Prince's Trust

SLIPPING THROUGH THE NET

Are disadvantaged young people being left further behind in the digital era?

SAMSUNG

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FOREWORD
THE PRINCE'S TRUST

Forty years ago, HRH The Prince of Wales founded what has become the United Kingdom's leading youth charity.

825,000 disadvantaged young people have been supported by The Trust since 1976 and, each year, we are helping many more.

We have always been very aware that the set of skills that young people need to succeed in education or in work, and to thrive as an individual, are in constant evolution. We are continuously updating our programmes to make sure that young people who have not had the best start in life can have real opportunities to develop in education or in work.

Digital skills are already embedded across our programmes, from essential requirements such as online applications, through enrichments such as coding, as well as more specific topics such as social media marketing for young entrepreneurs.

We are particularly proud of our partnership with Samsung which has supported us in creating three digital classrooms in our Kennington, Stoke-on-Trent and Glasgow centres. We are working together to ensure young people have access to technology and develop essential digital skills.

Today, we want to go further. Digital skills are becoming increasingly important for young people.

That is why, supported by Samsung, we asked The London School of Economics and Political Science to conduct new independent research about young people and Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs). The report looks at access, skills, uses, motivations and attitudes, networks of support, and the outcomes attained through digital engagement.

The research has shown that the opportunities provided online are not equally attained by all young people, in particular those who are not in education, employment or training. Unfortunately, these young people who have already run into frustrating experiences offline, are being left further behind in the online world.

We need to dispel the myth that all millennials know how to make the most of the digital world. Many disadvantaged young people, as this research shows, are not achieving positive outcomes online, in particular when it comes to education or employment.

The research has shown that they are also often at a disadvantage because of a lack of softer skills.

With the right support, these young people can get the most out of their digital experience and go on to achieve great things.

Our hope is that this research will not only inform the work of The Prince's Trust and benefit the young people we support daily, but also make a useful contribution to the debate on our country's digital strategy.

Martina Milburn CBE
Chief Executive, The Prince's Trust

FOREWORD SAMSUNG

At Samsung, we believe in the power of technology to educate and inspire.

As our world becomes smarter and more connected, we want everyone, particularly young people, to be able to take advantage of the opportunities that technology presents and to become active and responsible digital citizens.

For this reason, we are delighted to support this important research project initiated by The Prince's Trust into why some disadvantaged young people are being left behind digitally.

SAMSUNG

We see the digital skills gap as one of the major barriers to young people's full participation in an increasingly digital economy and society. That is why we undertake a wide range of digital skills initiatives across the UK: from Samsung Digital Classrooms at primary schools located in the most underprivileged areas in every UK region, to major projects with partners like the BBC to help young people learn to code.

Our longstanding partnership with The Prince's Trust has focused on helping the most disadvantaged young people develop the digital skills which will help them benefit from the opportunities presented by technology, both in the workplace and in their personal lives.

Together we have built Samsung Digital Classrooms in Prince's Trust centres and helped transform many lives, but this report highlights that despite this progress, some of the most disadvantaged young people risk being left behind in the digital world.

We are therefore committed to working with government, and partners like The Prince's Trust, to ensure that barriers to full participation in the digital revolution are overcome and that all young people, no matter their background, are equipped with the skills, confidence and desire to take advantage of the exciting opportunities that technology has to offer in the future.

Aleyne Johnson
Samsung

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) access, skills and relevant content are not equally available to all.

This unique report sets out to analyse the range of digital skills that young people from different backgrounds possess.

Disadvantaged young people are likely to have lower quality access and lower levels of digital skills which impede their ability to take up education and employment opportunities. This is also likely to prevent them from avoiding risks that might lead to physical or emotional harm.This report aims to shed some light on the troubling inequalities in digital engagement which exist today between disadvantaged and advantaged young people.

Access

While 90% of young people have access to a smartphone regardless of their background, those who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs) and those with a history of economic disadvantage have access to a smaller range of devices, at fewer locations. This is linked to a limited ability to use the internet in the privacy of their own home and potential social isolation because their friends are connected at home.

NEETs often have to end up relying on others (including their WiFi) to connect, which makes them feel embarrassed. Their lack of high quality access did not translate into wishing for better gadgets but instead was expressed in a view of a future world with internet for everyone, everywhere.

Digital skills

60% of young people were very confident in their digital skills. Around 40% had low skill levels in relation to 'netiquette', that is decisions about their own behaviour, dealing with the negative behaviour of others online or in managing their mobile phones in a safe way. Young people were the least skilled in the areas of content creation and information navigation, which are important skills because these are most needed in work and study.

There are inequalities in young people's digital skills. NEETs and those with a history of economic disadvantage lack traditional offline literacy skills, like problem solving and live in less digitally rich environments which are all related to having lower levels of digital skills. These inequalities express themselves mostly in the softer, social communication-related skills.

Disadvantaged young people see more formal education or teaching as necessary to learn the harder, more technical and information navigation aspects of digital skills, whereas they see acquiring social and basic content creation skills as natural or automatic, following from their own or others' experiences.

NEETs had little training in and awareness of the softer digital skills such as those related to self-presentation and communication that are needed to take up digital opportunities such as online job searches.

While young people in general struggle to manage negative experiences, extreme passive or disruptive coping strategies are stronger among disadvantaged young people. NEETs use either 'offlining' (e.g. "don't go on Facebook", "don't use Wikipedia") or fatalistic 'head in the sand' (e.g. "toughen up", "ignore it", "nothing to be done") tactics. These do not turn into transferrable skills that can be applied to new and unfamiliar situations or to prevent similar negative experiences from occurring in the future.

Often NEETs were unaware that they could turn their expertise into an asset in a digital world. This was especially true for ICT skills they acquired through informal learning and play.

Motivations, attitudes and dispositions

Overall, young people were positive towards the potential of ICTs. They were simultaneously positive towards what ICTs have to offer as well as being aware and realistic about some of the risks.

Even though they are positive about the potential benefits, disadvantaged young people feel less social or societal pressure to go online and they see fewer reasons to go online than their more advantaged peers. They were particularly concerned about the impact they felt ICTs have on social relationships and interactions.

NEETs' frustration lies with the dehumanising nature of digital experiences which does not allow them to check on the intentions or reasoning of those they are interacting with.

This can be linked to high levels of distrust in others online. The report shows that 50% of NEETs thought that no one or almost no one could be trusted online, compared to 38% of the young people who were employed or students.

Networks of support

67% of young people have someone available to help them out if they need support with ICT related issues, but less than a quarter have asked for that help.

Young people rely on peer networks for support and on close relations at home or place of work or study.

Disadvantaged young people have a narrower and less expert network of support available. They have to rely even more on those who are close to them but, perhaps because of their networks' lower levels of expertise, the default position for NEETs is to try to figure things out for themselves.

NEETs think of support in mostly technical terms (i.e. how to get ICTs to work) rather than in terms of advice on how to behave online, or in terms of support in figuring out how to produce and share content. Support is thus a one off solution rather than leading to individuals learning and gaining skills for the longer term.

Use

Need is a driver of use. NEETs and those with a history of economic disadvantage (who have to be more preoccupied with improving their economic situation) are engaging more broadly and more frequently with employment related activities, though they are less involved in educational activities online. However, because they are running into more frustrating experiences online, they are achieving less positive outcomes in this area than their more advantaged peers (see Outcomes).

Those with a history of disadvantage engage more frequently in particular with social and personal well-being aspects of ICT use. Those who are currently disadvantaged (NEETs) are less broadly engaged with all types of activities.

NEETs were involved in content creation and entertainment activities but these were more likely to be individual solitary activities with a narrow network of close relations, rather than oriented towards a wider public or engaging with people unlike them.

Outcomes

While use is based on need, outcomes are based on skills and resources. Those with more skills and confidence have fewer negative outcomes and more positive outcomes.

Many NEETs do not live with close relatives and communicating through ICTs is seen as a means to help overcome loneliness and feelings of being uprooted. The flipside is that those with weaker grounding in their local community are also more likely to experience online risks of harassment or bullying.

While disadvantaged young people are broadly engaged with economic, employment and education uses of ICTs, they are less likely to obtain outcomes in this area.

NEETs' frustrating online experiences and lack of trust in others online might explain their strong preference for offline, face to face interactions even if the outcomes (i.e. not getting a job) are the same.

Online job applications are typically frustrating experiences for NEETs. They are demotivated by never hearing back from potential employers or receiving automated rejections, and interpret these as personal rather than as the way the system works.

NEETs saw ICTs' potential to expand professional contacts and engagement with employers but there was little understanding of how this might work, and it remained a future possibility rather than a concrete strategy.

NEETs struggled to understand who they could reach with content or products they placed online. They showed and promoted these mostly to close friends. On a more cultural level, they did not feel ICTs confronted them with ideas or individuals with which they were unfamiliar.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Digital inclusion is a complex, multiple-levelled picture.
There were barriers and challenges in access, skills, and translating use into outcomes for disadvantaged young people.

Recommendation 1:
Interventions and policies should address barriers at all three levels, to ensure that young people are able to take up the opportunities provided through digital technologies.

Recommendation 2:
There needs to be a joined-up, collaborative approach between government, businesses and organisations working with young people, to create rich digital environments so that young people have private, secure access in environments that they feel comfortable in.

This means taking the technology and training to young people, rather than expecting them to come to wherever it is provided.

The environment of disadvantaged young people throws various hurdles in the way of them achieving high levels of digital skills through traditional means.

Their compound disadvantage – characterised by lower traditional problem solving skills, higher levels of emotional problems, less diverse social networks and less rich digital environments – is associated with lower digital skill levels.

Recommendation 3:
Digital skills training is necessary for disadvantaged young people in particular, so that they can take up opportunities in a digital Britain. It might also help them overcome some of the other disadvantages that they face.

Schools and ICT learning opportunities for young people focus on computer science – quite rightly in terms of important in-demand skills for the future – but being digitally literate is not just about computer science and coding.

Inequalities in critical literacy, social communicative and more basic content creation skills are related to inequalities in achieving outcomes more so than technical, operational or information searching skills.

Recommendation 4:
Softer skills such as online behaviour and interaction norms and etiquette as well as more basic, everyday content creation skills should be part of digital skills training programmes.

This will help disadvantaged young people achieve economic and other tangible outcomes related to their social and personal well-being.

The “social bank of family and friends” is very important to get beneficial outcomes from digital use and engagement. A lack of explicit training and experience within close circles of friends and family means that young people who are not in employment, education or training are less likely to have the support or training needed to solve everyday problems related to ICTs.

They seem unaware of potential sources of support with more expertise that are available at locations they frequent.

Recommendation 5:
Professionals who work with disadvantaged young people (such as teachers or youth workers) should be trained to support ICT related queries. It should be made explicit that these sources of support are available.

Disadvantaged young people live in environments that put less pressure on them to use technologies and the support that they ask for in using technologies is defined in rather narrow technical terms.

Recommendation 6:
Organisations and employers should improve disadvantaged young people's frustrating employment and educational experiences (e.g. not getting an answer after an online job application) in all circumstances.

They should further develop essential digital services, so that they do not turn into dehumanising, negative experiences that lead to young people disconnecting and giving up on the digital world.

Recommendation 7:
Disadvantaged young people should be supported in building resilience to overcome rejection on digital services, in learning from negative experiences and in obtaining the skills to build and strengthen online relationships.

Digital can be a great enabler. However, it also creates a greater divide between those who are able to obtain tangible outcomes and those who do not.

Disadvantaged young people who are digitally confident outperform their peers who are not digitally confident, achieving more positive outcomes and fewer negative outcomes.

Recommendation 8:
Evaluations of success of digital skills and inclusion interventions should focus on the tangible outcomes that young people achieve and the inequalities therein.

Recommendation 9:
More investment in evaluation of programmes and initiatives developing digital skills training programmes is needed to further understand which digital skills and which types of training lead to the widest range of high quality, beneficial outcomes.

Thus, the playing field can be truly levelled for young people in a digital Britain.

WHY SOCIO-DIGITAL SKILLS MATTER FOR DISADVANTAGED YOUTH

The UK is digitising rapidly, with more and more aspects of our everyday lives now represented online. Those who are able to use Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), such as the internet and mobile phones, in effective and efficient ways, are often able to access better services and more diverse content. Not only this, they are also able to build on this to improve their general well-being, through access to opportunities to maintain and expand existing relationships and a wide variety of leisure pursuits.

Amongst other benefits, being digitally literate broadens career opportunities and makes job applications significantly easier. It helps continuing formal and informal learning, offers a dizzying array of people to connect with a myriad of different types of relationships, enables access to markets, and facilitates broadening civic and cultural engagement.

Individuals who are digitally literate integrate ICTs into everyday life, tend to get beneficial outcomes of using ICTs and are able to avoid risks that lead to harm. Nevertheless, ICT access, skills and relevant content are not equally available to all. Research has shown over and over again that those who are traditionally disadvantaged are also disadvantaged in the digital sphere.

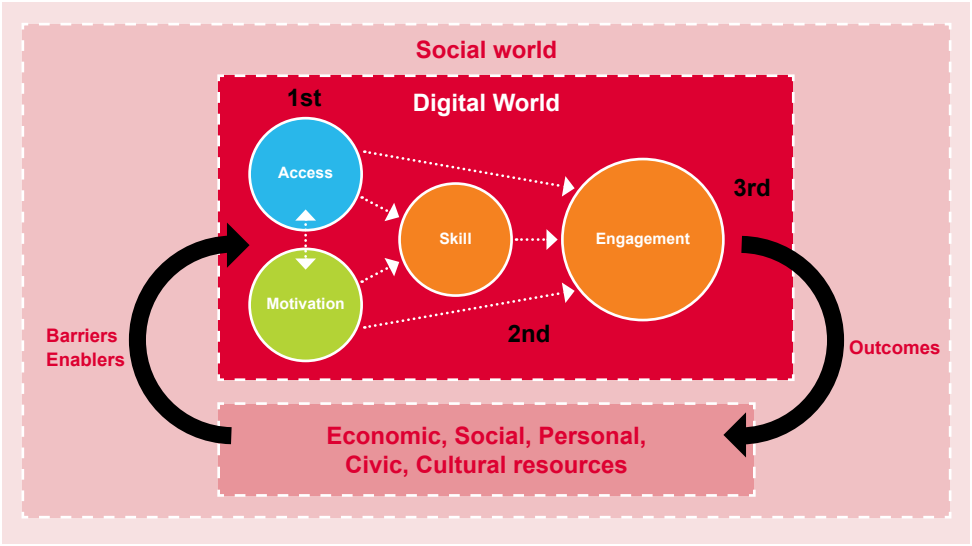
This report uses the model presented in the figure overleaf to frame thinking about the links between the social and the digital world for advantaged and disadvantaged young people in the UK. In both the social and digital world individuals have access to different fields of resources.

Whether individuals with or without certain resources are able to take these up in the digital realm and achieve tangible outcomes from these, depends on their access (inequalities here are called the '*first level* digital divide'), their motivation to engage with ICTs, the skills that enable them to do this and the types of activities they undertake when they are connected to the digital world (inequalities here are labelled the '*second level* divide').

A person is considered included in the digital space if they are able to translate ICT engagement into benefits while avoiding the risks. That is: a person is a true digital native if they are able to translate ICT use into tangible outcomes that improve their everyday well-being. Inequalities in the ability or opportunities to translate use of ICTs into tangible outcomes are considered the '*third level* digital divide'.

We know there are clear links between social and digital inequalities and that those who lack resources offline often lack the skills needed to be able to convert use of ICTs into tangible benefits in everyday life.

Framework for thinking about the links between the social and digital world



The study presented in this report explicitly set out to include a deeper understanding of the digital skills that young people from different backgrounds have partly because there is a renewed interest in the importance of these skills in current policy making and stakeholder initiatives related to inclusion in an increasingly digital Britain.

The Basic Digital Skills Framework and associated charter[1] show the interest of key stakeholders in this field. The evidence derived from this initiative and the From Digital Skills to Tangible Outcomes (DiSTO) project[2] that builds on this, shows that for increased digital literacy to turn into increased socio-economic equality of opportunity, a wide variety of digital skills is needed.

Little is as of yet known about how softer skills related to *social interaction* (i.e. networking and communicative skills) and *informal creative and participatory skills* (i.e. creating and sharing texts, images and videos) relate to employment and education prospects or psychological and physical well-being.

While the bulk of research around digital skills has focussed on adults, existing research suggests that these inequalities in opportunity also exist amongst young people. There are disparities in digital literacy and, against widespread assumptions to the contrary, by no means are all young people comfortable and capable participants in digital environments. Disadvantaged young people are likely to have lower quality access and lower levels of technical

1 https://doteveryone.org.uk/digital-skills/digital-skills-framework/
2 http://www.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/research/DiSTO/Home.aspx

skills which impede their ability to take up current educational and future employment opportunities and to avoid risks that might lead to physical or emotional harm. There is a particular gap in baseline data around the digital skills and engagement of young people who fall outside of or who are 'marginalised' from mainstream education and employment such as young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs), and little is known about how their use and the outcomes they achieve from it differs from more advantaged youth.

This report presents the evidence collected through qualitative fieldwork using focus groups and a national survey of young people with a booster sample for NEETs. This two track approach explored a wide variety of young people's ICT access, skills, uses and the outcomes that they achieved through this engagement. Unique in its field, this report also presents systematic research of the *motivations and attitudes* of young people from different backgrounds as well as the *support networks* that they have in navigating this digital world. These findings fill some of the gaps in the evidence and understanding of the barriers and enablers vulnerable youth come across in taking up the opportunities available through engagement with ICTs.

In the end, that is what digital inclusion and related policies and interventions should be about: creating equality of opportunity in how ICTs benefit our everyday well-being and participation in society. As one of the NEETs put it...

THE POTENTIAL OF TECHNOLOGY IS TO CLOSE THE POVERTY DIVIDE BETWEEN THE RICHEST AND THE POOREST, AND ESSENTIALLY ENABLE THE REST OF THE WORLD TO WORK IN A MORE COOPERATIVE WAY, THAT IS IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE MAJORITY OF THE POPULATION, RATHER THAN JUST A FEW WHO GET TO MAKE THE RULES.

Note for the reader

The report consists of six sections that build on each other but can be read separately as well: 1) Where: Access; 2) Which: Skills; 3) Why: Motivations and Attitudes; 4) Who: Networks of support; 5) What: Use; and 6) What for: Outcomes. Every section will start with an overview of the findings for each indicator at the general level, after which more detailed descriptions of the findings are given and comparisons based on their socio-demographic, personal and digital characteristics are made. To make it manageable and readable, this report will focus on a few key socio-demographic, psychological and digital characteristics in comparing young people from different backgrounds and a few key citations from the focus groups. It will refer to research and literature but not reference particular text. The bibliography on which this background research is based is available upon request.

Note on methodology

This study combined qualitative focus groups with an online survey. The survey included a broader sample of youth in general while the focus groups focused exclusively on conversations with NEETs.

Five focus groups were conducted during the month of August 2016 on locations where The Prince's Trust NEET-related Team and Fairbridge programmes ran (including FE Colleges, Prince's Trust centres, and fire stations). Each of the discussions lasted from one to one and a half hours and involved anywhere from four to eight participants between the ages of 16 and 26. Some of the focus groups included participants of a single sex, others were mixed. The groups were based on those formed as part of Prince's Trust programmes but the respondents were free to opt in or out of participation when the focus groups were held during one of their programme days. Contributions have been anonymised throughout the report.

Quotes have been kept as closely as possible to the original expressions used by these young people to make sure their voices were authentically heard with only minor amendments/additions if the original wording was likely to cause problems in understanding.

The survey sampling aimed for 800 internet users in the UK between 16 and 24 and a booster sample of 400 NEET youth. The survey was created and managed on LSE servers and distributed to Toluna's[3] survey panel and (for the NEETs) their partner panels.

The final sample consisted of 1344 young people who on average had used the internet 10 years. This consists of a representative sample of 1026 young people and a sample of 318 NEETs which was majority female. The different regions were represented with 238 individuals from London, 939 from the rest of England, 82 in Scotland, 51 in Wales and 34 in Northern Ireland.

The initial survey design was based on existing instruments from the From Digital Skills to Tangible Outcome (DiSTO), The Basic Digital Skills Framework (DotEveryone), Global Kids Online, World Internet Project and Ofcom surveys and the focus group fed into the development of final survey design.

In effect, the focus group took different sections of the initially designed survey instrument as conversation starters and used this form of group cognitive interview to generate original, in-depth qualitative data as well as improve and adapt the questionnaire.

The methodological appendix available on the DiSTO[4] website presents more detail on the measures and a discussion of advantages and shortcomings of this kind of methodological triangulation as well as the full questionnaire.

The study was much richer and separate reports and academic papers will follow to delve deeper into some of the interesting issues that this study has brought to light. This report will refer to multi-variate analyses but not present the statistical results of these.

The multi-variate analyses were based on basic regressions using logistic or general linear modelling (with $p < .05$ significance cut off levels) in which the variable or factor to be explained is simultaneously related to a variety of indicators (e.g. socio-demographics, personal characteristics, motivation, skills, support structure and digital environment).

This allows the researcher to determine which of these are independently related to the variable to be explained. For example, it is possible to determine if NEETs really have lower skill levels or whether it is because NEETs have access to a narrower range of ICTs that they have lower skill levels – in the latter case it is the digital environment rather than the work status that explains skill levels and providing access might solve a potential NEETs digital skills deficit.

3 http://www.toluna-group.com/

4 http://www.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/research/DiSTO/DiSTO-NEETs.aspx

WHERE: ACCESS

Access goes beyond being able to connect to the internet. When it comes to access it is important to differentiate ubiquity of access (always on, everywhere, private access), the quality of the connection (speed of the line), and the versatility of the platform (closed environments and apps versus open environments and browsing).

Ubiquitous, high quality access makes seamless connecting to the digital world possible so that ICTs become part of the flow of everyday life. Access to private devices whenever and wherever needed also allows individuals to have autonomous digital experiences, beneficial for the development of skills and broadening of engagement levels.

To cover these different elements of access, three questions were included in the survey: which devices they had access to, how often they used these devices to connect to the internet, and the locations where they connected to the internet.

What we already know about NEETs and access

Ofcom's *Adults' Media and Attitudes Report* (2016) shows that 1 in 10 Brits does not use the internet and consequently does not have access to the opportunities available through engagement with ICTs.

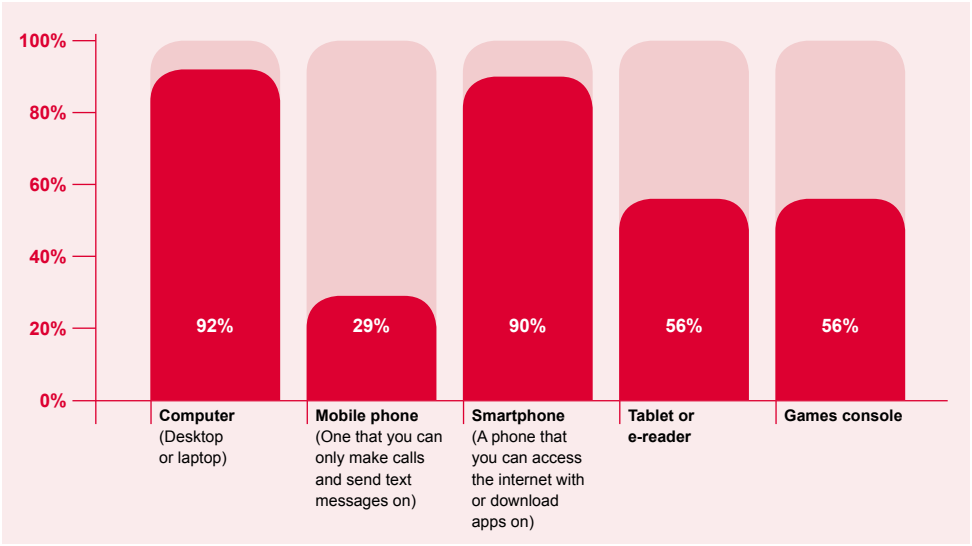
Only 3% of young adults (16 to 24 year olds) do not use the internet but their access is of a different kind, more mobile and app based, to that of other generations. In this context, it is important to note that recent research shows that mobile access on smartphones and tablets does not allow individuals to undertake the same activities as others who have access to a broader variety of devices and locations.

