



respondi

# THE FOLLY OF MISUNDERSTANDING YOUTH

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respondi alters a company's knowledge about markets and target groups. respondi follows and accompanies people in their daily online life and creates an extensive and detailed picture of customers, wishes and behaviour using a combination of the latest technology, scientific methods and digital know how.

Closeness creates trust and people confide in those that they trust. This applies to both market research participants as well as clients. That's why we see the people in the panel, and recognise them as our partners. The basis for real insights. We are there, where our clients need us, represented by people they know. In London, Paris and Cologne..

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For the past few years, UM have been working on an output called UK by UM.

<https://uk.ipgmediabrands.com/wp-content/uploads/UK-by-UM-Women-in-Ads.pdf>

The UM project aims to better understand audiences, cultures and identities in the UK today. To date UM have released 3 stand-out productions – tackling stereotypes of dads, gay/bisexual men and women.

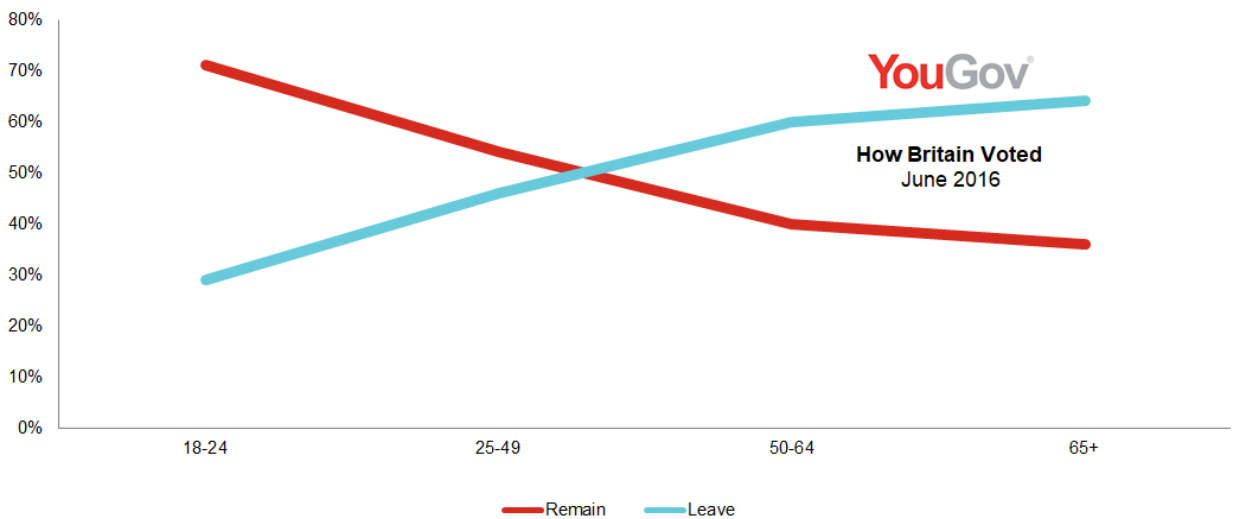
[www.umww.com](http://www.umww.com)

# Introduction

As we know, youth culture and the movements it has inspired, has taken many forms over the years: punks and go's ravers to name a few. However, sadly it sometimes feels as if the generational gap has never been more

pronounced or real than it does today. How the electorate voted in the 2016 Brexit referendum illustrates powerfully the diagonal difference in how the age groups vote:

## The generational gap is real



Of course, the differences are political, but they extend to technology, housing,

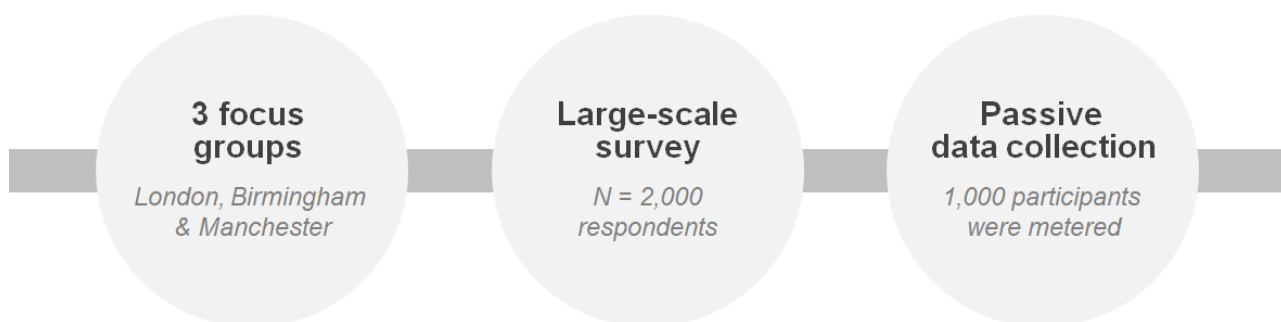
employment, debt, opportunity, and even health and especially mental health.

