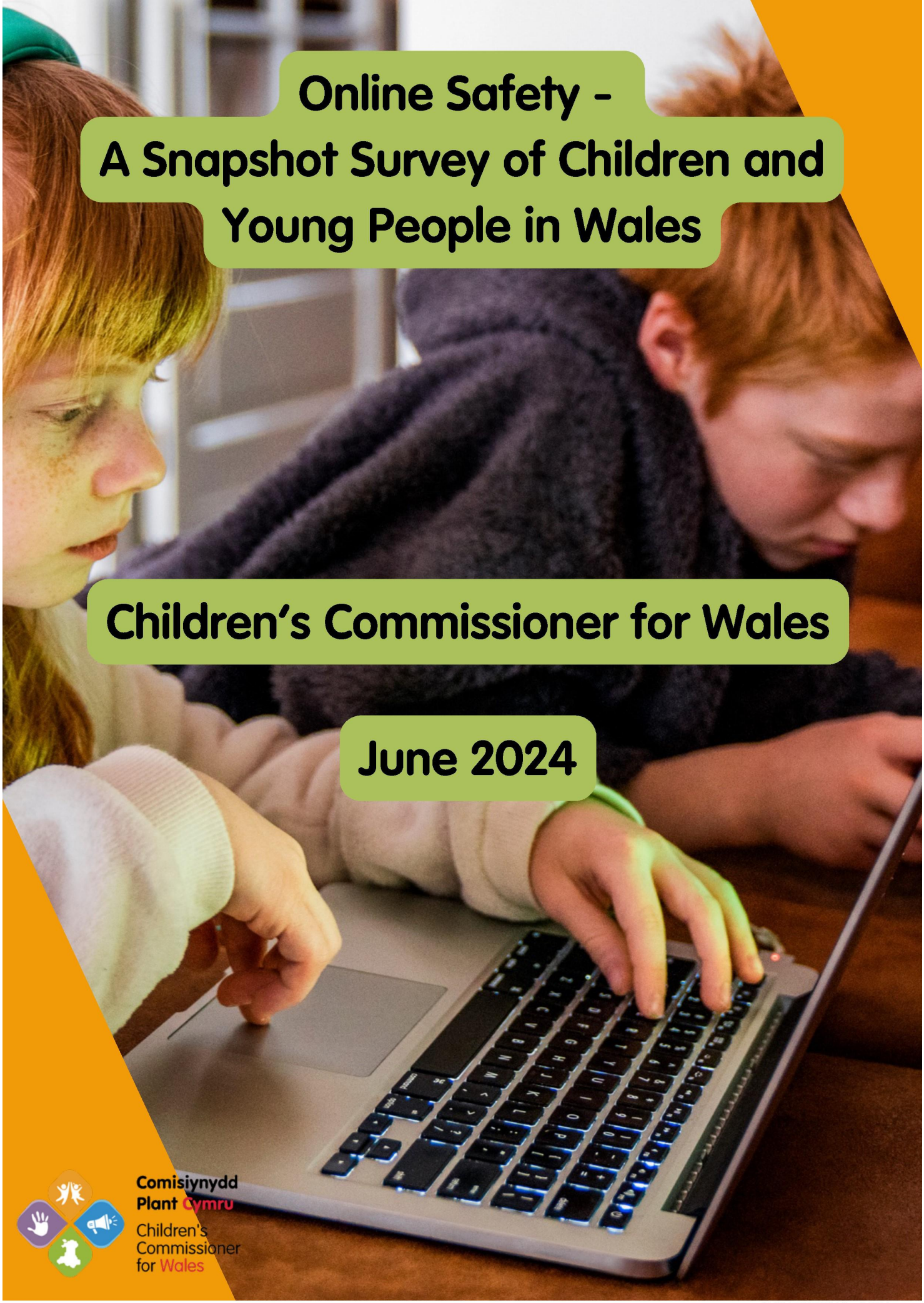
Online Safety - A Snapshot Survey of Children and Young People in Wales



Children's Commissioner for Wales

June 2024

Comisiynydd Plant Cymru
Children's Commissioner for Wales

Introduction

During June 2024, we asked children and young people for their views on online safety.