Generalisable, comparative quantitative data on NEETs' digital access and use has not been available until now.

The best available estimates come from a handful of qualitative studies that provided estimates based on small and purposeful samples. These studies indicate that for NEETs mobile phones are often the main route of access to the internet. We can assume from research with the general population that this is likely to provide NEETs with lower quality engagement with practical services and more complex tasks, even if it allows them to access social and entertainment functions.

Studies show that other issues often encountered by NEETs include the lack of personal ownership of devices, having to seek out free WiFi connections, limited data plans, time-limits and the lack of privacy linked to an inability or reluctance to access certain webpages in public spaces such as Jobcentres, community centres and libraries.

Access devices: Do you have access to the following devices?



Base: All young people (N=1026 Non-NEETs and N=318 NEETs).

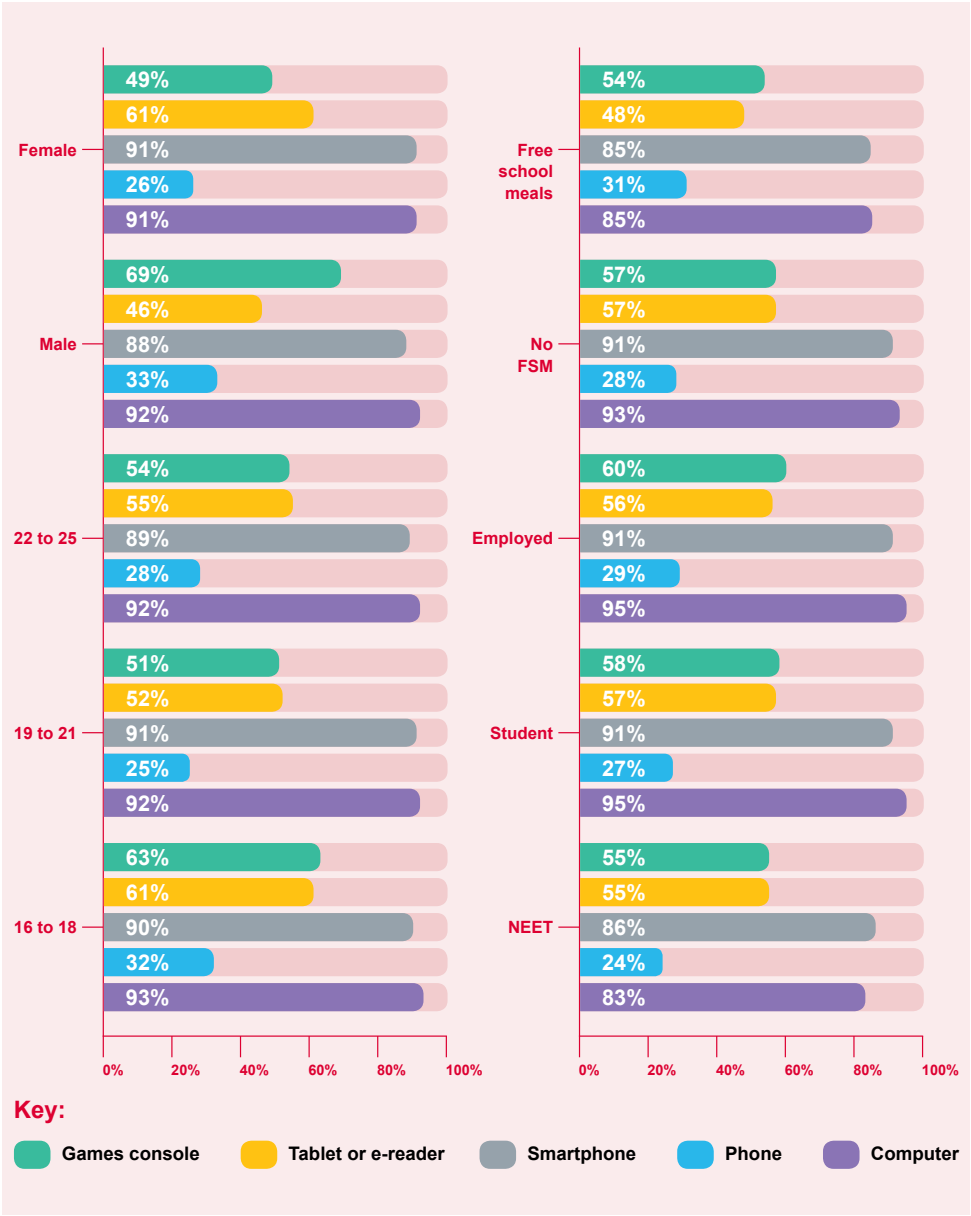
Devices

As indicated in the introduction to this section, having a variety of devices allows young people to play around with technology, especially when it is a personal device such as a smartphone or tablet.

Most young people who participated in this survey (92%) still have access to desktop PCs or laptops and almost as many have access to smartphones (90%).

Tablets and games consoles are equally represented. 29% also still has access to mobile phones that are not connected to the internet.

Access to devices by socio-demographic characteristics



Base: All young people (N=1026 Non-NEETs and N=318 NEETs).

There were significant differences in age, gender, history of poverty and work status in the devices that young people had access to.

Besides the gender and age differences that we might expect based on other studies (e.g. younger male participants having more access to games consoles) the differences related to mobile phones are interesting: young women are more likely to have access to smartphones.

We see confirmed here what we expect based on the links between social and digital disadvantage; those with a history of poverty (indicated by those who have received free school meals (FSM) throughout their education) and NEETs are less likely to have access to all devices, computers in particular (FSM=85%; NEET=83%), in comparison to those who did not receive FSM (93%) or were in employment (95%).

The exception is non-smartphones which are more common amongst those who received FSM throughout their school days (31%) and which women (26%) were less likely to have access to than men (33%). In the focus groups, having a not up-to-date phone and preferring non-mediated communication were often mentioned by NEETs, though not always in a negative sense.

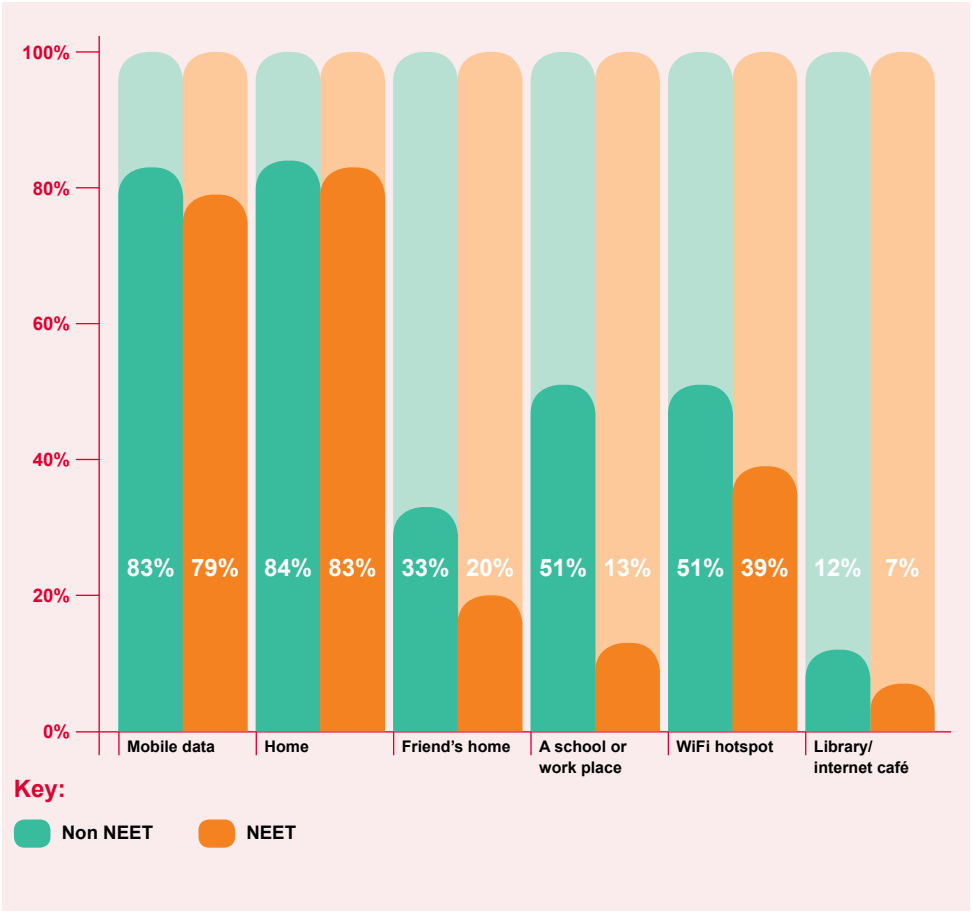
Some showed a sense of pride in not being that digitally connected, it made a person more real and connected to what was really important such as friends and family present in the room.

> **I PREFER TO BE IN THE REAL WORLD, TO HAVE FACE TO FACE CONVERSATIONS, RATHER THAN OVER THE PHONE.**

Locations

A variety of internet access points or locations is another aspect of ubiquity of connectivity that helps young people use ICTs where and when they need them and integrate them into their everyday lives.

Locations of access by work status: In the last month, how did you connect to the internet?



Base: All young people (N=1026 Non-NEETs and N=318 NEETs).

While public locations like schools or work (42%) and public WiFi hotspots (48%) are important as access points for these young people, private access via mobiles (82%) or home connections (84%) still outweigh the others in terms of frequent use.

NEETs were far less likely to have connected to the internet at a friend or neighbour's home (20%), at a school or workplace (13%), through public WiFi (39%), or in an internet café (7%) in comparisons to those who were in employment or education (33%, 51%, 51%, and 12%).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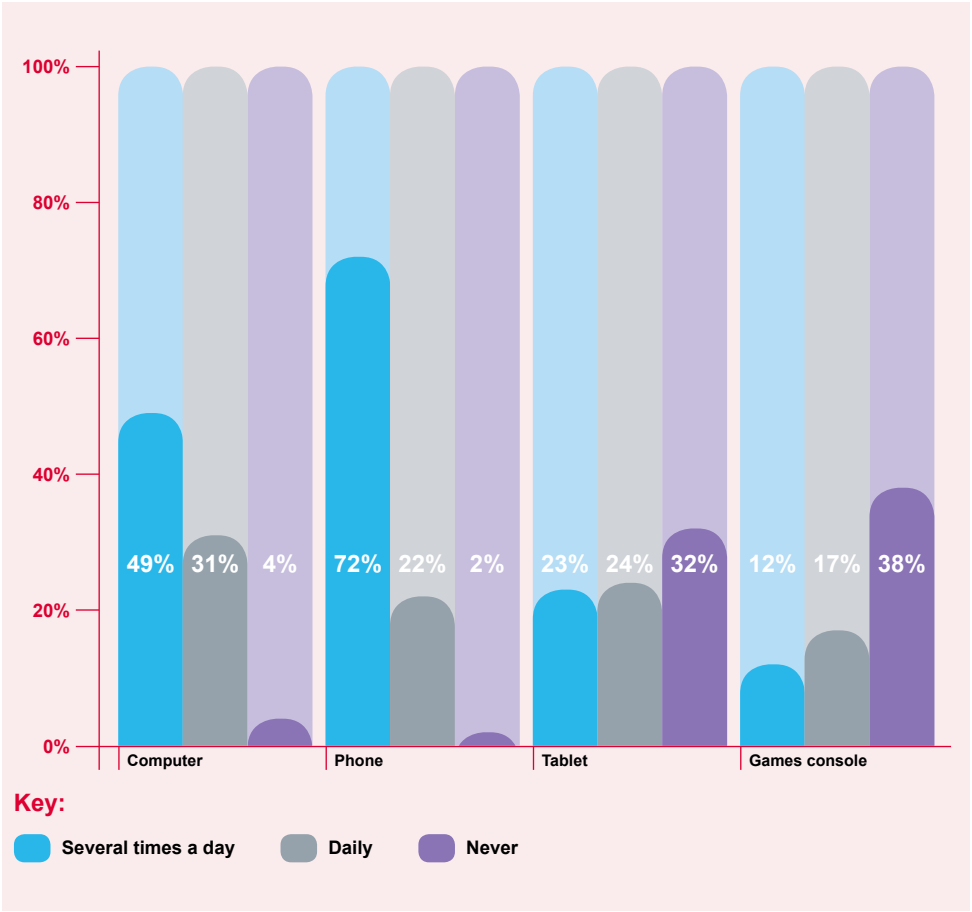
Frequency of use: How often do you connect to the internet using the following devices?



Base: All young people (Non-NEETs N=1026; NEETs N=318).

Frequency of use

However many access devices or locations a person has, it is only with frequent use that someone might become comfortable in the digital space.

Note:
Daily use percentage of those who have used the device to connect to the internet; excludes respondents who answered never. (Computer N=1278, Phone N=1311, Tablet N=876, Games Console N=798).

While most young people have access to both PCs and mobile phones, they are online more frequently with their mobile phones; 80% of those who use a PC to connect use it daily or several times per day compared to 99% using their smartphone daily or several times per day.

Young people reflect the patterns in the wider population relying on the standard devices for their everyday use even when they have access to a wider range of devices: 38% of young people have never accessed the internet through a games console and about a third (32%) has not accessed the internet through a tablet.

The patterns of frequency of use reflect to a large extent those of access to devices with significant age, gender, poverty and work status differences.

In general, women used devices less frequently than men with the exception of smartphones. Notable is that FSM receivers used games consoles more frequently (on average between monthly and less than monthly) than those without this history (on average between never and less than monthly) but they used other devices less frequently.

Even more interesting is that women (14%) and NEETs (14%) rely far more on their mobiles than men (5%) and students (8%) do. While employed individuals also rely on their mobiles (12%) as the most frequent point of access (i.e. mobile mostly users) they, in contrast to NEETs, accessed and used other devices frequently too.

Mobility and social resourcefulness in getting access

The problems of relying on mobiles as the main access points have been observed in other studies and also came out in the focus groups. Often data plans and costs are an issue and therefore NEETs have to be creative. Alongside the more widely recognised strategies also measured through the survey, such as visiting libraries or places of study with free WiFi, NEETs used their social resources (e.g. friends).

> **“I’M THAT GUY THAT’LL WALK INTO YOUR HOUSE AND ASK ‘DO YOU HAVE WIFI?’**

The main issue here was, unsurprisingly, a lack of income but also smartphones breaking down and not being replaced, since the originals were often hand-me-downs or gifts.

The issue of access resulted in both limited ability to use the internet in the privacy of one’s own home and potential social isolation because their friends are connected at home.

The lack of a private connection might result in social embarrassment or make the home a non-desirable location to hang out and socialise.

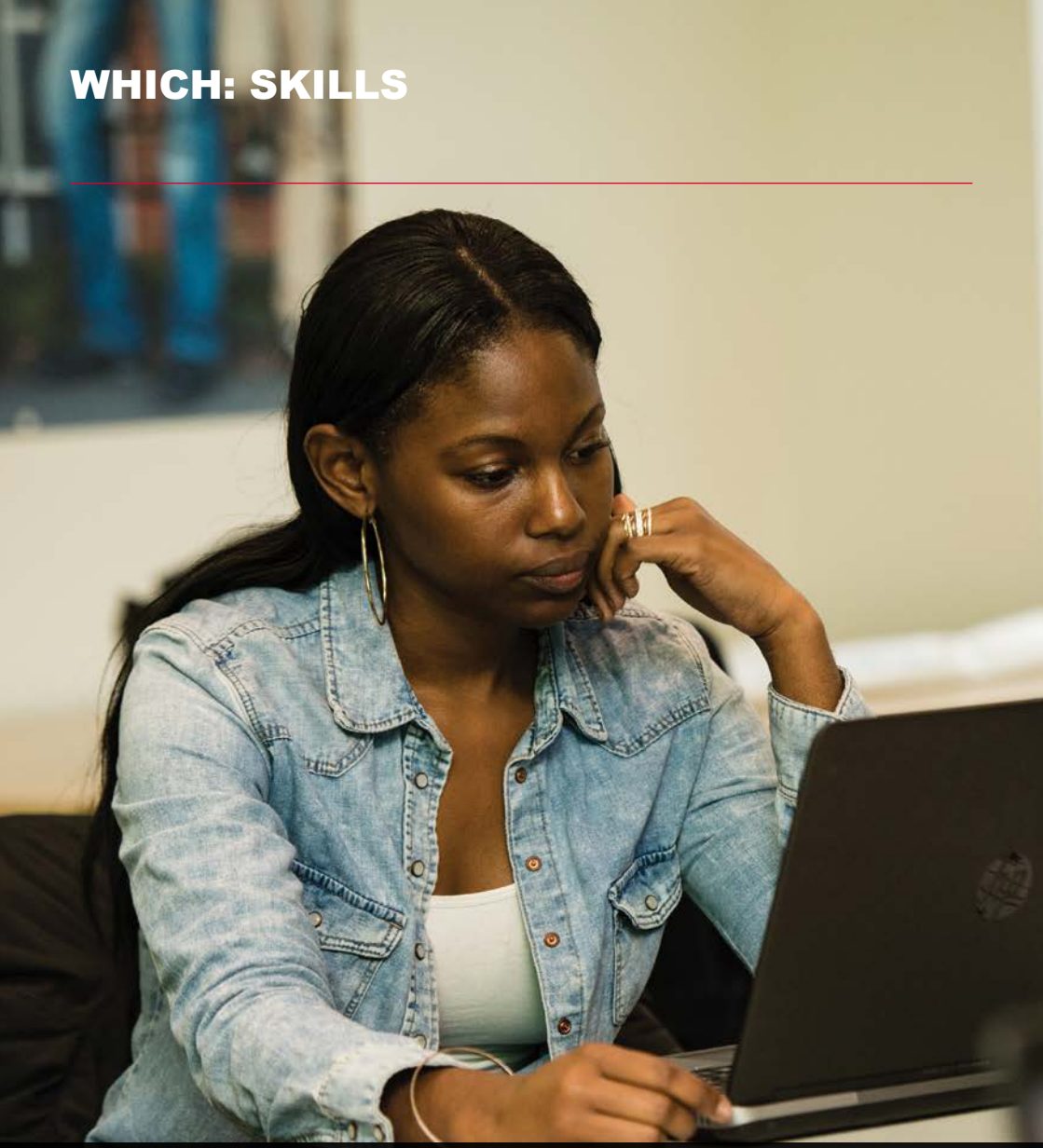
Friends expressed disbelief that they did not have access to WiFi at home, making them think that that must be a lie or a joke. One NEET described seeking access at his friends' houses sometimes by standing outside.

> **HALF THE TIME I'M ALREADY ON [MY FRIENDS' WIFI], SO I'LL SNEAK OUTSIDE THEIR HOUSE AND JUST SIT ON THEIR WALL FOR FIVE MINUTES.**

While free WiFi was not hard to find and NEETs managed to go online in many places when they had working phones, it was uncomfortable to have to seek out and rely on others or ask for codes. Interestingly, this did not translate in desires for more money to be able to buy better gadgets and instead was expressed in a view of a future world with ubiquitous internet for everyone. This desire for the seamless connectivity they perceived others to have was also apparent in requests for unlimited data and faster connection speeds.

> **I JUST WANT TO BE ABLE TO CONNECT TO OTHER PEOPLE'S INTERNET.**

WHICH: SKILLS



Inequalities in the benefits that people reap from ICT use do not relate to access alone. The skills to use the technology are fundamental to take advantage of the opportunities available and avoid some of the risks faced when going online.

Without the skills to use ICTs, access becomes frustrating and narrow in nature. Digital skills are distinct from computer skills, as use of ICTs requires more than technical skills or button knowledge; technical operational, information navigation, social and content creation skills are involved in digital engagement.

All these skills are necessary to engage, even when for some activities this might not intuitively appear to be the case. Since so much of digital engagement is about interacting with others, social skills (i.e. knowing who to communicate with, about what, on which platforms, in which way) underpin many online activities.

Similarly, many online activities involve the capacity to create and share content from filling out forms to uploading photos and designing websites. For example, social and content creation skills play a role in learning and in finding employment. In this context it is concerning that the latest industry research shows that Britain in general lags behind other countries, especially in relation to high level content creation skills (defined as coding, game, web and app design).

This study used the classification and measures from the From Digital Skills to Tangible Outcomes project[5] which based its measures on extensive testing and reviews of existing research and incorporates the skill set defined in the UK's Basic Digital Skills Framework[6].

This allowed for an exploration of the full spectrum of skills, including technical operational, information navigation, social communicative, content creation and mobile/protection skills. These are closely related to the five basic digital skills in the skills charter: transacting, managing information, communicating and creating. The fifth factor, safety, which is separate in the basic digital skills charter, includes elements of operational, information navigation, social, content creation and mobile skills and is therefore not included as a separate skill here.

It is important to note here that the range of skills measured in the survey does not touch upon what others have called critical literacy. Critical literacy is an understanding of how texts are created and what the persuasive nature of texts is. Because this is very context dependent this is better explored through qualitative research.

It is clear that the awareness of commercial and other interests behind the production of content online is sometimes lacking. This report addresses these critical literacy issues in each part of the skills section through a look at the qualitative findings.

What we already know about NEETs and digital skills

As was the case for access, there is little systematic, generalisable research exploring NEETs' digital skills. Most of the available empirical evidence comes from small scale qualitative descriptions produced by youth themselves or their support service workers.

5 http://www.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/research/DiSTO/Home.aspx
6 https://doteveryone.org.uk/digital-skills/digital-skills-framework/

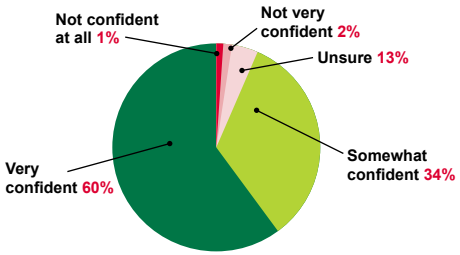
Earlier Prince's Trust (2013) research[7] has shown that NEETs suffer disproportionately from a lack of confidence and do not feel that they have the skills to use ICTs to help improve their situation, nor do they apply for jobs that involve these types of skills. Other studies show that youth from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to lack confidence and that they encounter more barriers in looking at and understanding how to use information; digital or otherwise. The lack of confidence in their own computer skills and the limited use of ICTs for purposes that could improve NEETs' situations, are even more problematic perhaps than for other generations because others in their generation are rapidly adopting ICTs for a variety of purposes.

NEETs experience particular difficulties with digital activities requiring information seeking and evaluation. NEETs repeatedly request help for the same tasks, such as account setups, benefits interpretation, financial planning and online job applications. Studies have highlighted issues associated with not being able to formulate and/or provide enough information in their query or not having critical skills to determine which of many semi-identical search links to click; leading to confusion, frustration and defeatism. There is no academic research on the social and creative digital skills of NEETs in particular but they are likely to share the general tendency for young people to have technical, operational skills and actively engage with social platforms online, but lacking in the more critical information, communication and content creation skills.

Overall confidence and skills

Besides practical skills, digital self-efficacy or confidence that people have in their own abilities has been shown to be an important driver of digital engagement.

Digital self-confidence: Overall, how confident would you say you are as a user of the internet and technologies such as mobile phones?



> **IT'S NOT ROCKET SCIENCE, YOU'RE JUST BORN TO IT.**

Base: All young people (N=1026 Non-NEETs and N=318 NEETs).

