Insights from Internet Matters tracker survey:

Online experiences of vulnerable children and their parents’ concerns (Dec 2021)

About our tracker survey:

• Conducted twice a year with 2000 UK parents of children aged 4-16 years-old, around 25% of which are parents of vulnerable children (defined as those with special educational needs or past experiences of mental health problems).

• Give us a unique insight into trends in children’s experiences and parents’ attitudes and concerns.

• Enables us to compare responses from parents of vulnerable and non-vulnerable children.

• Latest wave from December 2021.

Key findings about vulnerable children:

• Between March 2021 and December 2021, parents of vulnerable children became significantly more concerned about all of the online issues explored by our tracker.
  
  - There was a particularly large increase in the proportion of parents worried about their vulnerable children suffering fraud or identity theft (up by 11% to two-thirds of these parents), and viewing violent content (up by 9% to nearly three-quarters of these parents).

- Increasing numbers of parents say that their vulnerable children are giving away personal information online.
Nearly 1 in 5 parents say that their vulnerable children are watching online content which promotes dangerous eating habits, compared to just 1 in 20 non-vulnerable children.

Vulnerable children are over twice as likely to share personal information online.

Level of experience (%) for non-vulnerable and vulnerable children (reported by parents)

- Viewing content promoting self-harm or suicide: 10%
- Exposure to hate speech: 10%
- Suffering damage to their current or future reputation as a result of what they do online now: 10%
- Having a poor body image or low self-esteem as a result of what they’ve seen online: 11%
- Proactively viewing content from and communicating with radical / extremist groups: 11%
- Sharing inappropriate or sexual images of themselves or others: 11%
- Suffering mental health issues as a result of what they see or do online: 11%
- Giving away personal information online: 11%
- Gambling: 12%
- Viewing content which promotes dangerous eating habits (e.g. pro anorexia and bulimia content): 13%

Q.B5. And which of these issues are you aware your child or children has had direct experience of online?

Parents of vulnerable (583) and non-vulnerable (1,427) children

This is just a snapshot of our survey findings. For further information and insight please contact Simone Vibert, Head of Policy: simone.vibert@internetmatters.org