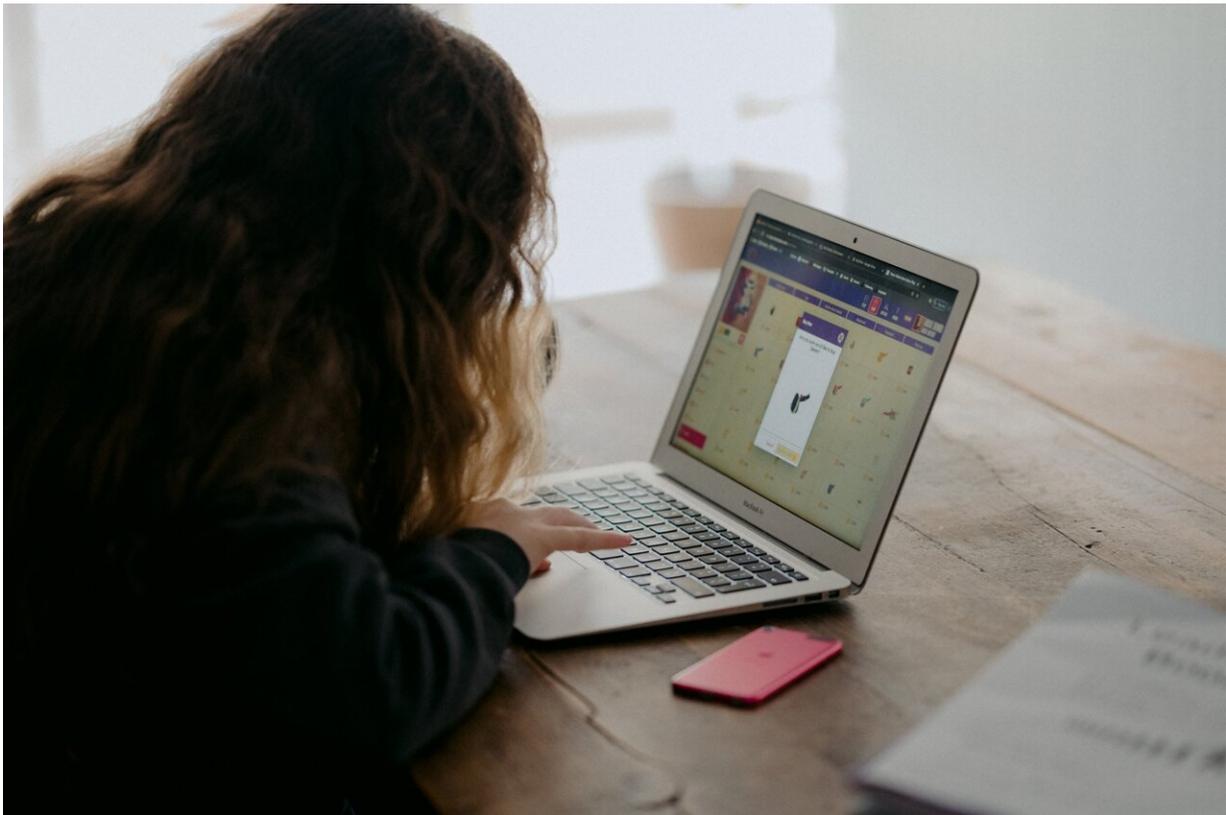


Research finds BAME and LGBTQI+ youths at most risk of harm online

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Young people from minority groups—such as those from Black, Asian, minority ethnic backgrounds, and LGBTQI+ youth—are more likely to be exposed to and experience online harms than their white, heterosexual

and cisgender counterparts, according to new research from the University of Surrey.

While the research found that most young people do not regularly or directly experience online harm, a "substantial" percentage of young people are exposed to harmful materials or content when logged on.

Dr. Emily Setty, co-author of the study and lecturer in criminology at the University of Surrey, said, "Our research makes clear that we must work with young people—particularly those from minority backgrounds—to identify and develop solutions that effectively prevent online harms.

"A one-size-fits-all approach to minimizing harm can't hope to tackle the discrimination that seems to be hard-wired into young people's online experiences. While young people were familiar with technical solutions to combat these risks, such as blocking and reporting accounts, our research highlighted that digital safety education is needed to help them develop critical understanding around these issues."

According to the research, a substantial number of young people have encountered or experienced online harms and exposure to sexist, racist, homophobic and transphobic content. Furthermore, the research highlighted that young women are at a heightened risk of being targeted with unwanted sexual content and often experience negative impacts—such as dissatisfaction with their bodies—associated with this behavior.

As part of a series of focus groups, participants aged 12 to 16 were shown a display of words relating to risks and harms online and were asked for their reactions. They discussed how different issues they experienced played out online, the actions they took to deal with them, and their views on digital safety education. Additionally, they discussed the benefits of being online and how they balanced risks and

opportunities.

Amidst the ongoing debate about the age restriction of social media channels and how Big Tech companies make them safer, the research team at Surrey also found that young people who use social media apps at a higher rate are more at [risk](#) than young people who spend their time on activities such as gaming or streaming.

Emma Robertson, Co-Founder of online safety organization Digital Awareness UK, said, "This research resonates with the conversations our organization is having with young people about topics such as online hate speech, which they are experiencing at alarming rates. Much awareness and progress has come about as a result of big social movements which have played out online, such as racism in football or sexual harassment, as seen with Everyone's Invited.

"However, at a time when discussions about topics such as race, identity and sexuality are being debated and spotlighted online, we must remember that young people are also experiencing unprecedented amounts of racism, sexism, homophobia and transphobia online. This only highlights the pressing need for educators, parents and carers to get the support they require to help [young people](#) manage these challenges, and for policymakers and [tech companies](#) to help make online spaces as inclusive and safe as possible."

More information: Emily Setty, Young people and online harms: Expanding digital safety educational interventions. [howardleague.org/wp-content/up ... utumn-2021-FINAL.pdf](https://www.howardleague.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/young-people-and-online-harms-utumn-2021-FINAL.pdf)

Provided by University of Surrey

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