

*Thread
& Fable*

**ENGAGING
YOUTH 2022**

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THREAD & FABLE. DEC 2022**

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1. INTRODUCTION

IF EVER THERE WAS A TIME TO SPEAK TO YOUTH AUDIENCES TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THEIR NEEDS AND PERSPECTIVE, IT WOULD BE NOW...

Engaging Youth 2022 won't tell you who young people are and what they need. In fact it highlights just how diverse experiences of growing up in the UK are.

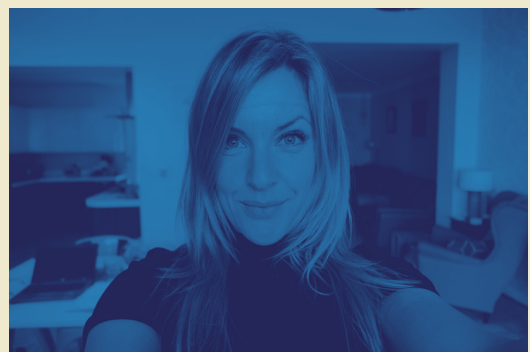
Increasingly, this is down to socioeconomic inequality. Factors that have to give context to our marketing and communications aimed at young people as we go into 2023.

While some of the picture is bleak, young people continue to propel themselves into higher education, employment, business and often a combination of these as they go. They are exploring the ways in which they make a future, despite of challenges.

Any brand, organisation or campaign that doesn't adapt to the spectrum of how young people are experiencing adolescence and early adulthood, risks speaking to everyone at once but nobody listening.

I hope the themes explored help inform your approach to meaningful youth engagement within your marketing and communications. Having worked on numerous projects and campaigns involving young people over the year, there are not any examples of enabling youth voice that haven't led to better work.

Rebecca Roberts
Founder, Thread & Fable



2. THE GENERATIONAL PRICE OF LIVING

IT'S NOT JUST THE COST OF LIVING FOR YOUTH AUDIENCES BUT THE PRICE THEY'LL BE PAYING FOR THE PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES ON THEIR FUTURE PROSPECTS.

More children are falling into poverty (1) with Black and minority ethnic people twice as likely to be in deep poverty (2), the growing divide on children's quality of life and overall health is stark, with recent data highlighting poverty to mental health issues (3).



This year not only are we seeing the knock-on impact of Covid on young people's future view, but the economic pressures are adding to the scarring impact which is set to cast a long shadow on their financial prospects (4).

Again, while some of Gen Z are set to inherit their financial stability from the more prosperous Boomers, the social inequality that comes with it is also another generational fee that broadens the gap between rich and poor (5).

Overall happiness and confidence in the future is low (6), with rising pressure on jobs, standards of living and a sense of progress (7). Students are experiencing a higher than average cost of living rise (8), with maintenance loans falling short, again having an effect on mental health and for many will impact their ability to stay in education (9).

More broadly, younger generations are less financially resilient and due to pay, housing access and other factors, are being hit hard by the cost of living crisis (10).

**only
20%**

**OF YOUNG PEOPLE FEEL
CONFIDENT ABOUT THE
FUTURE OF THE ECONOMY
(11)**

**MANY GEN Z DON'T FEEL
HOME OWNERSHIP WILL
EVER BE ACHIEVABLE (13)**

**THOSE FROM POORER
BACKGROUNDS AND THOSE
WHO ARE NOT IN FULL TIME
EMPLOYMENT OR
EDUCATION SAID THAT
THEY FEEL THEIR LIFE WILL
AMOUNT TO NOTHING NO
MATTER HOW HARD THEY
TRY (12).**

**MORE CHILDREN WHO ARE BLACK OR FROM MINORITY ETHNIC
BACKGROUNDS ARE FALLING BELOW 50% MEDIAN INCOMES AND
SUFFERING MATERIAL DEPRIVATION (14).**