# Methodology

At respondi, our corporate motto is "Close to People". Our mixed methodology, blending passive and declarative data, helps us do this. And

that helps us get closer to the truth – or at least to see the full picture!

In this instance, we conducted a 3-part methodology;

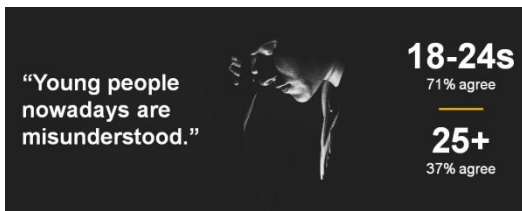


- 3 focus groups to gain a big-picture understanding of what young people do and how they think
- a 1,000 Nat Rep general population survey with a separate cell of 1,000 participants between 18.24 years of age
- and finally we passively tracked the web behaviour of over 1,000 people on smartphones, tablets and PC.

Passive data comes with a lot of questions! Namely, why would people share their data like this and how? Are participants all opted in? Interestingly, we find that younger people are far more open to sharing their data when asked in an open and transparent way. Food for thought: maybe the younger generation realises their data has a value and thus our industry and brands should pay.

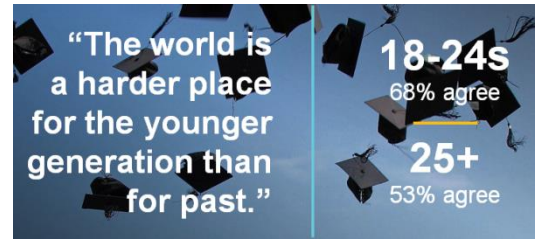
# Results

This new generation is less deferential; once upon time people thought "oh wow, someone wants my opinion" and were excited to be asked what they thought. The new generation have a deeper understanding of the power they have and if brands want their valuable and rich data – they should be paid for it. 18-24-year olds today feel largely misunderstood.:



An astonishing 71% of young people feel they are misunderstood; Only half of 25+ year olds felt the same way. How can politicians, marketers and the rest of us get these groups so wrong? How do we encompass them?

The youth audience also believes the world is a harder place for the younger generation than for past generations:



As well as having it tougher, the youth audience also feels the responsibility to 'right the wrongs of older generations':



The youth worry about climate change, about paying off or managing the debts society is passing down to them, and that's not even talking about how they feel about Brexit...

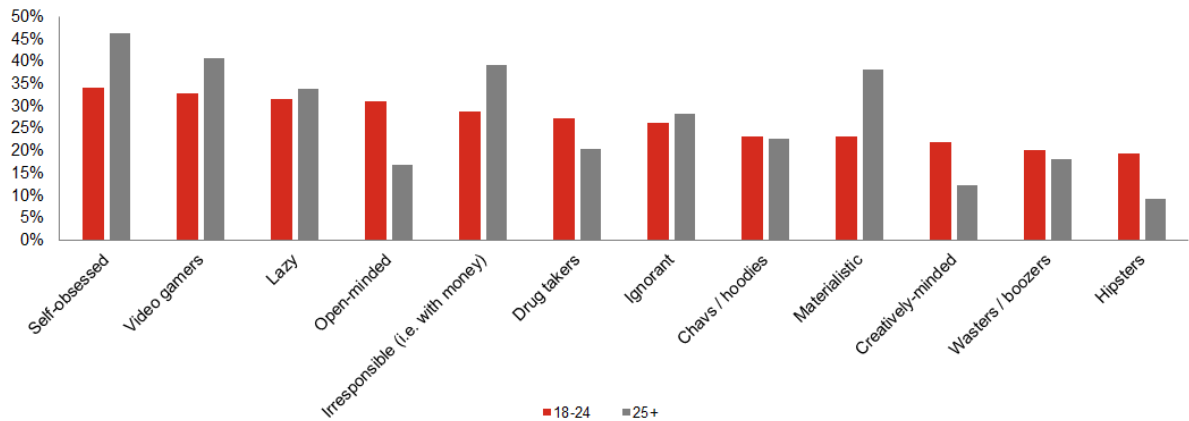
But it's not just societal issues they worry about or feel responsible for, as we will see later, they also worry about the individual social pressures they face. Through our focus groups and survey, we discovered a long list of stereotypes that exist about young people today; the most