Note:
The question did not give answer categories but asked the respondents to slide a bar to the left or right. This created either a smiling (to the right) or a frowning (to the left smiley icon).

7 https://www.princes-trust.org.uk/Our-research_Digital-Literacy_2013.pdf

In terms of confidence, the young participants in this study labelled themselves digital natives; with just under two thirds (60%) indicating that they were very confident and a third (34%) saying they were somewhat confident.

It needs to be noted though that this also means that over a third was not as confident as some older generations might think. Here we see the pattern of linked disadvantages repeating itself: those with economic disadvantages, FSM receivers (55% very confident), NEETs (60% very confident) and students (57% very confident) sharing lower levels of digital self-confidence as compared to those who were in some form of employment (63% very confident) or did not have a history of economic disadvantage (61% very confident). These generally high levels of confidence were reflected in the qualitative work. NEETs felt like they were in a better position than many of their friends who were not participating in a Prince's Trust programme. They attributed their own abilities not to learning or study but to the fact that being digital was easy to figure out. They were relatively satisfied with what they were able to do and when things went wrong they did not attribute this to their own skill but to the failing technology or the people who were on or behind the platforms.

While potentially empowering in that NEETs did not feel undermined or threatened by the technology, this might lead to them ignoring things that they do not yet master, or to not seeking and not being offered further learning opportunities.

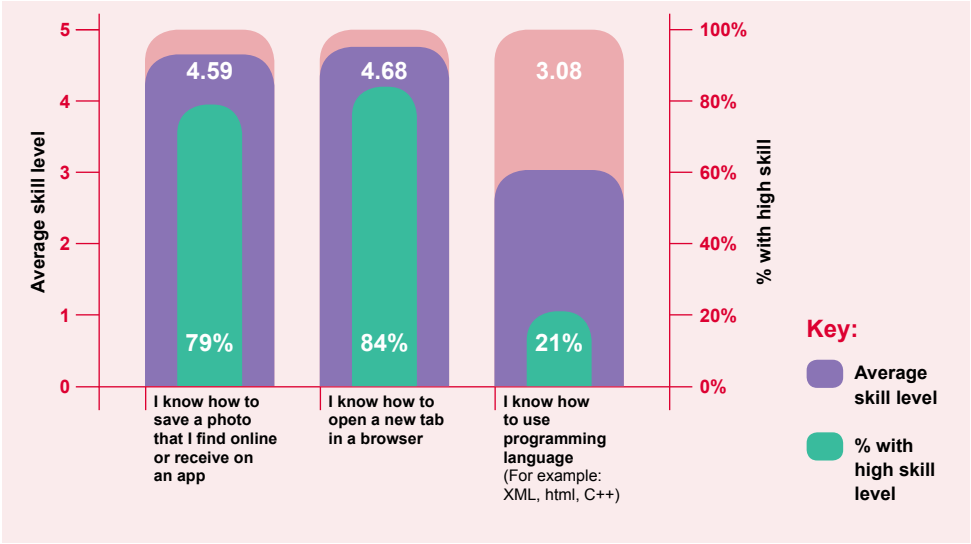
The study used 17 different items (see sections that follow for details) to measure skills across five categories; operational, information-navigation, social communicative, content creation and mobile/protection skills. These measure the transferable skills necessary across a range of uses and applications by avoiding asking about use or platform specific activities. On average participants indicated high skill levels on less than half of the skills they were asked about - 'very true of me' for 8 out of the 17 items. The average level of skill was medium high[8] ('somewhat true of me'). They were the least skilled in content creation and information navigation. Participants indicated high levels for 2 out of 3 operational skills, 1 out of 3 navigation skills, 3 out of 4 social skills, 1 out of 4 content creation skills, 2 out of 3 mobile/ protection skills.

The multi-variate analysis confirmed that students have lower overall skill levels as do those with emotional problems. Those who have high traditional problem solving abilities and live in rich digital environments (e.g. they have ubiquitous access) are perhaps unsurprisingly more skilled in the digital world. The difference based on socio-economic disadvantage in overall skill levels was not significant; non NEETs had 8.5 skills at a high level compared to NEETs was 8.3. However, processes of compound disadvantage could mean that, since NEETs were more likely to be disadvantaged in socio-economic status and offline skill sets and because they were more likely to have emotional problems, NEETs are less digitally skilled.

8 High level skill scores calculated by counting the number of times a person indicated that a skill statement was 'very true of me' among items on that particular dimension. Average skills scores assumed that someone who did not know what a skill was did not have it and thus got a score of 0. The scale consisted of 0='don't know what this means' and a scale from 1 to 5 where 1='not at all true' of me and 5='very true of me').

Technical and operational skills

Average and high operational skill levels



Base: All young people (N=1026 Non-NEETs and N=318 NEETs).

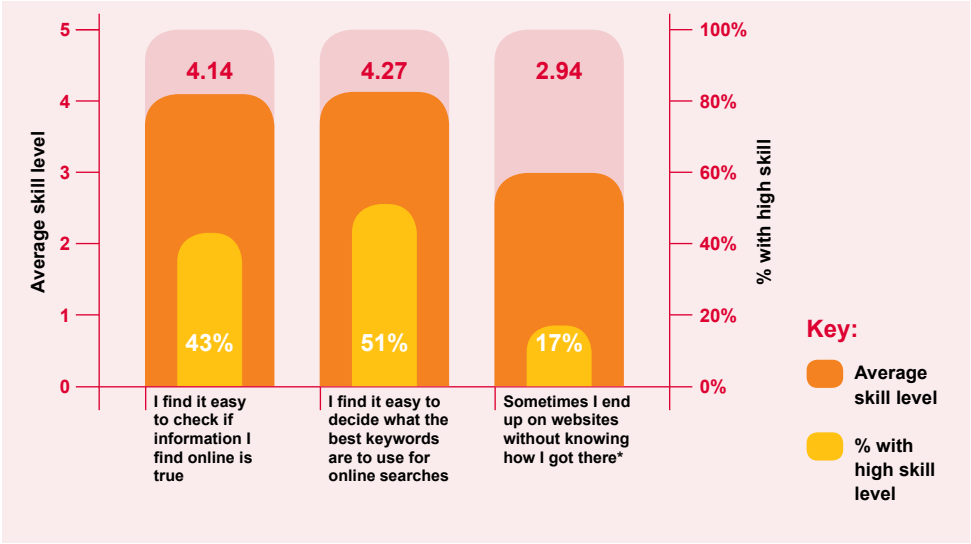
Note:
0='don't know what this means', scale 1 to 5 where 1='not at all true of me' and 5='very true of me'. High skill level is composed of those indicating that the skill is very true of them.

Respondents are most comfortable with basic operational skills such as opening tabs (84% high skill levels) and saving photos (79% high skill level) but with more advanced operational skills such as programming there is still a large deficit (only 21% has high skill levels).

While this paints a positive picture overall, one in five (21%) does not have high skill levels in saving photos which could be considered a fairly basic activity in the current social media and sharing Web 2.0 environment.

Information navigation skills

Average and high information navigation skill levels



Base: All young people (N=1026 Non-NEETs and N=318 NEETs).

Note:
0='don't know what this means', scale 1 to 5 where 1= 'not at all true of me' and 5='very true of me'. High skill level is composed of those indicating that the skill is very true of them.

*This scale was reversed so that a higher score means being less likely to get lost.

Keyword searches, the most basic of information navigation skills is the one young people were most comfortable with, showing somewhat high average skill levels (score of 4.27 out of 5) and 51% with high skill levels. Nevertheless, levels of information navigation skills were lower than one might expect of true digital natives. The large majority (83%) did not have high levels of skill in orienting themselves, ending up on websites without knowing how they got there. Interesting is that while getting lost online was an aspect where young people were equally distributed across the range from high to low competency, the other skills young people either had to a high degree or they did not have them.

In the multi-variate analysis, an interesting result appeared as regards to work status. The employed respondents had higher information navigation skills, then NEETs, then students. This might be due to students having to undertake more complex tasks in information searching and thus finding their skills lacking, while NEETs and the employed on average

have information searching tasks that are relatively less complicated and thus their skills might be appropriate to their needs. Nevertheless, since issues associated with being NEET such as having emotional problems and lower social esteem and poorer digital environments are strongly linked to lower information navigation skills, NEETs are still struggling to keep up with the employed in terms of information navigation.

Of the NEETs, 46% had truth checking, 49% had keyword search and 19% had orientation skills and on average they had 1.1 of the 3 information navigation skills at the highest level, as compared to the employed who had 56% truth checking, 59% keyword search and 24% orientation skills and 1.4 information navigation skills at the highest level.

However, the multi-variate analysis indicates that once other socio-demographic and personal characteristics are controlled for they can have higher skill levels; which suggest that there are possibilities to break the negative cycle by focussing on improving the general resources and support for NEETs.

Getting lost in spite of skill

Critical information literacy and navigation were some of the most important topics for the more disadvantaged NEET participants in the focus groups. As is the case for most internet users search engines were the main information acquisition source for NEETs but they could not fully verbalise their search strategies.

Only a few participants stated that they used “keywords” for their searches (even after they were asked to fill out a survey asking about keyword searches).

Strategies recommended by critical digital literacy programmes – such as cross checking information through different links, visiting sites of known and well established organisations, and avoiding Wikipedia – were mentioned regularly and these seem to be part of the general discourse now.

The Wikipedia avoidance strategy was among the most common behaviours reported, as participants in different focus groups repeatedly stated that the online encyclopaedia is “just rubbish”.

However, beyond these rather simple and explicit strategies NEETs did have problems with critical literacy. Quite a few assumed that information was correct because it appeared logical or true and this was not contested by the others in the focus groups.

In other areas there was more awareness of the inadequacy of some of their search strategies. Interesting in this regard were reports of self-diagnosing health issues by Googling their symptoms, and laughing the method off as it too frequently resulted in a diagnosis of a life-threatening illness.

Another aspect of search that caused instant recognition was the idea of relatively undirected search (e.g. clicking on links that were provided somewhere without explicitly having looked for this topic or website) instead of actively searching things out. This led to getting lost online, ending up on websites without knowing how or being taken to places or content without having clicked on anything. Discussions of YouTube searches or browsing were examples of this, where the playlists automatically screen another video without the person having necessarily selected these. NEETs saw this happen but did not really understand how this worked or why it happened.

There was a lack of understanding amongst NEETs about how digital content is produced and organised (i.e. media critical literacy), which shows that there is still much to do in terms of developing this type of literacy in this group in particular. They often assume online content is free and expressed a belief that it is more objective because according to them it is not owned by anyone.

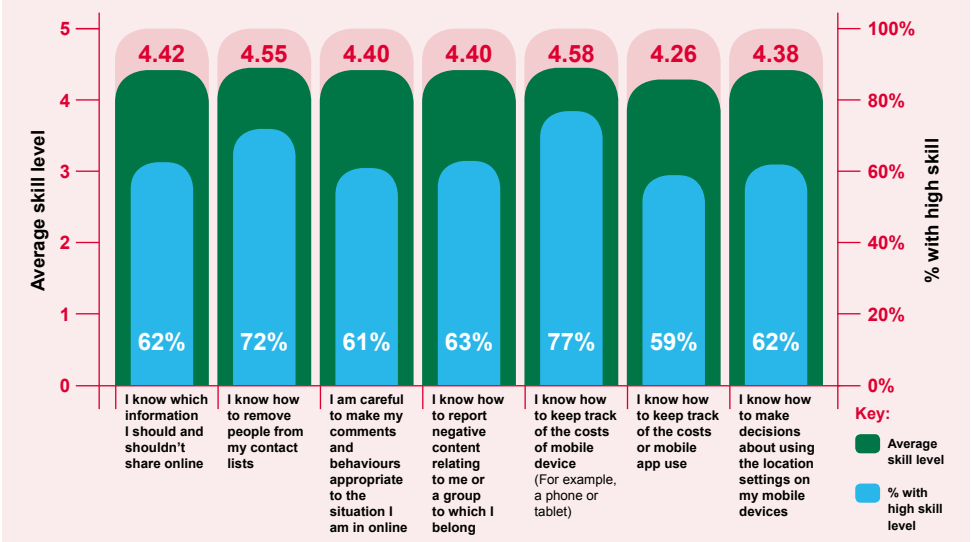
> **“THERE HAVE BEEN TIMES WHERE I’VE CLICKED ON SOMETHING AND IT’S TAKEN ME TO A DIFFERENT WEBSITE AND THEN I’VE GONE BACK, BECAUSE I’VE REALISED THAT’S NOT WHAT I WANTED.**

Social and mobile/protection

Besides the more commonly taught and measured skills such as technical operational and information navigation skills, the rise of ICTs as communication and participatory media make it necessary to have skills that allow us to navigate these types of experiences as well.

These 'softer' skills are very rarely measured and this study is the first to look at how they relate to general well-being and opportunities of disadvantaged youth in digital societies. In the analyses mobile and social skills showed a lot of the same characteristics, so they are analysed together here.

Average and high level social and mobile/protection skills



Base: All young people (N=1026 Non-NEETs and N=318 NEETs).

Note:
0='don't know what this means', Scale 1 to 5 where 1='not at all true of me' and 5='very true of me'. High skill level is composed of those indicating that the skill is very true of them.

Respondents were most skilled in the more basic operational social and mobile skills such as removing contacts (72% highly skilled) and downloading applications (77% highly skilled) and less skilled in areas that had to do with making decisions on how to behave where the consequences are less immediate (61% was careful in

their comments, 63% knew how to report negative comments and 62% understood protecting their personal location). Notably, around 40% of the participants did not indicate high skill levels for decisions about their own behaviour, dealing with negative behaviour of others, nor, in the mobile space, in making decisions about costs or their personal location data on mobile phones.

The multi-variate analyses show that gender, economic disadvantage, traditional problem solving skills and digital ecologies are related to social and mobile skills.

This is the field in which women are stronger, though more for the social (2.7 versus 2.3 high level skills) than the mobile/protection skills (2.0 versus 1.9 high level skills). In the other areas traditional disadvantage is reflected in digital skills deficits with those growing up in poorer households (FSM receivers – 4.3 versus 4.5 average score), those with lower problem solving skills (0.38 high level social and 0.32 mobile skills less) and those with digitally richer environments have lower levels of social and mobile skills (around 0.1 fewer high level skills with each device or location less).

Skills you need but don't learn

Managing social interaction was a widely discussed topic in the focus groups. This was one of the areas where there seemed to have been no formal training or awareness of the skills needed.

Managing relationships and profiles online was seen as something you just do or knew how to do. The NEETs seem to have passive short term strategies in both prevention and coping with some of the less pleasant aspects of mediated interactions. There was mention of lying low or not posting anything, ("lurking") but also in extreme cases of going offline.

NEETs had clearly got the message that you should only accept friend requests from the people you know and reported denying requests from people they had not met in person.

Blocking and ignoring the person were the recommended tactics. Very few seemed to have thought of or heard about reporting, moderation or mediation. There was one instance of reporting a person who had taken over a person's Facebook identity and in this case parents were asked for assistance since the person did not know how to do this herself.

> **"I HAD A REALLY BAD INCIDENT, WHERE SOMEBODY REPLICATED MY FACEBOOK PROFILE, LITERALLY WORD FOR WORD. [THEY ALSO] SENT ME QUITE A RUDE MESSAGE. SO I PRINT-SCREENED IT, SENT IT TO MY MUM AND BLOCKED HIM.**

NEETs in the focus groups reported experiencing issues of online bullying and catfishing (i.e. creating a fake profile with malicious intent such as fooling someone else into believing that you are romantically interested). Some of these were personal experiences but a surprising number referred to this happening to adults, either their parents or relatives of friends, and witnessing their friends being bullied.

Pictures often figured in their own and others' accounts, sometimes they were surprised and shocked at how people they considered otherwise very capable posted pictures of others (e.g. younger siblings) without thinking of the consequences. These were the moments in the focus groups where it became apparent that the more aware and skilled thought these things were very obvious but realised that not everyone, not even the other people in the discussion, thought the same.

Even after action has been taken it seems that there was confusion about how it could be prevented from happening again, indicating that their actions were reactive rather than proactive or preventative and that more universal skills which could be used for similar or different situations seemed to be missing. A bit of a defeatist attitude could be observed, with NEETs arguing that this was just the way it was: you either learned to live with it (mostly male NEETs) or avoided the digital space altogether (mostly female NEETs).

NEETs demonstrated forethought in reporting that their present behaviour could be subject to scrutiny from potential employees. Some of them had already experienced the negative effects of self-presentation online, not because they were not considerate in what they were posting or that others might see it but because employers had different criteria from those they expected.

NEETs took precautions which were quite drastic (i.e. disconnecting) to protect themselves or accepted that they had to live with these aspects, some of them implying that negative behaviour is inevitable because of human nature. They perceived a lack of safety nets beyond the police and those were logically seen to be only there for extreme cases.

It seems that social skills were seen as natural and only more technical and advanced content creation skills were discussed as requiring training.

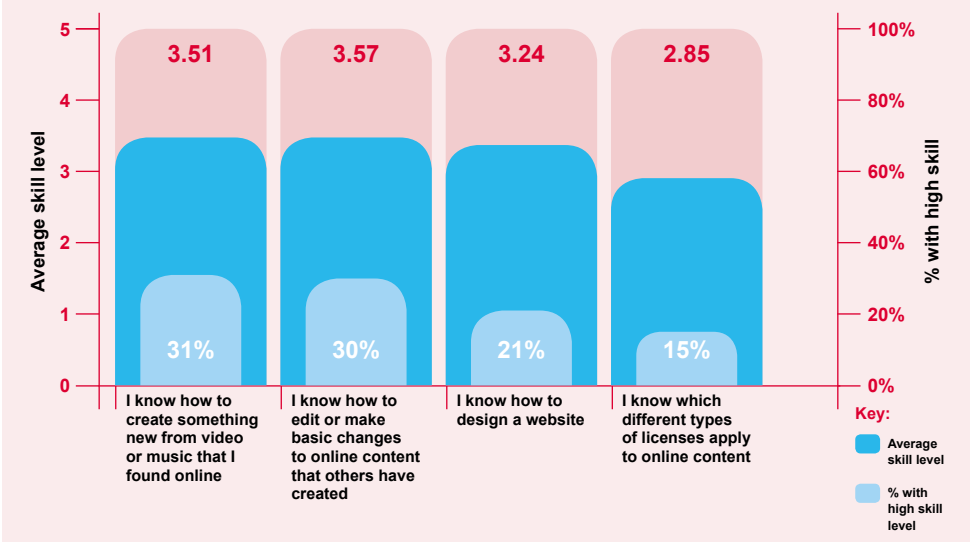
This could be related to experiences in school and elsewhere where the emphasis in training is on technical skills. Nevertheless, frustrations were more often mentioned and discussions more heated around negative social experiences than around frustrations with using ICTs themselves.

Content creation

Ever since the invention of Web 2.0 and the move towards digital by default, content creation skills from uploading documents to creating and distributing audio-visual content have been added to the list of fundamental digital skills.

Without them it is now hard to get a job (e.g. you need to upload CVs to apply and create digital texts for higher status jobs), utilise or access services (e.g. filling out forms and sharing information about oneself), and to maintain and establish relationships (e.g. social media are designed to make the sharing of content and information necessary to establish and maintain a relationship).

Average and high level content creation skills



Base: All young people (N=1026 Non-NEETs and N=318 NEETs).

Note:
0='don't know what this means', Scale 1 to 5 where 1='not at all true of me' and 5='very true of me'. High skill level is composed of those indicating that the skill is very true of them.

Compared to the other types of skills, young people's content creation skills are clearly lower. Participants were less skilled in understanding licenses (15% high skill levels) and website design (21% high skill levels) than they were in creating (31% high skill level) and editing (30% high skill level) content. Only a third had higher skills levels in creating and editing and less than a fifth exhibited the kind of skills needed to publish and distribute content.

The types of significant differences that were related to higher content creation skills were more to do with socio-cultural and personality aspects than with socio-economic differences between the young people.

For example, women were considerably less likely (0.8 versus 1.2 high level skills) to have high level content creation skills. Problem solvers (0.64 more high level skills) and those with lower social esteem (0.32 more high level skills) also had higher content creation skills. Interestingly, the range of locations or devices did not relate to content creation skills.

Doing without knowing why or how

NEETs' experiences with content creation training seemed to be either absent, not through connected technologies (e.g. excel spreadsheets) or very technical and abstract, and unrelated to most of the content creation that they had to do as part of their everyday lives, with the exception of creating CVs which was a standard part of their Prince's Trust programme.

While a few derived pleasure from learning how to programme tiny robots in class, learning Photoshop, trying out animation and coding, others described these types of classes they had had in school as "painful" and "horrible" and irrelevant to them and it remained unclear as to why they were learning these.

These classes were often part of special after hours clubs or one off courses and seemed disconnected from the rest of the curriculum. For some, being confronted with the more advanced technical skills led them to devalue what they could already do or made them feel different.

I ONLY KNOW THE BASICS. BECAUSE IT ISN'T SOMETHING THAT IS FOR ME.

Knowledge related to distribution of content is something that many struggle with and NEETs are no exception.

Only a few were able to give a definitive response when they were asked about licenses or how to reach an audience and while they started out fairly confident, they came up on hurdles while trying to explain this to others when they were asked questions.

Most of the time they seemed to be guessing or repeating verbatim what they had heard elsewhere or linking it to identity theft or surveillance and tracking by larger corporations under the big umbrella of ‘things that can happen to stuff that you put online’.

WHY: MOTIVATION AND ATTITUDES

Motivations might be called the missing link in understanding the relationship between traditional and digital forms of disadvantage. Researchers hypothesise that what really drives people to use and develop their ICT access and skills is motivation and general attitudes about what technologies can do for the individual and for society in general.

Motivations and attitudes are seen as key in helping people overcome barriers to inclusion in digital societies. They serve to facilitate the continuous updating and development of digital skills and thus guarantee sustainability of digital engagement. High levels of motivation also help to overcome barriers (e.g. negative experiences) and allow people to engage in non-routine ways (e.g. creatively). They facilitate individuals to see ICTs as fundamental to everyday life rather than as merely technical tools for which a use needs to be found.

Qualitative research in particular has shown that negative attitudes such as fear and lack of self-efficacy are important in driving people away from engagement with ICTs.

For example, people fear that viruses from one computer will kill files on others or are afraid to break technology. Personality of course also plays a part in an individual's motivation for engaging with certain types of digital activities. Most quantitative research around motivation focuses on very specific online activities and suggests that individuals are motivated to learn new skills to meet specific goals. Attitudes towards technology have a high explanatory value in relation to the level of engagement with the internet above and beyond socio-demographic characteristics.

Quantitative research shows that a lack of interest has become the most prominent reason for non-use in countries with high levels of diffusion. The 2013 OxIS survey[9] showed that almost 94% of the British non-internet user population indicated that they did not use the internet because they were not interested, this was up from 52% in 2005. Motivations are not only internal and interest-driven but also determined by external pressures or norms. This manifests itself in the range of digital activities that people undertake to fit in in a social group and the desire to stay connected with others. There is a difference between motivations (goal oriented, pragmatic drives), attitudes (abstract, general opinions) and opinions/ dispositions (value-laden, social norms towards the benefits and risks of technology).

At present the empirical evidence is inconclusive, suggesting that individuals might not be aware of what kind of opportunities they are excluded from. Therefore, they might not see the internet as a useful resource for them (i.e. motivation), that the content available online might not be designed for those who are currently not as engaged, leading individuals to see it as not for them (i.e. attitudes) or that this has to do with the social norms (i.e. dispositions) surrounding technology within the particular social context and communities of the less engaged ICTs use, encouraging or discouraging use of ICTs.

