Internet users’ experience of potential online harms: summary of survey research

# Details

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Risks and harms

## Sample

2,080 internet users aged 16+ in the UK (face-to-face in-home survey) and 2,001 children aged between 12 and 15 (online interviews)

## Implications For Policy Makers About

Creating a safe environment for children online

# Abstract

We first asked adults whether they had any concerns at all about the internet (including social media, using an app, video, online games and emails).Respondents were not shown any potential harms to choose from at first, so anything they told us was top-of-mind. In total, 81% (+3% vs. 2019)of adult internet users have at least one unprompted concern
• We then showed adult respondents a list of potential online harms (slide 20) and asked them which, if any, concerned them specifically in relation to children, and then which concerned them more generally. 12-15 year old research participants were shown a similar list (slide 21), using age-appropriate language and asked to indicate which were of concern.After prompting, the proportion of adult internet users concerned about at least once aspect of going online increases to 83% (unchanged) in relation to children and 86% (+2%) more generally.In comparison, 89% (-2%) of 12-15 year old internet users have at least one concern about going online.
• However, individualadult concerns in relation to children, and more generally, have both dropped compared to 2019 (from 8 to 7 concerns in relation to children and 7 to 6 generally).This is possibly due to the timing of the fieldwork –i.e. immediately after the election, when the news agenda was focussed on Brexit / during a time when there were fewer high-profile controversies on social media NB: It is worth noting that 2020 scores remain higher than those reported in 2018\*
• As in 2019, adults and 12-15 year olds’ highest level of concern is around children’s exposure to bullying, abusive behaviour or threats (45% and 52% respectively).Adults with children in the household are especially concerned about this (54%), as are female 12-15’s (59%).
• Adults remain more concerned about potential online harms in relation to children than about the internet more generally. However, when asked about the internet more generally, adults are more concerned about their personal information being stolen (43%), scams/frauds (42%) and their data being processed without prior consent (37%).
• Most issues cause a significant level of concern, but the issue causing the greatest concern is material showing child sexual abuse (83% of those expressing a concern with this were very concerned in relation to children).

# Outcome

See abstract