

# TABLETS SCHOOLS

## Young People's Attitude towards Gaming

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## Management Summary

- What is interesting in this research is the overall passion and interest that young people display in responding to the notion of underage gaming. The 3,557 young people taking part in this research are all using Tablets in school, and have firm views about their use.
- In many ways the responses from different age groups reflect developmental stages, beginning with the somewhat conforming year 7's (first year of secondary school, 11-12), to the rebellious, wanting to be autonomous Year 9's (13-14) and progressing through to the more mature, thoughtful sixth formers (16-18) who are mostly discriminating enough to see the pitfalls of exposing younger children to what might be inappropriate content found in games with a 16+ or 18+ age rating.
- Games such as World of Warcraft, Call of Duty and Grand Theft Auto are among the most popular games with young people 11-17. There is considerable disquiet amongst adults about children playing games with violent or inappropriate content and a fear that it will influence or harm them.
- Age ratings have been introduced in an effort to prevent young people from playing these games. World of Warcraft is rated 12 years, Call of Duty is rated 16 years and Grand Theft Auto is rated 18 years. It is however known that younger people play these games despite the age ratings.
- In this survey of over 3,500 young people between 11-17 years, seven out of ten said they were 'not bothered' about young people playing games that were intended for older people.
- Analysis of 1,378 open ended responses however showed a much greater range of opinions and these were grouped into the following three categories:
  - **For (40%)** – those that think it is ok for younger people to play games rated 16-18 years
  - **Against (36%)** – those that do not think it is ok for younger people to play games rated 16-18 years
  - **Discretionary (25%)** – those that think their choice of games should be left to the discretion of the parents or individual, not governed by an age rating.
- The most common reason young people were 'not bothered' by underage play was a perception that these were 'only games' and not real and that they would therefore not be influenced by their content. This was followed by beliefs that these games were 'just fun' and that young people are mature enough to deal with the content.

- The most common reason why young people were opposed to children playing these games was a belief that the ratings were there for a reason and should be respected. Others argued that these games contain inappropriate content and that this could negatively impact thinking and behaviour.
- A third group of students felt that it should be up to parents to decide whether their child is allowed to play these games. Some also felt that it should be up to the individual young person to decide.
- There were significant differences across year groups. Students in Year 7 (age 10-11) were much more concerned about children playing games intended for older people than other year groups. From Year 8 to Year 10 there is a steady decline in concern.
- Across Year 8 to Sixth form (age 11-17), 3 out of 10 young people think it should be a discretionary decision, with discretion coming from the parent. In Year 11 (age 15-16) students began expressing concern about younger peers playing these games and this increased among Sixth form students, who after Year 7 students expressed the most concern.
- There were also significant gender differences. While 50 % of girls were against younger people playing these games 55% of boys were not concerned about this. Almost one-quarter (24%) of both genders felt it should be discretionary.

# Young people's attitudes towards gaming

## 1.0 Background

In January 2014, Tablets for Schools conducted a survey in nine one-to-one Tablet schools to better understand how young people use the internet. The survey was completed by over 3,500 11-17 year olds and explored a range of issues around internet safety. One of these aspects was gaming. There is ongoing concern among adults about the impact of gaming on young people's well-being, and these concerns are frequently reported in the media. The concerns typically revolve around impact on development<sup>1</sup>, physical and emotional well-being<sup>2</sup> and exposure to violent or pornographic content and subsequent impact on feelings of aggression.<sup>3</sup>

This survey aimed to explore young people's own attitudes towards this issue by posing the question: *Does it bother you that some computer games are meant for people over the age of 16 or 18 but are played by younger people?* Nearly three-quarters (72%) of young people said this did not bother them. Young people were then asked to comment on why they felt this way. This was an optional open-ended response question yet over three-quarters (80%) of those that responded to the previous question gave reasons for their answers. This report analyses the responses to these two questions and discusses these in light of previous research for Tablets for Schools.

Despite the majority of young people (72%) stating they were not bothered about young people engaging in underage play, their open-ended responses provided much more depth to their views on this topic and were grouped into the following three categories:

1. *For* – those that think it is ok for younger people to play games rated 16-18 years
2. *Against* – those that do not think it is ok for younger people to play games rated 16-18 years
3. *Discretionary* – those that think their choice of games should be left to the discretion of the parents or individual, not governed by an age rating

This report will offer analysis of young people's overall attitudes to gaming, as well as findings analysed by gender and age. A full overview of sample and methodology can be viewed in Appendix 1.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/children\\_shealth/8825655/Video-games-can-alter-childrens-brains.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/children_shealth/8825655/Video-games-can-alter-childrens-brains.html)

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-22283452>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/10488240/How-young-is-too-young-for-technology.html>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/science/head-quarters/2013/sep/19/neuroscience-psychology>

## 2.0 Young people's use of the internet

The discussion around young people and gaming forms part of wider concern among adults about young people's use of the internet. Concerns often revolve around 'stranger danger', cyberbullying, exposure to inappropriate content and excessive use. Although the young people in this research appeared to be highly internet savvy and felt confident using the internet in a safe way<sup>4</sup>, there were some concerns.

Over a quarter of young people (27%) said they had seen something which concerned, upset or frightened them online. Bullying was the most common incident among these children (18%), but 5% said they had been upset by something they experienced while playing a game.