What we already know about NEETs and motivation

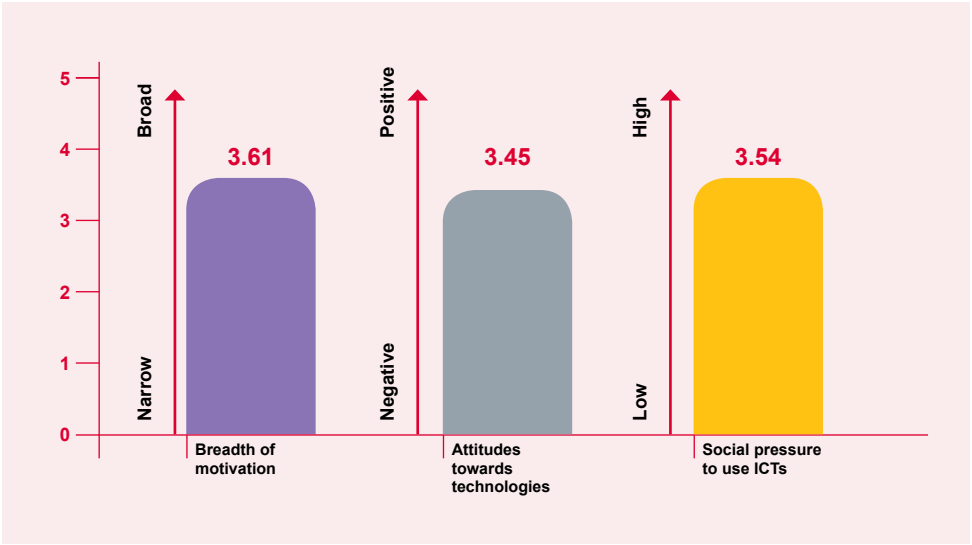
The little research that is out there about specific types of motivation to use ICTs by NEETs suggests a potential benefit of online engagement for identity establishment and entertainment. However, it highlights a high number of negative and frustrating experiences when they aim to undertake activities online that they are encouraged or required to do by others (e.g. job searches, online courses). This might influence their general attitudes towards ICTs but so far this has remained unexplored in more systematic, generalisable studies.

Overall motivations and attitudes

In this section, a distinction is made between individual motivations, general attitudes and the social pressure (i.e. dispositions) around ICT use. This is an innovative approach formulated after a review of the wide and disjointed field of research into reasons for (dis)engagement.

9 http://oxis.oii.ox.ac.uk/

Overall motivation and attitudinal scales[10]: Indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about (why you use) technologies such as the internet and mobile phones



Base: All young people (N=1026 Non-NEETs and N=318 NEETs).

On average motivation to engage with the internet came from a wide variety of interests; 3.6 out of 5 different types of motivation were mentioned (entertainment, social, functional, news, and creative aspects) as drivers for their ICT use. Young people were mildly positive about ICTs and their impact on societies (average score of 3.45 on a scale from 1 to 5), though perhaps less so than the discourse of the digital natives, skilled and comfortable in a digital world suggests. Similarly, they perceive that those around them put pressure on them and that social norms encourage them to use ICTs (average score 3.54 on a scale from 1 to 5).

The multi-variate analyses show that motivations, attitudes and social pressures to use ICTs are related to a broad spectrum of indicators in quite unexpected ways. While women are more broadly motivated to use them they have more negative attitudes towards ICTs.

This is a different pattern from NEETs, those who are emotionally balanced and those who have high social esteem.

10 Breadth of motivation was measured through the summing of the number of times a person agreed somewhat or strongly with the statements on the scale. The attitudinal and social digital ecology scales were created by averaging the agreement across the items on the scales which ranged from: 1 ‘Strongly disagree’ to 5 ‘Strongly agree’.

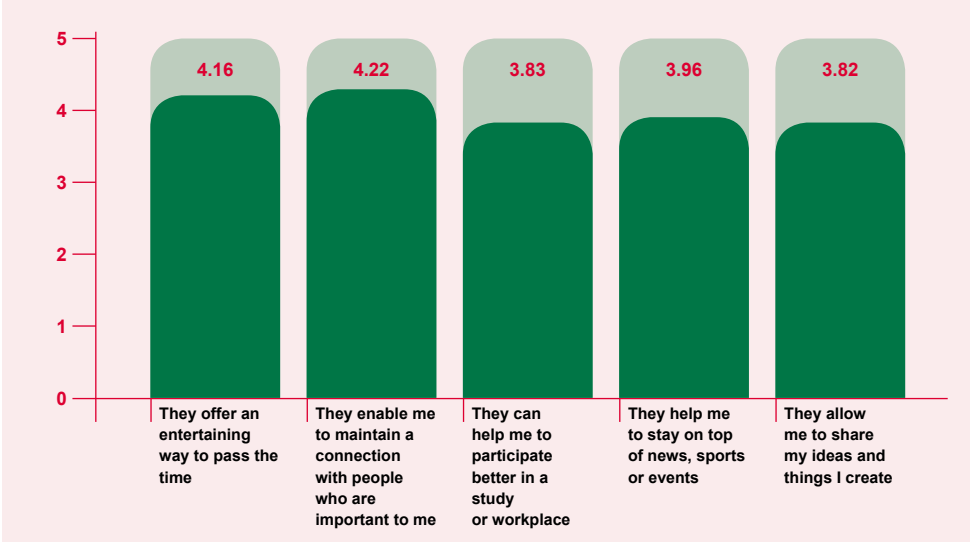
These groups of young people have positive attitudes towards ICTs, do not feel much social pressure to use them but are not more motivated to use ICTs than others. Problem solvers on the other hand have more negative impressions of ICTs and feel social pressure to use them. Those with higher education also perceive more social pressure to use ICTs and, related to this, are more broadly motivated.

There is a strong relationship between perceiving there to be social pressure to use ICTs and being broadly motivated as an individual, this suggests an individual internalisation of social norms and values around ICT use which is independent from whether ICTs are perceived as beneficial in a more general sense. In fact for some groups, social pressure seems related to lower appreciation of what ICTs can do for society. That is, they feel social pressure, hence are more motivated to use, but at the same time may have negative (or less positive) attitudes towards ICTs in general.

Unsurprisingly, a rich digital environment and high levels of digital skills and confidence are related to broader sets of motivations, more positive attitudes and, in the case of skill levels, more social encouragement to use ICTs.

Motivations

Levels of different types of motivation: 'I use the internet and mobile phones because...'



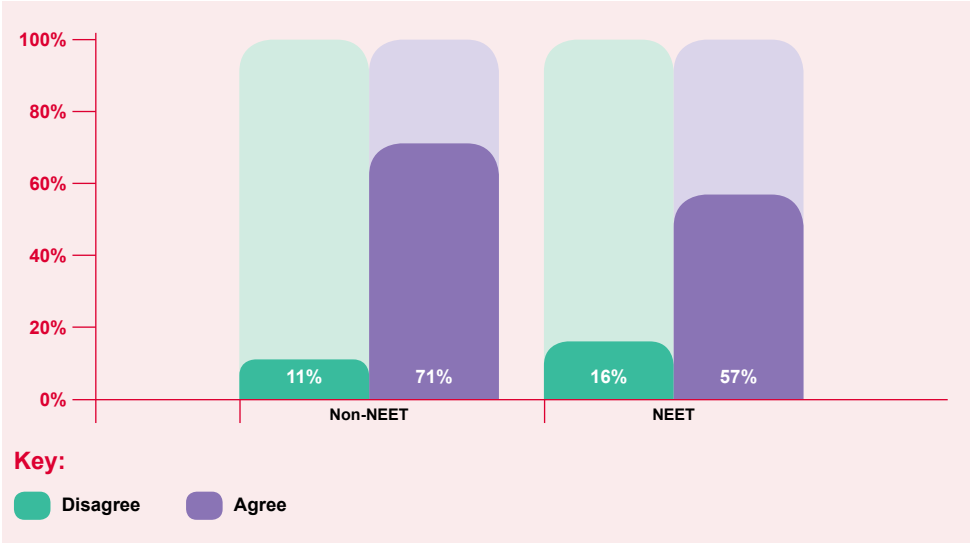
Base: All young people (N=1026 Non-NEETs and N=318 NEETs).

As expected, the entertainment (4.16 on scale to 5) and social (4.22 on scale to 5) possibilities of ICTs were the most important motivators for use and functional employment and education related issues (3.83 on scale to 5) and creative aspects (3.82 on scale to 5) of using ICTs were the least important.

Nevertheless, overall all were seen as reasons to engage digitally and these young people showed high and broad levels of motivation.

PERSONALLY I DON'T THINK I COULD REALLY LIVE WITHOUT MY TECH. I NEED THE INTERNET BECAUSE IF I DON'T HAVE IT, THEN I WON'T BE ABLE TO GET ANYTHING DONE OR FIND OUT ANYTHING NEW.

ICTs: 'They can help me to participate better in a study or workplace' by work status



Base: All young people (N=1026 Non-NEETs and N=318 NEETs).

Age, gender, a history of poverty and work status were all related to the type of motivation young people had to use ICTs.

The older group and men were more motivated by information related aspects, women and FSM receivers were more motivated by socialising and entertainment aspects of ICTs than their peers. In the survey, NEETs were the least motivated by all of these aspects of ICT use but this was especially true for functional aspects: 16% disagreed and 57% agreed that work or study could motivate them to use ICTs, compared with 11% and 71% of non-NEETs.

This reflects the experiences of NEETs who are often required to look for jobs and employment by outside organisations and therefore might not feel individually motivated to do so. NEETs indicated much frustration with the supposedly functional or pragmatic uses of ICTs for employment and education-related matters. There was a conflict between their desire to apply for jobs in-person and being told to apply for positions online because that would be easier for the employers.

YOU DON'T EVEN GET A 'THANK YOU' EMAIL TO SAY THEY'VE RECEIVED YOUR EMAIL.

From their experiences, it is clear that the online process is more frustrating and, because of their history with rejection, humiliating considering that online job applications almost universally provide no follow up message from the employers which they interpret as a rejection of them personally.

To some extent it was not so much about the experience of not getting a job, as it was about being acknowledged with a response. This desire for human contact and the ability to visually check whether a person can be trusted was not present in online job applications and housing searches.

There were signs that after a few of these experiences they would be demotivated and just give up and revert to offline ways of achieving things. Thus it is not that they lack the motivation to do these things altogether, it is the frustration with the dehumanising digital experience that demotivates them.

I'D LOVE TO BE ABLE TO DO IT ON PAPER. THAT'S SOMETHING THAT REALLY GETS ME, BECAUSE HALF OF THE TIME I GET ONTO THE WEBSITE, IT CRASHES AND I KEEP RELOADING AS IT COMES BACK UP. AND IT JUST TAKES SO MUCH TIME.

NEETs also explained their disengagement from the digital world based on its perceived lack of usefulness for their everyday activities.

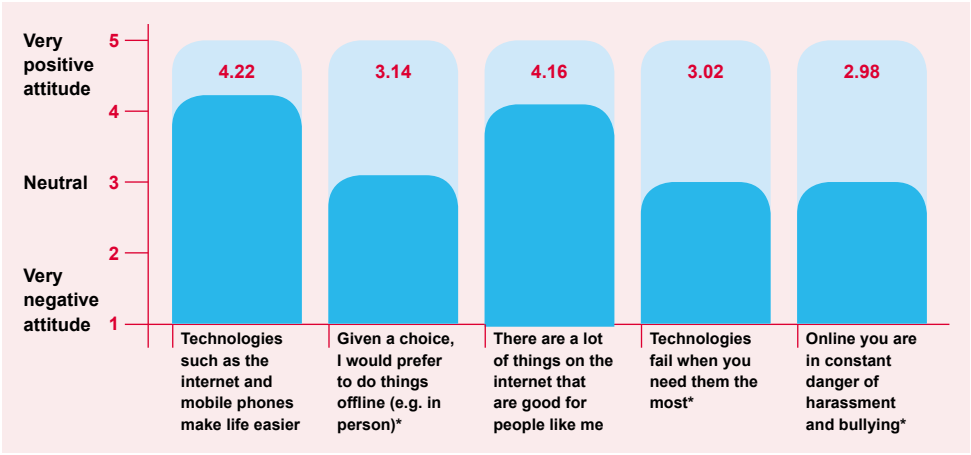
When asked what they would lose out on if the internet suddenly disappeared, some of the participants suggested they would lose nothing at all which is a very uncommon response in research with people of this age group. However, most could not imagine going on without the internet and their phones which reflects the quantitative data in relation to social and entertainment motivation where NEETs and non-NEETs are at par.

BECAUSE ANYTHING YOU CAN DO ONLINE, YOU CAN DO OFFLINE.

Attitudes and dispositions

Besides personal motivations related to the different needs that ICT use might fulfil, there are also broader attitudes and societal norms and values around ICT use that influence a young person's engagement with ICTs.

Attitudes towards ICTs: To what extent do you agree with the following statements?



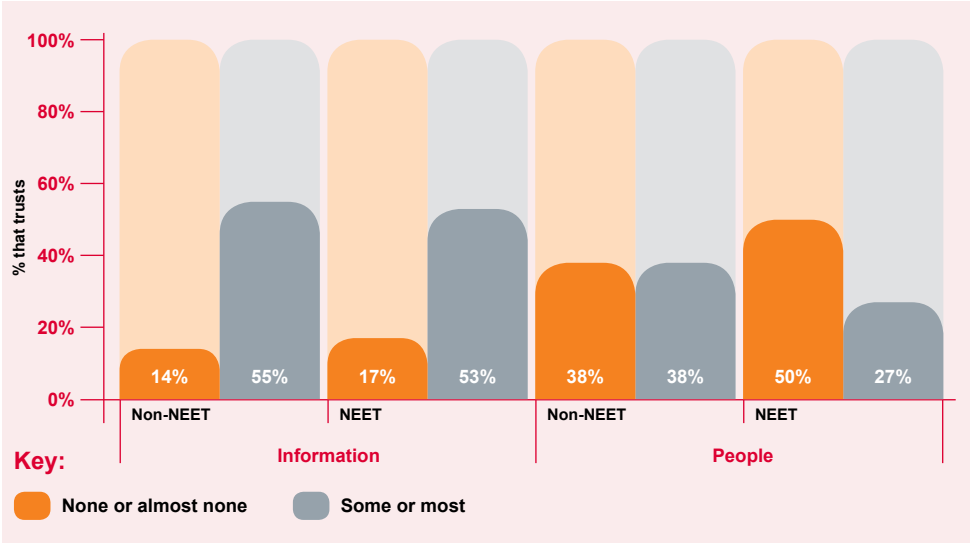
Base: All young people (N=1026 Non-NEETs and N=318 NEETs).

*These scales are reversed so that a higher score means a more positive attitude.

It seems that the respondents had an overall positive view of the possibilities of ICTs: they make life easier (average 4.2 on a scale to 5) and contain a lot of good content (4.16 on a scale to 5). When asked to compare offline with online interactions the participants were relatively neutral (score 3.14); indicating neither huge preferences nor rejection of mediated communication and interactions over face to face interactions. This and the neutral position towards the robustness of technologies themselves (score 3.02), paints a relatively realistic picture of their perceptions of ICTs. They understand that there are good and bad sides to it but the conclusion seems to be that the overall potential is for people to benefit from ICTs.

Overall positive attitudes towards the technology might mask diverging perceptions of the technology itself, the content and the people who move in the digital space. This is apparent in the evaluation of risks of harassment and bullying (2.98 out of 5).

Trust in information and in others online by work status: 'How much of the information on the internet is generally reliable?' and 'Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted online, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people on the internet?'



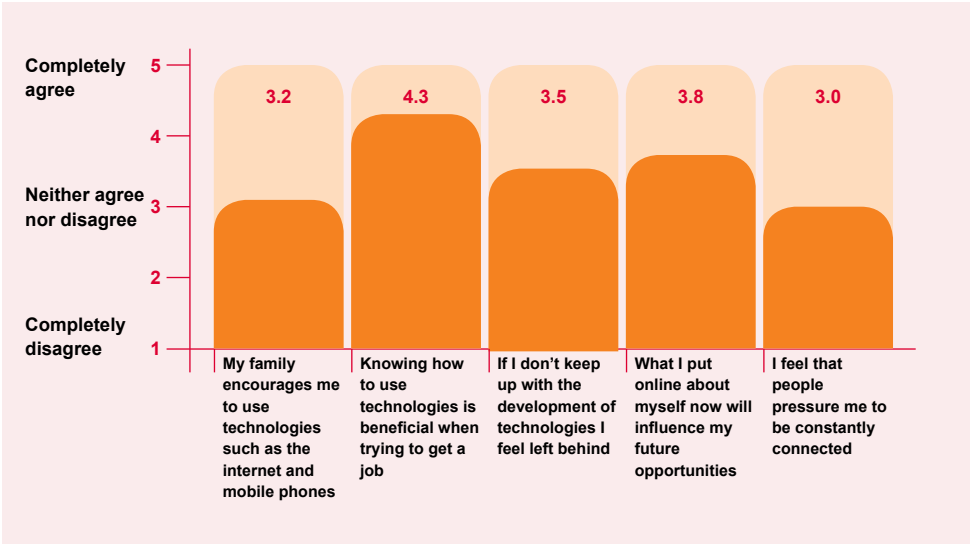
Base: All young people (N=1026 Non-NEETs and N=318 NEETs).

NEETs have significantly lower levels of trust in others online: 50% of NEETs thought that none or almost no one could be trusted online compared to 38% of the young people who were employed or students.

This can be contrasted to the higher levels of trust that both NEETs and those who are in education, employment and training have in the information, that is available online, just over half of the young people say that some or most of the information on the internet can be trusted and very few (less than 1 in 6) think the information is mostly untrustworthy.

Thus the positive evaluation seems to have more to do with the practical information aspects rather than the social interactional aspects of engagement with ICTs.

Dispositions: Positive and negative social pressure



Base: All young people (N=1026 Non-NEETs and N=318 NEETs).

Respondents have clearly received the message and are aware that work is going digital, agreeing that it is important for job prospects and that their digital footprint will influence future opportunities, and, to a slightly lesser extent, that without keeping up with developments they will be left behind. The pressure does not only come from distant, societal forces. Family and close others put a certain amount of both positive and negative pressure on them to use ICTs.

It's useful but complicated

While the survey showed the overall positive stance towards ICTs and their impact, the discussions in the focus groups were more negative in nature. Personal experiences of these more disadvantaged NEETs as well as what they heard from others and the media tempered their enthusiasm somewhat. They had negative personal experiences ranging from job applications to social media interactions, witnessed and/or experienced threats and embarrassment stemming from digital engagement which resulted not only in a lack of individual motivation but also a more generalised indifference towards online opportunities by feeling that they are not explicitly part of that world.

However, another important aspect was the dominance and preference for face to face interactions amongst the people in their immediate environment. They believed the people closest to them were not as connected as the rest of the world.

THEY'RE ALL SAT THERE WITH THEIR SMARTPHONES AND THEIR PHONES, AND YOU'RE JUST TALKING TO A BLANK WALL.

The personal side of NEETs' experiences reflect a sense that people have lost closeness and intimacy in interpersonal relationships.

The "real world" and the digital world were experienced as conflicting, rather than co-existing and seamlessly integrated. Indeed, the non-digital world was seen as desirable and the digital one as "computer rubbish", a place of less happiness, less connection and less intimacy.

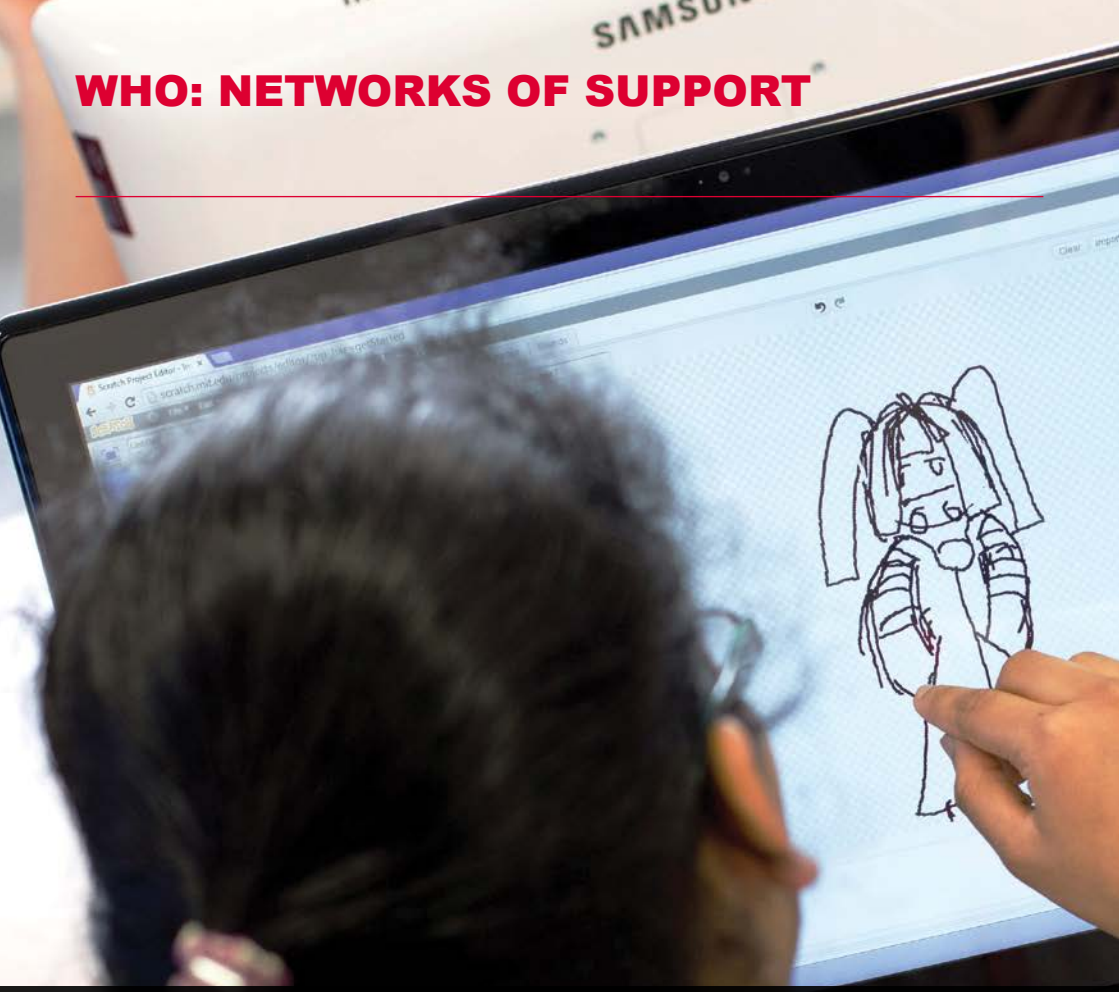
The digital world, however enjoyable, was also seen as invading into and destroying a comfortable and familiar world. Male NEETs in particular reported excessive use of games consoles and social media, resulting in bad sleep, health and disturbed routines, which all improved once this "addiction" had been overcome.

Despite negative experiences and perceived risks of digital engagement, NEETs engaged in many enjoyable activities and would miss these if the internet disappeared suddenly. Importantly, they did see the potential and provided a whole range of solutions to negative experiences indicating the existence of positive attitudes towards the possibilities of ICTs.

The opportunities ranged from restricting negative content (e.g. anti-trolling filters and sophisticated negative content screening programmes) to stimulating positive participation (e.g. increasing transparency and civic participation).

IF YOU DIDN'T HAVE FACEBOOK, YOU'D FILL YOUR TIME WITH OTHER STUFF LIKE SCHOOL OR GOING OUT AND SEEING FRIENDS FOR REAL.