50%

**SAID THEY HAD CUT BACK
ON FOOD, PARTICULARLY
DISABLED STUDENTS,
ESTRANGED STUDENTS
AND THOSE FROM LOWER
SOCIO-ECONOMIC
GROUPS (15)**

**COST OF LIVING CRISIS
IS MAKING STUDENTS
WORRY ABOUT STAYING
IN EDUCATION (16)**

85%

**OF PARENTS AND CARERS
ARE CONCERNED ABOUT
THE IMPACT OF THE COST-
OF-LIVING INCREASES ON
THEIR FAMILY (17)**

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1. [Going Without: deepening poverty in the UK, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2022](#)
2. [Runnymede Trust Analysis, September 2022](#)
3. [NHS digital, Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, Dec 2022](#)
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3. LEARNING & EARNING

HOW YOUNG PEOPLE EXPERIENCE LEARNING AND EARNING IN THE UK HAS AN IMPACT ON THEIR FUTURE VIEW, SOCIAL MOBILITY AND OVERALL HAPPINESS.

While the gaps in education attainment continue to exist between socioeconomic groups (1), those from Black and ethnic minority communities are progressing to university at a greater rate than their White British classmates, however attainment gaps exist for these students once at university (2) and within the careers market afterwards (3).

Compared to other nations, the UK has a lot of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET), despite data that shows raising outcomes for young people would improve the economy (4).



Youth employment varies significantly around the country with inequalities also existing by gender and ethnicity, with the pandemic accentuating these (5).

Over the course of the year, overall youth unemployment figures have declined back to pre-pandemic rates, although the rise in numbers of young people going into full time education is another factor to consider (6).

Regardless of the stats, young people still need opportunities, particularly as we move into 2023 with the economic challenges ahead. Many young people reported feeling frustrated at missing out on school and work opportunities in recent years and feel their employment prospects won't ever recover (7).

The majority of young people who are able to get internships or work placements are doing so unpaid (8), which brings inequalities when you then look at career prospects and who is able to better demonstrate experiences over others.

1 in 10

YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE UK ARE NOT IN EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION OR TRAINING (9)

DECLINE IN WORKING HOURS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH NO QUALIFICATIONS WERE 5 TIMES HIGHER THAN FOR THOSE WITH A DEGREE (10)

1 in 5

YOUNG PEOPLE DON'T THINK THEIR EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS WILL EVER RECOVER FROM THE PANDEMIC (11)

73%

OF YOUNG PEOPLE ARE FRUSTRATED AT MISSING OPPORTUNITIES TO ENHANCE THEIR CAREERS (12)

66%

SAID THEIR INTERNSHIP OR WORK PLACEMENT WAS UNPAID (13)

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1. [Impact of Key Stage 1 school closures on later attainment and social skills \(a longitudinal study\)](#), Education Endowment Foundation, 20224
2. [The IFS Deaton Review of Inequalities, November 2022](#)
3. [Uneven Steps, Resolution Foundation, 2021](#)
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12. [The Prince's Trust Natwest Youth Index 2022](#)
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4. SOCIAL LIVES & RELATIONSHIPS

GROWING UP, FORMING FRIENDSHIPS AND DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIPS UNDERPINS WELLBEING AND LIFE EXPERIENCES.

The pandemic impacted how young people socialise; with rising levels of time spent alone and many finding it harder to make and maintain friendships and relationships (1).

Some insight indicates that as a result, the majority value close relationships more than careers (2), with many expressing that family life with a stable relationship and children is something aspirational for their future (3).

More young people identify as gay, bi and trans than older generations and are more likely to have a pattern of attraction that could be described as queer* (4). Encouragingly, some sources highlight the growth in positive experiences of young people coming out to those close to them, despite the ongoing challenges in society and lack of safety many from the LGBTQIA+ community experience (5).



*i.e. outside the scope of exclusively heterosexual attractions between cisgender people.

