Demystifying teens online interactions

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Commissioned by ROBLOX

Background and objectives

Background and research objectives

This report was commissioned by Roblox to better understand how teens seek to thrive online and to demystify their online interactions for parents and carers

Completed in association with YouthSight, the youth specialist research consultancy, this report aims to interact with teen gamers, content creators and other general internet users by better understanding...

- ...their experiences in relation to connecting and belonging

- ...their experiences in relation to authenticity and self-expression

- ...the role of parents and carers in their online life and what they want them to know about it

- ...what could improve their ability to thrive online and how they could be better supported
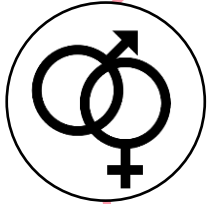
Sample and methodology

3-day Online Community

19 participants: 13-16 year olds

Gender:
- 10 females
- 9 males

Range of time spent online:
- Low (1-3 hours per day)
- Medium (4-8 hours per day)
- High (9+ hours per day)

Age group:
- 10 x 13-14 year olds
- 9 x 15-16 year olds
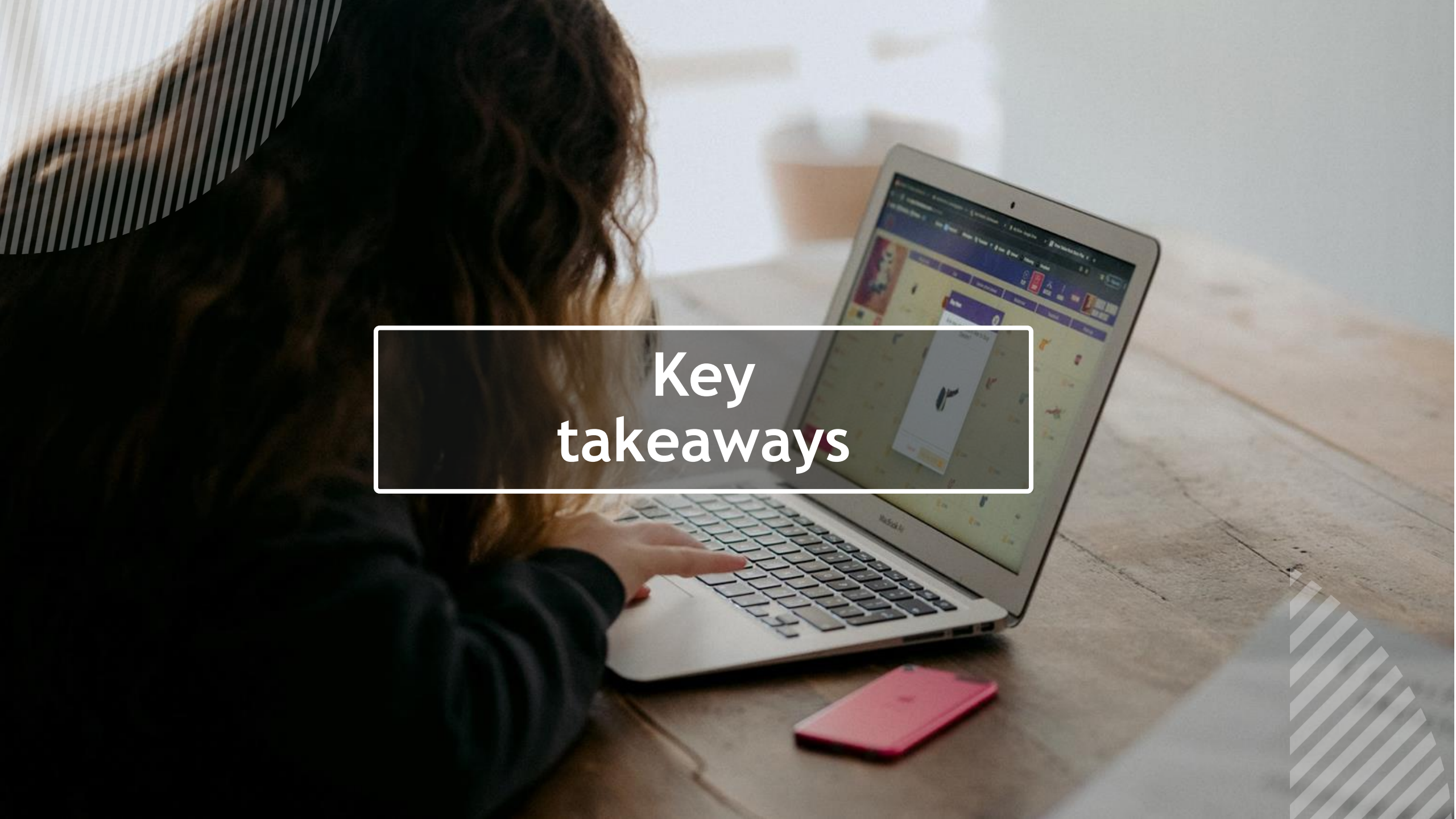
Other variables:
- Even split between rural and urban residences
- Ethnic diversity

Range of internet habits:
- 4 x General internet users
- 5 x Content creators
- 10 x Online gamers

Using an online community allowed us to get more insight from each respondent compared to traditional focus groups by allowing them to complete tasks in their own time to provide authentic perspectives and to share their experiences in their own words.