WHO: NETWORKS OF SUPPORT



The everyday social environment people live in is extremely important in determining whether something is perceived as useful or beneficial and whether as individuals we should engage with certain activities and in which ways. The type of support we have, whether it is available and whether these individuals have the expertise needed to help us out, will determine to a large extent whether we can become independent users of the internet.

NEETs' skill development, like that of others, requires easily accessible interaction with others, especially people possessing a different level of digital expertise and experience. The workplace is an important space for this type of potential support in solving issues and learning about ICTs. The availability of diverse expertise in the immediate environment plays a role in enhancing an individual's digital literacy.

In this section a distinction is made between expert, professional and informal, close networks of support. The first are made up of more distant others that are likely to be asked because of their specific expertise in an area and consists of sources such as colleagues and help desks. The informal close support networks are more trusted others who we know personally, such as family and friends.

What we already know about NEETs and networks for digital support

Disadvantaged individuals often rely on their family and friends for such expertise, the evidence from studies about NEETs' social environments indicates the dominance of relationships with people who are alike over interactions with individuals in positions of power and with people from diverse socio-economic backgrounds.

While relying on informal, non-professional support is not unique to NEETs, this disadvantaged group has the most to gain from these types of interactions since they are disadvantaged in terms of professional, expert connections that might help them achieve for example, educational and employment outcomes. NEET-specific studies indicate that while family members are the popular source of support and information when it comes to ICTs, the expertise they provide is limited. Based on studies with the general population and the expertise that different networks bring; exclusion from formal and informal education and employment is likely to have a negative impact on NEETs' development of digital skills that enable seamless and effortless engagement in the digital space.

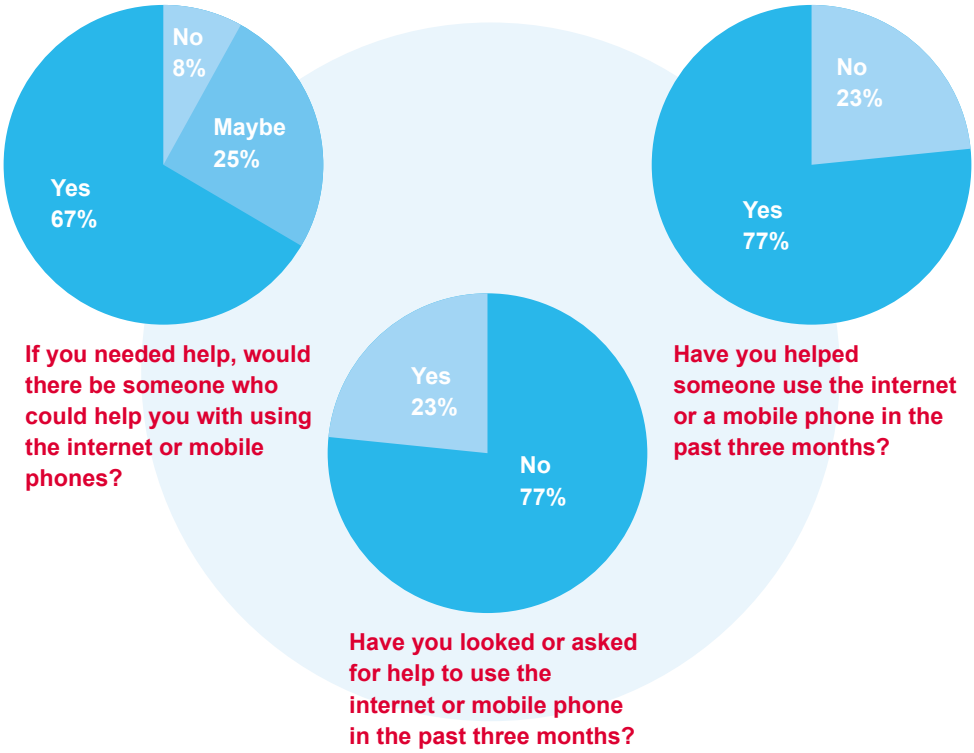
NEETs' digital engagement is also often dismissed based on assumptions about the 'right way' of doing things by the people that support them or surround them. Relatively rigid perceptions of how and which things should be done persist. When NEETs are told off for undertaking activities that are not sanctioned or do these in ways that are different from how they are 'supposed' to be done, they are left to feel disempowered, demotivated and feeling guilty at failures that are not necessarily their own.

In addition, NEETs' higher propensity to suffer from psychological health issues such as low self-confidence and emotional problems also puts them at risk of seeing these experiences as confirmation of their 'worthlessness' as someone who will never learn and who has nothing to teach others, leading to a negative spiral of hesitation in asking for help and not believing or recognising when others could appreciate their abilities.

Overall networks of support

This section looks at the nature of young people's support networks through three lenses: the support they have available, the support they call upon and the support they give to others.

Support available, asked for and offered

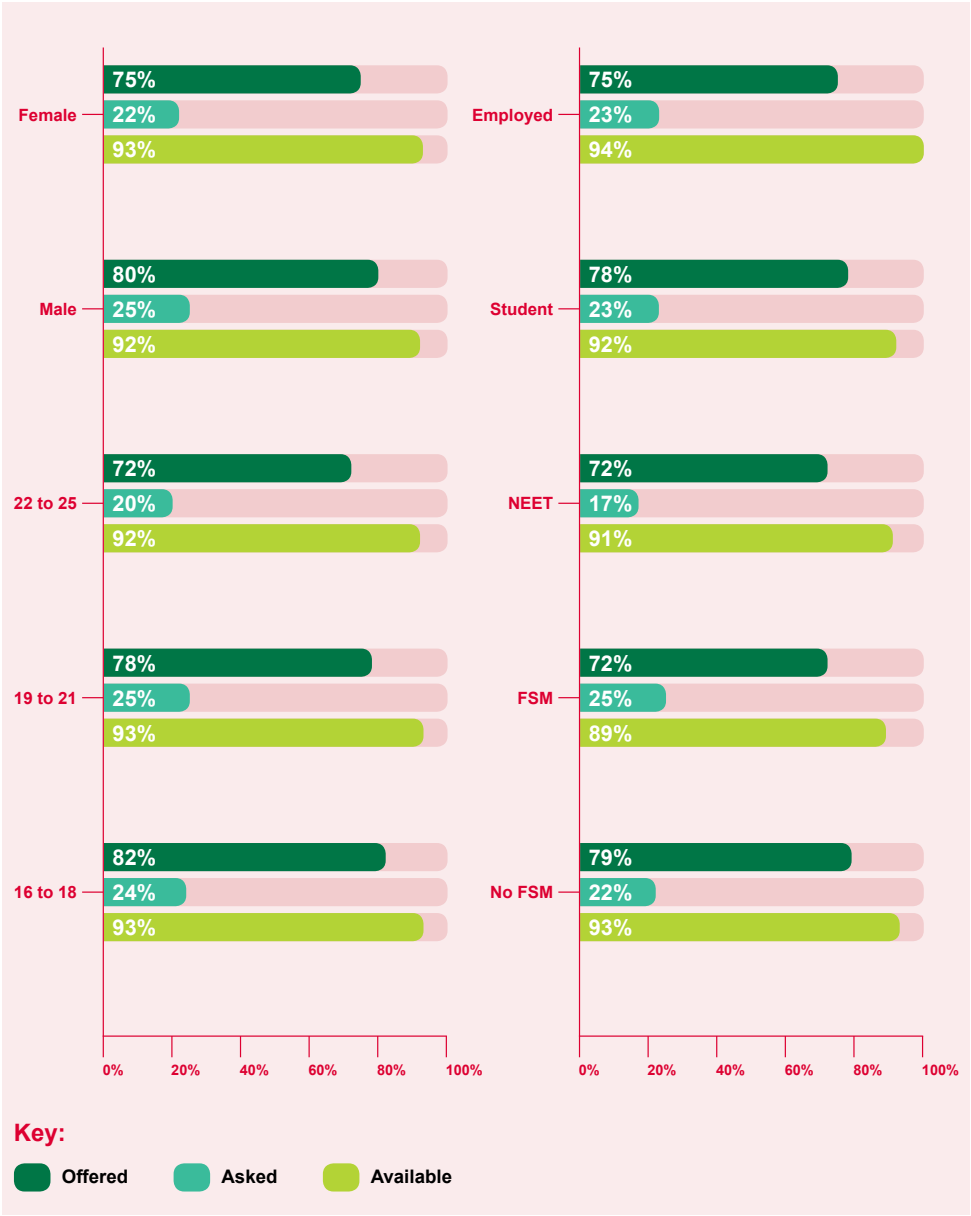


Base: All young people (N=1026 Non-NEETs and N=318 NEETs).

Two thirds of respondents (67%) had somebody to ask for help with ICT related matters if they needed to, while almost 8% were stranded on their own.

This contrasts to the one quarter (23%) who actually asked for support but also on the other hand to the 73% who offered support to others.

Support available, asked for and offered by socio-demographic characteristics



Base: All young people (N=1026 Non-NEETs and N=318 NEETs).

There were significant age, gender, historical poverty and work status differences in the descriptive analysis with the older (72%), female (75%), FSM receivers (72%) and NEETs (72%) less likely to have provided support to others and the NEETs are also less likely to have support available (NEET 9% no support, 29% maybe; non NEETs 7% no support, 25% maybe support available) and to have asked for support (NEETs 17% asked and non-NEETs 23% asked).

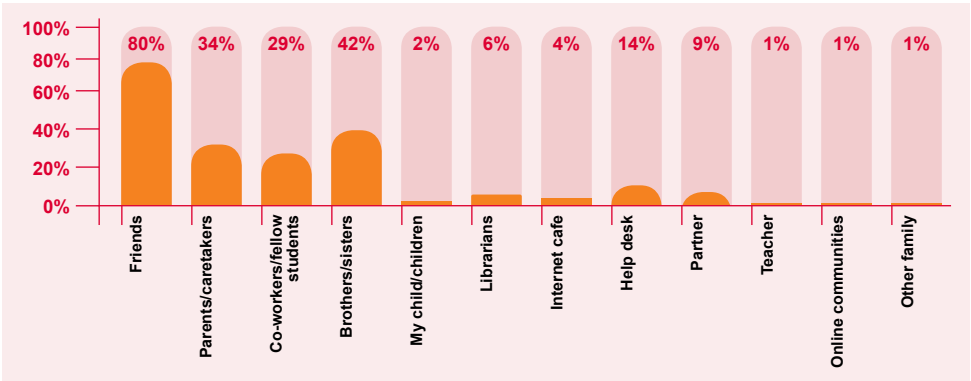
Nevertheless, the multi-variate analyses show that some of these differences disappear when controlling for other characteristics. Age differences remain in giving support but NEETs are likely to have less support available. Those with high levels of emotional problems are also much less likely to have support available. When it comes to asking for and offering support; higher social esteem is associated with a lower likelihood of asking for support and of giving support. In addition, those with high problem solving skills are more likely to have offered support to others suggesting that their expertise is recognised and that they feel confident enough to give support.

Separate analysis shows that those who have higher digital skills and confidence are more likely to have support sources available, are less likely to have asked others for help and are more likely to have helped others.

Support available

The two thirds who indicated that there would be someone available had access to on average around two different types of people who could help them.

Available support: Who of the following could help you?



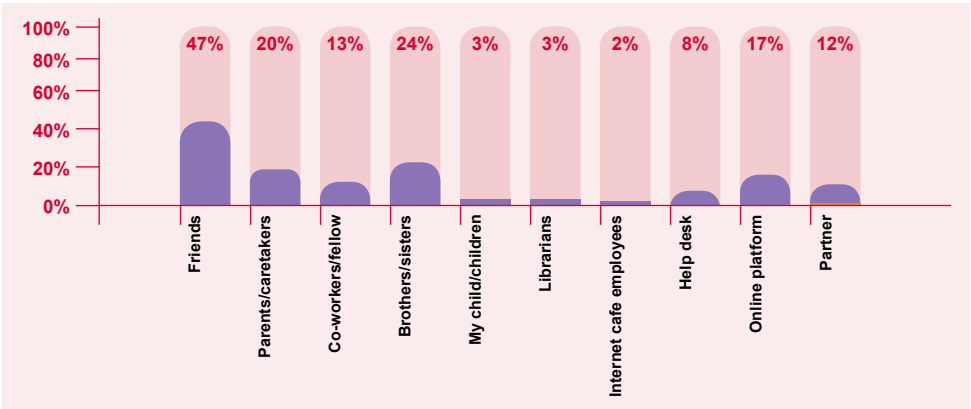
Base: All young people who had support available (N=952 Non-NEETs and N=289 NEETs).

These sources of support were most likely to be friends and family, or the group of people one step removed from the inner circle such as fellow students and co-workers. These were far more likely to be thought of as available for support. More distant expert sources such as help desks were seen as potential networks of support by only 14% of the young people. Teachers are non-existent in the imagination of young people as sources for support. The multi-variate analyses showed differences in age, gender, historical disadvantage and work status in the breadth of the support networks available. Those who are older had broader support networks available once their expertise in digital skills and other factors were controlled for. Women had broader informal support networks but not broader networks of expert support. NEETs had narrower networks of expert but not informal support while problem solvers and those with higher digital skills had broader networks of available expert but not informal support. Some of this might be due to the lack of recognition of some people as potential sources of support in matters related to ICT even though they are there and have the expertise. Support workers, job centre staff, programme staff and other service providers, were seen as delivering very specific employment and skills related content and support, but not as the go-to people for questions or solutions to the problems NEETs were having with everyday interactions with and through ICTs.

Support used

While there were a wide range of support sources a narrower range of people was actually called upon for help, on average around 1.5 people had been asked for support by the 23% of young people who had asked someone.

Who was asked for support: Who was the person(s) you went to for help?



Base: All young people who had asked for help (N=246 Non-NEETs and N=50 NEETs).

Spontaneously, parents (mostly mothers), siblings, extended family members and to a lesser extent the social care workers and fellow participants in their Prince's Trust programmes were mentioned as available. However, these people often served as a secondary source after self-help via reading online and Googling had failed. Also in the discussions it was clear that support was mostly thought of in a technical sense, in terms of helping sort out failure of equipment or a lack of understanding of how specific applications or software worked. While there were many conversations about things that went wrong in interactions, there was not really an awareness that there were professional sources of support that gave advice or that teachers and other trainers could be of help with these matters.

Peers were the most accessible as sources for support with around half asking friends and around a quarter asking siblings. Asking for help shows a different pattern to the help that is seen as available, with online platforms and helpdesks coming in stronger here with around a quarter of young people asking either when they asked for help. Teachers were not asked or mentioned spontaneously as people they had gone to for help. Interestingly, in the people that were actually reached out to there were only significant differences in the use of informal sources for support in the multi-variate analysis and only for those with a history of disadvantage and by work status. NEETs and those who had received FSM throughout their lifetime relied more on informal sources of support than the other groups. This has to be seen in light of the finding that NEETs were less likely to have support available and less likely to ask anyone with narrower networks of experts. It is therefore logical that when they do ask someone they have to resort to informal close networks. NEETs, like other young people, rely on online platforms and informal learning to sort out problems first, trying to acquire necessary skills and support through seeking information online. Googling or watching instruction videos on YouTube are mentioned spontaneously in discussions though it was mostly for technical and clearly operational aspects of use rather than the more complex social/creative activities that they were trying to undertake.

There was the sporadic mention of IT courses they had in school. The most frequently voiced help requests included questions about simple technical tasks, such as print screening, as well as technical queries related to failed devices. There was very little indication that support was sought around the more social and communicative aspects of the technology.

SOMETIMES I'LL RESEARCH ONLINE, OR SOMETIMES I'LL ASK MY SISTER. BUT MOST OF THE TIME I'LL SEARCH ONLINE.

The conversations and interactions with family members seemed to be more useful for social and behavioural queries with mothers more frequently relied upon even though other research shows that fathers are seen as more expert in ICT.

Rules were installed top-down by a parent often without much conversation or discussion about the reasoning for this. However, in the more sophisticated reasoning the parental advice was seemingly linked to negative experiences of the parent themselves.

With a few exceptions these rules were not linked to conversations about what could be done and more about restrictions on using certain platforms or devices all together (mostly restrictions on mobile phone use).

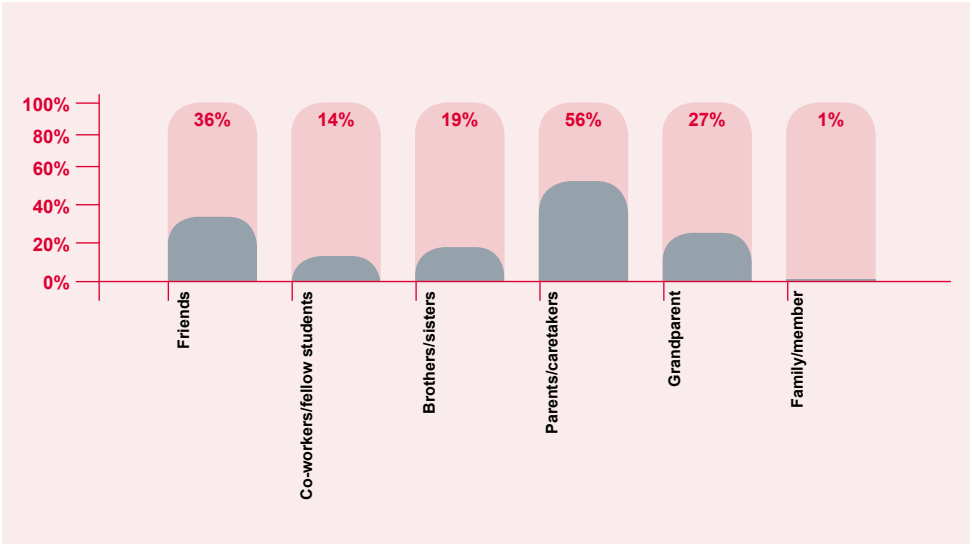
A lack of explicit IT training or learned ICT expertise within close circles of friends and family manifested itself in the NEETs thinking of engaging with ICTs as something that is just done, rather than learned.

“I WAS NEVER TAUGHT TO COOK BUT I WATCHED MY MUM DO IT. SHE WASN’T SAT THERE SAYING ‘YOU HAVE TO CUT THE ONION’ BUT YOU OBSERVE IT AND IT JUST GOES IN.

Support provided

Those who had helped someone else out had, on average offered 1.6 people their support in ICT related matters in the last three months.

Support provided: Who have you helped in the past three months?



Base: All young people who had asked for help (N=777 Non-NEETs and N=216 NEETs).

Those 1.6 individuals were most likely to be parents and a friend or grandparent. Siblings or co-workers were less likely to be offered or ask these young people for help.

The multi-variate analysis showed significant differences for age, gender, work status, problem solving and young people with different levels of digital skills. Those who were older, the young men, those who were problem solvers and had higher digital skills had all offered support to a wider group of others who were close to them, that is, their informal networks. While the descriptive analysis suggested that the youngest people provided support to the narrowest range of experts (0.14 compared to 0.19 by 22 to 25 year olds), the multi-variate analysis showed that this probably is because they are less likely to work.

In fact, the older individuals helped a narrower range of more distant professional individuals out. Women and NEETs were also less likely to have provided support to professional or more

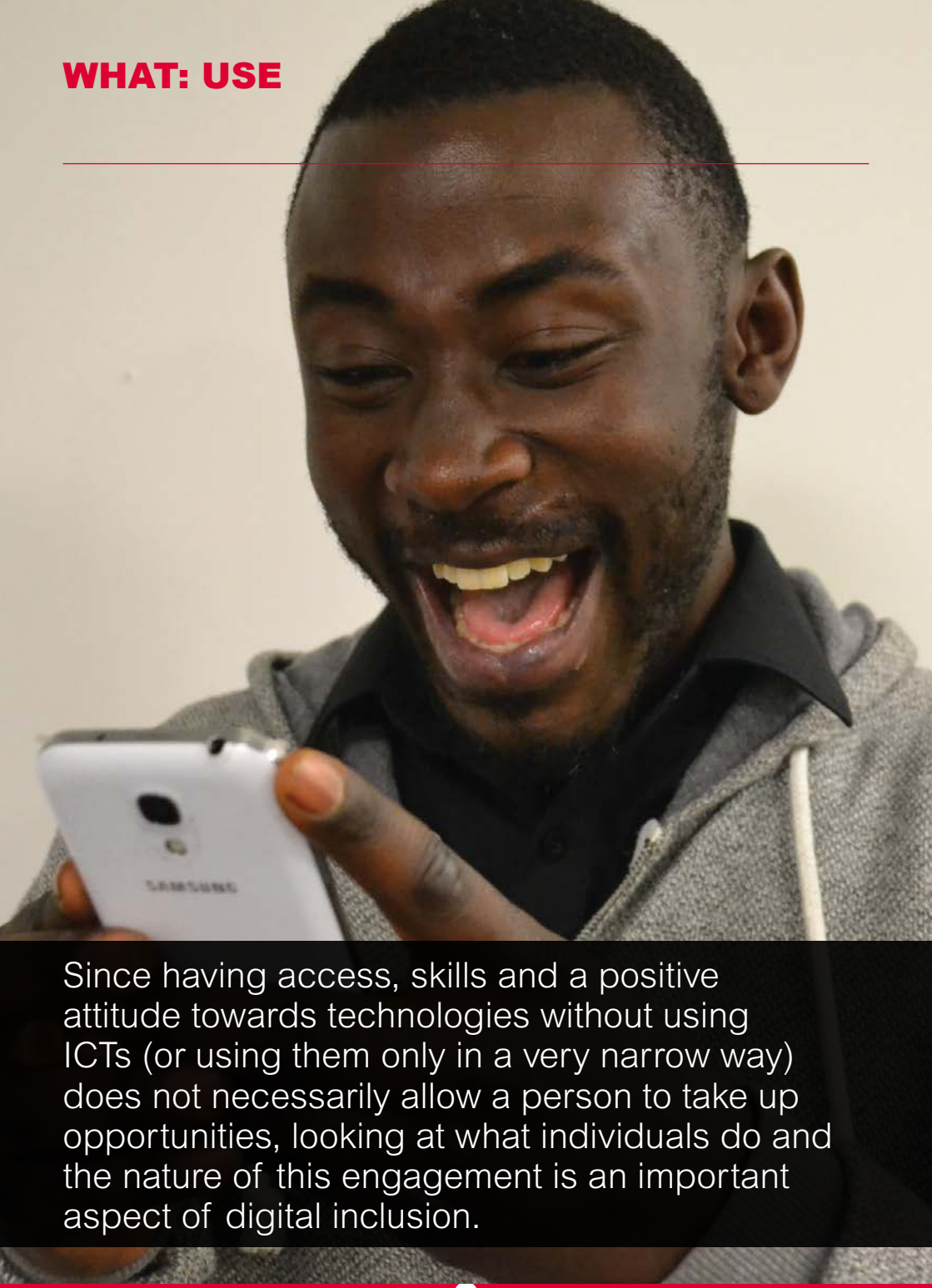
distant networks as opposed to those with high digital skills. In this case being a problem solver did not make a difference.

NEETs did report serving as teachers and tech experts in their surroundings, doing things like explaining to their parents how devices work.

As for the support that was asked for, the emphasis here was on technical support, showing how different devices worked. There was some surprise at what others put online but this did not translate in a sense that they could be taught or given advice about these matters.

Somehow NEETs did not feel it was their place to give that type of advice to what seemed to be parental errors of judgement.

WHAT: USE



Since having access, skills and a positive attitude towards technologies without using ICTs (or using them only in a very narrow way) does not necessarily allow a person to take up opportunities, looking at what individuals do and the nature of this engagement is an important aspect of digital inclusion.

As more and more activities, services and products are going digital, the range of possibilities and ways in which to use ICTs has multiplied, giving us access to the same range of resources we have available offline. These different ways of engaging are not all seen as having the same value by different stakeholders and therefore different domains of resources should be distinguished.

