

# Covid-19: Expectations and Effects on Children Online



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## DIGITAL MIGRATION



Online access surged

**22%**  
increase in web access  
Verizon (US)

**35-60%**  
increase in weekday  
daytime traffic  
UK BT (UK)

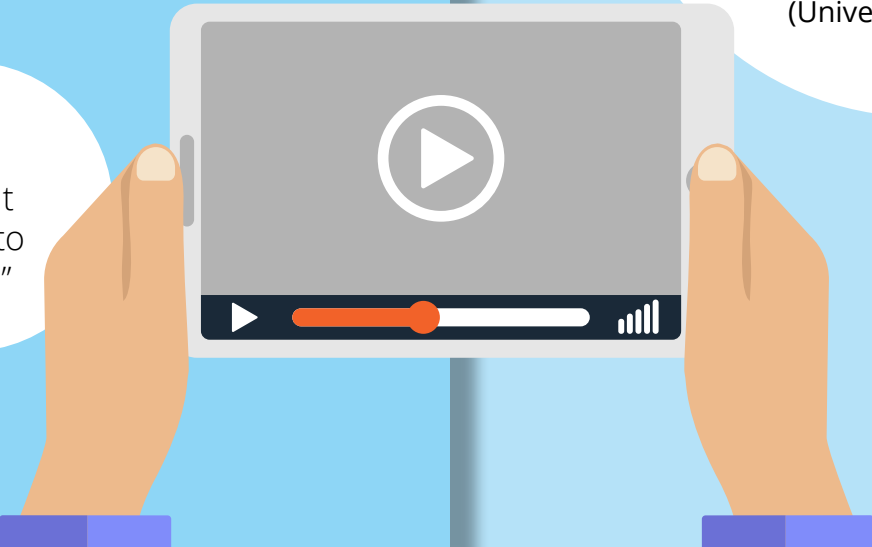
Demand for content increased

Facebook, WhatsApp, Messenger, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat and Twitter all broke their respective records for time spent in-app

**57%**  
average increase for top ten news sites in Australia



Streaming services saw unprecedented demand. In Europe, Netflix announced that it was "Reducing Netflix traffic" to maintain "member experience"



"Millions of children are at **increased risk of harm** as their lives move increasingly online during lockdown in the COVID-19 pandemic"  
(Unicef)

"Adults working remotely subsequently are not as able to supervise their children's internet activity"  
(Europol)

## WARNINGS AND PREDICTIONS

"There are a minimum **300,000 individuals** in the UK posing a **sexual threat to children**"  
(UK's National Crime Agency's threat assessment)

"Spending more time on virtual platforms can leave children vulnerable to online sexual exploitation and grooming, as predators look to exploit the COVID-19 pandemic."  
(Global Partnership to End Violence)

"Greater unsupervised internet use means children are **likely to be exposed to greater risk** of sexual exploitation online"  
(WeProtect Global Alliance)

**72%**  
of teachers said school closures would have a **NEGATIVE IMPACT** on pupil wellbeing and safety.  
(University of Exeter)



## Health and Wellbeing

Girls aged 15 to 18 feel under more pressure to look a certain way on social media  
e.g. lose weight or exercise (26%) and be online all the time (20%)  
(Girlguiding)

**32%**  
of 2,111 young people with a history of mental health needs agreed that it had made their mental health much worse  
(Young Minds)



## IMPACT

### Child Sexual Exploitation

**OVER 200%**  
Increase in posts on known child sex abuse forums  
(WeProtect Global Alliance)

"IWF and its partners blocked at least **8.8 million attempts** by UK internet users to access videos and images of children suffering sexual abuse"  
During Covid-19 restrictions

"...increased online activity by those seeking child sexual abuse material"  
Europol director Catherine De Bolle

## CONCLUSION

*"the heightened risks of online harm for children put a particular responsibility on tech companies and service providers. This is not the time to lessen the priority on children's safety,"*  
Her Majesty Queen Silvia of Sweden

Policymakers will need to consider and accommodate the impacts of COVID-19 on children for many years to come.

**There will, without doubt, be a lasting impact on children from COVID-19.**