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Key takeaways

Online experiences – what you need to know

1
Most teens in the sample felt a strong sense of personal agency online

- There is an ability to feel 'seen', which gives them freedom to express themselves
- Connection to others who like the same things – creating communities
- But few placed limits on their screentime, which can cause them concern

2
Online friendships enhance feelings of belonging, driven by trust

- Most of our teens are confident to connect with others online
- Trust and authenticity are crucial to maintaining those connections to avoid negativity
- Some are cautious about what they share and there is a distinction between their online and offline friends

3
The teens we spoke to want to create but are wary of being judged by others

- Creativity drives a sense of purpose and self-belief
- They like to feel in control of their own content, particularly who it is shared with
- Fear of judgement and the impact of negative sentiment is a barrier

4
The gamers group stand out as feeling more confident being themselves online

- They feel a deeper sense of belonging and believe they are more accepted in the gaming community than they are offline
- Feelings of comfort mean they are more willing to experiment with self-expression
- The COVID pandemic allowed them more time to enjoy these benefits but made some disconnected with their offline life

5
The teens feel parents trust them but think more involvement would bring better understanding

- Parental involvement in the group was limited so they lack understanding of the benefits
- Most would welcome parents taking a greater interest and to share online experiences
- They feel this could help them give the right support when needed

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Ideas to make young people feel more supported online

Teens need to feel confident to be themselves online	Young people are nervous about harassment online. Increased moderation and managing negativity can help to appease these fears and make them feel more comfortable to express themselves freely
Teens are cautious when interacting with new people and find it difficult to assess authenticity of others	They would like to see improved ID verification to make them feel more comfortable building online relationships. Implementing clear reporting procedures and ensuring there is awareness of the tools available is crucial to support positive connections
Parents are seen a key point of contact in troubling situations, but they lack understanding on their online lives	To bridge the gap in understanding, parents should be encouraged to learn about the platforms children use and what they do. Giving parents the information to have more meaningful conversations with children will improve the support they can provide when young people need it

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Pen portraits of sample groups

GENERAL INTERNET USERS

General internet users are online at least once a week, but do not game/ create content that regularly

Online habits: INFORMAL AND FUN
- Their daily screentime varies
- Mostly use phones when online
- They chat with friends a lot, and are most often active on WhatsApp, FaceTime, Snapchat and TikTok

Attitude: UTILITY AND CAUTION
- They are often online to keep themselves occupied/ avoid boredom
- They proactively try to enjoy offline activities, such as arts, reading and watching TV
- They are more cautious when interacting online, e.g. befriending

ONLINE GAMERS

Members regularly play games, either on PC, console, or mobile, at least once a week

Online habits: PLAY AND WATCH GAMES
- They spend 5-8 hours a day online
- They are likely to use a personal computer as their primary device
- They are active on video sites; Twitch, YouTube and TikTok
- Rather than moving to social media, they also often converse through gaming communities (e.g. Discord, Twitch)

Attitude: CONFIDENT CONNECTORS
- They are confident interacting online, including with strangers
- For them, gaming is a communal activity, not only entertainment

CONTENT CREATORS

Members create content online (streaming, videos, music or games) at least once a week

Online habits: CREATE ON THE GO
- Content creators were more likely to spend over 9 hours online a day
- Their personal phones are their main device to access the internet
- They are most active on TikTok, Snapchat and Instagram, both to socialise and to create content

Attitude: FUN FOR ME
- They like to be up-to-date with what's online to avoid fear of missing out
- They create content for fun, and for their own gratification rather than to satisfy other social media users

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What do the online lives of young people look like?

SUMMARY

The teens loved their sense of personal agency online, their connectedness and their ability to have fun
- Their online lives bring them freedom and joy and keep them entertained

Teens spoke of seeing unrealistic lives online and being a target for negativity
- Some teens felt more vulnerable outside their friendly closed community
- Social media can distort reality for some people while judgement from others brings a sense of insecurity

Young people go online to avoid boredom, but some feel they become too absorbed
- Most of the young people claim to set limits on screentime but very few actually do
- Teens acknowledged that their screentime increased during the pandemic, but their online activities have generally remained the same and some reached a tipping point

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Teens loved their sense of personal agency online, their connectedness and their ability to have fun

Being online makes teens feel 'seen', but they do not feel over exposed. It gives them a sense of freedom and joy to pursue their interests. They also rely on the internet for school work so it's a safety net for their education

What young people love about being online:

Connect
Socialise
Stay in contact
Find others with similar interests

Entertainment
Music, film, TV, gaming
Avoid boredom
Other hobbies

Self expression
Be yourself

Convenience
Fast
Problem solving
Answers
Homework

"Online 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."
Online gamer, male, 15

The same positives of being online are echoed across all ages; however, 15-16 year olds mentioned information more as a benefit.

