Exploring how and why young people use social networking sites

# Details

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Internet usage, practices and engagement

## Sample

393 children aged 12-18

## Implications For Educators About

Digital citizenship

# Abstract

Upcoming statutory UK government guidance for keeping children
safe in education reflects the use of social media, which is one of
the most common activities undertaken by young people. This study
explores how and why young people are using social networking sites
(SNS) and whether there are age or gender differences. A key feature
of the study was that the research was built around the views and
interests of young people and their advice was sought at each point
of the four phase methodological process. The study finds significant
gender and age differences related to how young people use SNS.
An unexpected but significant finding relates to young people’s
perception of SNS and how closely it is associated to their offline lives.
By understanding that a large proportion of young people perceive
SNS as being different to their offline lives, this study provides a new
area of focus in order to effectively support young people online.

# Outcome

"young people are using a range of SNS, with the main motivator to interact with existing friends... young females are more likely to engage in self-disclosing and self-presentation behaviour than males... SNS use appears to reach a peak level during Years 9 and 10... The most salient finding of this study is that 53% of participants perceived interacting online as somehow different to interacting in a face-to-face environment. Participants who felt interacting online is different from real-life were significantly less likely to know those on their friends’ and followers’ lists and significantly more likely to have experienced something online that upset them or made them feel uncomfortable." (Gray, 2018: 189).