This study classifies engagement into four categories following the DiSTO model: economic (financial and wealth related activities, including education and employment), cultural (those that lead to identity construction/affirmation and feelings of belonging), social (including political and civic participation) and personal well-being (including health and entertainment) activities. Since this study engaged young people who were considered particularly vulnerable in this employment and education area (i.e. NEETs), the employment and educational opportunities taken up by young people were studied in detail, separately and as part of the economic resources.

What we already know about NEETs and how they engage with ICTs

Quantitative data on NEET-specific ICT use (e.g. type, variety) of the internet is missing. The little research on use out there shows that NEETs are less likely to engage with practical, instrumental activities that are generally perceived to be beneficial for socio-economic and health opportunities.

The Prince's Trust report (2013) showed that NEETs are not comfortable doing tasks such as filling online applications, digital job searches and spread-sheet creation.

Since NEETs are unlikely to engage in these types of activities, it is likely that they receive only partial or marginal benefits of being online. Similarly, qualitative studies illustrated how engaging with a narrow but familiar and comfortable range of activities might limit disadvantaged individuals' benefits of digital participation.

NEETs have two characteristics that are likely to place them in the category of less frequent and narrower use: low socio-economic status (SES) and limited social capital. From general research we know that the variety of activities undertaken online by individuals with lower levels of education and SES are likely to be limited.

Recent qualitative studies suggest that NEETs spent most of their time on a narrow range of activities: listening to music, playing games and socialising. They rarely engage in independent information seeking, filling application forms or performing job searches and only do this when required by others.

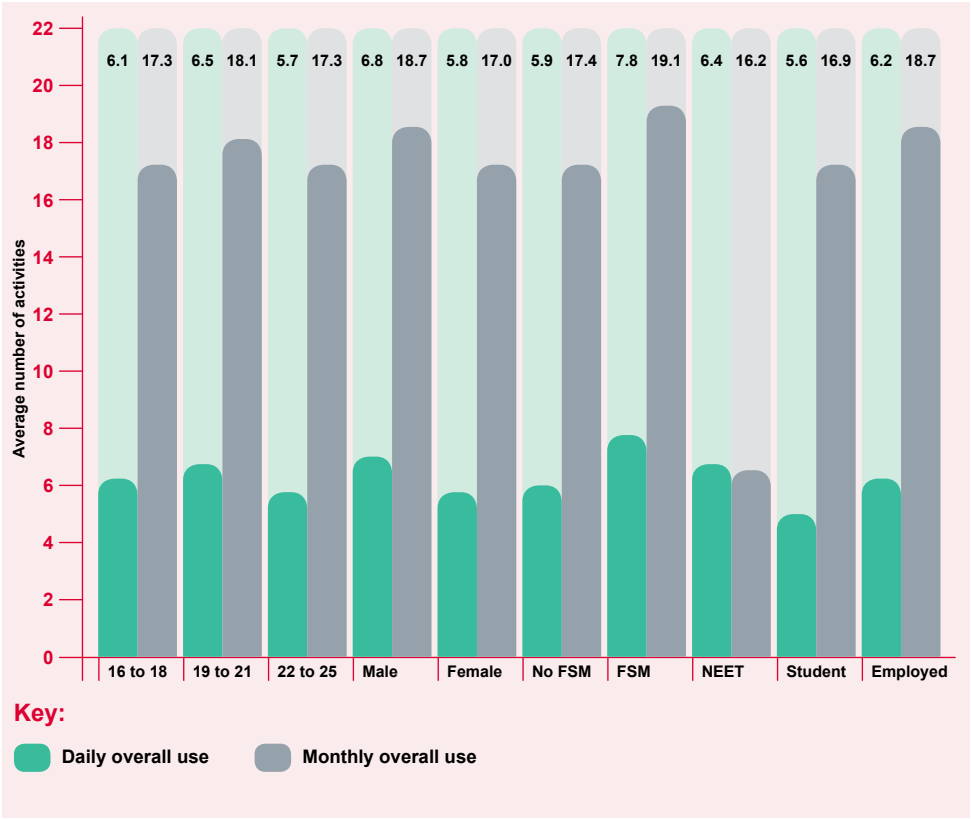
NEETs are thus likely to be excluded from deriving the benefits of civic, health and professional digital activities. While they might use the internet for entertainment, it is unlikely to have a positive impact on employment prospects or health.

Overall engagement

The survey included over 22 activities and on average an individual undertook around 6.1 activities on a daily basis and 17.6 activities on a monthly basis. While it is interesting to look at very specific activities these often depend on particular individual circumstances.

For example, you are less likely to be looking for a job frequently if you have a (good) job. Thus this study focused on grouping together these different activities so that they reflect the broader benefits that people might obtain through use, independent from their specific

Activities undertaken at least monthly and average frequency of use:
In the last three months, how often have you done the following things on the internet and technologies such as mobile phones?



Base: All young people (N=1026 Non-NEETs and N=318 NEETs).

An interesting picture emerges if we look at the multi-variate analysis. Broad daily and monthly users differ in some significant aspects.

Men, FSM receivers, NEETs, those with only secondary education, problem solvers, those with emotional problems, those with low social esteem, those with many devices, accessing the internet at many locations, who have strong social digital capital (i.e. they have support sources available, used them and given support), narrower motivations and more negative attitudes towards ICTs but higher levels of digital self-confidence use the internet daily for more activities than their peers who don't have these characteristics.

This paints a picture of young broad daily users as individuals who are not well embedded in offline social life but have digital and problem solving skills despite coming from relatively disadvantaged backgrounds.

However, when we look at those who spread their use out over the month and are more broadly engaged in that longer term another type appears: broad monthly users are younger, men, with a history of disadvantage (FSM), but currently better off (i.e. non-NEETs), with higher levels of education, who are problem solvers, with less social esteem, with access at a lot of locations but relying heavily on their mobile phones, with extensive digital social capital, who are confident but report lower levels of skills, even when they are more negative about technologies and feel more societal pressure to use them.

In summary, these broad monthly users are perhaps not treated well by wider society but do not have emotional problems and have a solid support network which they communicate with often and which encourages them to get involved in the digital society. They are smart and confident but have limits to their digital knowledge and they have overcome childhood barriers.

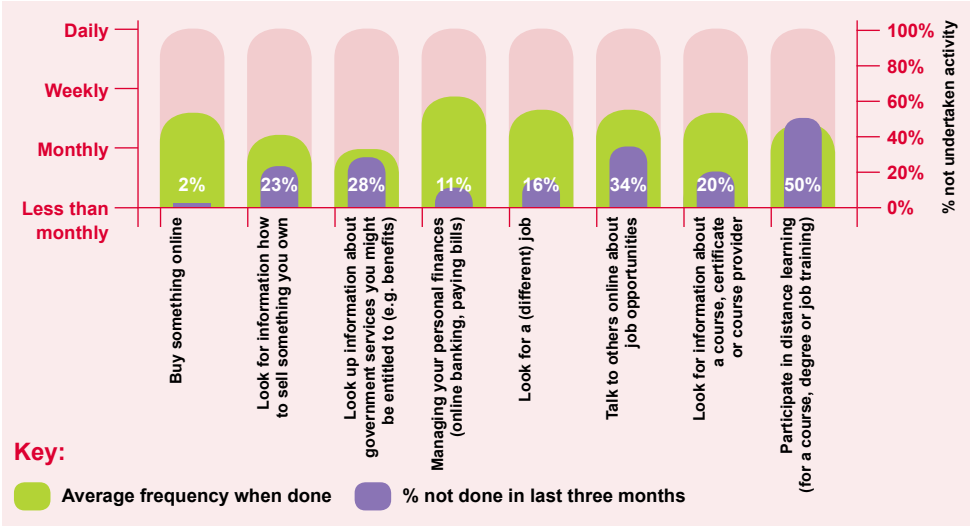
Gender inequalities continue to exist in this space but some of the traditional economic disadvantages seem possible to overcome with more confidence, education and a broad support network. Nevertheless, care needs to be had as NEETs indicated there might be a tendency to over rely on ICT especially by those who have difficulty connecting offline and escape into the online world.

Economic, employment and educational uses

One of the biggest concerns surrounding disadvantaged youth is the perceived lack of opportunities available to them that would help them increase their economic capital.

Economic capital relates to wealth as well as to employment and education opportunities.

Frequency economic uses: In the last three months, how often have you done the following things on the internet and technologies such as mobile phones? (several times per day/daily/weekly/monthly)



Base: Percentage who has never undertaken – All young people (N=1026 Non-NEETs and N=318 NEETs).

Note:
Average - All young people who have undertaken a specific activity in the last three months.

The most frequently undertaken economic activity is managing personal finances, on average the young people who have done this in the last three months do this almost on a weekly basis. Only 11% has not done this at all in the last three months. The least frequent activity amongst those who undertake it is looking up benefits; this is done on average on a monthly basis and a third (28%) has not done this in the last three months. Activities to do with employment and education are undertaken on slightly more than a monthly basis and are slightly less frequently undertaken than

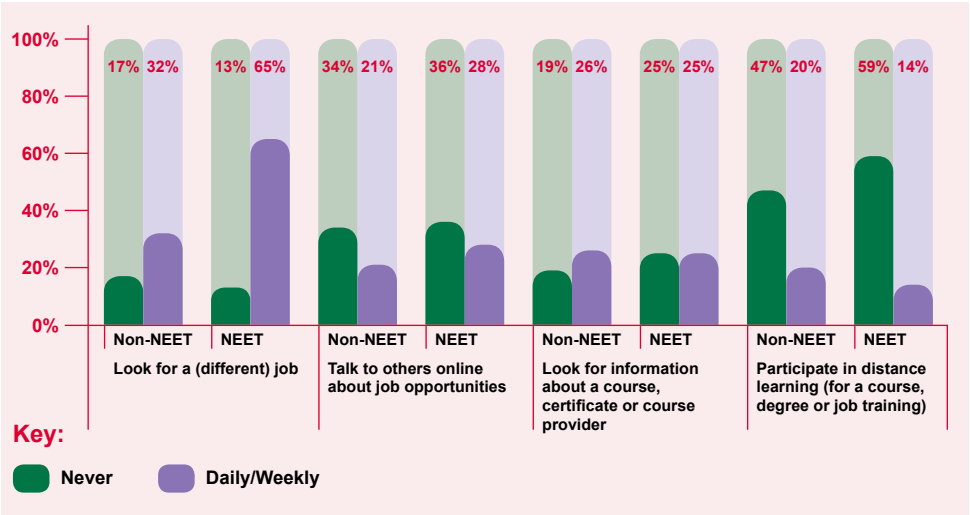
buying things online. Nevertheless, buying is the most common place activity with only 2% not having done this in the last three months, though it is not the most frequently undertaken activity (on average just over monthly).

However, the least common activity online is formal education; half of the young people (50%) has not undertaken any learning at a distance in the last three months, even though a fifth (20%) has looked for this.

Looking for a different job is relatively common with only 16% not having done this in the last three months but this seems to be a browsing and rather passive activity since only two thirds talked to others about this on the internet or through mobile phones. That is one third (34%) has not talked about job opportunities online.

Since job seeking and education are the types of digital opportunity that are seen as particularly relevant to NEETs, these will be looked at in more detail.

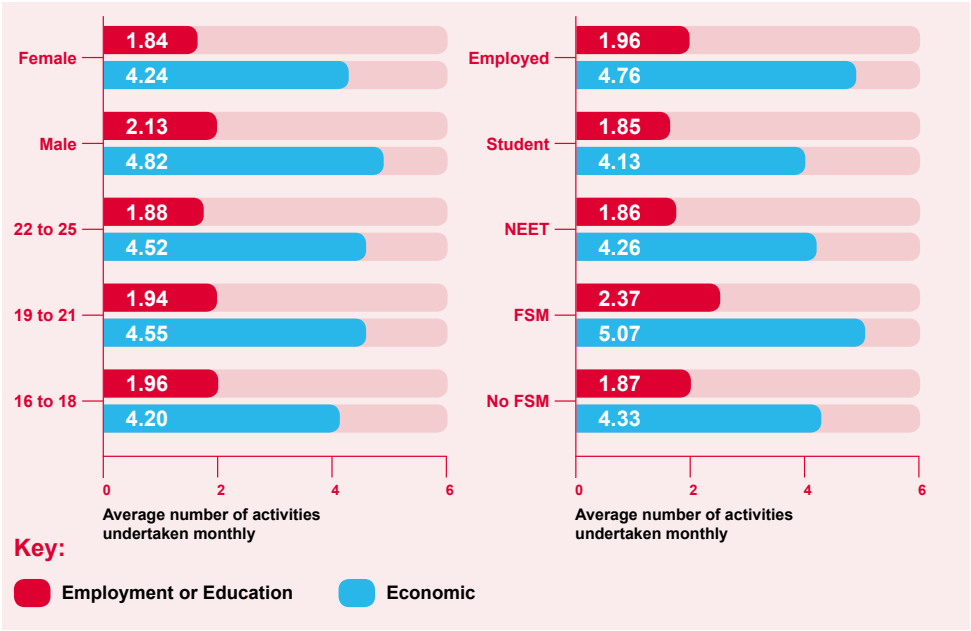
Frequency of employment and education activities in the last three months by work status



Base: All young people (N=1026 Non-NEETs and N=318 NEETs).

While NEETs are more likely to look for (65% weekly; 13% didn't do this) and talk to others about (28% weekly; 36% didn't do this) employment opportunities online than Non-NEETs (32% weekly and 21% weekly), they are far less likely to look for (NEETs 25% didn't do v non-NEETs 19% didn't do) or participate in (NEETs 59% didn't do; Non-NEETs 47% didn't do) educational opportunities.

Breadth of economic (scale 0 to 8) and employment/education use (scale 0 to 4)



Base: All young people (N=1026 Non-NEETs and N=318 NEETs).

Gender, socio-economic disadvantage, and personal characteristics of the young person are all important in relation to economic, employment and education opportunities. Men, those who have received FSM, those who are employed, the problem solvers and those with lower social esteem, use ICTs for a broader range of economic activities. For educational and employment uses, work status (i.e. being NEET or not) does not make a difference. This means that the employed, students and NEETs all use ICTs with more or less the same frequency (score 2.6 - less than monthly) and undertake more or less the same range of activities in the employment/education area (around 1.9). Looking back to differences for the specific items, this shows the balancing out of differences in undertaking employment and education activities in overall employment/education use, because NEETs take up fewer education and more employment opportunities than non NEETs.

A more complex multi-variate analysis confirms the above but adds interesting findings in relation to digital skills, support networks and motivations or attitudes. Those with low social esteem but broad networks of digital support, those who access the internet at many locations and have high levels of digital confidence

undertake on average more economic activities in a month. Having negative attitudes but sensing social pressure to engage is also positively related to engaging with the economic resources available through ICTs. The NEETs did not get spontaneously involved in wide discussions around using the internet for formal economic, employment or education purposes.

These uses were clearly something they felt they must do because they were put upon them from the outside but they did not have clear strategies linked to their specific skills or interests. Often they were unaware that they could turn some of the expertise that they had into an asset. This was especially true of ICT skills they acquired through informal learning and play, for example, high level gaming, photography editing or shooting videos. They considered these hobbies and would revert back to what they saw as appropriate or real jobs in job searches.

The most disadvantaged NEETs knew about and used job searching sites because that was what was part of their Prince's Trust programmes. Most used the sites that they were signed up for through the programme only. They did go out to look for information on degrees or courses they had already been pointed to or signed up for through other, not connected means, often recommendations by friends or family. There was very little engagement with the possibilities for using the internet or mobile phones to find study opportunities. When NEETs were using ICTs to find educational opportunities, how they searched was often decontextualised without much knowledge of the quality degrees.

IT'S QUITE HARD TO FIND THINGS ONLINE SOMETIMES, WHEN YOU AREN'T SURE EXACTLY WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR. IT'S MUCH EASIER TO FIND IT IN CONVERSATION WITH SOMEONE AND THEN LOOK IT UP.

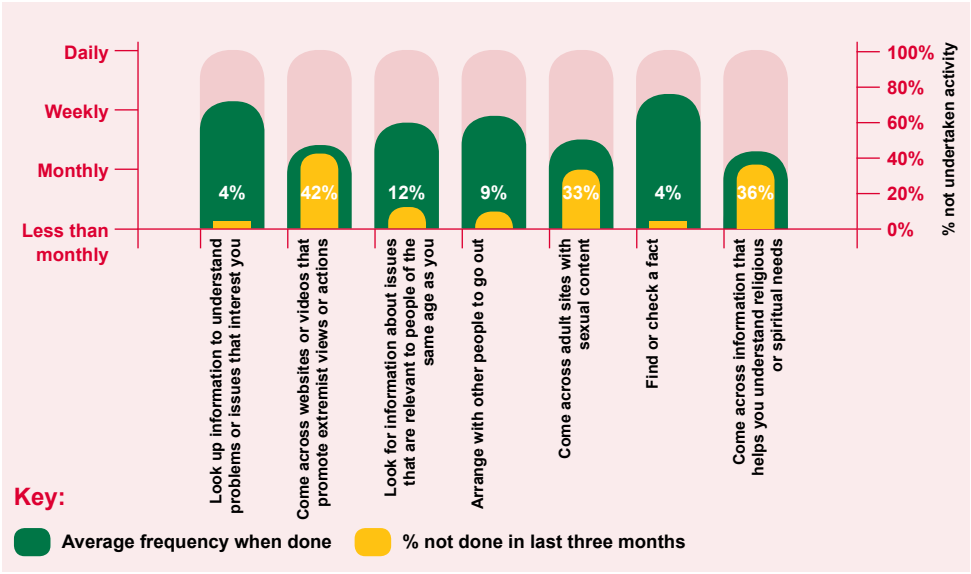
For these value judgements they relied on word of mouth or recommendations from staff. This means that NEETs who are not in these programmes are unlikely to come across further education opportunities or be able to judge the quality of them.

Cultural uses

An important aspect of ICT use is the possibility to come across or engage with content and others that can give a person a sense of belonging or reaffirm different aspects of their identity. It also means coming into contact with content and others who are unfamiliar or uncomfortable to us and through these means reshaping ideas of who we are and what the world out there looks like. Only a few of these aspects could be captured by the survey so the section below looks at how a clearer sense of self as part of a wider socio-cultural system, that is self-actualisation[11], identity and belonging, might have been stimulated through different online activities.

11 This is the need for personal growth and discovery that is present throughout a person's life.

Cultural uses: In the last three months, how often have you done the following things on the internet and technologies such as mobile phones? (several times per day/daily/weekly/monthly)



Base: Percentage – All young people (N=1026 Non-NEETs and N=318 NEETs) Average - All young people who have undertaken a specific activity in the last three months.

The cultural use that was undertaken most frequently was fact checking with 4% not having engaged in this activity in the last three months. They did this on average more than weekly when they did. This was followed closely by personal interest searches (4% hadn't done this and young people on average were doing this weekly when they did this). All these have more to do with self-actualisation than with engaging with others in establishing identities or belonging.

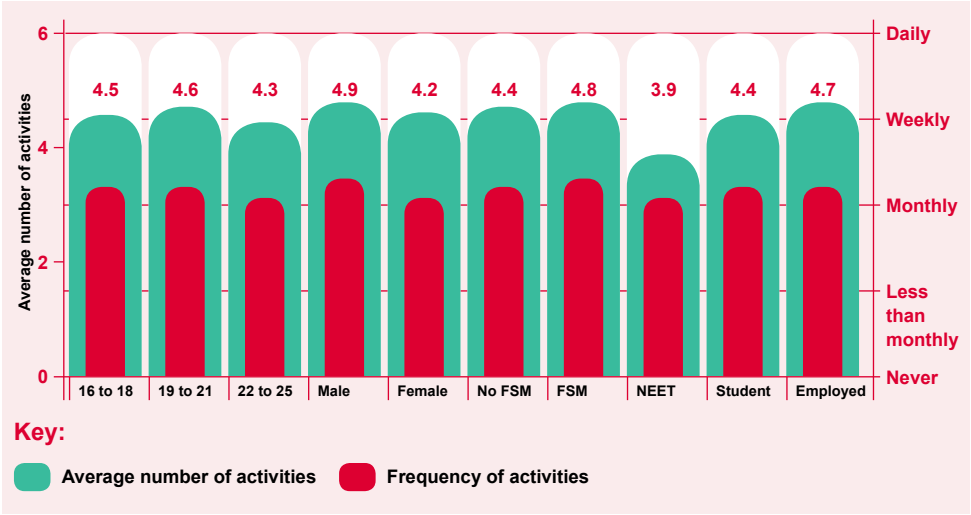
Around a tenth never used ICTs to undertake belonging activities such as looking for information that is relevant for people like them (12%) or arranging to go out with others (9%). Least common were positive and negative encounters with more ideological aspects related to identity: 42% had not come across extremist sites and just over a third (36%) had not come across information around religious or spiritual identities.

This was less frequent than content related to sexuality and intimate relationships (i.e. 'adult sites'), which implies thinking about or being confronted with issues of gender and sexual identity. These identity building aspects were on average encountered less than weekly but more than monthly.

This paints a picture of relatively individualistic, interest based engagement with cultural content online rather than engagement with other cultures and backgrounds.

Though it should also be noted that around two thirds had come across extremist, sexual or religious content.

Cultural use of ICTs by socio-demographic characteristics



Base: All young people (N=1026 Non-NEETs and N=318 NEETs).

The multi-variate analyses showed clear relationships between cultural uses and gender, socio-economic disadvantage, personal characteristics and the digital environment.

Men engaged more and more frequently (on a monthly basis with an average of almost 5 activities) with cultural uses while those with histories of disadvantage engaged more (on a monthly basis and with 4.8 activities) and those currently disadvantaged (NEETs) less (less than monthly with 3.9 activities).

Having more locations of access was also related to broader and more frequent cultural use of ICTs (for every additional location 0.1 activities were added).

More complex analysis show that digital confidence, skills and support networks also matter. Content creation skills encourage use of this kind but a pattern emerges where those who have good offline relationships and social digital skills are likely to not seek out these activities on ICTs. It might mean that they prefer to

do this through other means or that they are sceptical of the use of ICTs for these means. As was the case for economic uses, those with broader networks of support, and in this case in particular those who had asked for help, were also more likely to engage frequently with these issues.

I do this just for me

This idea that content creation is linked to cultural uses was addressed by the NEETs. They talked about connecting with others and sharing ideas through what they posted on social media platforms for Instagram and Facebook, creating video content for personal YouTube channels and creating online ads.

Nevertheless, this sharing of ideas was mostly with people they already knew, based on informal relationships with close others or because they were asked to do this in a formal job situation. There was little confidence in the idea that this could actually reach a wider audience; that this could give them a voice in the digital space that they might not have in their current situation.

Similar to their struggle to understand who they might reach with their content, they also did not indicate that ICTs confronted them with ideas or individuals that they were unfamiliar with.

The focus groups took place right after the EU referendum but this did not filter through in their discussions about confrontation and identity.

Despite all the debates that were going on at the time there was no mention of other than very practical and personal issues such as housing and health care unrelated to ideas of defining what it meant to be British. Discussion and development of these ideas, if at all, seemed to take place outside the digital sphere for these NEETs.