*Having to torture a character on Grand Theft Auto.*

*Year 8, girl (age 12-13 years)*

*In 2012 I used to play on Movie Star Planet and someone tried to hack me and said they would find me.*

*Year 7, girl (age 11-12 years)*

*A ghost on [Grand Theft Auto] 5.*

*Year 7, boy (age 11-12 years)*

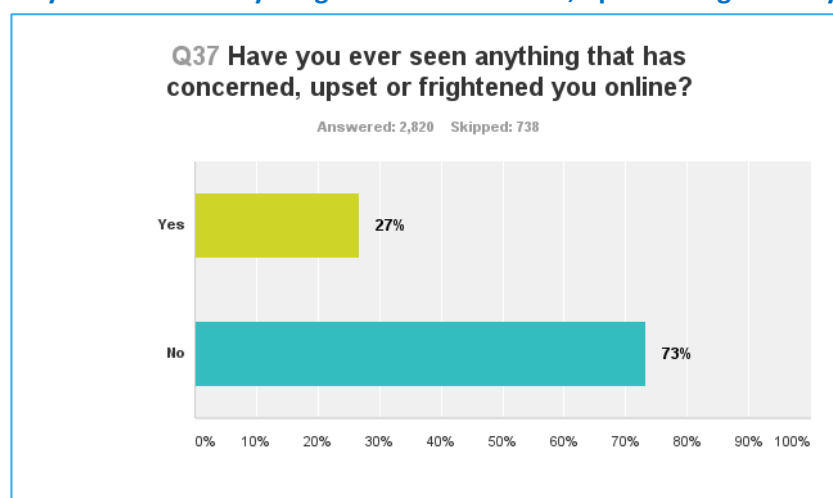
*Horror game which gives me nightmares and I don't like those games.*

*Year 11, boy (age 15-16 years)*

*On Minecraft online, people starting to say my real name and call me names and take the mickey out of me and started saying they were going to come and find me and rape me things like that.*

*Year 7, girl (age 11-12 years)*

**Chart 1: Have you ever seen anything that has concerned, upset or frightened you online?**



<sup>4</sup> See Clarke and Hitchenor (2014). [What Advice Would You Give to Other People Your Age About Staying Safe Online](#). Tablets for Schools.

Although 71% of young people felt that most people their age knew how to use the internet safely, 56% agreed that many children go on websites they know they should not go on. As will be discussed further in this report, there was similarly a perception that playing games they knew were intended for older people was 'the norm'.

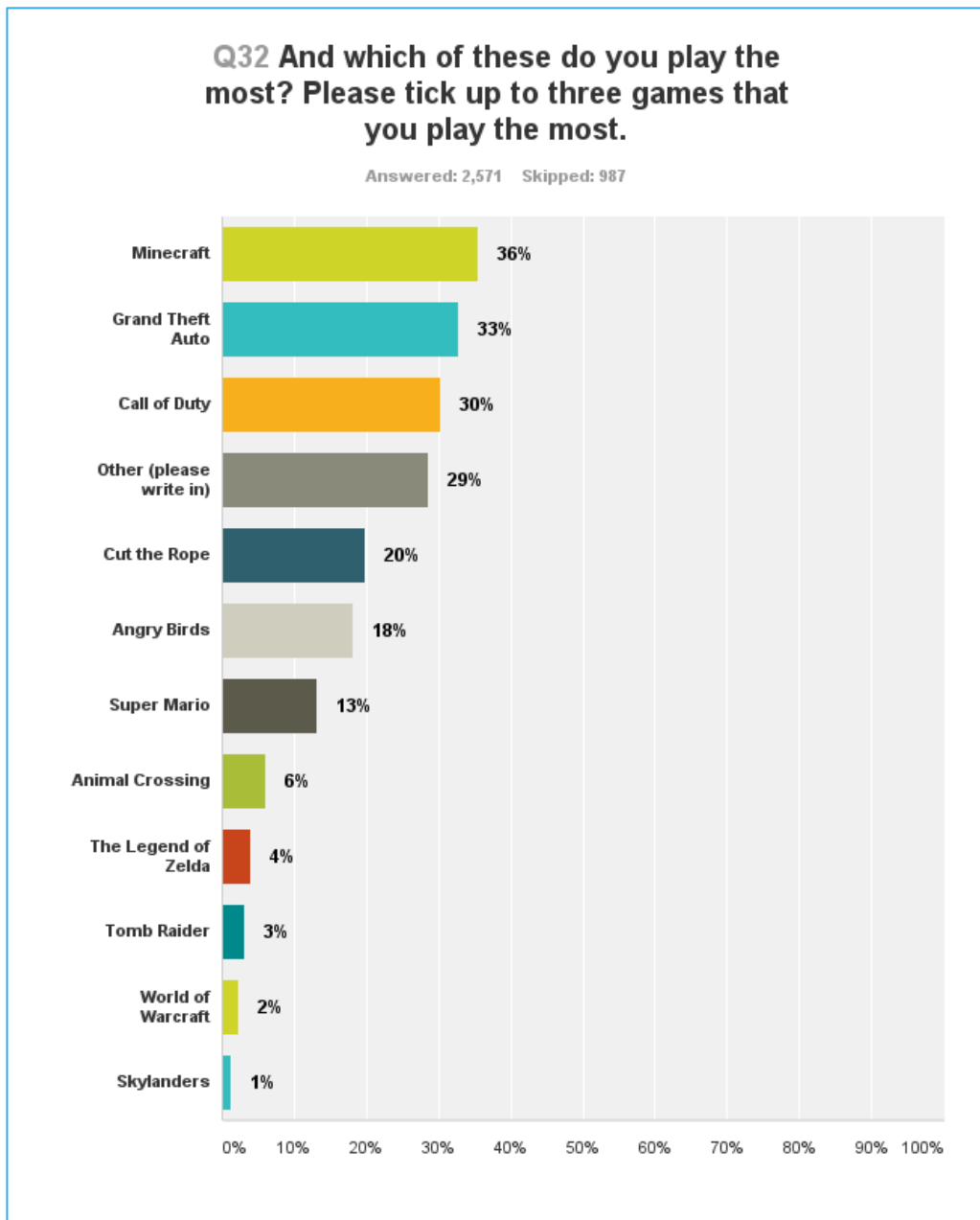
The survey also asked whether the students sometimes thought they were addicted to the internet. While the majority of young people, 6 out of 10 (61%), do *not* think they are addicted, nearly four out of 10 (39%) think that they are sometimes addicted, and this increases with age. When asked in what ways they sometimes think they are addicted to the internet 16% stated that they compulsively play games. 26% of boys felt that they did this.

