

# Growing Up Fast In A Virtual WWWorld:

Contributed by Vox Pops International  
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Techy tweens & teens who can't fathom a time before the internet and smartphones

In the latest stage of our Lifestage omnibus, Vox Pops International filmed and spoke to thirty teens aged between 13-16, and twenty tweens aged between 9-12, in Manchester, Birmingham, Guildford, Epsom and Southampton to understand their views and attitudes towards an extensive range of topics from favourite brands and TV programmes to personal expenditure.

For the young respondents, a time before internet and Blackberry is unfathomable. Research showed that over 70% tweens and teens are actively and sophisticatedly operating social networking sites and Smartphone technology. Â Â Â

100% of the teen respondents owned a mobile with 68% of all respondents in possession of a Smartphone. Of the five tweens that did not own a mobile phone, three wanted a Blackberry.

Isabelle, 12 said this was because:

“Lots of people have Blackberrys and they’re always on it, it’s just like text messaging but quicker, you can just send a message and they will get it.” Amongst the endless mobile phone functions the most popular were texting and calling, BBM, playing games and browsing the internet.

Isla, aged 10, said she used her mobile phone to organise her social life:

“Mostly for emergencies and like so I can contact my friends to see if I can like go for tea and stuff.”

Almost 100% of 13-16 year olds reported to use Facebook at intervals ranging from once a week for ten minutes, to every day for an hour or more for staying in touch with friends and playing games. Amongst the 9-12 year olds, over 50% used “Facebook” in spite of the Facebook legislation forbidding children under the age of 13 from using it.

Whilst most 9-12 year olds were unaware of the risks involved with publicising personal information online,

Alex, 11, said she chose not to have Facebook because

“it’s a bit more dangerous, it shares all of your details with anyone that wants to look at them.” More appropriate social networking sites for kids such as “Disney Club Penguin” in which you care for virtual penguins, were dismissed as too childish.

With over 35% of 9-16 year olds actively using it to follow celebrities, Twitter’s popularity with teens and tweens has certainly risen.

Using a combination of Facebook and Twitter was preferred by Laura, 14, who said:

“Facebook probably for birthdays and events mostly and I go on it about once a week. I have sort of gone off it now, I used to go on it quite often but now I just mainly go on Twitter because I love following the celebrities.”

Vicky, 16, agreed:

“Yeah, Facebook and Twitter. It’s good for meeting friends and sort of, expressing yourself.” Joe, 16 seemed to prefer Twitter: “Mainly Twitter, not so much Facebook anymore ‘cause everyone’s moved on to Twitter now where you can talk to celebrities and they occasionally tweet back. Facebook’s a bit boring.”

Robin, 15, also preferred Twitter to Facebook:

“Because you feel like you’re friends with like celebrities. I follow Leonardo DiCaprio and like Zac Efron and One Direction.”

Amongst the tweens, Kallum, 11, thought:

“Well I use Twitter ‘cause it’s very useful to find out what people are doing and why they’re doing it and when.”

Isabelle, 12, who also had Twitter, did not seem to fully understand it:

“To follow people and then if they follow you, you get good? I don’t know.”

Our research showed that other than social networking, teens and tweens are using the internet for school homework (42%); watching/listening YouTube videos (37%); playing games (32%); and watching catch-up TV programmes (11%).

Girls favoured virtual pet games like “Moshi Monsters”, whilst “Modern Warfare II” featured as a popular game for boys.

Alex, 11, told us she used the internet to do homework research:

“Whatever the homework is for you just type it in to Google and it will come and that is it really, you just copy and paste it and change it a little bit and that is it.”

Craig, 11, seemed to agree that the internet was  
“every useful for homework, so I don’t get detention.”

With the World Wide Web at their small fingertips, today’s young consumer generation are, like the rest of us, becoming dependent on the internet for entertainment, information and more dangerously, virtual social interaction.

To read our transcripts on a more extensive range of topics and select the quotes you’d like to use in your own video edit please contact Vox Pops International, [info@voxpops.com](mailto:info@voxpops.com) or ring 020 8786 8855.

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