"I love being online as I feel like I'm a completely new person. I think I'm 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."
Online gamer, female, 16

"I love how everything is so much quicker online. How you can connect with all your friends and family in seconds rather than minutes or hours. I also love the fact that you can learn so much online, if you have a problem all you need to do is search how to fix it and you will probably find the right answer for you. It also makes doing your homework a lot quicker. Finally, I love how there are apps that you can use for entertainment online."
General internet user, female, 14

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Teens speak of the negative aspects of being online and the impact of the wider community

Teens are concerned about the impact being online has on their mental health – feeling inadequate, feeling exposed and vulnerable, and becoming too absorbed in their online world

Social pressure from social media

Comparing your life to others is natural on social media but for young people it shapes their world view from an early age. This can lead to negative thinking, jealousy and a lack of self-worth
- Young people remind themselves that social media isn't real
- **Content creators** feel more affected, this is largely down to pressure created by others and negative comments they receive

Being too visible

Young people were cautious about being too visible online for fear of trolling and bulling
- This means that privacy settings are important
- Socialising in smaller groups online is preferred
- They are cautious and avoid posting too publicly

Safety threats

Young people are aware of online dangers and negativity coming from sharing personal information
- The risk of being *catfished* makes them feel uneasy and cautious

How does age influence experiences?

Age 13 — Among **younger teens**, feelings of social stress and FOMO* were often present, driven by experiences of social expectations and standards in online communities.

Age 14 — Those **aged 14-15** were most likely to report general concerns on online bullying, trolling and hate speech – however, such concerns persisted towards age 16 as well.

Age 15 — At **older ages**, online safety and privacy concerns dominated. Nonetheless, socially-induced stress also remained present; female teens in particular felt they are negatively impacted by online beauty standards.

Age 16

"Using lots of different social medias and seeing how certain people look online can sometimes make me feel bad about myself and not very confident. This does make me sad as it makes me wonder if I really fit into society's standards."

Online gamer, female, 16

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Most of the teens understood the steps to take if they come across direct negativity, but they also need support

While not always coming from personal experience, teens are aware and knowledgeable of common online issues – many also understand what to do in case they encounter this

SOLUTIONS TO ONLINE PROBLEMS

Self-regulation: Teens are keen (or even feel obliged) to resolve their own negative experiences – the typical actions are to unfollow, block or report.

Parents / Carers: If it is not possible to take action themselves, some teens go to a trusted adult, likely a parent or older sibling, to get help and advice.

Prevention: Teens think that negative experiences should be prevented in the first place. This is often suggested to be the responsibly of the site owners, e.g. via identity verification, moderation of harmful content and trolling.

"Some people get bullied and called out on online groups, things you don't want get shared and people get carried away to impress others [...] kids talk to someone older without realising, or nudity getting leaked, schools only deal with the matter when it's too late"
Content creator, female, 14

"Only let your friends and family follow you as there are mean people in the world who feel like they can hide behind a screen and direct hate towards people."
General internet user, male, 16

"I think there should be boundaries online to prevent people from hearing/seeing certain things online and block certain things that people find offending."
Online gamer, male, 15

Source: Online community, Q. 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?

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Some teens mentioned the positive impact on their mental health, while social media can distort reality for others

While positive experiences were linked to increased socialising, negative impact on mental health tended to stem from teens' interaction with others online

POSITIVE IMPACTS

4 teens suggest that being online has had a positive impact on their mental health.

Confidence: Some, in particular content creators, suggest that receiving positive feedback from peers makes them feel better about themselves

Connection: There is an appreciation that being online is vital to young people's sense of belonging. If they were not able to be online they could feel lonely or distant from their friends and communities

"I do worry about other people who aren't allowed social media because they feel like they miss out on a lot."

Content creator, female, 13

"Being online hasn't really impacted my mental health but it does educate me about how it can affect others."

Content creator, female, 14

CONCERNING EXPERIENCES

Out of 19 teens, only 6 claimed that being online does not impact their mental health, but were aware of its impact on others. Seven teens felt they experienced a negative impact on mental health.

Online vs offline realities: Significant differences between offline and online realities can lead to confusion, unhealthy escapism and distortion of teens' ideas about what is truly real.