Young people were also asked whether they take an internet enabled device to bed with them, which 64% said they did. Of these, 47% are playing games. For boys this increases to 53%, while 42% of girls say they do this.

## 2.1 Young people's gaming behaviour

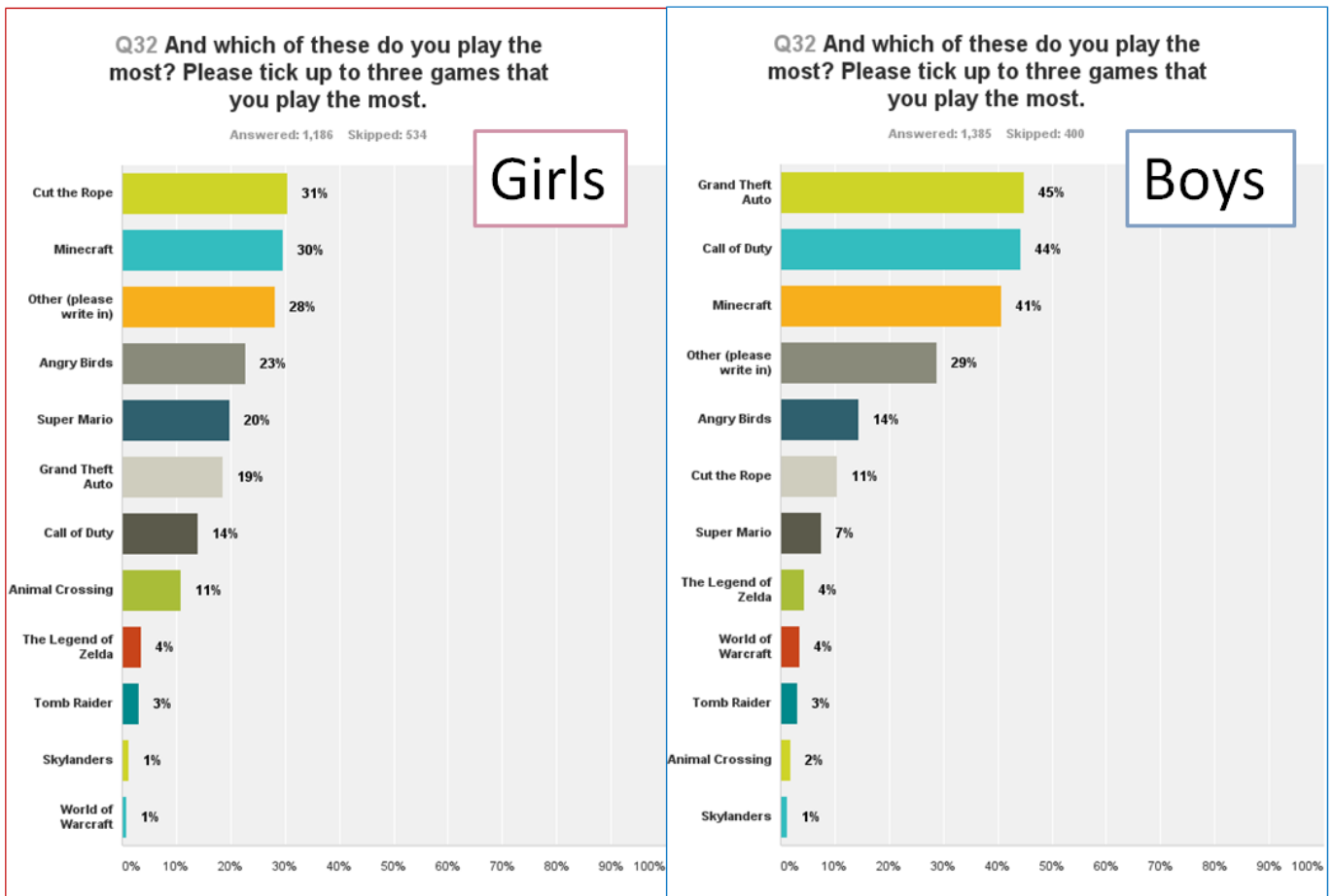
The survey asked young people which games they played the most. Chart 2 shows that the top three most popular games are Minecraft, Grand Theft Auto and Call of Duty. The following chart shows the differences between boys and girls. While Grand Theft Auto (45%), Call of Duty (44%) and Minecraft (41%) are the most popular games among boys, Cut the Rope (31%), Minecraft (30%) and Other (28%) were the most common responses among the girls.