The push to more creative ways of socialising and dating during lockdown as well as increased time spent along has had a lasting impact. A broadening of ways in which younger audiences want to date and socialise but also for many, less stigma attached to being single (6).

While many young people still want to go out over staying in, their overall relationship with 'home' has changed, and experiences and events are preferred with a definite shift away from drink culture continuing (7).

Of course, the picture varies dramatically and for many young people the cost of living crisis puts additional pressure on their relationships and opportunities to socialise.

45% SAY THEIR SOCIAL LIFE IS WORSE (8)

OVER HALF SAY THEY'VE SPENT A LOT OF TIME ON THEIR OWN (9)

82% OF PARTICIPANTS RECEIVED A SUPPORTIVE OR VERY SUPPORTIVE RESPONSE FROM THE PERSON THEY HAD COME OUT TO ABOUT THEIR SEXUAL ORIENTATION (10)

OVER A THIRD OF 16-24S DESCRIBE THEMSELVES AS "HAPPILY SINGLE" (11)

79% PREFER GOING OUT TO STAYING IN (12)

6 in 10 SAY THE WAY WE SOCIALISE WILL BE THE MOST LASTING SOCIETAL CHANGE SINCE THE PANDEMIC (13)

References in this section...

1. [Prince's Trust NatWest Youth Index 2022](#)
2. [Dazed x Space10 Impermaculture Report 2022](#)
3. [BBC Radio 1 and Newsbeat Survey 2022](#)
4. [Attraction, Identity and Connection in Great Britain in 2022, Stonewall.](#)
5. [Life in Scotland for LGBT Young People 2022, LGBT Youth Scotland](#)
6. [Gen Z Dating Story pre and post pandemic, Savanta 2022](#)
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9. [Prince's Trust NatWest Youth Index 2022](#)
10. [Life in Scotland for LGBT Young People 2022, LGBT Scotland](#)
11. [State of the Youth Nation, Savanta 2021](#)
12. [Night Shift, Vice and Monkey Shoulder, 2022](#)
13. [Night Shift, Vice and Monkey Shoulder, 2022](#)

5. SURVIVING OR THRIVING?

A LOOK AT YOUTH HEALTH IN THE UK HELPS US TO THINK ABOUT THE PRIORITIES AND KEY ISSUES YOUNG PEOPLE WILL FACE OVER THE COMING YEARS INTO ADULTHOOD, BOTH PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY.

Among teens, smoking rates and drug use have dropped, with those trying alcohol or drinking regularly broadly the same. However, it's vaping that's seen a boom across age groups and a significant shift in recent years (1).

The significant health data over this year points to the rise in mental disorders among children and young people (2), with many young people feeling that they won't ever emotionally recover from the pandemic (3).



For those children with probable mental disorders, this has a knock-on effect to their wellbeing at school when it comes to feeling safe, learning or having a friend to support them. It's also worth highlighting the links to family income, need for additional support like food banks etc, also correlates to pupils being more likely to experience issues with their mental health (4).

As we've seen with the overall picture of poverty among children and young people, this doesn't play out equally across regions and when it comes to marginalised communities.

Data indicates that children and young peoples' activity levels have however recovering but gaps between boys and girls still exist (5). The picture isn't universal however, with those from low affluence families still likely to be less active (6).

UK children's happiness with their lives continues to decline and areas like wellbeing at school, appearance (more so for girls) and family wealth all connect (7).

Tackling inequalities is a major part of addressing this alongside listening, supporting and empowering young people when it comes to campaigns to improve their health (8).

