State of the Nation
The lives and views of young people in the UK: A summary
Executive summary

- Over 500 twelve to fifteen year olds from across the UK shared their views on key topics that affect them and wider society; 32 in 1:1 depth interviews and 514 in an online survey.
- We explored how much these young people care about, worry about, and feel affected by nine key topics.
  - 89% said they care about crime, racism, and online privacy and safety
  - 81% worry about crime
  - 60% feel personally affected by what other people think of them
- Young people recognise that they don't know everything they should about these topics. Some say they want to know more about them right now, but they don't have the time. This is particularly the case for climate change. As one 14 year old girl in Gateshead put it, "I don't think [climate change] bothers us enough. I know that something has to be done but... like I'm more bothered about my homework that is due tomorrow."
- They draw on a vast range of sources to understand these topics, and friends and family feature heavily. When learning about climate change, gender and sexuality, race, diversity, and crime, they are particularly likely to learn from teachers and TV news, too.
- They view authority figures, specifically the Police, teachers and the Government, with some concern. They are particularly critical of the Government, with just 22% saying they think they treat everyone fairly, and 24% saying they think they're effective.
- They are largely positive about LGBT identities; however they appear moderately more accepting of lesbian, gay and bisexual identities than trans.
- Looking to the future, almost half said they worry that they won't have enough money to support themselves in the future, and that they worry they won’t be able to buy a house. However, more immediate pressures cause more widespread worry, and 61% said they worry their grades won’t be good enough.
- Depth interviews revealed that the term 'TV' means different things to different people. Immediate interpretations of 'TV' indicated that young people consider it to encompass any or all of Netflix, YouTube and linear programming – or “channels”, as they called it.
- Extended viewing - 3 hours or more in a day - is more often done on Netflix (47% use it for 3+ hours/day), or YouTube (37%), than live TV (23%).
- Only slightly over half of young people say that local, national and world news are important to them. Relatively few say it's neither important nor interesting, and around a third say that they find the news interesting, but unimportant to them.
- Young people are content to learn about the news second hand, and family, social media and friends are the most commonly cited sources.
- TikTok is an important part of their day. Most use at least one social media platform for at least an hour a day, but TikTok sees particularly heavy use. 85% of TikTok users spend over an hour on the platform every day; compared with 76% on Snapchat, 71% on Instagram, 67% on Facebook, and 57% on Twitter.
- Interviews revealed the purposes social media platforms serve to young people. TikTok is a source of entertainment, while Snapchat is principally for communication between friends (and not family, with whom they communicate via WhatsApp). They use Instagram to follow friends and family - rarely influencers - and occasionally post pictures and stories. However, their accounts are typically set to private.
Objectives
To understand twelve to fifteen year olds’ daily lives, surface young people’s views about their lives, and the world around them; explore which sources they think influence these views; and measure and characterise their engagement with media and the news.

Methodology and sample
Stage 1 1:1 depth interviews, structured to reveal what topics are important to them, and how they feel about those topics.

N=32 twelve to fifteen year olds living in cities or suburban/rural areas in the North and South of England. Ages and genders were equally balanced across all locations.

Stage 2: Online quantitative survey to understand what young people care about, worry about and feel affected by, and what might influence those feelings.

N=514 twelve to fifteen year olds living in the UK, with national representation of ages and genders.
Beliefs, attitudes and opinions

We explored how much young people care about, worry about, and feel affected by nine topics:

**Climate change**
82% care about climate change
75% are worried about climate change
53% feel personally affected by climate change
Top 3 influences: TV News (41%), Teachers (28%), Family (22%)

“I don’t think [climate change] bothers us enough. I know that something has to be done about it because I’ve learned about it at school, all the effects that it is having but like I’m more bothered about my homework that is due tomorrow.”
*(14 year old girl, Gateshead)*

**Diversity**
83% care about diversity
61% are worried about diversity
47% feel personally affected by diversity
Top 3 influences: Teachers (27%), Family (26%), Friends (23%)

“It is still a big problem topic in the world, especially now, and like people are getting discriminated against and all across the world people are still getting hurt, literally based on their race, nothing else it is just based on their race, the colour of their skin or what race they are. And it’s like 2021. You would hope that some change has happened but still the world is backwards.”
*(14 year old girl, Bournemouth)*

**Racism**
89% care about racism
76% are worried about racism
39% feel personally affected by racism
Top 3 influences: TV News (34%), Friends (30%), Family (29%)
Gender and sexuality
76% care about gender and sexuality
64% are worried about gender and sexuality
43% feel personally affected by gender and sexuality
Top 3 influences: TV News (24%), Family (23%), TikTok (22%)

When asked how they’d feel if a close friend told them they were lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans, most expected to react positively. However, they appear moderately more accepting of lesbian, gay and bisexual identities than trans.