Chart 2: And which of these do you play the most? Please tick up to three games that you play the most.



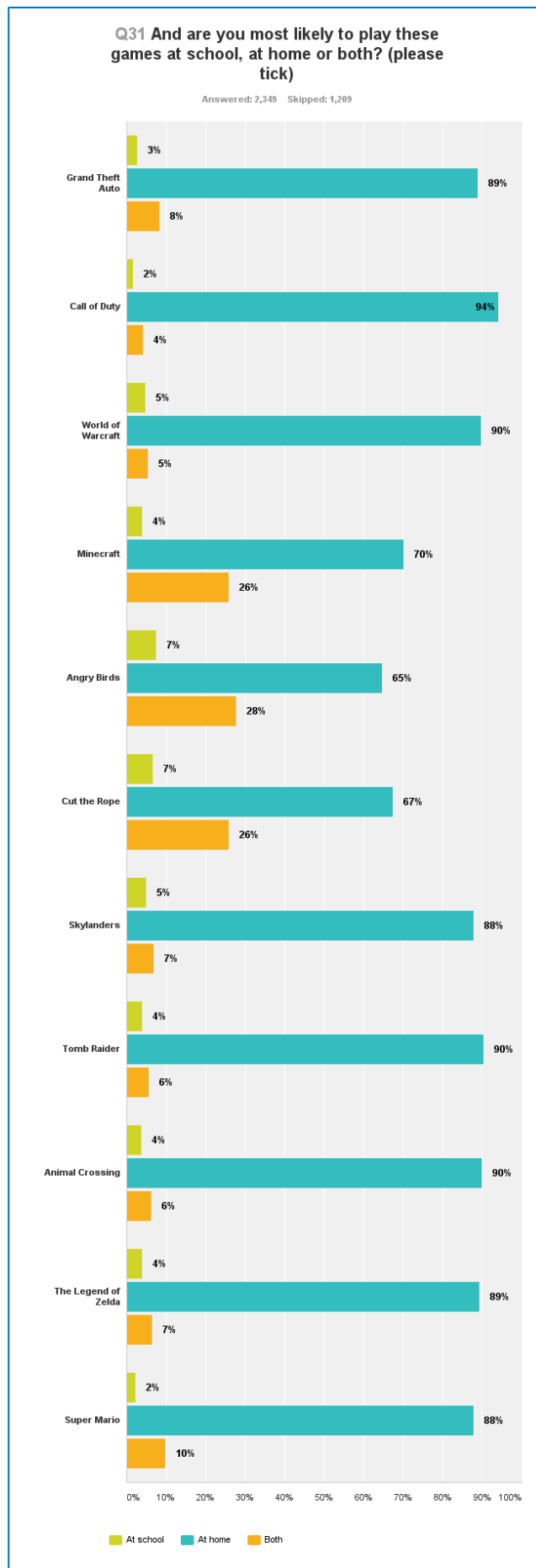


**Chart 3: And which of these do you play the most? Please tick up to three games that you play the most (comparison between girls and boys).**



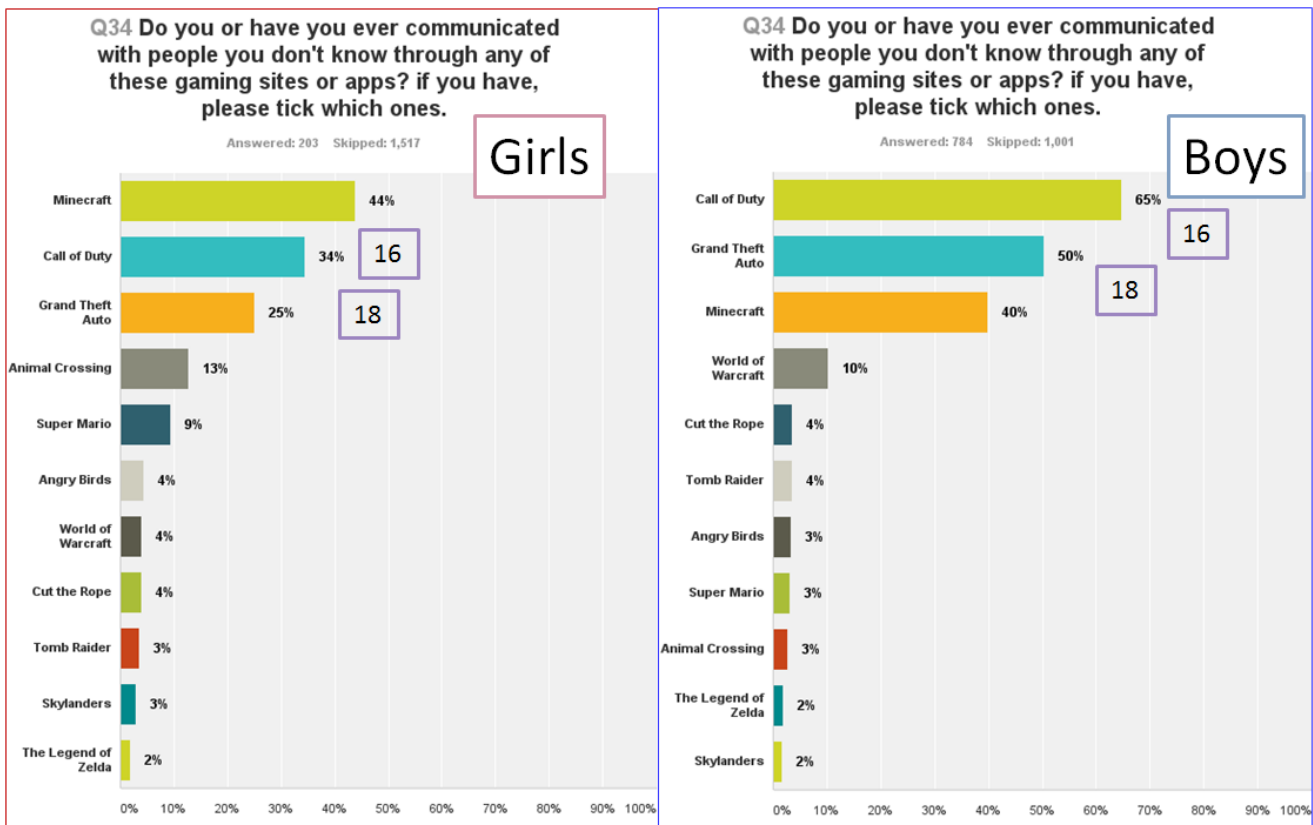
The young people confirmed that these games are mostly blocked in school and they are therefore predominantly playing games at home (see chart 4). Three games are however sometimes played at school. Two of these, Cut the Rope and Angry Birds are mobile games, and can more easily be played on smartphones or Tablets during breaks or in lessons without the teacher noticing. Minecraft can also be played on a Tablet, but is also sometimes used in lessons as an educational game (see section 4.0 for more).

