Case Studies of *Online Gamers* from the Demystifying teens online interactions report

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Internet Matters | YouthSight

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Contents

1. Girl, 16 years old, Midlands, C2DE, White British

What would you miss if you weren't able to go online for a whole weekend?

I would miss out on being able to talk to my online friends and I also wouldn't be able to play the games that I like to play, such as GTA V, Minecraft, Roblox etc. This would make me feel sad as for me games are a place for me to be my true self - my friends that I play with online bring out the best in me and I am very grateful for them

Please let us know what you mostly do at each time e.g. in the morning you might check social media and messaging apps while after dinner you might be gaming and talking to your friends in games? Your answer doesn't have to be very detailed, we just want to get a sense of what you do. Spend around 5 mins on this task.

When I wake up, I go on my phone and I message my friends to see if any of them would like to go out that day. I tend to stay in my pyjamas for a bit while I play on my PC until I start to get hungry and I typically have brunch instead as I don't really like breakfast. After Brunch, I go for a shower and go out to see my friends or my boyfriend if they are available. Later on in the day, I usually make my favourite food, which is orzo risotto, it's my own recipe and I love it. After dinner, I go back on my PC, if I am still at home, to play with my friends again, I stay on my pc for a few hours until late at night due to my sleep schedule not being very good at the moment. When I finally get tired, I get changed into my pyjamas and go to sleep after I have watched some Youtube or a film.

Thinking about the Covid-19 pandemic, how, if at all, would you say the things you do online in your free time have changed, and how has the amount of time you spend online in your free time changed?

I think that due to covid I have definitely spent an increased amount of time online. I tend to have a lot more free time aswell, which I use to talk to new or old friends online while I play games with them. However, because of this, my sleep schedule has become quite bad and I usually don't go to sleep until around 2am. I would like to fix my sleep schedule so that I can be more productive throughout the day.

Being online is great however it can also impact other areas of your life. For you, does the good outweigh the bad or do you have concerns?

I love being online as I feel like I am a completely new person. I think I am a lot less shy towards new people and I find it easy to make friends as I can meet people who have similar interests very easily, so I find it simple to get along with them. On the other hand, online there is a lot of trolls and cyber bullying is definitely a problem. I have came across a few horrible people after many years of playing games online and it definitely affects people in bad ways as some are more sensitive than others, which can lead to people being set back in confidence, or even not enjoy their own hobbies.

How has being online impacted your mental health?
I think that being online has affected my mental health in both positive and negative ways, for example, I enjoy being able to relax and chill at home while also being able to stay in contact with my friends. However, using lots of different social media's and seeing how certain people look online can sometimes make me feel bad about myself and not very confident. This does sometimes make me sad as it makes me wonder if I really fit into society's standards.

In terms of your mental health, how do the gaming communities make you feel? Do you find them, if at all, similar or different to other social media sites that you use?

I think that the gaming communities are less toxic than social media sites. Through gaming you get to connect with people of similar interests so you can't really be judged for random things.

Setting limits to being online

When it comes to going online, can you set limits on yourself or is it hard to stop?
I think that I am aware of how much time I usually spend online and I know when it is time to come off my devices and socialise with my friends and family outside of social media. However, I think I should try to balance how much time I spend online compared to going to see people in person now that covid restrictions have lightened a bit.

Reaction to coming across negative/hurtful content

Please can you tell us about a time when you saw something troubling online, what did you do? And where did you go/ who did you speak to? We are interested in understanding what you have done/ what you might do when you are not comfortable with what you have seen online
Recently, someone I know contacted me about a random account on Instagram that had used a photo of her, which she was very uncomfortable with that image being on the internet for anyone to see. We both reported the account and it has since been taken down.

Balance between online and offline

How often do you become friends with people online and on what sort of platforms/sites do you make friends?
I think that online I find it a lot easier to make friends. By playing games, I have found lots of people with similar interests whether that's through a friend of a friend or just finding someone around. Online, I would say I am less shy and I can be myself around anyone while also feeling comfortable. I love socialising with new people especially when we like the same things.

How they feel connected to online friends

In what ways would you say you feel connected to your online friends? Please explain the reasons for your answer.
I feel connected to my online friends because I can be my true self online. When I make new friends through a game we tend to have the same interests and get along easily, which I really like. I have played games online since I was 7 years old and over the years I have made some great friends, some of which I have been lucky enough to meet in person. I feel especially connected with one of my friends who I have known for over 6 years now and we

still enjoy speaking to each other daily and love to share different aspects of our lives with each other.