“Because they’re older they might accidentally say something homophobic or transphobic”. She reflected on the legacy of discrimination, saying “I didn’t really know about it because my parents are not very open with gender but now I’m older I know about things and my friends are coming out as different things, it’s hard for me to fully understand it”. (14 year old girl, Gateshead)

What people think about them
77% care what people think about them
66% are worried about what people think about them
60% feel personally affected by what people think about them
Top 3 influences: Friends (42%), Family (29%), TikTok, Snapchat, Instagram (19%)

“I think it has gone too far. Everyone is flying out to Dominican to get dangerous procedures that most doctors won’t do because it can block your arteries and you can die. No one cares and it very expensive. I used to think oh why would you do that but now I feel sad for them because now society has put so much pressure on women’s features that they feel like they have to go for life threatening surgery to feel beautiful” (15 year old girl, London)

Online privacy and safety
89% care about online privacy and safety
76% are worried about online privacy and safety
54% feel personally affected by online privacy and safety
Top 3 influences: Family (29%), Teachers (28%), Friends (21%)

“It makes me feel safe that I’ve set it that way, I only have family and people from school that I like” (15 year old girl, Gateshead)
Crime
89% care about crime
81% are worried about crime
43% feel personally affected by crime
Top 3 influences: TV News (41%), Family (25%), Friends (18%)

When asked what he thinks should be done about a drug user who is visited by police daily, he replied “Rehab or something... [Instead of prison?]...Yeah...Because he's not dangerous or anything, he doesn't need to, he's not bad he's just harming himself, he's the one who is taking drugs. Rehab could help him and put him on the right path.” (14 year old boy, Newcastle)

Social media
74% care about social media
54% are worried about social media
53% feel personally affected by social media
Top 3 influences: TikTok (35%), Friends (33%), Instagram (30%)

“There is always going to be a bad side to social media, I've seen it, everyone has seen it. Some people use social media as a way to attack people and even if I don't, there are always going be people who use social media for all the wrong reasons. It can be good, sometimes, well practically all the time it spreads important stuff like the Black Lives Matter movement, LGBTQ+ rights, and it gives people advice. Especially there are things going on with like women at clubs and stuff like that so it gives advice on how to keep us safe” (15 year old girl, London)

Having a boyfriend or girlfriend
62% care about having a boyfriend or girlfriend
42% are worried about having a boyfriend or girlfriend
42% feel personally affected by having a boyfriend or girlfriend
Top 3 influences: Friends (38%), TikTok (18%), Family (15%)

“Most people my age are going like oh I need a boyfriend or a girlfriend and it is so annoying ...we are 14 it can wait for later” (14 year old girl, Bournemouth)

Authority
They view authority figures, specifically the Police, teachers and the Government, with concern. They feel particularly negative towards the Government.

“Looking at George Floyd and things like that I think just because they’ve got the label police I don’t think you can see them all as good people” (14 year old girl, Gateshead)

Figure 3: Proportion who agree with statements about the Police, teachers and the Government
What sources inform their views?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top Influence</th>
<th>Climate change</th>
<th>Racism</th>
<th>Gender equality</th>
<th>Diversity</th>
<th>Online privacy and safety</th>
<th>Crime</th>
<th>Social media</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TV News</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>TV News</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>TV News</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Influence</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Influence</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>TikTok</td>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>Instagram</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Do young people feel they know enough about these topics?
Young people recognise that they don’t know everything they should about these topics. Some say they want to know more about them right now, but they don’t have the time. This is particularly the case for climate change.

Is the news important?
A slim majority see local, national news as important, and young people are more likely to get it second hand – through family, social media or friends – than first hand.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of News</th>
<th>% who say it’s important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National news</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local news</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World news</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment news</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports news</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4 Proportion of respondents who say they know enough about/want to know more about each topic

Figure 5 Sources used to find out what’s in the news
What are their hopes and worries for the future?
The fact that more young people are worried about getting good enough grades than being able to support themselves or buy a house indicates that, right now, they place greatest emphasis on immediate pressures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hope/Worry</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I would like to be in a loving relationship</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It's important to me that I can afford luxuries like holiday abroad, nice cars, and eating out</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I worry that my grades won't be good enough</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It's important to me that I can afford to support others, for example family and charities</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would like to have a child</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I worry that I won't be able to afford to buy a house</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I worry that I won't have enough money to support myself</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Daily activities
Young people whom we interviewed showed little interest in TV generally. Linear TV and catch-up service, which they referred to as “channels” saw limited engagement, with greater interest in streaming services like Netflix. YouTube, however, was clearly important to those we spoke with.

Daily engagement with media
Depth interviews revealed that the term ‘TV’ means different things to different people. Immediate interpretations of ‘TV’ indicated that young people consider it to encompass Netflix, YouTube and linear programming – or “channels”, as they called it. Their responses suggest a greater interest in Netflix and YouTube.

“I do watch quite a bit of TV at times... Well not really TV, I like watching YouTube and stuff. [Do you watch any of the TV channels?] Not really, because I’ve got YouTube.”
(13 year old boy, Newcastle)

Figure 6 Time spent on each activity on a typical school day
Social media usage

TikTok is an important part of their day. While most use at least one social media platform for at least an hour a day, TikTok sees particularly heavy use. 85% of TikTok users spend over an hour on the platform every day; compared with 75% on Snapchat, 67% on Instagram, 67% on Facebook, and 57% on Twitter.

Figure 7 Time spent on social media each day
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