Chart 4: And are you most likely to play these games at school, at home or both? (please tick)



Young people were asked whether they had ever communicated with anyone they did not know through games. 59% said they had done this in Call of Duty, 45% had in Grand Theft Auto, 41% had in Minecraft and 9% had done this in World of Warcraft. Boys were more likely to have done this than girls, especially in Call of Duty (65%) and Grand Theft Auto (50%).

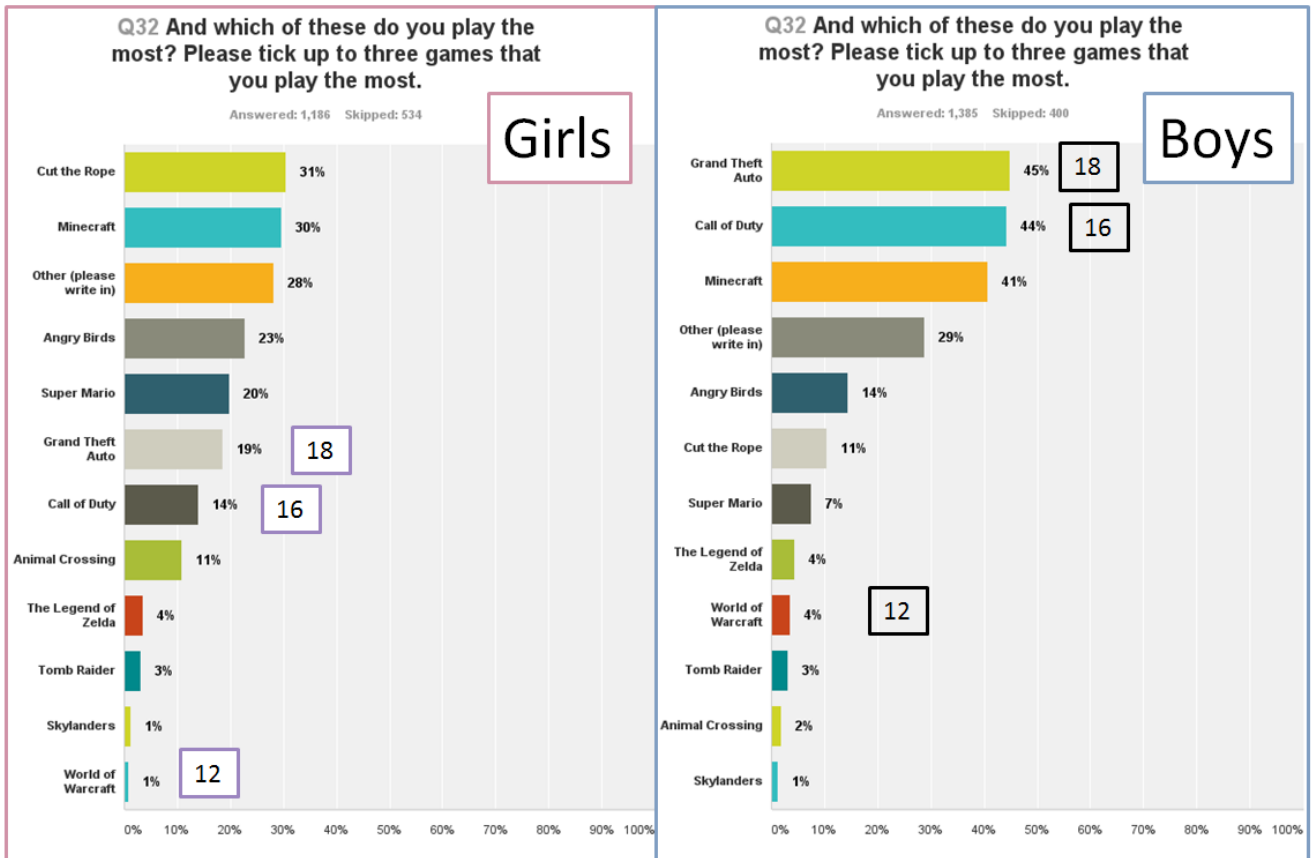
**Chart 5: Do you or have you ever communicated with people you don't know through any of these gaming sites or apps? If you have, please tick which ones.**



