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Lockdown  
life of young  
people 2020  
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*30% of children in the UK were living in relative poverty before the pandemic<sup>2</sup> and in a recent survey it's estimated almost a million children are living in families who are struggling<sup>3</sup>*



### **Introduction**

After releasing Engaging Youth 2020 in May, including a few early research points and findings in relation to the impact COVID-19 was having on youth audiences, it was clear that an update paper to bring things into focus as we head into a new academic year and onwards to 2021 was needed.

Young people have experienced the biggest challenge in terms of social and emotional development, education, impact on wellbeing and threat to their future prospects in their formative years due to COVID-19. Their experiences of course vary – ‘young people’ are people, each with their own needs, experiences and challenges and should not be viewed as one homogeneous group.

The context of growing up in 2020 will underline a generation and what remains clearer than ever, is that respecting and nurturing children and young people has to be the starting point for how we successfully engage with them as we steer through living a life under the curve and beyond.

We can all take that seriously and do things a little better – no matter where our work sits.

**Rebecca Roberts**  
**Founder, Thread & Fable**

@Rebecca7Roberts / @threadandfable  
rebecca@threadandfable.com

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***This year, people under 25 will make up 41% of the world's population<sup>1</sup>***

1. Revision of World Population Prospects by United Nations, June 2019  
2. Office for National Statistics, March 2020  
3. Children's Society, Good Childhood Report 2020