prevalent ones being that young people are vain and vacuous.

Older audiences over-index in considering that young people are 'self-obsessed', 'irresponsible' and 'materialistic':

## The most prevalent stereotypes are about vanity

Q. Please think of all the ways in which society tends to think about young people. Select all the stereotypes you recognise.



In total, we discovered 30 common stereotypes – for the sake of clarity, we're

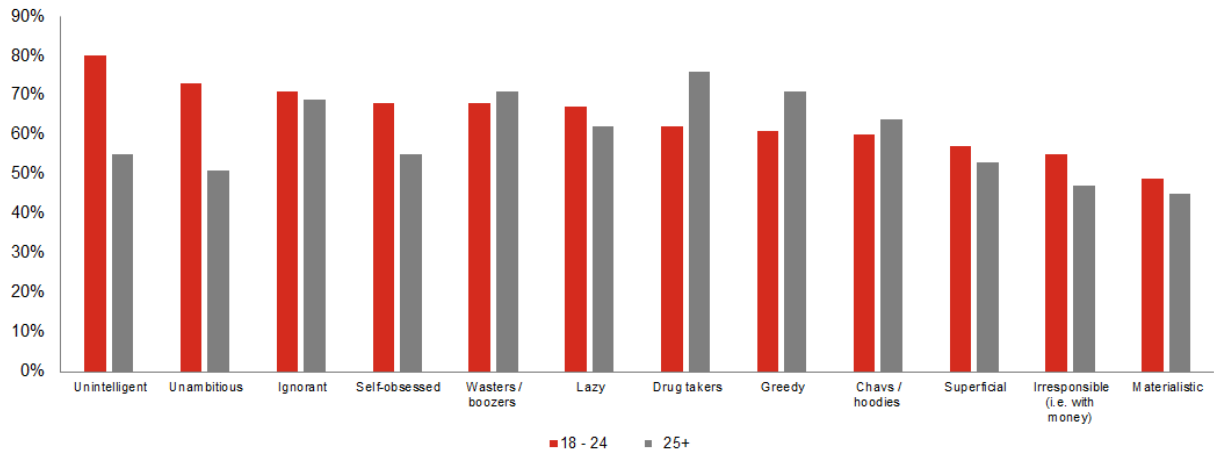
showing you the top 10.

We ranked these by considering which are most offensive and learned the

perceptions young people find most offensive are the patronising ones:

## The most offensive stereotypes are the most patronising

Q. How offensive do you find these stereotypes? (Any 'Offensive' shown)



Being considered 'unintelligent' and 'unambitious' were the most offensive stereotypes – but there are many others.

The learning here for brands is to stay away from all of these tropes when producing creative content.

As part of our mixed methodological approach, we utilised Vox Pops and asked our people to tell us what they would put in a time capsule to really bring to life the times we're living in. We find this question really useful at bringing audiences to life, something quantitative surveys fail to capture sometimes. Many respondents mentioned technology – and specifically, the smartphone.





We also asked our respondents to tell us about the top 3 brands they feel address young people in an authentic and appealing way, and saw that these

brands always fell into fashion, tech and entertainment and FMCG (only Coke featured in this 3rd category).



Coca Cola sits very lonely in that FMCG category, and many categories are missing altogether (news and retail brands, for example), showing that hardly any categories are doing a great job of engaging 18-24-year-olds.