## 2.2 Rated games

The findings show that many of the games that are popular with children have age ratings of 16 or 18 years. World of Warcraft (rated 12), Call of Duty (rated 16) and Grand Theft Auto (rated 18) are among the most popular games with these young people. These games are more popular with boys than girls.

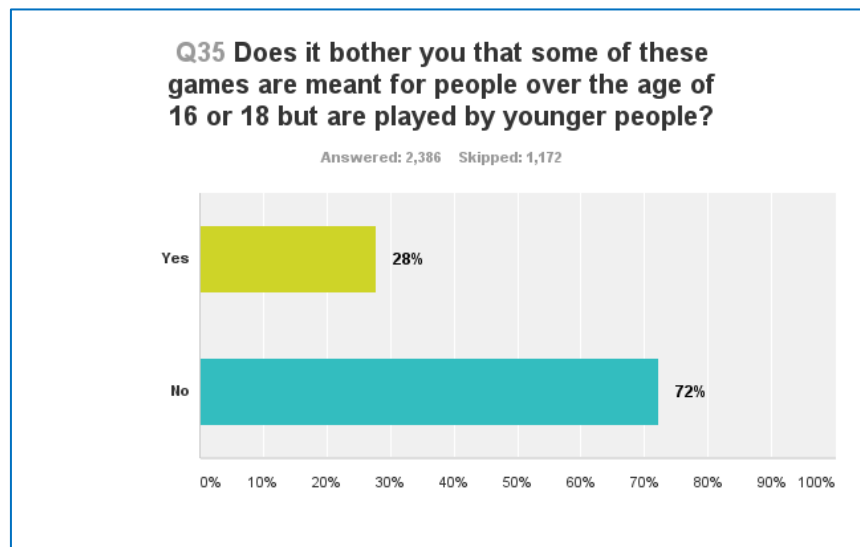
Chart 6: And which of these do you play the most? Please tick up to three games that you play the most?



### 3.0 Attitudes towards underage game playing

Young people were asked whether it bothered them that children played games meant for people over the age of 16 or 18 years. Seven out of ten children said they were not bothered.

**Chart 7: Does it bother you that some of these games meant for people over the age of 16 or 18 are played by younger people?**



#### 3.1 Why does it/does it not bother young people that some computer games meant for people over the age of 16 or 18 are played by younger people?

The young people were also asked why they felt this way, and over 80% of those who answered the initial question gave comments. This, and the range of comments received, show that this is a topic these young people feel strongly about, whether they are for or against it. A third viewpoint emerged where young people think it should be down to the discretion of parents and the individual to decide whether these older games should be played by younger audiences.

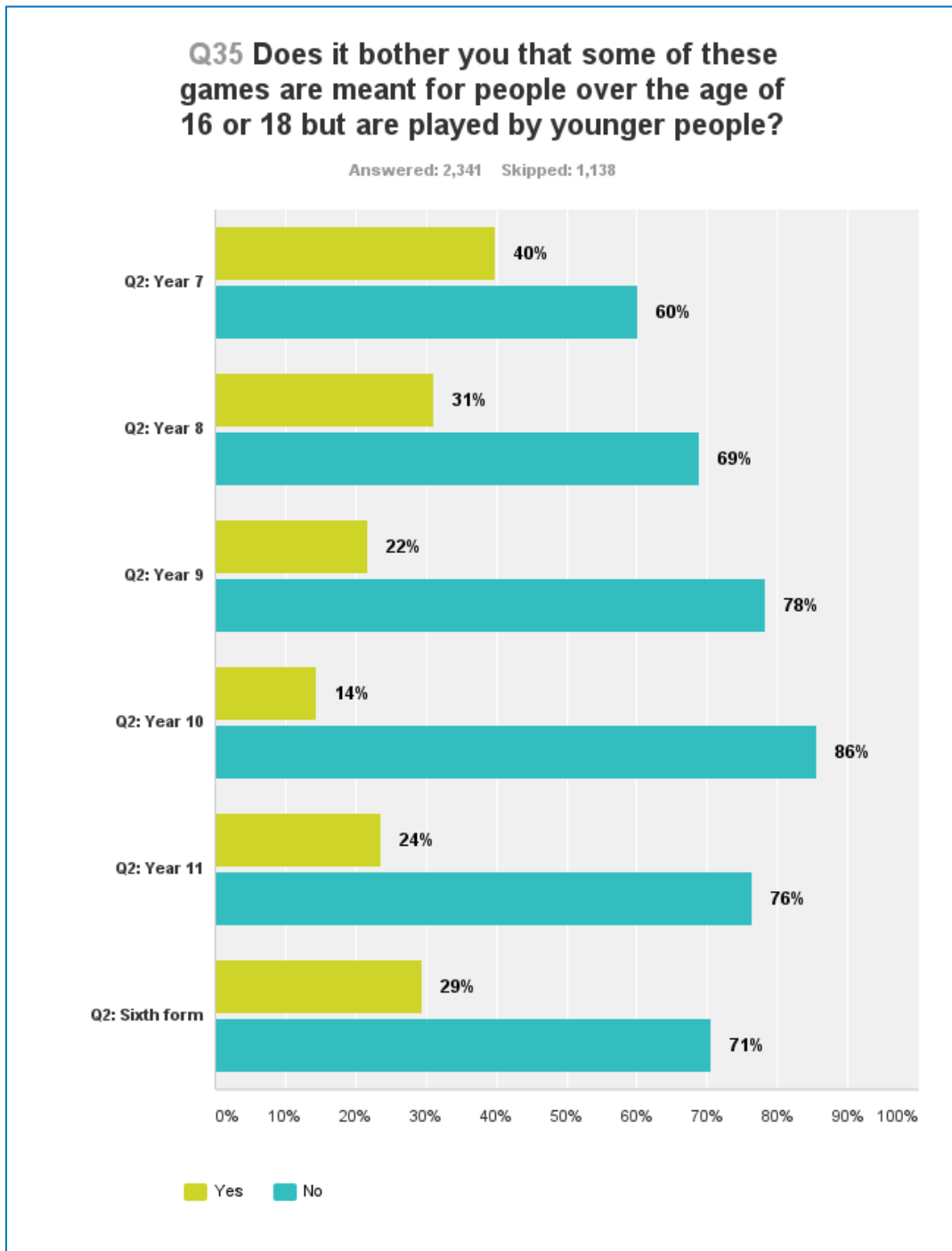
The table below shows the full range of responses that were coded and quantified. Their answers were overall categorised into three groups.