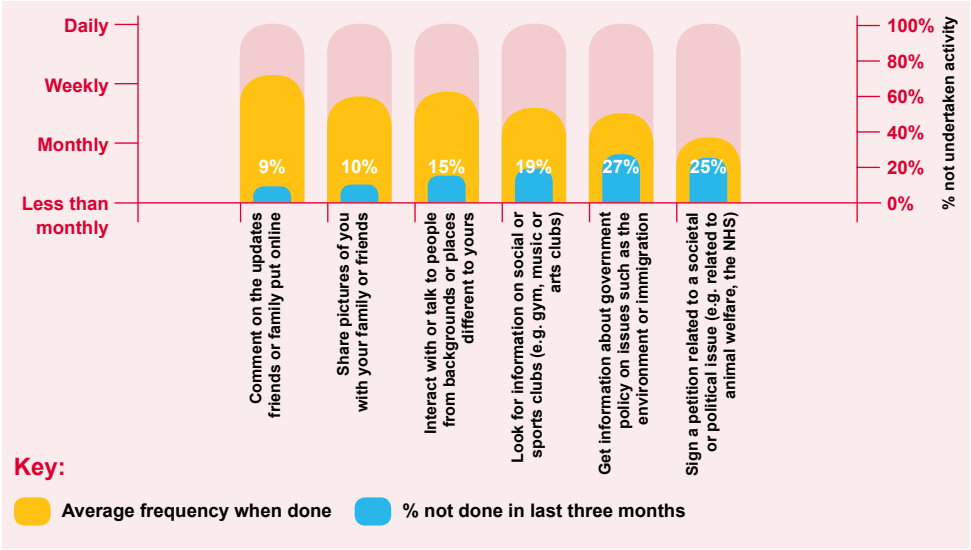
In general, the interactions with content that might define identity was on the more passive receiver end, rather than the production of content with which they could reach out to others.

> **“I’M JUST A CONSUMER [NOT A PRODUCER].**

Social uses

The social communicative use of ICTs has driven many recent platform developments and is one of the main drivers for people to engage. This report distinguishes between informal, closer relationships with people we know well and more formal, distant types of relationships with unknown others or organisations.

Social use: In the last three months, how often have you done the following things on the internet and technologies such as mobile phones? (several times per day/ daily/weekly/monthly)



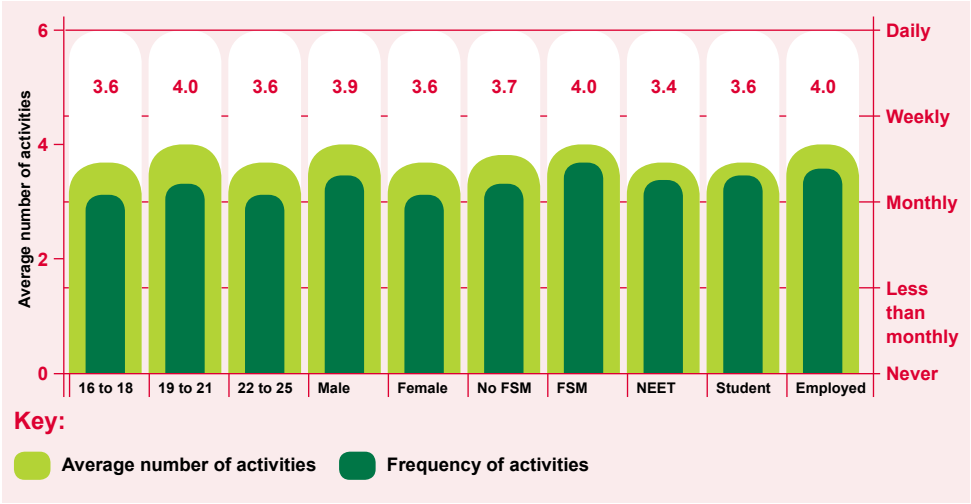
Base: Percentage – All young people (N=1026 Non-NEETs and N=318 NEETs). Average - All young people who have under taken a specific activity in the last three months.

Maintaining relationships with those we are close to are the most popular activities; commenting on updates from friends and family on a weekly basis on average and 40% doing this on a daily basis of those who do this.

Sharing photos with families and friends was marginally less popular than interacting with people of a different background but both were still on average done almost weekly.

Nevertheless, a tenth had not commented on updates friends or family put online or shared a picture with someone else. More formal social activities were less common though on average still done within the last month amongst those who did it; the least common activity was signing petitions around social and political issues (25% had not done this in the last three months).

Social uses by socio-demographic categories



Base: All young people (N=1026 Non-NEETs and N=318 NEETs).

Multi-variate analysis show that age, a history of disadvantage, work status and personal characteristics are related to social uses in very similar ways to how they were related to economic and cultural uses. Individuals just out of secondary school, those who received FSM throughout their schooling, the employed, problem solvers and those with lower social esteem, were more active in this area.

Interesting to note is that gender does not make a difference for this particular type of engagement. NEETs are again those with the lowest frequency of social digital engagement (3.4 activities undertaken monthly).

More complex analysis show that digital confidence, skills (content creation in particular), and support networks all relate to broader more frequent use. Interestingly, those with more positive attitudes tend to engage less with these types of activities. The question arises whether more frequent interaction with this type of content leads to negative attitudes about the possibilities of ICTs or whether negative attitudes towards ICTs lead people to seek out this type of content (to confirm or counter their view).

Close and comfortable

The NEETs emphasised that they used ICTs mostly to engage with very close and personal friends, family, and carers, the people they trust and are comfortable with.

This does not mean that there are no strangers online; accepting friends of friends' contacts is as common amongst NEETs as it is amongst other young people.

However, the idea that ICTs were appropriate to link up to a broader, less familiar group of individuals was not really present, especially not when it came to things like using ICTs to find jobs, or information or opinions that they might not otherwise hear about. This might also be explained by NEETs' low levels of trust of people online (see motivation section).

This reflects what we know about general trust issues based on experience and social circumstances that these disadvantaged young people have grown up with. There was a distinction in their discussions between people they do not know but could check up on, and untrustworthy strangers. A few participants who had been heavy social gamers considered other players to be friends because they had been on the platform together for a long time and trust was created through shared interest.

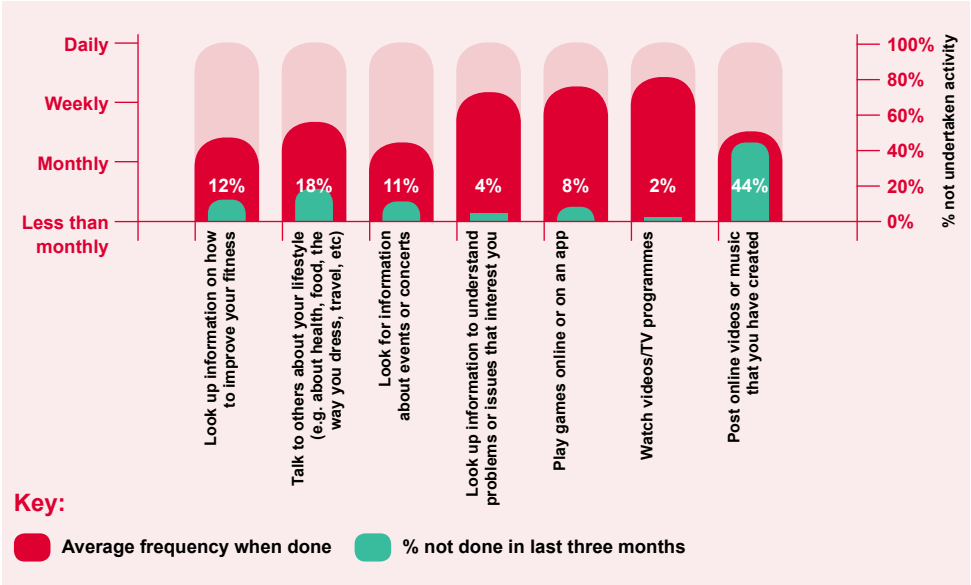
> **YOU DON'T ADD STRANGERS. YOU ADD YOUR FRIENDS AND PEOPLE YOU'VE MET.**

Personal well-being

Notwithstanding the need for more outward facing activities which help engage with others and in broader society, people tend to use ICTs most for personal purposes.

In this report we make a distinction between the well-being (i.e. lifestyle and health) related aspect and those that are related to entertainment or leisure.

Personal well-being uses of ICTs



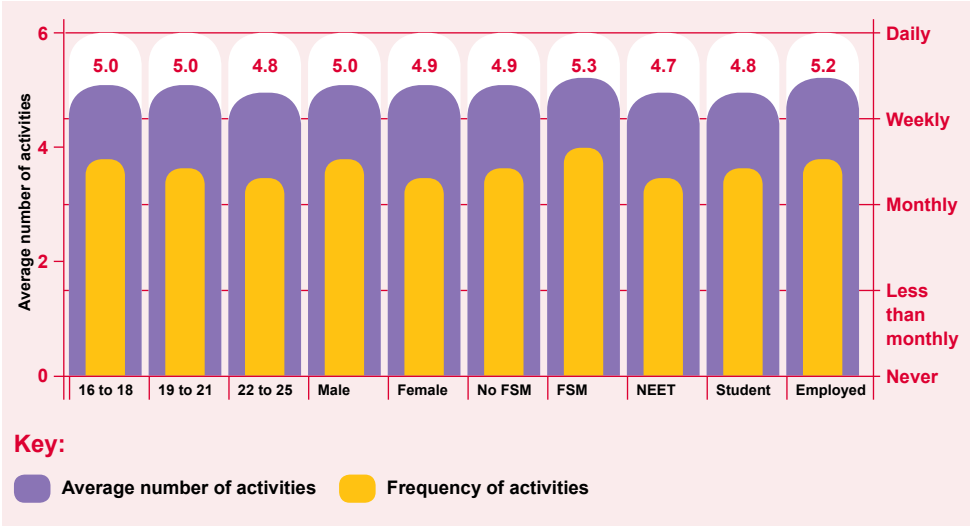
Base: Percentage – All young people (N=1026 Non-NEETs and N=318 NEETs). Average - All young people who have under taken a specific activity in the last three months.

The activity undertaken most on a monthly basis was passive entertainment related, only 2% had not watched videos or television online in the last three months and on average this was an almost daily activity (63% did this daily), 8% had not played games (50% did this daily) and hobby or interest related browsing were similarly popular (on average done on a weekly basis, with 39% doing this daily). Far less common were more active types of engagement that required follow up later such as looking for events (done monthly, 16% daily, and not done by 11%) or posting videos (on average done monthly or daily by 26% of those who do this). Posting videos is the least common (44% had not done this) but of those who

do this a quarter is really active (26% does this daily). Similarly looking up information about health and fitness were not as common as other more passive, immediate satisfaction activities.

Almost one fifth (18%) did not talk about lifestyle issues and just over a tenth (12%) had not looked up information about health or fitness in the last three months.

Personal well-being activities by socio-demographic characteristics



Base: All young people (N=1026 Non-NEETs and N=318 NEETs).

The multi-variate analysis showed that gender, socio-economic disadvantage, personal characteristics and digital environment make a difference when it comes to using ICTs for personal well-being.

Men, those with FSM, the employed and those with high problem solving skills and lower social esteem, as well as those with more devices and locations of access are more frequent and broader users of ICTs. While NEETs used ICTs for a narrower range of activities, they were not online less often. Differences between men and women were relatively minimal and disappeared when other factors were controlled.

Online often for a few things

In the survey the use of content tended to be more passive, without commenting or producing much content themselves.

This is largely confirmed by the qualitative study. While there is active engagement with those that were close to them and while there were instances of creation of videos around a specific area of expertise, these were more accidental rather than being accompanied by very clear strategies in terms of publishing and reaching out to others.

> **MOSTLY IT'S JUST MUSIC AND SOCIAL MEDIA.**

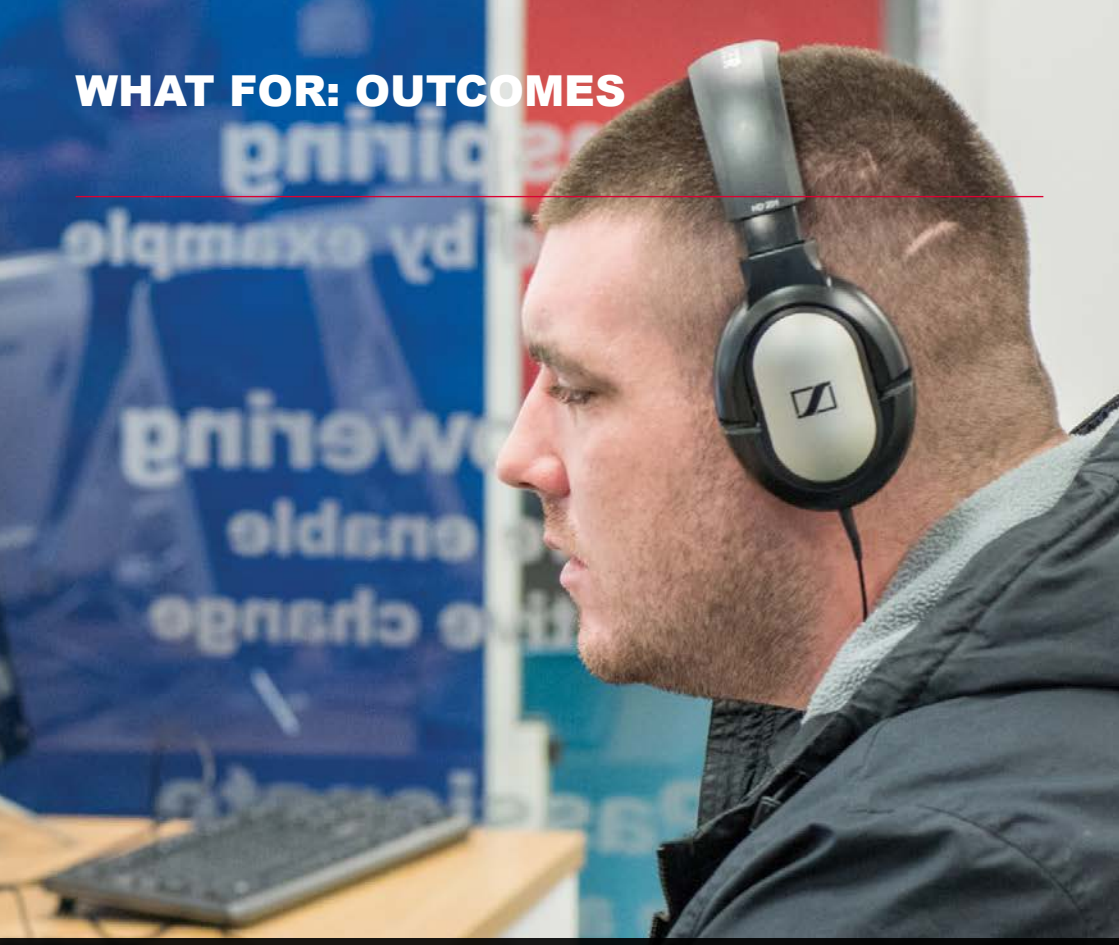
In the next section on outcomes, the report discusses how engagement with these personal aspects of ICTs is often very frustrating and that NEETs tend to stick to the things they know they love and like.

While they got taken to content through automatic playlists and recommendations there was not as much exploring or aimless browsing which would bring them in touch with unknown content.

As for the social uses, NEETs stuck to what they knew, trusted and felt comfortable with.

> **I DRAW AND PLAY GAMES, THAT'S PRETTY MUCH IT. MY WHOLE LIFE REVOLVES AROUND GAMING.**

WHAT FOR: OUTCOMES



In the end, digital inclusion and related policies should be about creating equality of opportunity in how ICTs benefit our everyday well-being and participation in society. The most problematic inequalities are those in the tangible outcomes that individuals from different economic, social, personal and cultural backgrounds are able to achieve through their informational, entertainment, social and transactional engagement with technologies.

This focus on tangible outcomes of ICT use rather than use itself is a recent development in digital inclusion and inequalities research.

Therefore, little generalisable evidence is available. The first studies in this field suggest that there is a potentially vicious cycle, whereby those who lack certain resources online lack the skills and steer away from precisely the type of engagement that might help them overcome this type of disadvantage.

What we already know about NEETs and outcomes

There is no systematic, generalisable research about this for NEETs but qualitative research suggests that NEETs' disadvantage in economic resources, such as poverty, education and employment histories are reflected in frustrating and lower quality experiences in these areas online. These negative experiences in using ICTs will likely lead to a lower achievement of outcomes in everyday life.

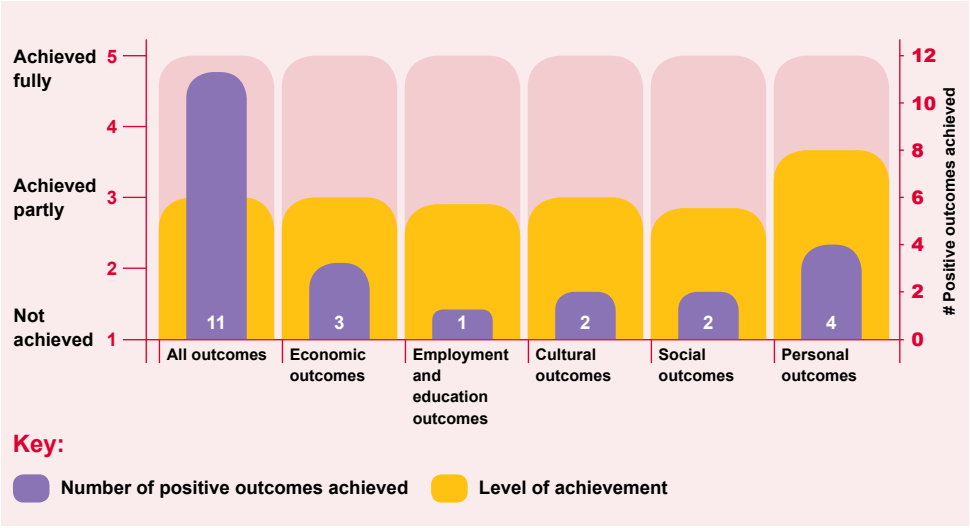
The same seems to occur for their offline disadvantage in regards to relationships with expert, professional others and negative interactions with others. This might translate into a narrower social digital engagement and lower trust in others in digital spaces and therefore lower quality social outcomes.

Overall outcomes

This section looks at the benefits obtained from ICT use in relation to economic (including employment and educational), cultural, social and personal resources.

That is, the tangible benefits that young people are getting from using the internet and technologies such as mobile phones.

Outcomes achieved from ICT use: Thinking about what you did online or on your mobile phone in the last year, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?[12]



Base: Participants who have undertaken to achieve a certain outcome through the use of ICTs (N=1325, N=1303, N=1246, N=1249, N=1299, N=1308).

Overall, when people use ICTs they have mixed results in achieving positive outcomes; 11 out of 23 outcomes were achieved partly or fully. On average, the participants were best at achieving the personal outcomes (four out of seven outcomes were achieved on average), the social (two out of six) and employment/education (one out of three) outcomes were

12 This question contained 23 statements about potential tangible outcomes to be achieved. Answer options were: Strongly disagree, Somewhat disagree, Neither agree nor disagree, Somewhat agree, Strongly agree, Not applicable and Don't know. Strongly agree and Somewhat agree answers were considered indications of an outcome achieved. If the person did not undertake the activity they answered Not Applicable. Averages were calculated over those that had tried to achieve an outcome. Education outcomes were asked for the last year rather than the last three months.

least achievable, with the average for achieving better outcomes through ICTs lower than they could through other means. Cultural and general economic outcomes were achieved on average only partly (two out of four and three out of six). Gender, socio-economic disadvantage, personal characteristics and digital environment were all related to achieving outcomes but in different ways than for use of ICTs.

In fact the results for outcomes were in the opposite direction for many variables; the employed (in comparison to NEETs) achieved the broadest range of outcomes and were better at attaining the outcomes they aimed to achieve.

Women were not as good at attaining the outcomes they aimed to achieve but did not differ in the breadth of their achievement. Problem solvers, those with more emotional problems, lower social esteem and more diverse digital environments (more locations) also achieved a wider range of outcomes.

These same individuals were also better at achieving them when they aimed to undertake an activity, in addition to those who had higher trust in people online, and higher levels of general self-confidence. It is interesting to compare the achievement of positive outcomes with having negative experiences. The multi-variate analysis shows that older young people, with lower social esteem and lower levels of trust in online information and people are more likely to report negative outcomes of internet use.

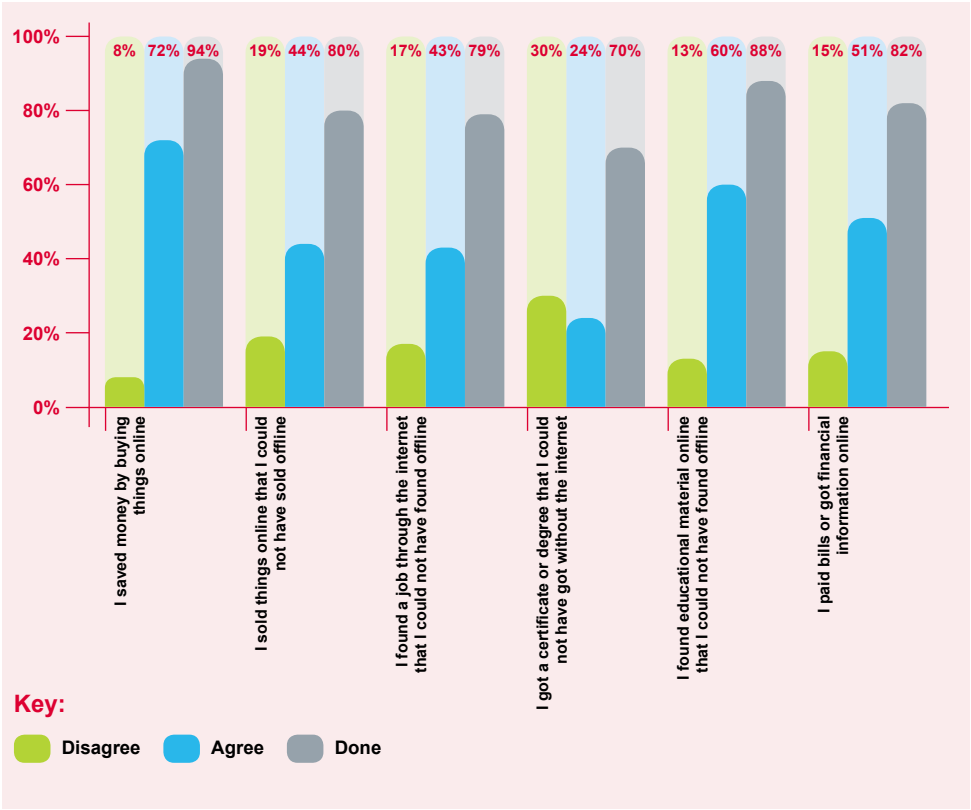
Work status or a history of disadvantage did not influence the overall achievement of outcomes.

Economic, employment and learning outcomes

Of most concern to policy makers and organisations working with NEETs is how ICTs can help provide access to economic opportunities that they might struggle to obtain in real life, education and employment opportunities in particular.

This section looks at the tangible benefits they have obtained in these areas through use of ICTs.

Achievement in economic, employment and learning outcomes

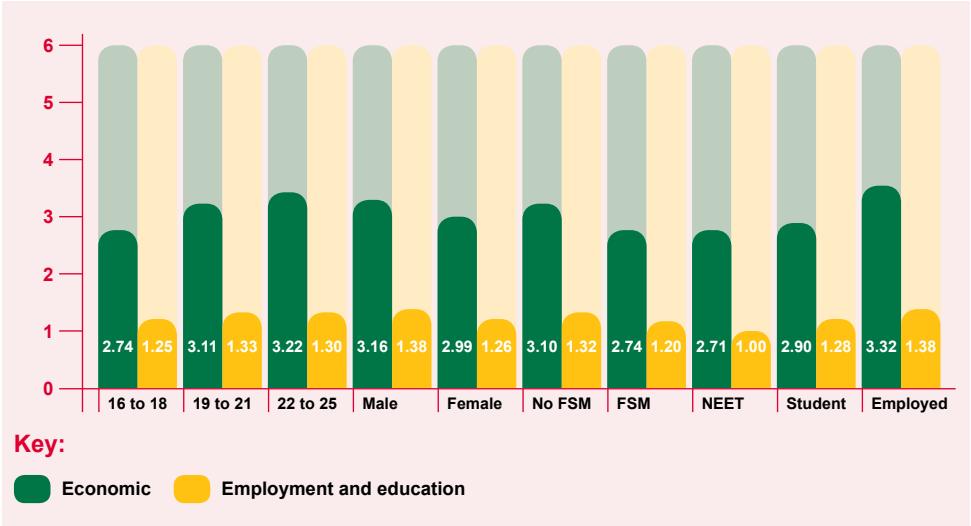


Base: All young people who had undertaken to achieve a specific economic outcome (Non-NEET N= 976, N=824,N=822, N=739, N=925, N=850; NEET N= 293, N=247, N=234, N=206, N=259, N=248). Percentage Done All young people (Non-NEET N=1026; NEET N=318).