9% OF PUPILS IN ENGLAND VAPE (9)

in 2022

18% OF 7-16 AND 22% OF 17-24S HAD A PROBABLY MENTAL DISORDER (11)

THOSE FROM LOW AFFLUENCE FAMILIES ARE LESS LIKELY TO BE ACTIVE THAN THOSE FROM HIGH AFFLUENCE (42% COMPARED TO 52%) (13)

23%

DON'T THINK THEY'LL EVER EMOTIONALLY RECOVER FROM THE PANDEMIC (10)

50% OF BOYS AND 45% OF GIRLS ARE DOING AN AVERAGE OF 60 MINUTES A DAY OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY (12)

27%

HAVE STRUGGLED WITH THE COST OF PE OR SPORTS KIT OVER THE LAST YEAR – AROUND 450,000 MORE CHILDREN THAN ARE IN RECEIPT OF FREE SCHOOL MEALS (14)

References in this section...

1. [Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use among young people in England 2021](#), NHS Digital, Sep 2022
2. [Mental Health of Children and Young People in England 2022](#), NHS Digital
3. [Princes' Trust NatWest Youth Index 2022](#)
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5. [Sport England Active Lives 2022](#)
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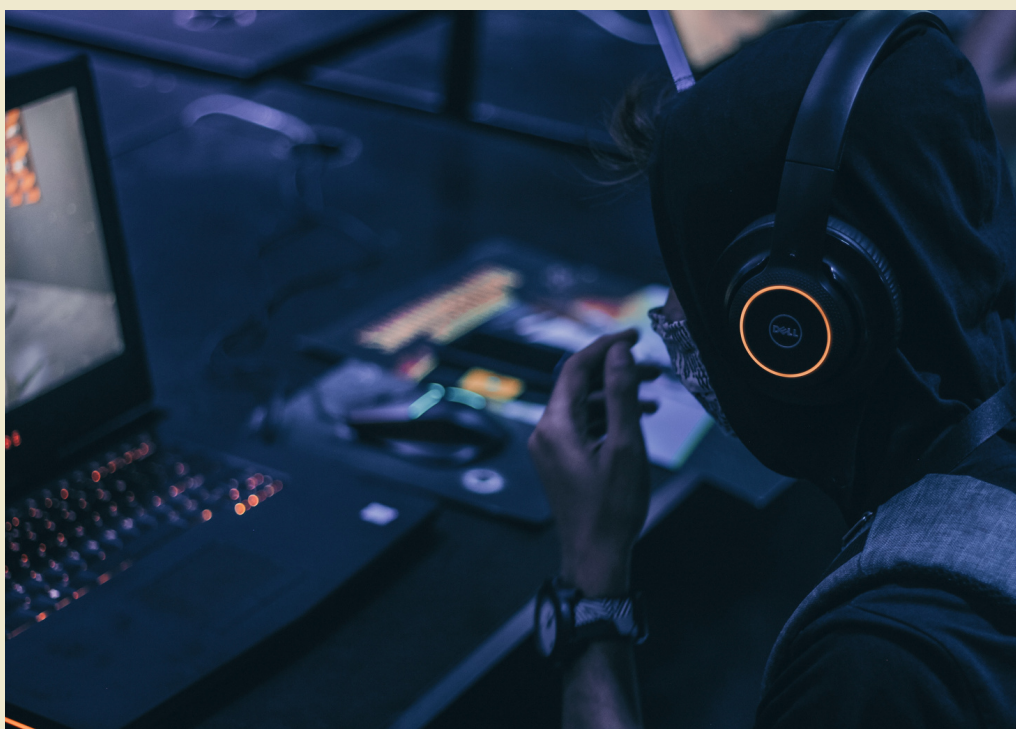
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11. [Mental Health of Children and Young People in England 2022](#), NHS Digital
12. [Sport England Active Lives 2022](#)
13. [Sport England Active Lives 2022](#)
14. [Good Childhood Report 2022](#), Children's Society.

6. A LIFE ONLINE

WITH NEARLY ALL CHILDREN IN THE UK GOING ONLINE OVER THE PAST YEAR (1), ONLINE SAFETY CONTINUES TO BE AN ISSUE THE UK HAS TO TACKLE.

The long-awaited online safety bill is due to come into play in 2023, with rising pressure on how platforms will protect children and young people from harmful content, addictive functionality and algorithms built for sales rather than social connection (2).

