by the experience than those who had seen ‘indirect online hate’. Young people who reported seeing ‘direct online hate’ were more likely to report feeling angry (44% said they felt this compared to 30% who had seen indirect hate). Indeed, 1 in 4 young people (24%) who had seen ‘indirect online hate’ said they were not bothered by it (compared to just 15% who had seen direct hate).

Reactions differ depending on age, gender and disability

The most common reaction among younger teens (13-15s) was to feel upset or sad (37%), while older teens (16-18s) are more likely to feel angry (40%).

Girls are more likely than boys to report feeling angry (45% of girls compared to 27% of boys), upset or sad (41% of girls compared to 26% of boys) and shocked (36% of girls compared to 23% of boys).

Boys are more likely to report feeling ‘not bothered’, with 32% of boys reporting this compared to just 11% of girls. Indeed this is the most common reaction for boys, followed by feeling angry (27%), upset or sad (26%) or shocked (23%).

The findings also suggest that young people with disabilities are more likely to report feeling angry after seeing online hate (54% reported this compared to 35% of those with no disabilities), and less likely to say they were not bothered (13% reported this compared to 21% of those with no disabilities).

2.5 Recommendations

Understanding, preventing and responding to online hate

- Many young people are being exposed to, and targeted with, online hate, and it is essential that we work collaboratively to understand, prevent and respond to online hate. In particular, more research is needed to understand the experiences of young people with disabilities.
- While it is apparent that much of the online hate young people are exposed to does not involve them or a friend directly they do still need to be empowered to protect themselves and their peers if they are ever targeted with it.
- Boys in particular are more likely to see their peer group sharing online hate and it is important that we work with boys to develop respectful behaviour.
- Schools can play an important role in challenging hateful behaviour: While the internet was the most likely place that young people are exposed to hate towards certain groups, school came a close second. Challenging offensive language and humour through classroom activities can be a way to address these issues and cultivate a positive community ethos, both offline and online.

3. Responding to online hate

Young people respond to online hate in a number of ways, but they often face barriers that can prevent them from taking action.

3.1 How young people responded when they were exposed to online hate

Young people usually ignore online hate – and just 1 in 5 report to the service provider

Young people do see counter speech in reaction to online hate – 84% have seen people responding to defend a certain group that is being targeted online, with more than a fifth (22%) saying they see this all or most of the time online.

However, most young people who had seen online hate said they just ignored it – particularly older teens, with 58% of 11-16s saying they ignored it compared to 48% of 13-15s. This can sometimes be a positive strategy, particularly as what young people define as online hate may not always reach the threshold for breaking the law or breaking the terms of an online platform. However, it can often mean that behaviour goes unchallenged. Indeed, just 1 in 5 who had seen online hate said they reported it to the service provider.

