

More than half of children use social media by the age of 10: Facebook is most popular site that youngsters join

- 52 per cent of eight to 16-year-olds ignored Facebook's age limit
 - Other popular sites include WhatsApp, BBM, SnapChat and Ask.fm
 - 43 per cent had messaged strangers, starting from an average age of 12
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By [Daily Mail Reporter](#)

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More than half of children have used an online social network by the age of 10, according to a study.

Facebook tops the list of sites that children sign up to under-age, with 52 per cent of eight to 16-year-olds admitting they had ignored the official age limit, the Social Age report for online safety advisory website Knowthenet found.

Other popular sites include WhatsApp, used by 40 per cent of eight to 16-year-olds, BBM (24 per cent), SnapChat (11 per cent) and Ask.fm (8 per cent).



Researchers have found more than half of children have used an online social network by the age of 10

The study found that although 59 per cent of children are social networking by 10 years old, just 32 per cent of parents feel 'very confident' about helping them stay safe online.

The poll found 21 per cent of children had posted negative comments, starting from an average age of 11, and 26 per cent had 'hijacked' another person's account and posted without permission.

Some 43 per cent had messaged strangers, starting from an average age of 12.

The study suggests that children are most likely to post an image or video of themselves online or set up a fake profile for the first time at the age of 11, try Twitter and message a stranger at 12 and try services like SnapChat and Ask.fm at the age of 13.

Two thirds (67 per cent) turn to their parents when they experience difficulties online, the poll found.

While 63 per cent of parents check their child's internet activity at least once a week, more than a fifth (21 per cent) are not confident they could install parental controls, and just under a half (46 per cent) admit not being confident or aware of the school internet policy.



Other popular sites include WhatsApp (right), used by 40 per cent of eight to 16-year-olds, and SnapChat (left)

Dr Richard Woolfson, child psychologist and Knowthenet spokesman, said: 'The internet offers wonderful experiences for growing and inquisitive young minds.

'Yet, as social media has removed the barriers between a young person's public and private self, children can become vulnerable, and compulsive online sharing can lead to danger.

'As this study shows, children are gaining access to social media sites at a younger age, which could expose them to content, people or situations that are out of their depth and which they're not emotionally prepared for.

'Parents can no longer protect children by simply trying to limit their online experiences. Instead parents need to maintain an open dialogue and encourage children to share both good and bad online experiences, talk openly and straightforwardly about the risks they may encounter online without scaring

them and make sure they keep up with the latest social media crazes and work with their children rather than trying to control them.'

Opinium surveyed 1,006 parents of children aged eight to 16 online and 1,004 children aged eight to 16 between October 17-24.