As ever, social media use varies among youth audiences and there's definitely a spectrum of attitudes towards it as well as habits. Average times on social media vary as do perceptions on whether they think they spend more time than they should being on social media (3).



While the rise in popularity for BeReal continues in the UK (4), notable for its lack of advertising, influencers and breadth of content, TikTok and Instagram continue to dominate as well as rising AI photo apps and Snapchat, particularly with younger teens. AI poses additional risks to privacy and safety among young people (5).

For many young people, their experiences are positive online (6), but that doesn't mean that they are always safe, avoid seeing worrying things, don't experience bullying or display risky behaviours (7). Some data highlights the issue of risky and criminal online behaviour being normalised among young people across Europe, with online trolling and digital piracy common (8).

Growing numbers of children and young people are spending time online gaming and forms another part of their social life, often with those they do and don't know in real life.

As well as platforms improving safety functionality, age verification and tackling harmful content, much of the data points to parents' roles in helping to control healthy screen time and open discussion about online safety (9).

ALMOST HALF OF YOUNG PEOPLE DON'T THINK THEY SPEND MORE TIME THAN THEY SHOULD ON SOCIAL MEDIA, BUT AROUND A THIRD DO (10)

1-8+ HOURS A DAY ON SOCIAL MEDIA (11)

1 in 4 16-19-YEAR-OLDS HAVE TROLLED SOMEONE ONLINE, 1 IN 5 HAVE ENGAGED IN SEXTING AND 1 IN 3 HAVE ENGAGED IN DIGITAL PIRACY (12)

53% OF 13-17S SAID BEING ONLINE WAS GOOD FOR THEIR MENTAL HEALTH, WITH 17% DISAGREEING (13)

OVER A THIRD OF 8-17S SAID THEY'D SEEN SOMETHING WORRYING OR NASTY ONLINE IN THE PAST YEAR, WITH 6 IN 10 SAYING THEY'D ALWAYS TELL SOMEONE (14)

References in this section...

1. [Children and parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report, Ofcom, March 2022](#)
2. [Online Safety Bill, UK Government \(regularly updated\)](#).
3. [Wireless Report 2021, Ditch the Label](#)
4. [Children and parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report, Ofcom, March 2022](#)
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8. [European Youth Cybercrime, Online Harm and Online Risk Taking: 2022 Research Report. Davidson, J., Aiken, M., Phillips, K. and Farr, R. 2022. European Youth Cybercrime, Online Harm and Online Risk Taking: 2022 Research Report. London United Kingdom Institute for Connected Communities, University of East London, Dec, 2022.](#)
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13. [Children and parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report, Ofcom, March 2022](#)
14. [Children and parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report, Ofcom, March 2022](#)

7. ENGAGING YOUTH

ENGAGING YOUTH 2022 HIGHLIGHTS A LOT OF CONTEXT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE UK - BUT HOW CAN YOU APPLY THIS TO YOUR WORK?

If you want more content you can sign up to a weekly update on the [Thread & Fable website](#), listen to guests on the [Hear It Podcast](#) and contact Rebecca at info@threadandfable.com to find out more about workshops, talks and ways in which to work with Thread & Fable and the collective it works with to support your campaigns and projects.

There are so many ways you can represent young people's voices through your work, involve them, co-create with them and offer invaluable opportunities for them to feel seen and heard.

As ever, a huge thank you to those who have sent reports, shared work they're involved in, come on as guests and to clients who have embraced engaging youth within the work.

THANK YOU



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REFERENCES

Throughout the report you'll find specific links and references. Below are the breadth of reports and articles that have been reviewed as part of this years' report. They are great sources of insight and may be useful within your own youth engagement.

- [Going Without: deepening poverty in the UK, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2022](#)
- [Runnymede Trust Analysis, September 2022](#)
- [NHS digital, Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, 2022](#)
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- [The IFS Deaton Review of Inequalities, November 2022](#)
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