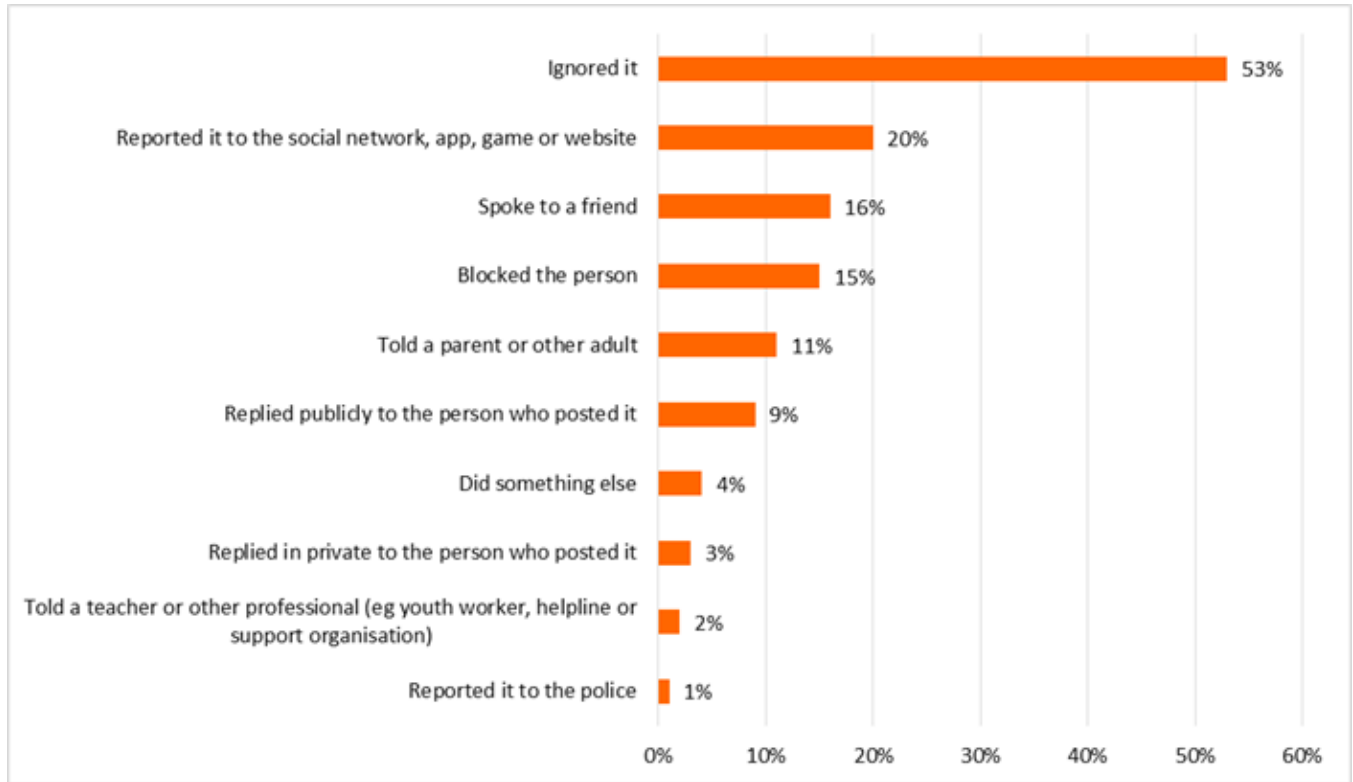
“Everyone sees online hate everyday but nobody speaks openly about so it carries on and doesn't get stopped.”

(Girl aged 13)

Young people are not very likely to seek support from those around them. Young people are unlikely to turn to a parent or other adult (11%) or a teacher or other professional (2%), and not many even spoke to a friend (16%) about what they had experienced. Younger teens are more likely to speak to a parent or other adult, with 18% of 13-15s saying they did this compared to just 5% of 16-18s.

Girls are more likely to have spoken to a friend, with 20% saying they did this compared to 12% of boys. Girls also are more likely to have reported online hate to the service provider (20% of girls compared to 12% of boys) or replied publicly to the person who posted it (12% of girls compared to 6% of boys). Boys are more likely to ignore online hate, with 59% saying they ignored it compared to 48% of girls.

Figure 8: How young people responded after being exposed to online hate



Q4e. What did you do? Multiple Choice (Multiple Answers). Base: All respondents who had reported they had seen something hateful on the internet in the last year. (1,241 young people aged 13-18 years).

Young people are more likely to take action in a number of ways if they are exposed to ‘direct online hate’ (targeted directly at a person), compared to ‘indirect online hate’ (not targeted directly at a person).

Table 4: How young people reacted after being exposed to ‘direct online hate’ or ‘indirect online hate’

	Direct online hate	Indirect online hate
Told a parent or other adult	13%	8%
Told a teacher or other professional	4%	1%
Spoke to a friend	21%	12%
Reported it to the social network, app, game or website	25%	16%
Reported it to the police	2%	0%
Blocked the person	18%	12%
Replied publicly to the person who posted it	13%	5%
Replied in private to the person who posted it	4%	2%
Ignored it	43%	64%

3.2 Barriers that can prevent young people from taking action

Many young people face barriers that prevent them from taking action, with 1 in 5 not knowing what to do if they come across online hate

While many young people feel equipped to deal with online hate, there are significant numbers of young people who face barriers in knowledge, skills and confidence.

