






Waterford
Primary Schools

WELCOME TO GEN FREE

GO PHONE FREE

FREE from smartphones, FREE from social media, FREE to be kids. Let's connect our children to the things that matter.

-  No smartphones while in primary school
-  No social media while in primary school
-  16+ Respect the age rating on video games

SIGN UP TO OUR GEN FREE CHARTER TODAY

YouTube was the most popular (75%) then **WhatsApp** (41%), **Roblox** (40%), **Snapchat** (36%) and **TikTok** (33%)

TRENDS & USAGE REPORT

WHAT WE KNOW



Data collected anonymously from **5,874** 8-12 year olds during academic year 2023-2024

94%

8-12 year olds owned their own smart device



82%

had their own social media account



38%

of children gamed with strangers online



25%

have experienced bullying online



25%

have seen or experienced something online in the last year that bothered them

55%

didn't tell a parent when bothered, upset or confused by something online

77%

said their parents can't see what they're doing online



84%

of teachers told us that **online safety** was a significant issue in their school

Physical Impacts

Since 2019 we've known that children under the age of three who are exposed to screens for more than 1 hour a day have an abnormal disorganisation of the white matter of the brain – responsible for language and communication.

([Massaroni](#), [Delle Donne](#), [Marra](#), [Arcangeli](#), and [Chieffo](#) (2024))

This year, in a \$300m US study of 11,000 9 and 10 year olds excessive screen time was seen to cause a physical thinning of the cerebral cortex responsible for interpreting information from the physical world.

Adolescent Brain Cognitive Development (ABCD) study

DCU Study Recommender Algorithms

YouTube Shorts and Tik Tok

- Male accounts were fed masculinist, anti-feminist and other extremist content, irrespective of whether they sought out general or male supremacist-related content, they all received this content within the first 23 minutes of the experiment.
- By the last round of the experiment (after two to three hours viewing), the vast majority of the content being recommended to the phones was toxic (TikTok 76% and YouTube Shorts 78%), primarily falling into the alpha male and anti-feminist category. Much of this content rails against equality and promotes the submission of women.
- The other toxic categories were reactionary right and conspiracy, which accounted for 13.6% of recommended content on TikTok and 5.2% of recommended content on YouTube Shorts. Much of this was anti-transgender content.

What are they seeing?

- By age nine, 10% of girls had seen pornography, 27% had seen it by age 11.
- Half of girls aged 16-21 had been sent or shown explicit content involving someone they know in real life.
- By age nine, 10% of boys had seen pornography, 27% had seen it by age 11.
- 47% of young people aged 16-21 stated that girls 'expect' sex to involve aggression, a further 42% stated that most girls 'enjoy' sexual aggression.
- The greatest number of young people (41%) had seen pornography on Twitter followed by pornography sites (37%), Instagram (33%), Snapchat (32%) and search engines (30%)

Children as the victim

- In their 2024 report Ireland's illegal online content watchdog Hotline.ie detected 29,044 cases of child sexual abuse on the internet in 2023 – a **110% increase on 2022.**
- 57% displayed children under 13 years old
- 43% were children in their early teens
- 97% were girls
- 4,322 of the images were self-generated by children






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