Saving money is most likely to be achieved of all economic outcomes; 72% indicated that they had done this partly or fully. Active participation in the economic market place (rather than just consumption) is achieved to a lesser degree; of those who tried 44% successfully sold something online in the last three months.

Formal qualifications are achieved at a lower level; 24% indicated having received a certificate or degree after having tried. This is especially low since it was the least undertaken activities of all in the economic sector (70% looked into this).

Partial and full achievement of economic (0 to 6), employment and education (0 to 3) outcomes by socio-demographic characteristics



Base: All young people who had undertaken activities to achieve economic outcome (N=1002 Non-NEETs and N=301 NEETs).

Multi-variate analyses show that age, gender, and socio-economic disadvantage are all related to achieving economic, education and employment outcomes as are personal characteristics and digital skills.

The youngest, women, FSM receivers, NEETs, and those with lower levels of education achieved fewer economic, employment and education outcomes. Problem solving was positively related to economic outcomes, as was having emotional problems and lower social esteem and higher levels of trust in people online, this was stronger for education and employment than overall economic outcomes. Those with a broader set of

motivations and with more social pressure to use ICTs also achieved more economic, education and employment outcomes. Interesting was that those with mostly mobile access and fewer access locations achieved fewer economic outcomes. While mobile mostly access did not make a difference for use it did make a difference for the outcomes achieved.

Interestingly, digital competencies and confidence were not significantly related to the achievement of economic outcomes.

Because these are such important digital opportunities for NEETs, it is worth looking at the employment and education aspects in more detail.

Achieving employment and education outcomes by work status

Base: All young people who had undertaken to achieve an outcome (Non-NEET N=822, N=739; NEET N=234, N=206).

While, overall, young people people were better at achieving job than education related outcomes when they had attempted these activities through ICT use, NEETs were clearly less successful in achieving these outcomes than those in employment or education.

Forty-six per cent of NEETs who set out to find a job achieved this partially or fully through ICTs compared to 65% of those in employment, and only 22% of NEETs who set out to get a certification achieved this fully through ICTs compared to 38% of those in employment.

This is especially interesting in light of the earlier finding that NEETs actually use ICTs more to engage in employment-related activities. Thus NEETs undertake employment and education related activities more frequently and more broadly but are less likely to obtain a useful outcome in these matters.

This can mean that either the types of jobs and degrees that they are looking for cannot be found online or that they do not have the skills to find these kinds of opportunities online.

Not in my digital world

NEETs by definition are not working or in full time education. Those partaking in a Prince's Trust programme were often in a transition period, actively looking (and being supported in their search) for jobs and some were looking into or starting in further education after finishing their programme.

The digital environment featured little especially in the educational opportunities they had been able to take up.

While in citing, for example, the convenience of automatic notification systems and following their own pace in online courses, they relied heavily on their informal support networks, social support and social workers and paper leaflets to get advice and register for formal education.

They didn't seem to really know where to go online or trust the information that they received about degrees online. They perceived offline recommendations and learning as easier and more trustworthy. Outcomes depended on these networks and positive educational outcomes from ICT use clearly followed from sufficient offline resources.

> **I PREFER TO SIT IN CLASS, IT'S EASIER.**

There was more creativity when it came to online commerce. A few NEETs had already sold their own creations online even when they did not know how to market it to a wider audience.

There were fewer instances of selling second hand items, which is more common amongst other groups.

The potential to expand professional contacts and engagement with potential employers was there, but there was little strategic planning around it and it remained a future possibility.

When considered in relation to other skills required for positive outcomes, for NEETs like for other individuals, technical skills alone did not result in them being able to gain better education or employment options.

The section on skills already pointed out that a distrust towards faceless technologies and an inability to see the reactions of others often led to a dissatisfaction with the outcomes of online transactions in relation to employment. This is likely to be more problematic for NEETs since they built on bad experiences and just see this confirmation that they are not worth it or that their skills are not appreciated when their applications get rejected.

DO YOU FIND WHEN YOU'RE APPLYING FOR JOBS, IT'S CERTAINLY HAPPENED TO ME, THAT YOU EMAIL SOMEBODY AND YOU DON'T GET ANY RESPONSE?

A recurring theme was disillusionment from never hearing back from their potential employees and thus preferring to go the known route where they could look the person in the eye and see why they were being rejected.

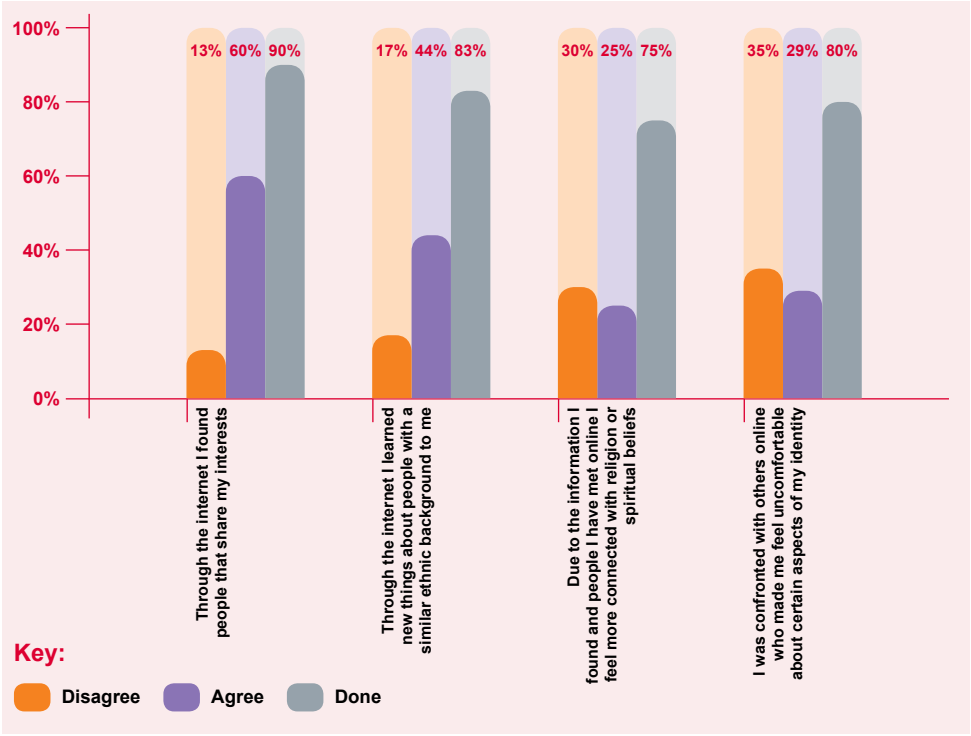
Disadvantage and exclusion experienced in everyday life often finds its way into the digital environment.

I'M ONLY GOING TO FIND THE LOCAL JOBS AND THEN I'LL GO INTO THE PLACE AND HAND IN MY CV AND STOP THERE.

Cultural outcomes

While the lower likelihood of tangible outcomes of ICT use related to increases in wealth and economic well-being will be of concern to many, NEETs and other disadvantage youth often suffer multiple types of disadvantage in everyday life. One of these is a lack of a confident sense of who they are (i.e. identity) or where they belong, which are important anchors to build general well-being around. This section looks at a few indicators of tangible outcomes in identity and belonging and which factors are associated with this aspect labelled cultural outcomes.

Achievement in cultural outcomes[13]



Base: All young people who had undertaken to achieve a specific cultural outcome (Non-NEET N= 935, N=864, N=782, N=830; NEET N= 276,N=247, N=229, N=244). Percentage Done All young people (Non-NEET N=1026; NEET N=318).

13 For the scale creation the confrontation with people who make the person feel uncomfortable about aspects of identity was reversed. A lack of achievement was considered a positive outcome. A higher percentage in the graph is a positive outcome.

The most attempted cultural outcome was also the most successfully achieved one, meeting people that share one's interest was undertaken by 90% and achieved fully or partially by 60% of these individuals.

The other identity related aspect, feeling comfortable with one's identity was achieved to a far lesser extent, with 29% indicating that they had been confronted with others online in a way that made them feel uncomfortable about their identity.

The least likely outcome of ICT use was a greater connection with religious or spiritual beliefs (25% of the 75% who had come across these types of interaction online achieved this). In fact, not achieving a greater sense of belonging to a religious or spiritual group and feeling uncomfortable with aspects of one's identity were more likely than achieving these outcomes.

While achieving this outcome was more likely than not achieving it, a greater sense of belonging to one's ethnic group was still relatively less common (44% out of the 83% who felt that they had undertaken interactions that could have led to this outcome).

The multi-variate analyses show that gender and personal characteristics were related to achieving cultural outcomes. Women, those with fewer problem solving skills and those with less emotional problems, achieved fewer positive cultural outcomes.

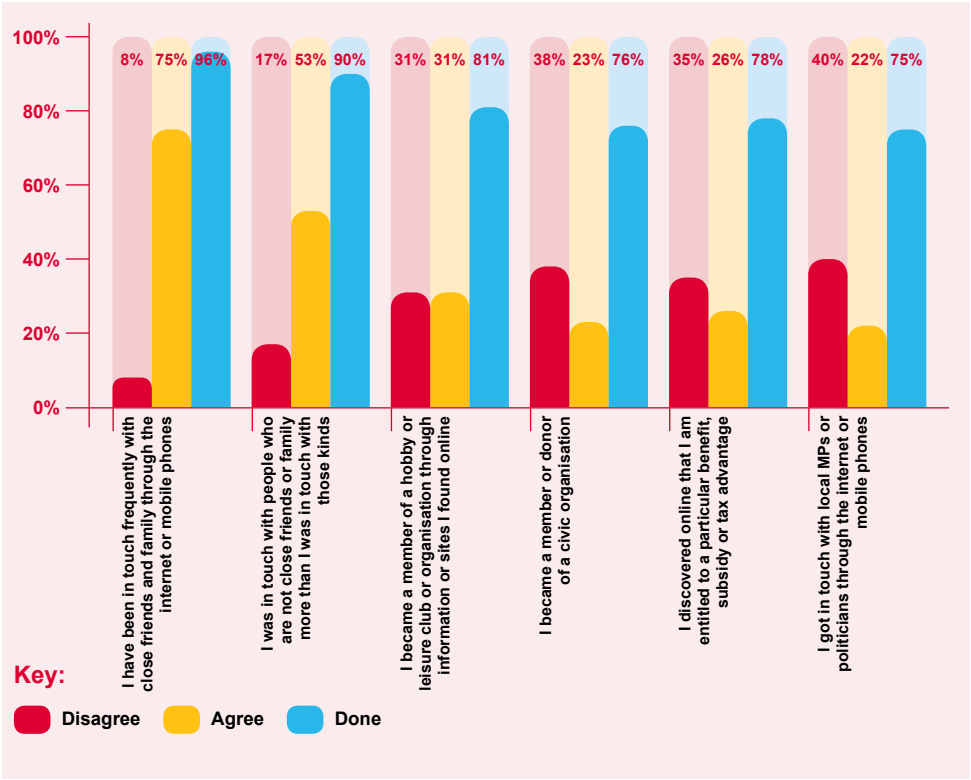
In relation to these outcomes digital skills, confidence and environment were very important.

Those with more locations of access, who had higher levels of mobile/protection skills in particular, as well as those who were more broadly motivated, felt more social pressure to use ICTs. Those more likely to have helped others use ICTs achieved more positive cultural outcomes.

Social outcomes

Many of the cultural outcomes described in the previous section are more abstract and harder to achieve than the day to day interactions we have and which ICTs are known for. Outcomes in these everyday interactions can be roughly divided into more frequent and better quality informal interactions with close others and more distant, formal relationships with others or organisations. Following the DiSTO framework, frequent, high quality interactions with governments and political participation are included in the latter category.

Achievement in social outcomes



Base: All young people who had undertaken activities that allowed them to achieve a specific social outcome (Non-NEET N= 990, N=928, N=856, N=796, N=801, N=781; NEET N= 297, N=280, N=238, N=231, N=246, N=223). Percentage done-All young people (Non NEET N=1026; NEET N=318).

Young people were more likely to undertake activities related to informal interactions with close others than more formal interactions and they were more likely to achieve these partially or fully when they did.

The most successfully achieved social outcomes are those related to interacting with family and friends (75% of the 96% who had undertaken these types of activities) and 53% indicating that using ICTs had helped them be aware of others who were unlike them. There was a gradually lower likelihood of successfully achieving outcomes when the relationship got more formal and more distant.

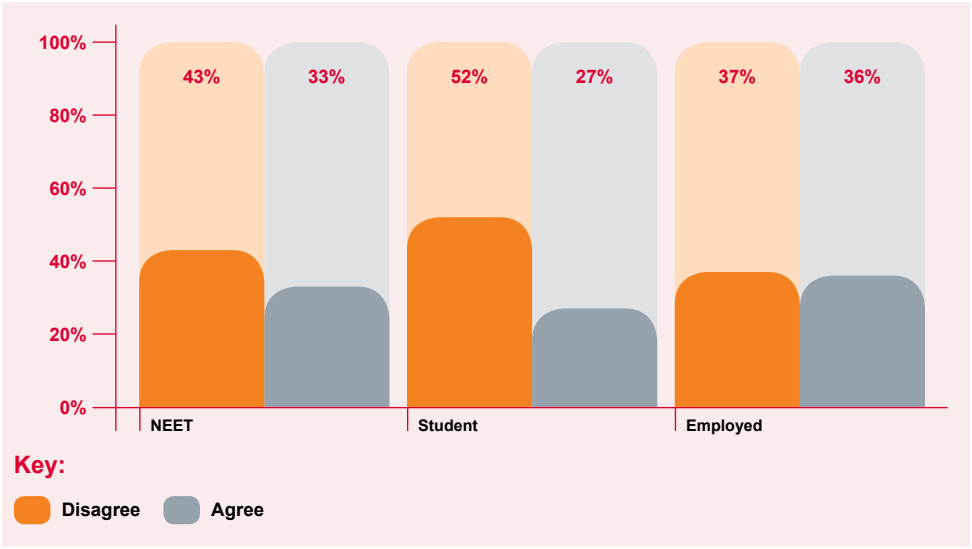
For the more formal types of interactions, the proportion of young people who said they did not achieve an outcome (one third) was larger than those who said that they were able to achieve it partially or fully (a quarter); civic engagement in the sense of becoming a member or a donor of an organisation (38% not achieved against 23% achieved) and political engagement in terms of getting in touch with local representatives (40% not achieved and 22% achieved) scored the lowest in achievement.

Of further note is that of those who undertook activities that could lead them to find a benefit or tax advantage online[14] (78%) a third did not find they were entitled to one (35%).

This might be because they were not or it might be because they already knew they were entitled and the information online provided nothing new. Therefore, it is important to look at this in more detail for those who are and who are less likely to be entitled to this.

14 This is considered a social formal interaction because it involves getting information and becoming involved in interactions with government services. Though the case could be made that this is an economic rather than a social outcome.

Achievement in benefits or tax outcomes by work status



Base: All young people who had undertaken activities that allowed them to achieve a specific social outcome (Non-NEET N=801; NEET N=246).

In this case, the findings are partially reassuring; those least likely to be entitled to benefits or tax advantages (i.e. the students) are also less likely to have achieved this type of outcome when they looked for this online.

The multi-variate analysis showed that age, gender, socio-economic disadvantage and personal characteristics are all related to social outcomes. Those who were younger, women and NEET achieved fewer social outcomes.

It needs to be noted here that women were more likely to undertake activities that could lead to social outcomes but that when they did the results were less positive.

Problem solvers, those with more emotional problems, lower levels of social esteem and higher levels of trust in people online were more successful at achieving positive social outcomes.

The socio-digital environment matters too, those with content creation skills in particular were better at achieving social outcomes.

However, here having asked for help in using ICTs, a broader range of motivations to use them, a more sceptical view of their benefits and the sensation that there was more social pressure to use ICTs were all related to achieving a broader range of social outcomes effectively.

Inevitable, but safer and better in the 'real' world

As was indicated in the skills and uses sections, many expressed a preference for face to face interactions to be able to see what people were really feeling. NEETs' lower levels of trust in people online are very likely to be related to this and influences the outcomes they achieve in other domains (see for example, employment) as well as in the social domain.

NEETs perceived others being tethered to their phones to be a tremendous problem, something that alienated them and in a way indicated that their preference for face to face, 'real' contact alienated them from others. It is interesting to observe this amongst this young generation because these are the kinds of frustrations about outcomes that are more common amongst older generations and in the media.

Though this feeling of frustration and alienation was also coupled with a clear sense of the importance of ICTs to stay in touch and maintain relationships with close family and friends.

> **I'M SO ISOLATED WHERE I'M LIVING, ALL I'VE GOT TO DO IS GO ON SOCIAL MEDIA.**

Many of the NEETs were not living with direct family, either in care, with foster parents or with families of whom one of the parents and some of the siblings were not theirs: to those it helped overcome loneliness and feelings of being uprooted.

They wished for mediated interactions and socialising to be different. They saw the potential for bringing people together but perceived the negatives to be greater at the moment. This was where they indicated a need for training to be able to achieve more positive outcomes.

The focus groups took place right after the EU referendum and while for many this was not linked to any of the digital interactions, others perceived that an opportunity had been missed.

They had great hopes for civic and political participation through ICTs. However, discussion about these topics was seen removed from their everyday life and most online discussions were with close friends or family about personal rather than public opinion related topics.

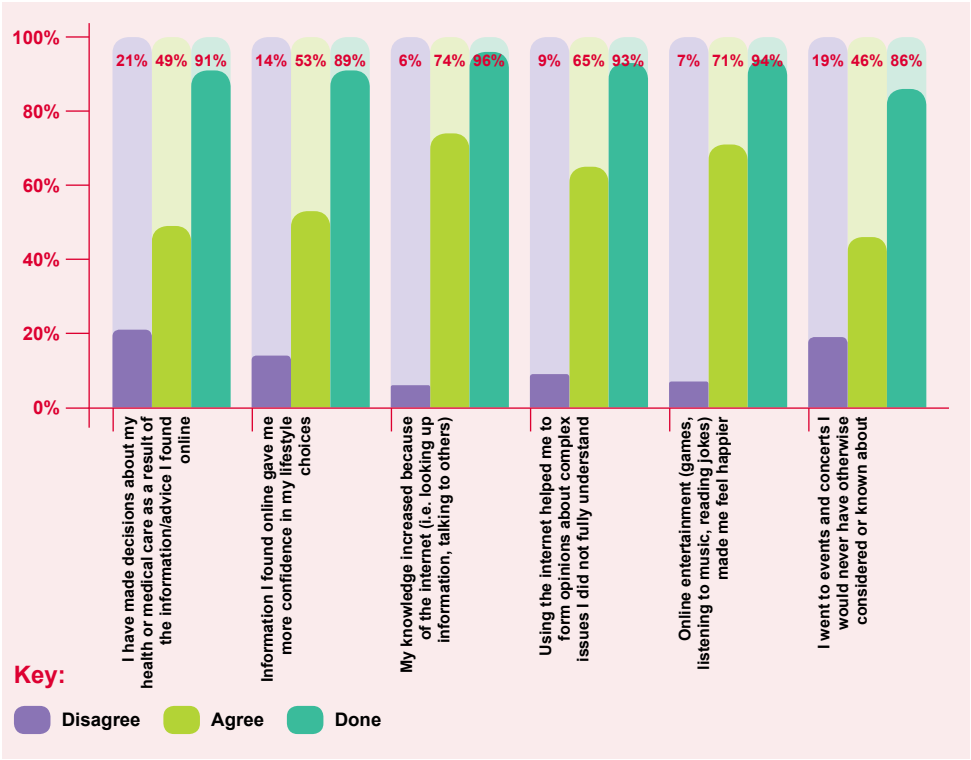
This reflects what we know from other research about the interactions and relationships that NEETs have which focus on maintaining and solidifying a small network of very close and trusted individuals who are much like them – to an even larger extent than those who have different backgrounds.

> **I'M REALLY INTO THE IDEA OF A WEB-BASED DEMOCRACY, WHERE WE CAN ALL USE WEBSITES TO HELP MAKE MORE INFORMED DECISIONS IN POLITICS.**

Personal well-being

All of the outcomes discussed so far are related to activities and resources that are considered important in wider society and to do with interactions with (and sometimes imposed by) others. The last domain of outcomes discussed in this report is that of individual well-being, things that make these young people feel better, healthier and increase their overall confidence. Three areas of personal well-being were examined: health and fitness, self-actualisation and entertainment. These were the most important motivations for and most frequently undertaken activities online and it should be expected that the levels of achievement are high.

Personal well-being outcome achievement



Base: All young people who had undertaken activities that allowed them to achieve a specific social outcome (Non-NEET N= 928, N=942, N=986, N=962, N=971, N=892; NEET N= 269, N=281, N=299, N=289, N=298, N=263). Percentage done-All young people (Non NEET N=1026; NEET N=318).

Indeed, of all the personal outcomes, those related to self-actualisation and entertainment were achieved with high levels of success (74% increased their knowledge, 65% were able to form more informed opinions, and 71% increased their happiness through online entertainment partially or fully). Those who looked for events or concerts (86%) were relatively less likely to achieve positive outcomes (46%), the same was found for high quality health (49% achieved partially or fully) and lifestyle (53% partially or fully achieved) outcomes.

Multi-variate analyses show that socio-economic disadvantage and personal characteristics were related to the achievement of personal well-being outcomes. NEETs were less successful at achieving personal well-being outcomes, as were those with fewer emotional problems. This was the only outcome area that was not related to problem solving skills or to age or gender. More important than the personal and demographic characteristics were the digital skills and support structures that the young person had. Those with more access locations and content creation skills, those who had helped others with ICTs, those who had broad motivations and felt encouraged by others to use ICTs were all more successful at achieving a wide range of personal well-being outcomes.

A necessary, addictive evil but fun nevertheless

Frustrations of using ICTs for personal well-being were clear. They had a dual relationship with this. Some reported on the benefits of looking for transport information online but the reality of them using the transport system with the information achieved was not always apparent. One NEET young person completely miscalculated the time it would take to get to her next appointment even though she had looked it up online and the social support workers had to help her figure it out taking all the other aspects of planning (e.g. leaving the building) into consideration.

That health and lifestyle related activities were popular but often did not lead to the desired outcomes was clear from the comments around the somewhat ridiculous advice that they got when looking for health information. This was earlier linked to skill levels but it also showed related to the actual outcomes that they achieved through searches even when they were on the NHS or other respected sites. In this, their experience is unlikely to differ from those in more advantaged positions in society. Though the result amongst NEETs seems to be to completely disconnect and give up on the digital world which might not be the case for others.

I DON'T GOOGLE ANYTHING ANY MORE. EVEN IF I GET A COUGH, IT TELLS ME I'M DYING.

The frustrations with ICTs and a clear preference for the offline after repeated frustrating experiences online, which partly have to do with connections and locations of use that are not adequate for the types of services they want to access, kept coming up in other practical areas.

Underlying the discussions was a desire to go back to more familiar ways of doing things but the world was changing and they realised there was no going back.

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