Knowledge and skills:

Many young people lack key knowledge and skills, which can prevent them from taking action. Among those who had been exposed to online hate, 1 in 5 (20%) of 13-18 year old respondents said they don't know what to do if they come across online hate.

The majority (58%) of young people aged 13-18 years who had been exposed to online hate said they wouldn't know when online hate breaks the law – rising from 50% of boys to 65% of girls – perhaps contributing to the fact that just 1% said they had reported the online hate to police.

15% of those who had witnessed online hate said they don't know how to report online hate to a social network – although it is encouraging that 68% said they do know how to do this. Boys are less likely to know how to report, with 62% saying they know how to do this compared to 72% of girls. Younger teens are also less likely to know how to report, with 64% saying they know how to report compared to 71% of 16-18s.

Confidence:

Many young people lack the confidence to take action or seek help about online hate. 1 in 4 (25%) of those who had witnessed online hate said they would like to report online hate but they are not comfortable doing so, perhaps contributing to the fact that just 1 in 5 reported online hate when they saw it.

Almost half (45%) of those who had witnessed online hate said they would worry about standing up to online hate as they don't want to be targeted, with 49% of girls agreeing with this compared to 40% of boys. Young people with disabilities appear to be more likely to say they would worry about standing up to online hate (53%) compared to those with no disabilities (44%).

Just 11% told a parent or other adult when they were exposed to online hate, with 23% saying they would not feel comfortable telling an adult about online hate – though encouragingly almost half (46%) said they would. This is particularly true for younger teens, with 50% of 13-15s saying they feel comfortable telling an adult compared to 42% of 16-18s.

“I think if we had more confidence we could report more online hate but also if we cared less about getting hate for doing the right thing and reporting hate”

(Girl aged 14)

3.3 Empowering young people to take action

We need to empower young people with the knowledge, skills and confidence to ensure they are equipped to deal with online hate. Over a third (36%) of young people who had witnessed online hate said they would like more information about what to do about online hate, and the majority (75%) said that more needs to be done about online hate – rising to 81% among those with disabilities.

Young people want to play their part in preventing and responding to online hate. The majority (72%) of young people aged 13-18 years said they believe that people their age can use the internet to bring different people closer together.

3.4 Recommendations

Empowering young people to respond to online hate

- We all need to help ensure young people have the skills and knowledge they need to help them respond to online hate and overcome barriers they face; whether that is understanding the law, or knowing how and when to block and report on social networks. Just because young people are tech savvy, it doesn't mean they understand everything about how to use technology safely, nor do they always have the confidence to make full use of their skills.
- It is important that we help young people feel more able to turn to trusted adults, whether parents or teachers, by having regular conversations at home and at school about technology use.
- Young people need access to reporting routes that help them feel more comfortable about taking action; for example, effective and easy-to-use reporting routes on social networks and other digital platforms, as well as anonymous reporting routes in school that all students are aware of.
- The research findings show that young people are most likely to turn to their friends above parents and teachers, so it is important they have the skills and knowledge to support each other.
- Given young people are being exposed to their peers sharing online hate, and the majority believe no one should be targeted with it, it may help to empower young people about how they could approach friends who share offensive or upsetting things on the internet in a non-confrontational and effective way.
- We can all play our part to empower young people to be kind and respectful online, and encourage them to be digital citizens and role models. This can start at home or school, by being a good role model to young people and showing them how to be kind to others. By enforcing respectful language and behaviour offline, we can remind young people that the same standards apply online. We need to help young people to understand the impact of their words and behaviour on others.

4. Focus: The differing experiences of girls and boys

Throughout the research it is apparent that girls and boys differ in their exposure, emotional reaction, response and attitude towards online hate and in their positive use of technology to empower others.

This section presents an overview of key trends that highlight potential differences in the experiences of boys and girls. While boys and girls are more similar than they are different, the findings may have implications for how we empower and educate boys and girls as we work to help create a kinder internet.