Expectations: Stemming from the differing realities, teens often face unrealistic expectations set by online communities. This is particularly prominent regarding beauty standards, but also in the representation of idealistic lifestyles.

Public judgement: Negative interactions, comments and bullying are detrimental and impacted on the confidence on some of our young people, especially when in response to ones' expression of self online.

"It's the hurtful comments from random people on your work [that makes being online difficult] but I learnt to just accept who they are and just ignore them."

Online gamer, male, 15

"When I was in my old friendship group, they were very dragging people. We had a group chat and I'd be annoyed or upset or concerned about what my friends were saying."

Content creator, female, 15

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Source: Online community, Q. How has being online impacted your mental health?

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Most young people claim to set limits on screentime but in reality very few do

Teens created a comprehensive list of excuses to allow extra screentime

Gaming as an excuse – not easy to stop mid-game

"Sometimes I can set limits for myself when I'm not doing something too important, but if I'm playing a game and in the middle of a match it is quite hard to stop. This makes me feel less responsible for not being able to just stop and not finish what I'm doing."
Online gamer, male, 15

It's tough to stop – willpower not up to it

"Although it can be tough to know when it is time to put my phone down and either rest or just watch my favourite movie/TV show."
General internet user, male, 16

Get carried away – lose track of time

"Sometimes I can control and set limits of how long I'm online for but other times I get carried away and don't realise how long I'm spending on my phone."
Content creator, female, 14

Variety is important to keep free time activities fresh

"It's not hard to stop it's just the days drag and this is something that keeps me occupied."
General internet user, female, 16

Excessive screentime can cause guilt in some teens
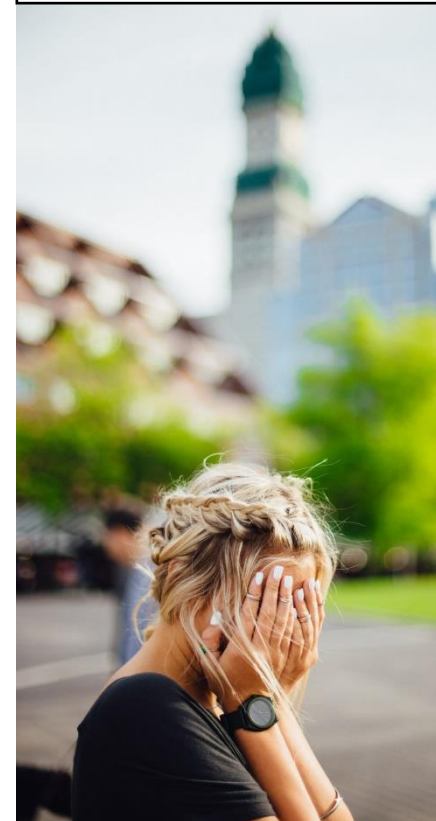
13-14 year olds were more likely to admit that they get carried away being online; they are open and would respond to external warning, e.g. from parents.

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During lockdown, teens acknowledged that screentime increased but their activities generally remained the same

The pandemic prompted initial enthusiasm about spending more time online, but most began to worry that there were no limits

ENTHUSIASM:

- **Keeping in touch:** With limitations of physical contact during lockdowns, spending more time online became vital to keep in touch with friends – and meant that teens can spend more time with their friends, anytime and anywhere.

- **Entertainment:** As offline activities became limited, time online satisfied teens' source of entertainment (e.g. music, videos, movies) – this was particularly important for gamers, who could spend more time on their hobby, contributing to their positive outlook on the pandemic's impact.

CONCERNS:

- **Lack of limits:** Screentime saw a self-reported surge as most activities teens engage in (e.g. school, socialising etc.) involuntarily moved online. Reliance on the online world contributed to concerns over the lack of limits.

- **Monotony:** Due to the lack of options on what to do in their free time, some reached a saturation point where time spent online became repetitive and boring.

"The things I do online haven't changed as much, I do online school sometimes when there is a lockdown. The amount of time however has increased as I now play video games or watch shows for most of the time during the day."
Online gamer, male, 15

"I have been spending way more time online and basic tasks like shopping and clothes shopping can all be done now online so it makes life easier."
Content creator, female, 13

"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 [...], this can lead to a dormant lifestyle, however it is important to remain entertained and happy in these times."
Online gamer, male, 14

"I use social media way more than before as I rarely go out now, it's not an escape just something that keeps me occupied. I binge watch shows as time drags [...] the days all feel the same so now I wake up around 1 and go to sleep at 3 in the morning."
General internet user, female, 16

"At the start of lockdown I was playing games with my friends on Roblox and FaceTimeing everyday. It slowly started getting boring because I would wake up, do my work and play. But it was the same cycle every day and I didn't like that. Now I just play when I want and I feel much happier."
Content creator, female, 15

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Source: Online community, Q. Thinking about the Covid-19 pandemic, how have the things you do online in your free time changed, and how has the amount of time you spend online changed?

