

Press release

For immediate release

The loneliness of the digital child

New independent report reveals a rise in the number of UK children who feel lonely – with teenage girls most affected

This year has seen a large increase in the number of children age 9-16 who say they feel lonely, reveals a new independent report from CHILDWISE.

The new data shows that three in five children ‘ever feel lonely’¹ with this worry up seven per cent over the last year.

“Significantly more children, especially older girls, admit to ever feeling lonely this year,” said Simon Leggett, CHILDWISE research director.

Girls are much more likely than boys to ever feel this way, with four out of five older teenage girls age 15-16 reporting ever feeling lonely, including more than a third who admit to often feeling this way.

The 2019 CHILDWISE Monitor is a comprehensive annual report looking at 5 to 16-year-olds’ media consumption, purchasing and social habits as well as key behaviour and reading habits. More than 2000 children in schools across the United Kingdom completed in-depth online surveys for the report, which is now in its 25th year.

“Our data shows that children are more digitally connected than any other generation and more so than last year. Yet as connectivity increases, rather than feeling more linked to their peers, children are increasingly feeling alone and isolated,” says Simon Leggett.

“They socialise more online but less in person and this doesn’t make them feel close to others in the same way as meeting up.”

“They are spending time alone in their bedrooms, scrolling through digital content, watching the lives of others unfold, talking via texts and messages, connecting on Instagram and Snapchat rather than going to a friend’s house after school or simply hanging out together offline.”

“It could be for this digital generation that it feels more ‘risky’ to share their real selves, as every word and image they use can be potentially documented, shared, and criticised. To counter this, they share a curated ‘glossy’ portrayal of themselves on their social media timeline.”

In the study children age 9-16 were asked how often they feel or experience a range of emotions. This year has also seen a rise in the number of children saying they ever feel worried or anxious, feel they need to be perfect and fear they are not good enough.

¹ 58% this year up from 51% last year.

“Significant numbers say that the way they look holds them back or that they compare themselves to celebrities,” says Simon.

“For each of the concerns listed, girls are more likely than boys to have experienced them at all, and experienced them more often.”

The biggest pressure overall is the stress about schoolwork, with four in five experiencing this. By age 15-16, nine in ten girls say they are ever stressed about their school work.

CHILDWISE is an independent market research agency specialising in children and young people. CHILDWISE has a programme of published independent research and also conducts research for government agencies, charities, broadcasters, publishers and brands www.childwise.co.uk

The Monitor Report 2019 covers... children and their media; TV viewing; music; reading ; children’s equipment; money; purchasing; sports & activities; health & wellbeing and education and employment.

Editorial notes: For more information please contact Liz Hollis 07889 680302 liz@lizhollis.co.uk
CHILDWISE website www.childwise.co.uk