The survey was part of an ongoing series of topical questions we ask children and young people every month to hear their views on a variety of issues, called Monthly Matters. It was shared directly with all schools signed up to our children's rights schemes for primary and secondary schools, as well as community groups.

As part of the survey pack, children and young people were shown a video introducing the topic, and they were then asked to consider questions about online safety. We suggested in our session outline that following this video, children and young people should have time to discuss their views with each other before answering the survey.

Schools had two options for completing the survey; children and young people could either do it independently, or a teacher could complete the survey on behalf of the group, answering a different set of questions to give an overview of the discussion.

In total, 1284 individual children and young people aged answered the survey. A further 869 children took part in groups, with teachers and youth workers submitting a summary of their views. We received responses from 20 local authority areas. A broad range of ages took part, from children under the age of 7, to 18-year-olds.

Questions were developed by the Commissioner's experienced staff team based on themes that had emerged from previous engagement exercises with children, young people, and professionals.

Results from the survey were used in the Children's Commissioner for Wales' response to the Ofcom's consultation, Protecting Children from Harms Online.

Questions for children and young people

Think about the apps, games, or websites you use. Do you feel safe and happy when you use them?

Yes (974) - 76%

Sometimes (249) - 19% I

don't know (46) - 4% No

(20) - 2%

If they answered 'Sometimes', 'I don't know', or 'No' they were asked another question:

Which apps/games/websites have made you feel unsafe or unhappy?

- 29% of children answering this question said Roblox
- 17% said YouTube 12% said snapchat
- Snapchat

Quotes

- 'Youtube because sometimes it shows me not child friendly stuff and gore' - 11-year-old
- 'Snapchat because people can add you' - 10-year-old
- 'Sometimes on apps like Roblox they have voice chat were some people say inappropriate stuff also even without it people discriminate me because of my skin colour' - 11-year-old

What would you do if something online made you feel worried, upset, or unsafe?

Tell your parent/carer (913) - 71%

Report it on the app/website (616) - 48%

Tell someone else in your family (498) - 39%

Report it on the app/website (414) - 32%

Do nothing (119) - 9% Something else (115) - 9%

If they chose 'Something else', they were asked another question:

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What else would you do?

The most common answers fell under the following themes:

- Delete the app
- Tell friends
- Leave the app/website

Have you reported something that's made you feel unsafe, worried, or upset to an app/website/game before?

No (223) - 45%

Yes (193) - 39%

I'm not sure (85) - 17%

If they said 'yes' they were asked another question:

Do you feel like the app/website/game took your concern seriously?

I'm not sure (75) - 39%

Yes (62) - 32%

No (55) - 29%

Is there anything that would stop you from reporting something online?
The vast majority of children said that nothing would stop them from reporting something online.

But the most common answers referring to barriers to reporting fell under the following themes:

- Being bullied
- Feeling threatened
- Not being bothered enough

Which of these do you do?

I talk a little bit with my family about what I do online (599) - 47% I

talk a lot with my family about what I do online (348) - 27% I don't

talk a lot with my family about what I do online (334) - 26%

Questions for teachers

Where teachers responded on behalf of a group, their answers reflected the answers given by children directly.

Teachers were also able to give their own perspective and experiences in the following questions:

To what extent do children's online lives impact their education/school life?

The most common answers fell under the following themes:

- Children being tired because of online activities
- A lack of motivation/concentration
- Arguments that began online affecting the classroom

Are there any new or growing online trends/platforms/behaviours that worry you as a professional?

The most common answers fell under the following themes:

- Children accessing platforms not suitable for their age
- TikTok
- Concerns that children's attention span is shortening
- Inappropriate content

Conclusion

- There have been consistent calls over recent years for significant improvements in online safety for children. Our snapshot survey echoes some existing concerns: experiences that make children feel unsafe or put them at potential risk; low confidence in how platforms deal with concerns; and children using apps not suitable for their age.
- The survey results formed our response to Ofcom's consultation on new online safety proposals, 'Protecting Children from Harms Online'. It's imperative that new regulations make a positive difference to children's online experiences.
- You can read our press release about this survey on our web page, which includes statements from Ofcom Cymru and NSPCC Wales.