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Understanding online friendships and communities

SUMMARY

Young people are comfortable making friends online, generally through shared interests
- Largely this happens on social media, but gamers meet a lot of people through their online games

For most, online communities enhance a sense of belonging socially
- Although the wider online community can make young people feel vulnerable due to unwanted negativity and judgement
- Authenticity is a sought after attribute of users for themselves and those they follow

At least in the early stages, conversations with online friends are casual, but as trust is built a deeper connection can form
- Privacy is important to young people, they like to feel in control of their personal information
- They are mature and know not to overshare with new people online. They save more personal conversations for offline friends that they trust

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Teens are confident in connecting with others online, normally through shared interests

They say they are cautious about unknown people online, but seem comfortable engaging with those who have shared interests. Casual conversations online are used to verify the suitability of potential friends

Teens told us that privacy and trust were extremely important and that making online friends can be a risky thing to do – they shared their experiences of this with us

How online friendships are made:
Friends are generally made online through a shared interest.

Many make friends via social media and gaming...

On social media:
- Talking in comments
- Reply to someone's story
- Commenting on someone's feed

Gaming:
- Chatting in game
- Creating separate groups in other chat platforms

"Usually if we have common interests, I'll respond to something on their feed or story and that's how a conversation starts going."
Online gamer, male, 14

"I mostly become friends with people through Tik Tok. People create videos asking people with similar interests if they would like to join a Snapchat group chat to make friends. (Through the comments)."
General internet user, male, 16

"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. I love socialising with new people especially when we like the same things."
Online Gamer, Female, 16

Considering most engage in this filtering process, younger teens (ages 13-14) tend to be more thorough throughout the process, meanwhile older teens (aged 15-16) become more relaxed, perhaps because they feel more aware and better-equipped to make safe decisions on who to befriend.

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Source: Online community, Q. In what ways would you say you feel connected to your online friends? Please explain the reasons for your answer.
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For most, online groups enhance a sense of belonging socially where they are accepted and supported

To feel like they belong, young people want to feel welcome, accepted, comfortable and understood

What belonging means to young people

CLOSENESS SUPPORTED ACCEPTED INCLUDED RELATABLE
INCLUDED **ACCEPTED**
CLOSENESS **WELCOMED**
COMFORTABLE WARM **FUN**
SUPPORTED FUN WARM
WELCOMED CLOSENESS FEELING SAFE RELATABLE COMFORTABLE
TRUST
WELCOMED TRUST

"A sense of belonging means that you feel comfortable and safe at that place or platform or in that game. It means when you are in that place everything starts to feel better."

Online gamer and content creator, male,15

What online communities mean to young people

For most young people, online communities are a place to keep up with friends privately

"I like the community as I can post things publicly or privately to my friends."
Content creator, female, 13

"[Roblox] is for people like me and my friends."
Content creator, female, 15

But for others it plays a greater role in providing a place for them to be their true selves

"The thing I am most passionate about is the gaming community... I like it as I can express my opinions to others who may have similar views."
Online gamer, male, 15

"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."
Online gamer, female, 16

Although wider online groups can expose young people to unwanted negativity and judgement

Being online is not just about friendly closed groups. People are exposed to a wide range of comment and content online which can lead to feelings of vulnerability

The problems young people have experienced online

Bullying and harassment

"This girl called me period hair, at the time my mum was like horrified. We reported her on the game and that was about it. I just left the chatroom."
Content creator, female, 15

Upsetting content

"I saw a very graphic video that was extremely violent. I didn't feel comfortable with it on my feed on Instagram so I unfollowed and blocked the account."
Online gamer and content creator, male, 15

As previously mentioned, young people have strategies to deal with problems online

- Self-regulation
- Family / Friends
- Prevention

"If I am not comfortable with something online I either report the matter or comment on the situation."
Content creator, female, 15

"If I saw something troubling online, I would report it to make sure other people don't see it after me."
Online gamer, male, 15

"I would receive support from friends or family as I trust them."
Content creator, female, 15

Suggested improvements for online support

Improved moderation – There is a feeling that more stringent moderation is required to filter out abuse

ID validation – Concerns around authenticity could be reduced through improved security

"I think there should be filters on social media apps to prevent trolls from posting/commenting horrible things online for other social media users to see."
Online gamer, female, 16

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Source: Online community, Q. What are the difficult things that you've experienced being a part of an online group?