1. *For* (40%) – those that think it is ok for younger people to play games rated 16-18 years
2. *Against* (36%) – those that do not think it is ok for younger people to play games rated 16-18 years
3. *Discretionary* (25%) – those that think their choice of games should be left to the discretion of the parents or individual, not governed by an age rating

**Table 1: Does it bother you that some games meant for people over the age of 16 or 18 are played by younger people?**

	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Sixth form
Yes	40%	31%	22%	14%	24%	29%
No	60%	69%	78%	86%	76%	71%

**Chart 8: Does it bother you that some of these games are meant for people over the age of 16 or 18 but are played by younger people? (Comparison between year groups)**



This illustrates that Year 7 students are the most concerned about young people playing these games. From Year 7 to Year 10 there is a steady decline in those who are bothered. By Year 10 it is likely that many of the young people are being exposed to these games and many express a desire to play them. However, in Years 11 and Sixth form the number of young people who express concern increases again as they start to express concern for people younger than them playing the games.

**Table 2: Reasons why young people were / were not bothered that some games meant for people over the age of 16 or 18 are played by younger people? 1,378 responses<sup>5</sup>**

Category	Reason	Percentage
<b>For</b>	Not real, not influenced	11%
	Fun factor	9%
	Mature and responsible enough	8%
	Ratings are overrated	6%
	It's the norm for young people to play these games	2%
	Rating is not a rule and doesn't need to be obeyed	1%
	Young games are boring	1%
	Harmful content can be muted	1%
	It's just not fair that we can't	1%
	<b>Sub total</b>	<b>40%</b>
<b>Against</b>	Age limit is there for a reason	11%
	Contains inappropriate content	10%
	Negatively affects behaviour / thinking	8%
	Rating is a rule and should be obeyed	3%
	Stranger danger	1%
	Stress / nightmares	1%
	Parents don't allow us to play	1%
	Bullying	1%
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>36%</b>	
<b>Discretionary</b>	Parental choice	16%
	Individual choice	6%
	Age is insignificant, individual maturity is more relevant	2%
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>24%</b>	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

The analysis of these responses showed that although initially the majority of students appear 'not bothered' about young people playing games meant for 16-18 year olds, they in

<sup>5</sup> Note that a total of 518 responses from the total 1,896 answered were not coded for reasons such as the answer was inappropriate, rude or irrelevant. These are the figures used throughout this analysis.

fact have varied and strong opinions on this topic. The following section discussed each of these reasons.

### 3.2 'Not bothered'

#### *It's not real, we're not influenced*

Many of the young people argued that games are only virtual and therefore do not believe children are influenced by the content.

*If what people are saying is true everyone who ever played a violent video Game is going to be a Psychopath. Also there are more violent things on TV than there are in Video Games.*

*Year 9, boy (age 13-14 years)*

#### *Fun factor*

A similar argument was that these games were only harmless fun and should not be taken so seriously.

*Because it is fun and it is only virtual, not real.*

*Year 9, girl (age 13-14 years)*

#### *Mature enough*

Many young people felt that they are mature enough to handle the content of these games. It was also acknowledged that young people are exposed to similar things through other media and in their own personal experiences.

*They are exposed to much worst things at school and other places. I think it depends how much younger than the age rating they are, but it's usually only a bit violent or rude and they would experience much worse at school or in films.*

*Year 10, girl (age 14-15 years)*

### 3.3 'Yes, it bothers me'

#### *Age limit is there for a reason*

Some young people feel strongly that the age limit is there to protect them and that it should therefore be respected.