How much of your life do you share with your online friends? Do you talk about your relationships, thoughts, feelings, where you live, where you go to school, recommendations of who to friend/follow etc. Or do you keep it light hearted and talk about everyday things?

I spend a lot of time talking with my online friends. Depending on how long I've known them, I share different things. Some of my friends I would feel comfortable having a deep conversation with would be one that I have known for a long time. Typically, I spend more time talking about everyday things to them as it makes me feel comfortable. However, only a few online friends (like the ones I have met in person) know where I live and other personal parts of my life.

First of all, please can you describe to us what a sense of "belonging" means to you?

The word belonging to me means that I have the right to own something that I have worked hard for. I think that belongings can however be shared with someone who means a lot to you, so you can share the thing/experience that you have put your effort into and worked hard for.

What are the difficult things that you've experienced being a part of an online group?

Being a female in the gaming community can often come with a lot of negatives. As gaming is usually associated being a 'boy thing' people online can judge you and put you down for doing what you enjoy. Sometimes people think it's funny to deter girls off video games so it is seen as more 'masculine' to play games instead of being available to everyone.

How much you talk to your parents about your online activity?

I tell my parents a lot about my life online because it is something that I enjoy. I love to talk to my parents about anything and they also like to listen to what I get up to in my spare time. They know a lot about my online activity and what I enjoy doing. Likewise, my parents enjoy showing me things they like to look at such as cooking recipes on Instagram which is a hobby that me and my mum both share.

What steps, if any, do your parents take to control and/or monitor what you do online?

My parents know that I am responsible about what I do online, I know how to keep safe as from a young age they taught me what is okay to share online and what isn't. I took in this knowledge and still use it to this day, years later. I don't mind that my parents know what I do in my spare time because I don't do anything silly online that could get me into trouble. I would say I am mature for my age and I do my best to stay safe online.

What do you wish people your parents' age understood about young people's online activity?

I think if parents understood what their children get up to online, it could allow kids to be safer on the internet as there are still creepy people all over the internet sadly, sometimes children don't always grasp potentially dangerous situations as they weren't warned about them as they started using the internet. This could prevent lots of horrible things happening to kids online.

Self expression online

Where is the best place for you to express yourself online?
The best place for me to express myself is in Discord servers because I can talk about certain things in different ones as I will be sharing interests with the other people in the server. I am able to express myself by reacting on polls or replying to other people's messages, which I think is a good way for everyone to take part in sharing things about themselves.

Online v Offline

What three words would you use to describe yourself online and then what three words would you use to describe yourself offline? There's no right or wrong answer here, we just want to understand how you portray yourself online
Online - I would say that I am very social, humorous and chilled.
Offline - I believe I am contented, resourceful and considerate.
I think I am a completely different person online compared to offline, I am a lot more comfortable online because people don't know me in person so I can make other friends and share my similar interests with compared to in real life where I have to mix with people of different interests.

==Passion for online gaming==

What would you miss if you weren't able to go online for a whole weekend?
Being able to talk to my Friends, watch videos or play games for entertainment

==Morning routine==

Please let us know what you mostly do at each time e.g. in the morning you might check social media and messaging apps while after dinner you might be gaming and talking to your friends in games? Your answer doesn't have to be very detailed, we just want to get a sense of what you do. Spend around 5 mins on this task.
When I wake up, I use my phone to mainly just check the time and to check social media in case I have missed any messages. When I'm getting ready and travelling, I enjoy listening to music or watching videos to pass time. At lunch time I enjoy playing games with my friends or playing by myself and comparing scores with my friends. When I'm home from school, I usually go and watch some tv and talk about my day with my mum. After dinner I enjoy face timing my friends and messaging them. In the evening, I usually watch videos before falling asleep and make sure to set my alarm for the next day.

==Impact of Covid on routine==

Thinking about the Covid-19 pandemic, how, if at all, would you say the things you do online in your free time have changed, and how has the amount of time you spend online in your free time changed?
I would say that I use the internet more to communicate and talk to people or to entertain myself as there are more restrictions in terms of meeting people and if someone has Covid, you won't be able to see them, this can lead to a dormant lifestyle, however it is important to remain entertained and happy in these times

==How act online and pros/cons of being online==

Being online is great however it can also impact other areas of your life. For you, does the good outweigh the bad or do you have concerns?
In my opinion the good outweighs the bad however it determines on whether you are careful online because of you aren't, you may experience numerous trolls and mean messages however you can make a lot of friends, stay entertained and stimulate your mind

==Impact on mental health==

How has being online impacted your mental health?
I have found it to be positively impactive due to the fact that I have a place where I can air out my problems and talk to people when I need help