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Being seen to be inauthentic is a red flag and could lead to cutting off friendships

It is hard for young people to tell if others are being authentic online, which makes them cautious when connecting with them. They trust their instincts and distance themselves if they are unsure

How young people assess authenticity

It's hard to assess authenticity

It is not always possible to tell if people are being genuine, young people are therefore cautious when connecting with new people

> *"You can't tell how they act or if they are being genuine and I feel people can act how they want online and offline."*
> *Online gamer, male, 15*

Being genuine

Openness, honesty and vulnerability are good indicators to young people that someone is genuine

> *"I think that you can tell if someone is being genuine online if they don't make themselves sound perfect and take responsibility when they do something wrong."*
> *General internet user, female, 14*

How young people feel about inauthenticity

Inauthenticity is cause for concern

Young people worry that it is easy for people to pretend to be someone they are not online, increasing nervousness about connecting with others

> *"You're not who you are so you could be anyone you want to be, and anyone can do this so it's dangerous sometimes."*
> *Content creator, female, 15*

Alienating yourself

There are also concerns about the personal impact of being inauthentic. It can ruin real life relationships and impair mental health

> *"Those personalities will clash and people will see the real you eventually, if it's an outlet it can consume you and change your mind about everything, others around you will find it hard to be around you as you're putting on a whole act."*
> *General internet user, female, 16*

> *"You could try so hard to be that amazing person you seem online and it would affect you and make you feel down all the time."*
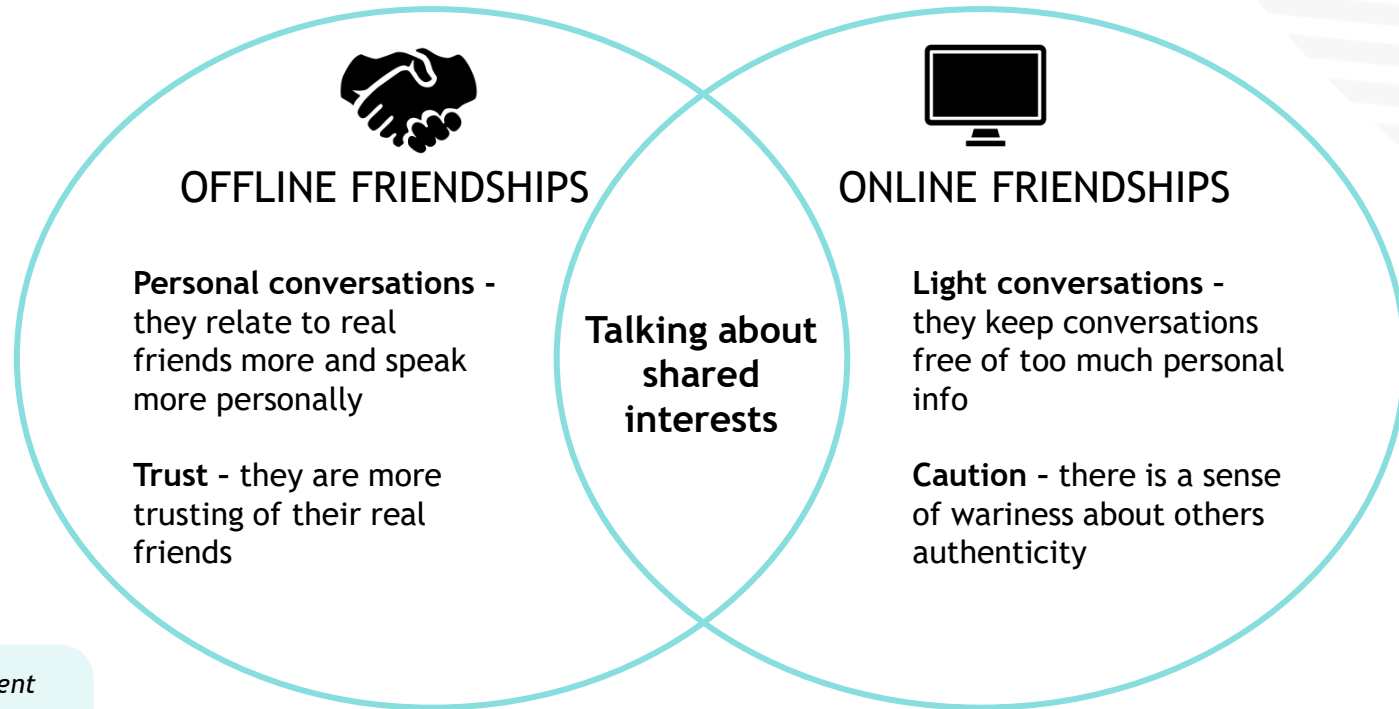> *General internet user, female, 16*

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Online and offline friendships can overlap but are often different

Teens are more likely to share more personal conversations with real life friends who they trust. Interactions with online friends remain more casual, but can become deeper over time as trust grows

Generally, it is not expected that online friendships will turn into offline friendships, although in a few cases this did happen

Once an online friendship has been established for a while, that person is then viewed as a friend who has shared interests