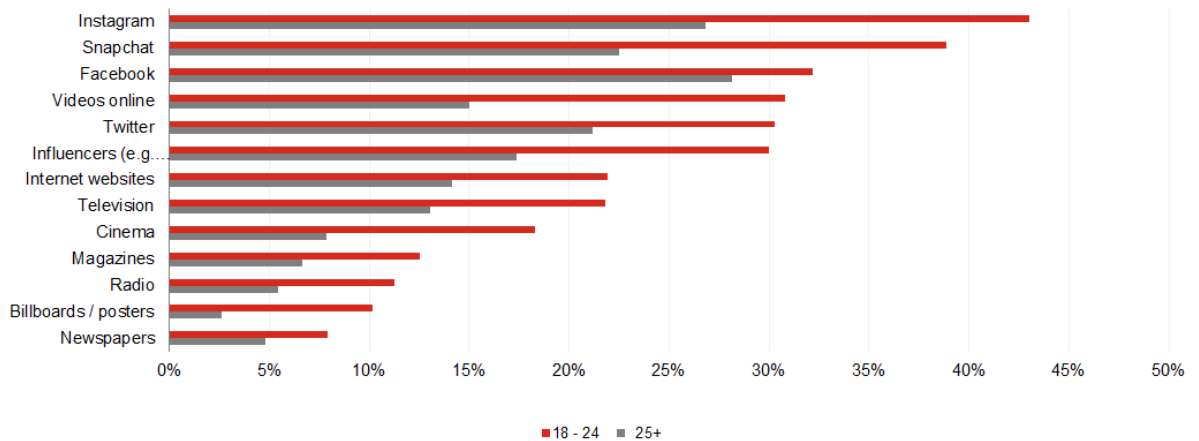
The brands that did tend to be mentioned were brands that serve up lifestyles and experiences, tying back to that (increasingly tired) Instagramism of 'living your best life' – a term coined by Oprah Winfrey, and a term so often used to describe quality of experience.

We saw that tech brands have the hearts of many young people, so perhaps it stands to reason that the media that has the greatest power to engage young

people are digital – you can see that social media has much greater influence amongst this audience.

## Social media resonate best

Q. Which of these media do you think represent young people in an authentic way?

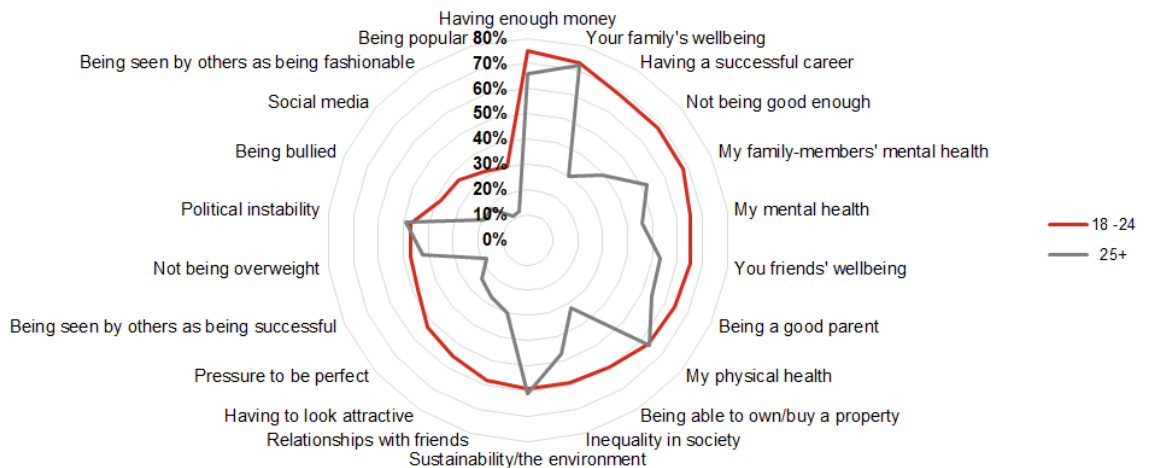


Our generation has created and continues to produce a wheel of worries that evidences the extent and scale of young people's personal struggles today. We asked our respondents which

aspects of their lives they worry about, and you can see that - consistently - younger people are more worried and about a broader range of things:

## The worry wheel evidences the extent of struggles

Q. Please tell us which aspects of your life you worry about.

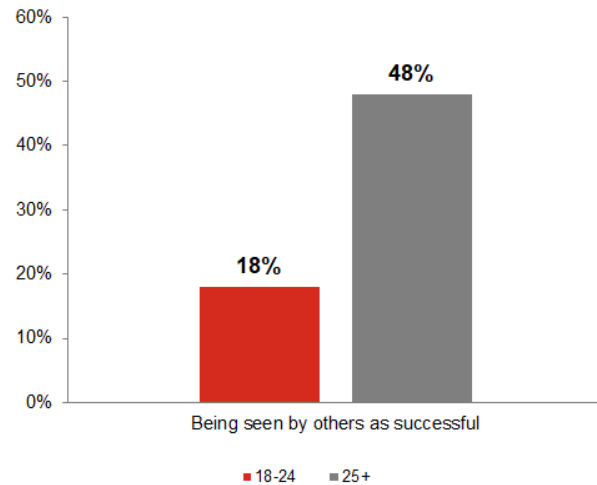
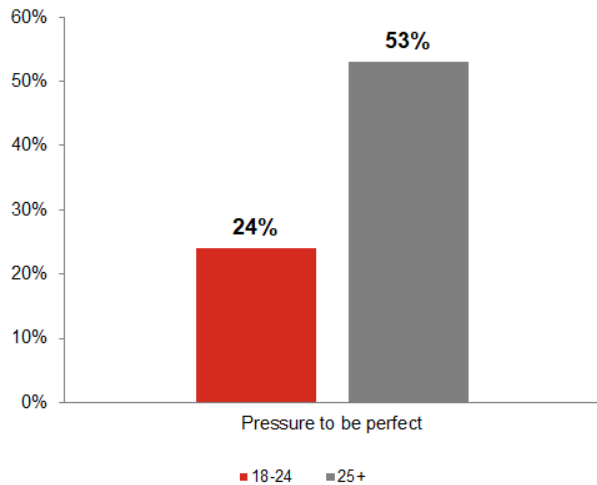


If you zoom into that wheel, you'll find that the way they are perceived by other people tends to exert pressure on 18-24-year-olds. They over-index dramatically

in worrying over the pressure to be perfect, and about the pressure to be seen by others as being successful.

## Perceptions exert pressure on 16-24s

Q. Please tell us which aspects of your life you worry about.

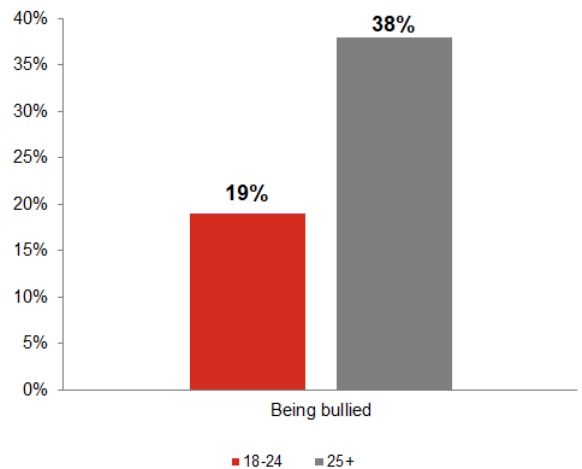
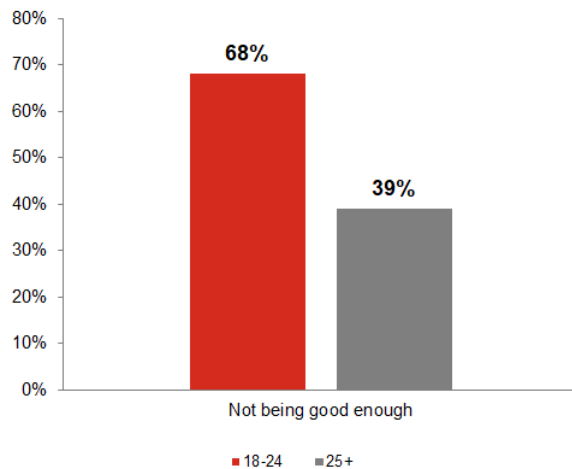


There is of course an ugly side to this perception pressure... Young people are emphatically more likely to worry about

not being good enough, and about being bullied:

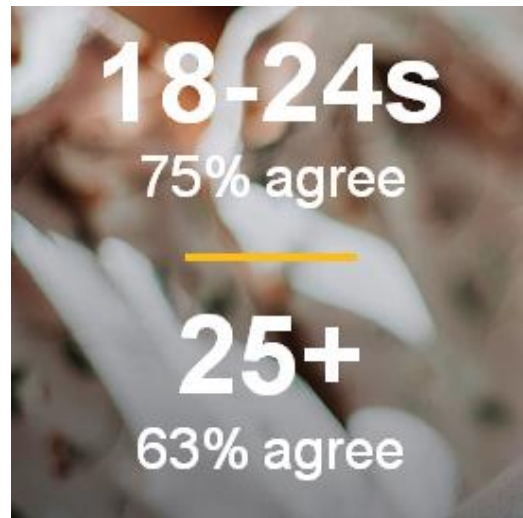
## There is an ugly side to this...

Q. Please tell us which aspects of your life you worry about.



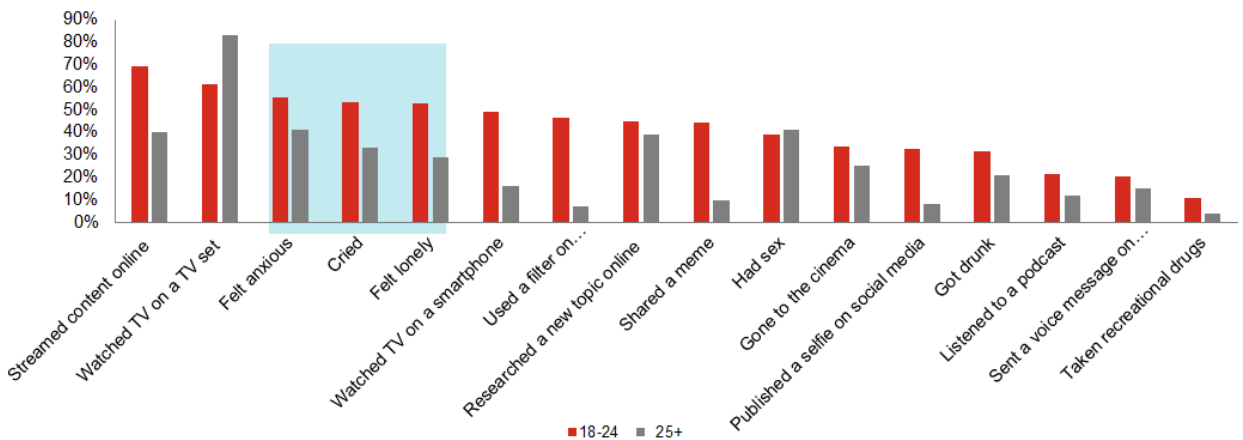
Social media is no doubt playing a part in this. 3 in 4 of the younger audience agree that in the digital age, people are under a lot of psychological pressure. We have learned that differentiating aspects of younger people are driven by technology and worry.

We asked our respondents which of these activities they have done in the last 30 days:



### The main differentiating behaviours are driven by technology and/or worry

Q. Which of these have you done in the last 30 days?



There are many ways in which the audiences differ – mainly around how they use technology (the younger audience is likelier to have streamed content or published a selfie) – but they are also likelier to have felt anxious, cried

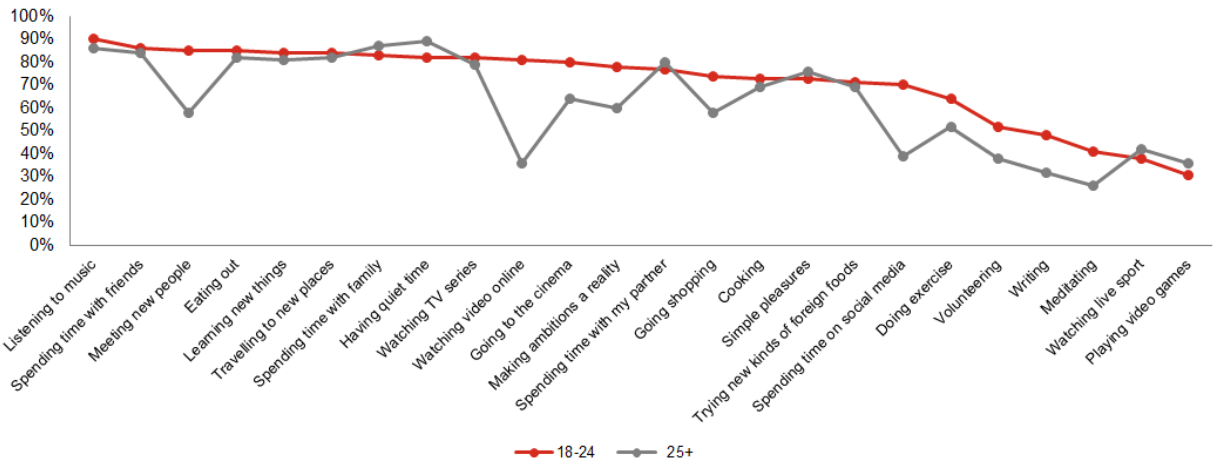
or felt lonely. The connected generation feels more lonely – surprising stuff (or maybe not too surprising, as we realise device screens' power to divide as well as unite us).