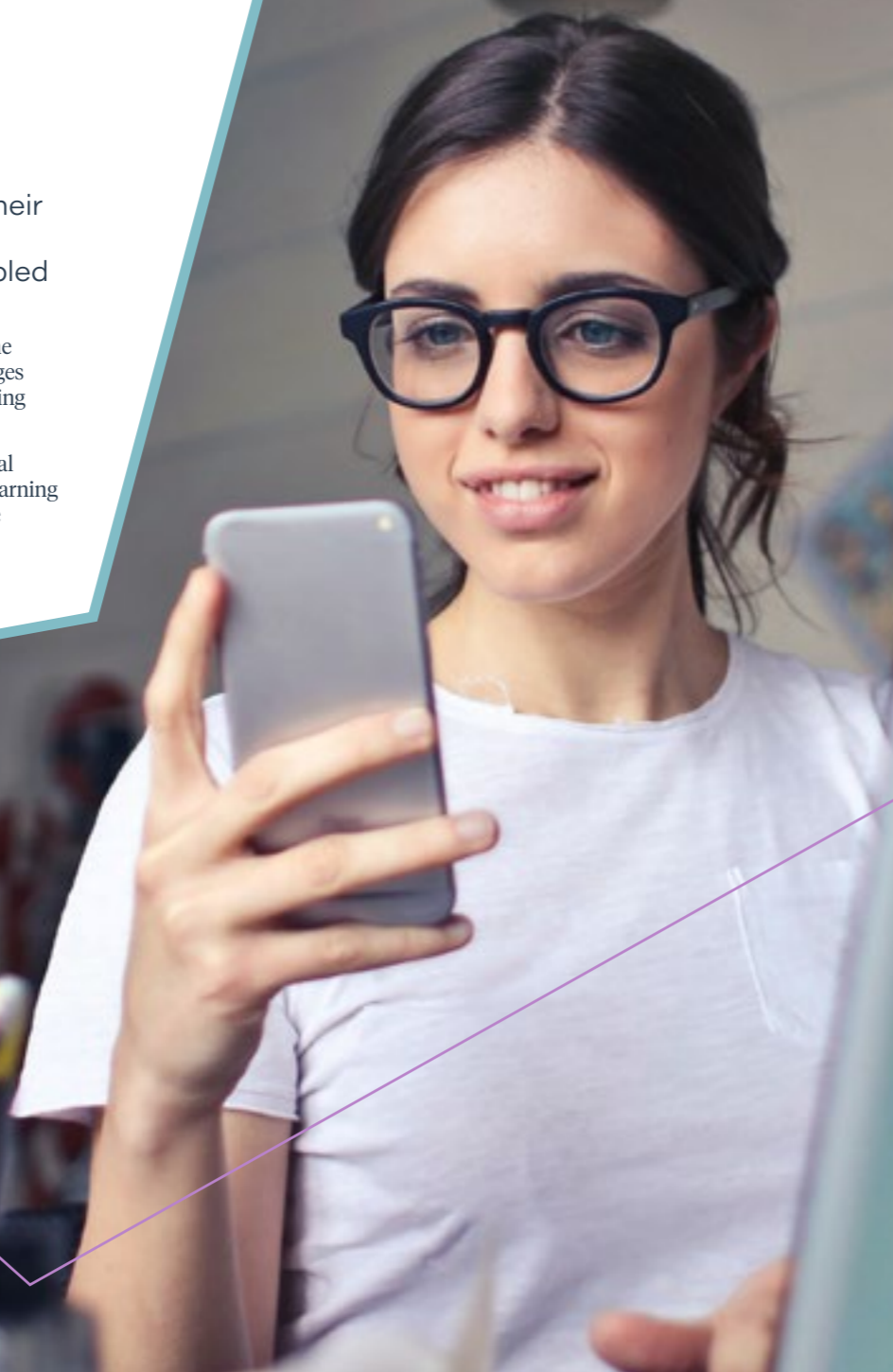
01

# Double Down on Digital

With so much of children and young people's day-to-day routine, not least their learning, locked down, it's no surprise then that screen time pretty much doubled overnight<sup>1</sup>.

But this is the 'digital native' generation, growing up with the technology and tools around them – causing many challenges around connection and loneliness on one hand, but equipping them to integrate their learning on another.

Additional screen time hasn't just meant more time on social media however. In the UK, 87% of Gen Z have focused on learning new skills or educating themselves on a new topic since the COVID-19 outbreak<sup>2</sup> for example.



"Millions of children are at an increased risk of harm online because of lockdown" **Unicef 2020**

What else has this additional screen time meant and what could change going forward?

- Rise in 'Edutainment' content from educational providers, tourist attractions and brands, recognising the need for educational content that is entertaining
- Metrics across social media platforms rocketed but the usage also changed, with many polls indicating young people talked directly to friends more, sought out content to relax, and consumed entertainment, with some signs that younger audiences are having a break from social altogether.
- 43% of Gen Z said they were 'long dating' online, getting to know people through video calls in a more personal way – something 40% said they intend to do even when lockdown measures lift further<sup>3</sup>.
- Rise in voice calls, video calls and increase in messaging and engagement with communities online has continued. The group chat continues to be queen, whilst public profiles remains for the "lurkers"<sup>4</sup>.



**87%**  
OF GEN Z IN THE UK USE  
INSTAGRAM DAILY  
and 31% use it to connect  
with their communities  
via Direct Messaging<sup>5</sup>.

1. Media Nations 2020, Ofcom, Aug 2020  
2. Meet the Future by YouGov (Facebook commissioned online survey), Aug 2020.  
3. Love in Lockdown, Global Web Index, July 2020  
4. Nerds Collective, YMS talk, 2020  
5. Meet the Future by YouGov (Facebook commissioned online survey), Aug 2020

# Witness the fitness

Many gym goers and sports players felt a loss at their usual routine, with younger audiences experiencing a drop in physical activity through lack of school sports and PE. The initial hour of activity outdoors grew as lockdown developed and slowly many activities have returned – but not all. But how has physical and emotional wellbeing been impacted as a result of the pandemic?

*“The Coronavirus pandemic affected children’s happiness due to the lack of choice they had in life”*

*The Children’s Society*

## What impact has this had and how have perceptions of physical activity changed?

**Strava activity**  
more than **tripled** in lockdown<sup>1</sup>



Whilst 40% said not being able to take part in sport made them feel worse, **37% said they now consider PE, sport and exercise to be more important to them than they did before lockdown**<sup>2</sup>

In the UK, Health/Wellbeing is a **Top 5 interest for Gen Z in general and on Instagram**<sup>3</sup>



Young people with a **mental health problem**

said they found exercise beneficial in lockdown<sup>4</sup>



**73%** of teachers say children have returned to school with lower levels of fitness<sup>5</sup>



**55%** of UK Gen Z have become more interested in health/wellbeing since the outbreak<sup>6</sup>



One in two 16-24s reported **overeating** in response to their mood during lockdown<sup>7</sup>



1. EE Change in Mobile Data, May 2020
2. Youth Sport Trust, June 2020
3. Meet the Future by YouGov (Facebook commissioned online survey), Aug 2020
4. Coronavirus Impact on young people with mental health needs, Young Minds, May 2020
5. Youth Sport Trust, September 2020
6. Meet the Future by YouGov (Facebook commissioned online survey), Aug 2020
7. You-COPE: Mental health consequences experienced by young people aged 16-24 during first months of the COVID-19 lockdown, July 2020

## Mind the education gap

Not only are there expected to be bigger gaps in attainment due to a whole breadth of issues, predominantly predicated by socioeconomic factors (access to the internet, resources, flexible working roles for parents, quality of home life etc) there have also been significant challenges when it comes to outcomes for students – namely in the UK around A Level and GCSE results.