OFFLINE FRIENDSHIPS

Personal conversations - they relate to real friends more and speak more personally

Trust – they are more trusting of their real friends

Talking about shared interests

ONLINE FRIENDSHIPS

Light conversations – they keep conversations free of too much personal info

Caution – there is a sense of wariness about others authenticity

"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."
Online gamer, female, 16

"I only tell people I know personal information and the ones that I don't really know I just talk about interest."
Content creator, female, 14

"People who aren't genuine online just make me feel aware that I have to be careful with who I trust online."
Content creator, female, 13

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Understanding creativity and self-expression

SUMMARY

Young people like to create content, it is important that they enjoy what they have made on a personal level primarily
- They want to feel in control of their content, both in terms of what they create and who they share it with
- There is a sense of nervousness from some who fear negative or judgemental feedback from others on their content, this could impact their mental health

Young people stay true to themselves online
- Teens feel it's safer to be themselves online and not experiment with their persona, some feel more confident offline than online

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Young people like to create content, but like to feel in control at all times

Young people mention liking to create and consume content on various platforms as they find it entertaining, fulfilling and a source of self-confidence

What teens get from content creation

Entertainment

Some make content for their own entertainment, and it can be a source of comfort to them

"Videos of people gaming, because you 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."
Online gamer, male, 15

Fulfilment

Creation can also be fulfilling, if young people are following their passions

"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."
Online gamer, male, 14

"People at any age can use [Roblox] and can create their game on the game. And your friends can play with you, and I think it's a really fun thing to do."
Internet user, male, 16

Confidence

Content that is well received by peers can also boost confidence

"It boosts my confidence and makes me feel happy as I know I can feel good about myself and others will say nice things, sometimes you can receive hate but I haven't had hate."
Content creator, female, 15

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Reducing fear of judgement would encourage young people to share their content more widely

Many of the teens were nervous about sharing the content they create. There is a fear of judgement, getting a negative reception, and the impact this would have

Things that are stopping young people from creating content

Negativity	Judgement	Mental health
Negativity from others, in reaction to their own or other peoples content makes young people nervous about sharing their creations	They are more likely to keep their lives private through fear of judgement (not just of their content, but their appearance etc.)	And some worry about the impact on mental health, whether that be maintaining an image of perfection or chasing validation

"I did create content online, but I took a break from it as I was unhappy with other's views on my content. There should be no criticising of other's works unless asked for."
Online gamer, male, 15

"I don't create content online because everyone can be so judgmental, so I keep all my accounts on private on every social media platform."
Online gamer, female, 16

"I don't personally upload all my content because its public, and anyone in the world can see it, and unfortunately I've met people online who will leave hateful comments about the way you look, the way you talk, the way you act, etc. I don't need that negativity in my life."
Online gamer, male, 14

Some of the younger participants feel like they are too young to create their own content

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Young people generally stay true to themselves online

Young people feel it's safer to be themselves online and are wary of straying from their true persona, they may even dampen this for fear of the consequences

How teens portray themselves online

Social groups – they are more likely to interact online with real life friends – giving them no reason to be any different

"As I am private online, I only let my friends follow me and I just be myself online as they know me in real life and I know that they won't judge me."
General internet user, male, 16

"Yes, because it would be fun to try out new and different personalities [but] I did not change my online identity because of feedback from others."
General internet user, male, 14

Confidence – they can feel more confident offline than online

"Offline I am much more bubbly and will have much more expression in the way that I talk, which you can't do online. So I am very different online in comparison to how I am in real life."
General internet user, male, 16

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Gamers

SUMMARY

Gamers within our sample stood out as having a deeper sense of belonging and greater confidence online
- They feel comfortable and accepted within the gaming community and are more willing to experiment with self-expression
- This is driven from their shared passion for games

They can therefore feel a little disconnected to the offline world
- This online confidence can mean that they become too absorbed in their online world and sometimes lose connection to their lives away from this

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Gamers in this study feel more fully connected when they are online as they are able to belong and relate to others

The shared interest of gaming creates a strong sense of community but they are still cautious about what they share

They feel a deeper sense of belonging online

Gamers feel more comfortable to be their true selves online and feel comfortable and supported in their online world

"Games are a place for me to be my true self – my friends that I play with online bring our the best in me and I am very grateful for that."
Online gamer, female, 16

They connect with others outside their usual network to share their passion

Gamers connect with others who play similar games and are more likely to make friends with people outside their usual network but are still careful to keep their details private

"I have a place where I can air my problems and talk to people when I need help."
Online gamer, male, 14

"We are similar because we like to play games! This is because we normally send each other gaming videos and news. However most of them live in America (I know this because they spell words the American way and use apps that aren't available in the UK)."
Online gamer, male, 13