To summarise, girls are more likely to be exposed to online hate, and they are more worried and emotionally affected by it. However they are more able to seek support and take positive actions online – from reporting abuse to showing support to various groups. Boys are less worried and affected by online hate, but they see their friends sharing it more, and are less able to seek support and take positive actions online.

4.1 Exposure and impact

The research indicates that girls are more likely to be exposed to online hate, and they are more worried and affected by it. On the other hand, boys are more likely to see their friends sharing online hate and offensive humour, and are more likely to say they are not bothered by online hate.

Table 5: Gender trends in young people’s exposure to online hate and the impact of it

	Girls	Boys
I have seen something hateful about a certain group on the internet in the last year	87%	77%
I have seen my friends posting offensive, mean or threatening things about a certain group on the internet in the last year	29%	41%
Online hate is something I worry about	38%	31%
Exposure to online hate made me feel ‘sad or upset’	41%	26%
Exposure to online hate made me feel ‘not bothered’	11%	32%
Online hate makes me more careful about what I share online	77%	71%

[Please refer to other sections for sample sizes and more detail on methodology]

4.2 Response to online hate

The research indicates that girls are more likely to take action about online hate, particularly reporting to a social network, speaking to a friend or replying publicly to the person. Boys are more likely to ignore online hate and are less likely to report to a social network or speak to a friend. Indeed, boys are more likely to believe that people should expect to be targeted with online hate if they share personal information about their gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, disability or transgender identity (18% of boys agreed with this compared to 11% of girls).

Table 6: Gender trends in young people’s response to witnessing online hate

What did you do after witnessing online hate?	Girls	Boys
Reported it to the social network, app, game or website	20%	12%
Spoke to a friend	20%	12%
Replied publicly to the person who posted it	12%	6%
Ignored it	48%	59%

[Please refer to other sections for sample sizes and more detail on methodology]

4.3 Barriers to taking action

While girls and boys both face the same barriers that can prevent them from taking action, it appears that girls are less likely to know when online hate breaks the law and they are more worried about standing up to online hate, while boys are less likely to know how to report to a social network.

Table 7: Gender trends in barriers faced by young people

	Girls	Boys
I wouldn’t know when online hate breaks the law	65%	50%
I would worry about standing up to online hate as I don’t want to be targeted	49%	40%
I know how to report to a social network	72%	62%

[Please refer to other sections for sample sizes and more detail on methodology]

4.4 Positive action

The research indicates that girls are more likely to see others using technology for good, with girls more likely to see their friends and others posting things online that are supportive, kind or positive. Plus they are more likely to have used technology to show support to a certain group. Boys are less likely to have shared something supportive towards a certain group, and are less likely to see others sharing things like this.

Table 8: Gender trends in positive online actions

In the last year...	Girls	Boys
I have seen people posting things online ‘all or most of the time’ that are supportive, kind or positive about a certain group, for example, girls, LGBT people, disabled people or those of a certain race or religion.	42%	27%
I have seen my friends posting things online ‘all or most of the time’ that are supportive, kind or positive about a certain group	39%	29%
I have done something online to show support to a certain group	58%	35%

[Please refer to other sections for sample sizes and more detail on methodology]

4.5 Recommendations

Educating boys and girls about online hate

- While many of the same educational strategies will be effective for both boys and girls, who are more similar than they are different, there may be nuanced approaches that may help strengthen this work.
- The research suggests that girls would particularly benefit from being empowered with skills, knowledge and confidence to take positive actions – from reporting abuse online to proactively creating a kinder internet – by helping them to understand their rights and the law online. Girls may also benefit from opportunities to share their concerns about online hate and the impact it can have both in terms of emotional reaction and how it may be altering how they choose to express themselves online.
- The research suggest that boys would benefit from safe and supported opportunities to express their values about respect and kindness and cultivate a positive ethos, as we help develop their belief that they can have a role to play in helping make the internet a better place. It may be important to challenge the normalisation of online hate among boys and help them to understand the impact of online hate on others. It might be helpful to highlight ways boys can seek support and take action that would not mark them out in their peer group (for example, anonymous reporting routes in school; anonymous reporting tools on social networks).