==Setting limits to being online==

When it comes to going online, can you set limits on yourself or is it hard to stop?
Going online can be quite addictive and definitely hard to set a limit or to stop going on. However I try not to stay on it too much these days so I can spend more time with my family

==Reaction to coming across negative/hurtful content==

Please can you tell us about a time when you saw something troubling online, what did you do? And where did you go/ who did you speak to? We are interested in understanding what you have done/ what you might do when you are not comfortable with what you have seen online

One time I saw something troubling on social media, I did not want to see what was seen and instantly alerted my brother and he advised me to block the account. In addition to this I have since deleted the app and reverted to much safer social media which hides and delete such photography.

How often do you become friends with people online and on what sort of platforms/sites do you make friends?

Mostly with people that are friends of friends so i know they can be trusted, I become friends with online such as Instagram. Usually if we have common interests, I'll respond to something on their feed or story or I'll respond to something on theirs and that's how a conversation starts going

In what ways would you say you feel connected to your online friends? Please explain the reasons for your answer.

My online friends tend to judge less as since they usually do not attend my school, they can't assume from what they've heard from people within it. Online I feel very close with my friends cos they never actively judge me and are very accepting as a whole

How much of your life do you share with your online friends? Do you talk about your relationships, thoughts, feelings, where you live, where you go to school, recommendations of who to friend/follow etc. Or do you keep it light hearted and talk about everyday things?

Depending on the level of trust is how much I share with online friends, if it's a secret I may not tell them, however they may be less likely to tell anyone that in real life friends.

First of all, please can you describe to us what a sense of "belonging" means to you?

The sense of belonging as my interpretation is something that has the right, purpose or is needed where it is. If there is a positive impact of something being, then they carries its sense of belonging. For example if I feel as if comforted and like I'm having a beneficial and posited impact in the area I'm in, I will feel a sense of belonging

What are the difficult things that you've experienced being a part of an online group?

It's not always the case where everyone agrees on the same thing which can result in arguments and etc.

What activities do you do with your parents online? (e.g. play a game together)

I don't rly play games with my parents online however a few years back, we all used to play two dots and piano tiles together. However now days we are more likely to play physical

games together rather than online games which I don't mind and honestly prefer as spending physical time is better than online with my parents

How much you talk to your parents about your online activity?
I don't rly talk much about my online life with my parents as it feels as if it's not that important however my parents are very involved with my music

What steps, if any, do your parents take to control and/or monitor what you do online?
My parents don't rly monitor what I do online, they just occasionally ask me what I'm doing or what I'm watching and I'm open to discuss with them as I don't rly have much to hide

What do you wish people your parents' age understood about young people's online activity?
I wish parents understood that times are rapidly changing and being the first generation to grow up with phones, we're still experimenting and still young and especially with the time after the Covid impact, it has become very good for escapism or simply just to pass time

Where is the best place for you to express yourself online?
I can express myself online through Spotify, TikTok and Snapchat as I have a love for music and make music. These platforms can help me share my music with the world

What three words would you use to describe yourself online and then what three words would you use to describe yourself offline? There's no right or wrong answer here, we just want to understand how you portray yourself online
Online I am quite active as I'm commonly on it, I tend to be quite quiet as I don't post much or comment much however I try to be quite motivational in the way I talk and relate to people online

Offline I'm quite loud considering I am quite talkative 😂, open as I consider myself quite easy to talk to and I share my opinions and quite fun as my friends all say they enjoy my company

How can you tell if people are being genuine online?

You cannot always tell if people are being genuine online however continuity is a main factor in this, as if you have continuity in messaging and commenting and positively have an impact, those are all signs of being genuine

What would you miss if you weren't able to go online for a whole weekend?
Playing and talking with my friends. This would make me feel more energised to do stuff other than on my PC .eg. Go on a walk.

Please let us know what you mostly do at each time e.g. in the morning you might check social media and messaging apps while after dinner you might be gaming and talking to your friends in games? Your answer doesn't have to be very detailed, we just want to get a sense of what you do. Spend around 5 mins on this task.
when I wake up I usually check my social media for any unread messages.

Getting ready I would usually put on one of my favourite songs, but travelling I don't use my devices because it makes me sickly.

Lunchtime I wouldn't use the internet since I am either talking to family/friends or eating.

Home from school I would go straight on the internet to play/talk with friends about school.

After dinner I would do the same and join my friends on whatever they are playing.

Evening I will still be playing with my friends on a different game, after my dinner.

Gone to bed I will usually browse my social media for any unread messages, like when I woke up.