Gamers want to create content, but can still fear judgement from others

They are passionate about games and want to share their passion with others. But they fear that they may be judged if people from their real lives were to see their content

"I don't create content online because I don't want people to see that I play games. I just want to make it private."
Online gamer, male, 13

Source: Online community

YouthSight

They also want to connect with their parents to share experiences they've had online

The impact of the pandemic on user habits are to be seen, but for some have led to over-use of devices and games

Gamers influences outside their online worlds

Parents	Pandemic	Community
Their passion for gaming also means they share more with parents	But gaming became almost 'too consuming' during the pandemic	And there remain some specific concerns around the gaming community
Gamers want to tell their parents about their hobby. But like others, they would like them to understand more, specifically that games are not as bad as they may think	While they enjoyed the benefits of the online gaming communities even more, some found it difficult to set aside the gaming world to do other things	They perceive the gaming community to be more positive then others online, but some talked about their negative experiences because of their gender or race

"I tell my parents a lot about my life online because it is something that I enjoy."
Online gamer, female, 16

"The pandemic has drastically increased the amount of time spent doing these indoor activities on games, and completely stopped the outdoor ones."
Online gamer, male, 15

"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."
Online gamer, female, 16

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Source: Online community

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Parental Involvement

SUMMARY

These young people feel that their parents trust them online, but limited involvement hinders understanding
- The teens are enthusiastic about their online lives and they want parents to understand how positive it can be
- They feel they are mature enough to handle the dangers and parents can worry unnecessarily

But being more involved would help parents and carers offer the right advice when needed
- While it is important that young people retain their sense of independence online, parents need to know enough to be able to provide support in troubling situations

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Teens feel their parents trust them online but have limited involvement in what they do

Teens feel that their parents respect their privacy and trust them to interact online responsibly

Control

Young people like to feel in control of their online lives, and don't want parents to be too intrusive

"They let me be free and do as I wish...I think they do this to make me feel free and it makes me happy...because I'm in control..."
Online gamer, male, 14

"My parents don't control anything about me going online as they trust me and know I wouldn't do anything I can't handle."
Content creator, Female, 14

Maturity

They feel like they are able to keep themselves safe online and are deserving of their independence

"My mother isn't too concerned about me being online she knows for sure I'm responsible enough to keep safe."
Online gamer, Male, 15

"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."
Online gamer, female, 16

Why parents have limited involvement in young peoples online lives

Differing interests - Parents interests often differ from their children's so they don't get involved in what their children are doing

Knowledge gap – For some, a lack of involvement is a barrier to understanding, they also find it harder to speak to their parents about their online lives when this is the case

Shared family activities - Often young people prefer to do things offline with their families, such as play board games

I don't connect with my parents online on games because they don't really like them."
Online gamer, female, 16

"I don't really play online games with my parents online. We usually all sit down and watch tv or something like that."
Content creator, female, 14

"I would like to do more online with them but its hard for them to understand."
Online gamer, male, 15

"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."
Online gamer, male, 14

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For these teens limited involvement means parents don't recognise how positive being online can be

Teens feel that their parents don't understand the benefits of their online lives and some find it frustrating that they perceive the internet as a danger

What young people want parents to be aware of

It's a place for young people - there is a perception that parents focus too much on negative perceptions of the internet.

"That it isn't all as bad as it seems if you use it sensibly and don't spend too long online. It can also be very helpful and that sometimes the apps you can get online are better than the games or books you can buy from the shops."
General internet user, female, 14

It helps young people grow – young people value their online life, as they gain a sense of fulfilment and it is an important element of their social life. They want parents to have an appreciation of the positives that being online brings to teens.

"[I wish] they could understand that I make real friendships."
Online gamer, male, 13

But young people know there are real risks – parents need to be aware of the risks posed too, so that they are able to support young people when needed.

"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."
Online gamer, female, 16

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While young people value their independence, parents are an important point of escalation

Young people feel mature enough to look after themselves online and value the trust their parents give them, but they also rely on their support as someone to talk to in difficult situations

Balance

There is a delicate balance to be struck. It is important that parents are engaged and some teens said they would like to share online experiences. But teens value their privacy and sense of independence online, parents need to respect this and not be seen to be controlling.

Escalation

They still rely on their parents for support if something troubles them in their online life. The more parents understand online lives the more they will be able to provide this support from a young age

"Yes I would love for my parents to start playing video games because its a lot easier than board games now."

Online gamer, male, 15

"I feel it's an invasion of privacy if your parents connect with your personal life online."
General internet user, female. 16

"I tell her what goes on and if I'm worried or scared."
Content creator, female, 13

"I will tell them about any major events like in my games or what someone has said on social media."
Online gamer, male, 15

"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."

Online gamer, female, 16

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Source: Online community, Q. What steps, if any, do your parents take to control and/or monitor what you do online?

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