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MySpace generation happier to talk online than real life

The MySpace generation is more able to talk about themselves online than in the flesh, a survey suggests.

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Young people are taking refuge from reality in cyberspace, with more than a third feeling better able to talk about themselves online, new research indicates.

A survey of British MySpace users aged 14 to 21 found that 36 per cent found it easier to talk about themselves online than in the real world and thought their online friends knew more about them than their off-line ones.

In their real life social scene, nearly three quarters (72 per cent) of youngsters said they felt "left out" and that they did not fit into any particular social group.

And more than four fifths (82 per cent) reported moving between four or more different groups of friends as they found it more and more difficult to be accepted.

Indicating how big an issue this difficulty in sustaining close real life friendships may be, 43 per cent of those questioned named having a good group of friends as the most important factor in their future happiness.

Money came way down the list of keys to future happiness, with family, health and friends all rated as more important.

Rebekah Horne, MySpace Europe managing director, said: "This study shows us to what extent young people are using online as a way to explore and settle into their burgeoning identities."

But children's charity NSPCC cautioned against viewing the internet as a safe haven, warning that young people could be vulnerable to bullying online.

Phillip Noyes, Director of Public Policy at the NSPCC, said: "The technology has...brought (young people) new ways to make friends. But it is also open to misuse and children can be vulnerable to bullying and abuse through this medium."

More than 16,000 MySpace users were polled for the survey.



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