5 Young people's recommendations

Preventing and responding to online hate

At the end of the survey, young people were invited to share their ideas about what might help to reduce online hate, and over 1,200 young people shared their ideas.

“More people should work together actively to combat negativity online.”

(Boy aged 18)

Young people – and all digital citizens – playing their part

Young people believe that the online community can play a part in preventing online hate and creating a kinder internet:

“If everyone reported online hate when they see it maybe it can be stopped.”

– Boy aged 14

“We could help by posting positive things about equal rights for LGBT, different races, genders, etc” – **Girl aged 14**

“I think greater emphasis should be put on not arguing with people, but rather just removing hateful comments and threads etc. People need to be taught to think before they post things online.” – **Girl aged 16**

“People could think more about the impact of their words and the affect they potentially could have on someone.” – **Boy aged 17**

Schools playing their part

They are calling for more information at school – starting at a young age.

“I think that youth should be informed about the laws and rules of online hate. Also we should be taught what to do. Everyone sees online hate everyday but nobody speaks openly about so it carries on and doesn't get stopped.” – **Girl aged 13**

“Talks in schools and for teenagers to be campaigners for online bullying to influence people of their own age” – **Girl aged 14**

“Examples in schools about how online hate effects a person to show pupils how to treat others and to give them more information about what to do if they see any online hate.”
– Boy aged 17

“We need to learn at a young age how to treat people online - not when we are 9 years old, younger.” – **Boy aged 17**

“We have lots of talks at school about Internet safety, but online hate and cyber bullying is only ever briefly mentioned without detail behind it.” – **Girl aged 18**

“Teaching young people the consequences of online hate, and that everyone deserves respect regardless of their age, religion, gender, sexuality, disability, etc.” – **Boy aged 18**

“The most important thing that adults can do to reduce the spread of hate-motivated behaviour is to help young people learn to respect and celebrate diversity” – **Boy aged 18**

Parents playing their part

Young people see that parents can play an important role too:

“Parents need to teach their children acceptable behaviour online” – **Girl aged 17**

Police playing their part

Many young people felt that police should be involved – both in education work and in responding to incidents – to help prevent and respond to online hate. They felt that there needed to be a clearer message that you can get prosecuted for posting online hate.

“More information should be given out about the laws in schools to try and discourage people to hate online” – **Girl aged 15**

“There aren't many people who get punished for online hate, people seem to believe they are untouchable because they are behind a screen.” – **Boy aged 18**

Tech companies playing their part

Young people also had feedback to industry, and are calling for reporting processes to be easier to use, more effective, to have more feedback and a quicker response.

“I think if it was easier to report more people would” – **Girl aged 16**

“Social media companies also need to make their reporting tools more useful (such as Instagram's reporting tool) so that people feel more confident that their report is being dealt with, I myself don't feel this is the case.” – **Boy aged 16**

“Make it easier for hate to be reported and taken down quicker so that people don't feel guilty about reporting it in the sense that they feel that they will then become targeted” – **Boy aged 16**

“Make it clear that if you do report it you will be supported” – **Boy aged 16**

They also felt that industry can play a role in educating users about how and when to report.

“Pop-ups on social media explaining what to do” – **Girl aged 15**

“When signing up to an online institution (social media) being bring told how to recognise it and report it.” – **Girl aged 17**

“For social medias to install a function where when you click post or share it comes up with a warning message saying something like ‘Are you sure you want to post this? Think about how it could make others feel?’ Then an option to post or cancel because this could make a lot of people think twice about saying something offensive or mean.” – **Girl aged 16**

“Use of advertising space on social media to regularly provide info and encouragement to report such encounters.” – **Boy aged 17**

They also suggested more proactive approaches that technology companies could consider:

“I don't know if this is possible, but perhaps if online sites such as YouTube could have a system where it detects whether the commenter has used any hateful language and, if they have, they could stop the comment from being posted.” – **Girl aged 15**



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