The younger audience is likelier to be

open to new people and cultures:

## 18-24s are likelier to be open to new things

Q. Please tell us how much you enjoy these activities.



You can see how much young people over-index, for example, in enjoying meeting new friends, going to the cinema, making ambitions a reality, spending time on social media, volunteering...

We have discovered that the younger audience self-defines differently to the older audience.

They are more likely to be defined by friends, less likely to be defined by family, and more likely to self-identify through culture like films:

## 18-24s are defined by different attributes

Q. Please think about your identity and the things that make you, you.

Please think about your identity and the things that make you, you	18 - 24	25+
Your family	▼ 53%	68%
Your friends	▲ 49%	43%
What you do in your free time	48%	52%
The music you listen to	▲ 46%	39%
How you look (e.g. physical attributes, dress, etc.)	▲ 43%	33%
Your age	40%	44%
Earning your own money	39%	38%
Where you live (city or region)	34%	35%
Your academic qualifications	▲ 32%	22%
The food you eat	▲ 32%	17%
Family heritage (e.g. knowing where you came from)	▼ 29%	36%
Your social media accounts	▲ 23%	7%

These young people are hungry to make new connections, discover the world and immerse themselves in it. Their probing minds earn them the name of Generation Why?

Using the passive data collection element of our project, which understands what content people consume; we discovered many insights that further attest to this idea of young people as cultural discoverers and open thinkers

- The younger audience was much more likely to have visited Wikipedia

- 18-24s certainly seemed to be more 'virtue than vice' in how they spend their time online
- The younger audience was half as likely to visit gambling websites
- And the younger audience was less high-brow in how they consume news: 10% fewer of them visited tabloid websites, and of those who did visit, spent much less time browsing them
- ... and of the 1,000 people we metered the younger audience spent half as much time watching online pornography than those aged 35+

## Conclusions

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### Unfair Game

*Society tends to view 18-24s as vain and trivial, whereas actually this group are hyperactive consumers and creators of culture*

2

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### Feel It

*Our younger audience is looking for brands that can enable a lifestyle and that can help them squeeze every drop of enjoyment from life*

3

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### Time for Empathy

*Division is rife in society. It's time for a more understanding approach towards an embattled audience that is facing inhospitable times*

## Authors



### **JENNIFER ROBERTON**

Managing Director UK  
respondi

For over 15 years she has been at the forefront of online research in the U.K., Europe and beyond. Jennifer has been instrumental in shifting analytical models from those based on self-reporting of consumer behavior to the fusion of data from a broad variety of sources, including the integration of consumers' passive online behavior. Under her leadership, they received the MRS "Best Data Collection (Online)" award for a pioneering study of attitudes among refugees in 12 countries, illustrating that her approach to research not only benefits commercial clients but can be used to tackle and better understand complex issues of importance to society as a whole.



### **MICHAEL BROWN**

Head of Insight  
UMWW

Michael started his career as a marketing graduate at American Express. After receiving his vocation to work in market research, he worked at two of the industry's most innovative businesses, Research Now SSI and MESH Experience. In his current role, he helps UM's clients understand their audiences and marketplaces. He has a particular passion for using traditional research methods to give a platform to marginalized voices in society and for understanding the role and responsibility of ads in tackling stereotyping.



CLOSE TO PEOPLE