Thinking about the Covid-19 pandemic, how, if at all, would you say the things you do online in your free time have changed, and how has the amount of time you spend online in your free time changed?
The pandemic has not changed what I do in my free time which is playing with my friends on all sorts of games, sometimes meeting in real life to do outdoor activities like swimming. but the pandemic has drastically increased the amount of time spent doing these indoor activities on games, and completely stopped the outdoor ones. only up until recently when the restrictions have been loosened.

Being online is great however it can also impact other areas of your life. For you, does the good outweigh the bad or do you have concerns?
Online is is a place to be yourself and connect to millions of others around the world, the internet is starting to feel more like real life. where meeting your friends isn't a problem and you can do anything from talking and doing any type of activities in games. The concerns of being online for so long is that my eye sight has drastically deteriorated over lockdown so now I am permanently wearing them, this also leads on to school where the online school has been a huge waste of a year where I am doing my GCSE this year and have not had the same support like last years GCSE.

How has being online impacted your mental health?
My mental health is fine as it has always been because I have usually spent large amounts of my day online, infront of screens and in my room but I do fear for the future where the world is not online and when I have to adapt to this new style of life.

When it comes to going online, can you set limits on yourself or is it hard to stop?
I can set limits online but its the fact that is this time off online, what else can I do, read books but they will only take up so much time until I am bored or I have to book to go and swim unlike the years before. Making me feel trapped in a loop of doing stuff then going back online which I don't want to do.

Please can you tell us about a time when you saw something troubling online, what did you do? And where did you go/ who did you speak to? We are interested in understanding what you have done/ what you might do when you are not comfortable with what you have seen online
Someone I know was laughing and spreading this horrible video on this social server and it was truly disgusting so I left the server and blocked him. because he must truly have problems to laugh at something like that.

I would like for their account to be banned but its not that hard now days to make another one.

How often do you become friends with people online and on what sort of platforms/sites do you make friends?
I occasionally do not make friends since online majority of people say they are something they are not and are sometimes very rude and abusive. The people I do get to know more are usually found in the games I play and the group chats I am in.

In what ways would you say you feel connected to your online friends? Please explain the reasons for your answer.
Playing the same type of games, same interests in TV shows and have same social media to talk/contact each other. The difference is that the small talk about our days would be different since they would not understand my life.

How much of your life do you share with your online friends? Do you talk about your relationships, thoughts, feelings, where you live, where you go to school, recommendations of who to friend/follow etc. Or do you keep it light hearted and talk about everyday things?
I tell my school friends majority of everything since I know them personally and what they behave like offline but I would never share a lot of my personal information to a stranger I have just met and have not seen in real life before.

First of all, please can you describe to us what a sense of "belonging" means to you?
A place where you have a warm welcome to that you keep coming back to because this place accept you for who you are since you are an accepted member of the group.

What are the difficult things that you've experienced being a part of an online group?
Its the hurtful comments from random people on your work but I have learnt to just accept who they are and just ignore them.

What activities do you do with your parents online? (e.g. play a game together)
Yes I would love for my parents to start playing video games because its a lot easier than board games now.

How much you talk to your parents about your online activity?
I will tell them about any major events like in my games or what someone has said on social media.

What steps, if any, do your parents take to control and/or monitor what you do online?
My parents trust me online and I do not really do anything they would not want me to do because they would have to check regularly on me which would waste there time.

What do you wish people your parents' age understood about young people's online activity?
How we use the internet that majority of people use it for good and making it an ease on life. Certain online activities spark interests in peoples life.EG Game design

Where is the best place for you to express yourself online?
Videos of people gaming, because yo can listen to people playing some of your favourite games that can encourage you to create similar content. By making content that I am happy making and not forcing myself to make it.

What three words would you use to describe yourself online and then what three words would you use to describe yourself offline? There's no right or wrong answer here, we just want to understand how you portray yourself online
Online - Funny, Confident, Rambunctious - Behind a screen I can be more of myself without being judged.

Offline - Funny, Awkward, Reckless - But in real life I am reserved trying to avoid others judgement.

How can you tell if people are being genuine online?

You cant tell if people are genuine online, but I do not rally care if they are fake because I will probably never meet them in real life.

Have you ever experimented with your online identity – making yourself seem a different type of person to who you are normally?
I have not done this before since I find it very creepy and misleading for others. I have changed my name since others was calling it but that was it.

In your opinion, what could be the downsides of having different online personas/making yourself appear a different type of person to who you are normally?
If anything you said/did with this persona could comeback and ruin your life if you have said any racist remakes or something like that.