Pre lockdown, the education gap was around 18 months between students from families who were poorer in the UK by the time children reached secondary school<sup>1</sup> but it is now estimated this will be more like two years and be significant at primary school (where previous gaps had been virtually minimised).<sup>2</sup>

lockdown life of young people

“The pandemic could create an educational underclass” *Teach First*

But as well as the gap in education, the prospects young people are facing are also pretty bleak, with youth unemployment at its highest and graduate placements and jobs significantly under threat.

- Children from better-off households were **spending 30% more time each day on educational activities** than children from the poorest fifth of households<sup>3</sup>
- Between **1.14 and 1.78m children in the UK** have no home access to a laptop, desktop or tablet<sup>4</sup>
- Up to **200,000 children** faced food poverty during lockdown<sup>5</sup>
- The **attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers** has stopped closing for the first time in a decade<sup>6</sup>
- **Youth unemployment is on course to more than triple to its highest level since the early '80s** and could hit 17% by the end of 2020<sup>7</sup>
- 78% of 16-24s says their normal educational/employment activities had changed, with 31% saying their **income had decreased**<sup>8</sup>
- Following testing on return to school an average **decline in performance between 5% and 15% was found**, the biggest drop being in maths and overall seven-year-olds were the most impacted<sup>9</sup>



1. Education in England, Annual report 2019, Education Policy Institute
2. BBC 'Poor students facing two year catch up', August 2020
3. Educational Gaps are growing in lockdown, Institute of Fiscal Studies, May 2020
4. Children's Commissioner ref Ofcom 2020 data
5. Feeding Britain and Northumbria University's Healthy Living Lab, Jun 2020
6. Education in England, Annual report 2020, Education Policy Institute
7. Resolution Foundation report March 2020
8. You-COPE: Disruptions experienced by young people aged 16-24 during first months of COVID-19 lockdown, June 2020
9. 2020 white paper. The impact of lockdown on children's education: a nationwide analysis

## New News

During the pandemic, the news has been an unavoidable force permeating all channels, from meme accounts to national news outlets. How has this been making young people feel and are their news habits evolving as a result?



As with content preferences, there are distinct differences in news content consumption amongst youth audiences. In an age of 'always on' content is expected to be where they are, so it's no surprise a large proportion consume their news through social media, often a diet of meme accounts and news sources.

However, in an age of 'fake news' and COVID-19, many young people have become equipped at dialling down news posts, recognising its impact on their overall wellbeing, particularly during lockdown. Those who do consume it are also showing signs that they're pretty cynical – checking facts and seeking sources before simply sharing (often more so than older generations).

**18-24s are twice as likely to prefer to access news via social media than older groups<sup>1</sup>**



Youth audiences are engaged in current events, stay up-to-date, want accurate information that's accessible<sup>2</sup>

**83% of 16-24s get news from social media but less than 10% create own original news posts – they consume and share news, but only a minority see themselves as broadcasters<sup>3</sup>**



1. Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2020
2. Youth Trends Report, Voxburner 2020
3. Youth Trends Report, Voxburner 2020
4. Generation Cynic, Hype Collective, 2020

**64% will check sources when see something shared on social media by friends<sup>4</sup>**

# What Matters



Even before lockdown, many reports pointed to the breadth of concerns younger audiences cared about it; climate change and equality being the major themes.

However, not all see themselves as 'activists' although increasingly online activity is demonstrating younger audiences are increasingly more active on key issues and lockdown has seen a widespread on and offline movement on huge global issues like Black Lives Matter.

- 45% of Gen Z in the UK are planning to prioritise sustainability (above price) when making a purchase<sup>1</sup>
- Only 51% of 16-24s see themselves as more activist than previous generations<sup>2</sup>
- 69% of 16-24s see themselves as more tolerant of different cultures<sup>3</sup>
- 72% of Gen Z in the UK have shown more interest in activism and social causes since the COVID-19 outbreak<sup>4</sup>
- 52% regularly share political opinions on social media and 26% actively lobby<sup>5</sup>
- 76% of students expect brands to take a stance on social and political issues<sup>6</sup>
- Gen Z are the most likely to have experienced bias as a result of their gender, ethnic background, sexual orientation or disability<sup>7</sup>

1. Meet the Future by YouGov (Facebook commissioned online survey), Aug 2020  
 2. Youth Trends Report, Voxburner 2020  
 3. Youth Trends Report, Voxburner 2020  
 4. Meet the Future by YouGov (Facebook commissioned online survey), Aug 2020  
 5. Dazed Media, Monomass, 2020  
 6. Dig In Report, 2020  
 7. Inclusion and Diversity report, Intel, Aug 2020



*Thread  
& Fable*



Curated by Rebecca Roberts  
*Founder, Thread & Fable*

[threadandfable.com](http://threadandfable.com) / [info@threadandfable.com](mailto:info@threadandfable.com) / [@rebecca7roberts](https://www.instagram.com/rebecca7roberts)

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