*Because it is not suited for a younger person below the age. I trust that the gaming officials who label games for an appropriate age limit know what they are doing and that would negatively impact a person if said person was under the age of the games age limit.*

*Sixth Form, boy (age 16-17 years)*



### **Contains controversial content**

Others showed concern for the controversial and violent content of the games and felt that this could be harmful to other children.

*Because some games have violence and inappropriate parts in them and it may affect the way some children under 16 or 18 act.*

*Year 8, girl (age 12-13 years)*

*The ones which are PEGI 16+ are OK as they do not portray much on the violence side, but 18+ holds graphic bloody violence and language unsuitable for younger kids; however it is initially the parent's choice to allow their child to play those games.*

*Year 10, boy (age 14-15 years)*

### **Negatively affects behaviour and thinking**

Some felt that the violent or aggressive content could have a negative impact on children's behaviour and thoughts. It was also argued to lead to stress, anxiety and nightmares.

*Children's brains are still forming and violent games that are designed for people over 16 and 18 may make children develop violent tendencies, learning difficulties, and a warped sense of reality. They may not know what is right or wrong.*

*Year 8, girl (age 12-13 years)*

*Because they have started acting more 'mature' and swear and smoke earlier, and these age restricted games could have influenced this.*

*Year 9, girl (age 13-14 years)*

*It may influence the younger ones in the future and also make them have nightmares.*

*Year 7, boy (age 11-12 years)*

*I don't like this because even though people say things like "we don't care", "we have seen it before, so what difference does it make" and "my parents let me play it". They are being told to think in a certain way at a young age. Because they have the age restrictions because you are more aware of these things when your older, but when you your young if you are playing a violent game, with naked women in you learn to only see women in that way and become a violent person. I know this isn't in all cases but most teenagers aren't ready to play things like that.*

*Year 9, girl (age 13-14 years)*

*Because I know an 11 year old who plays Call of Duty and Grand Theft Auto and games like that and has ended up swearing and saying inappropriate things because he has been speaking to people online. However I'd think that the age should be lowered because people will play it anyway and the stuff that they are saying is the worst is in 12 movies and they are mature enough*

*Year 9, girl (age 13-14 years)*

### 3.4 Discretionary

#### *Parental choice*

Many young people felt it should be the responsibility and choice of the parents to decide whether young people can play these games.

*Because I think it's up to the parent to decide whether their child is mature enough to play the game, but I think giving games an age rating help the parents decide if it's suitable.*

*Year 9, girl (age 13-14 years)*

*I believe that a game is made for having fun not to raise kids, a game should not be some sort of a role model to kids, parents should be role models.*

*Year 10, boy (age 14-15 years)*

Some of these young people showed strong feelings towards parents who in their opinion were not taking enough responsibility to monitor the games their children are playing.

*Although I play some of them, it hacks me off when you see eight year olds' mums buying them Grand Theft Auto because I think the gaming industry has a massive influence over children's lives and it is encouraging violence at a young age - and the mothers buying it for the children are encouraging it too.*

*Year 10, girl (age 14-15 years)*

*Kids are presented with various games that are too old for them but their incompetent parents think that it's a good idea to give them.*

*Year 11, boy (age 15-16 years)*

Although many young people felt that it should be up to parents to decide whether or not they can play these games, parents monitoring children's internet use is in general not welcomed, especially among older children. The survey asked young people if their mum, dad or carer look to see what they are doing on the internet (see chart 9). 43% said their parents do not do this, and nine out of ten of these young people said they would not like their parents to do this more (see chart 10).

Chart 9: Does your mum or dad, or your main carer, look to see what you are doing on the internet?

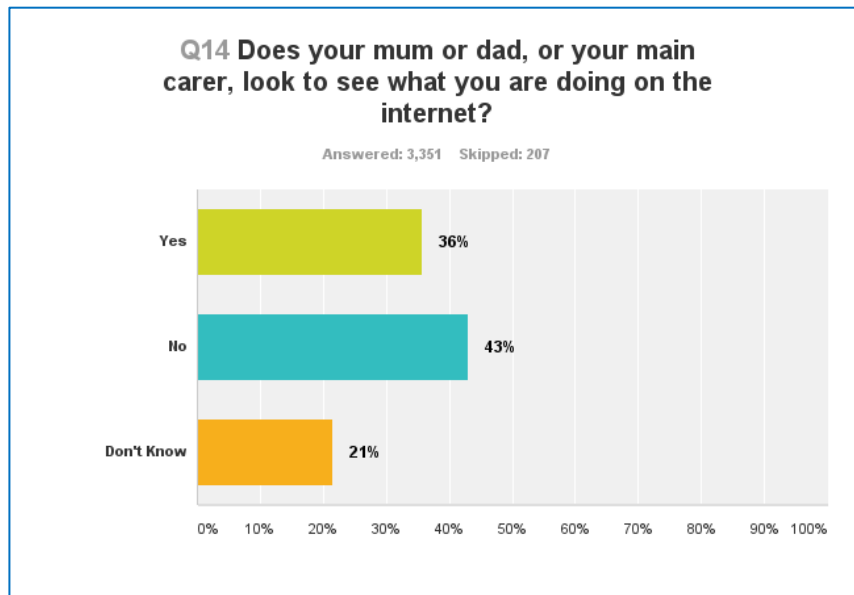
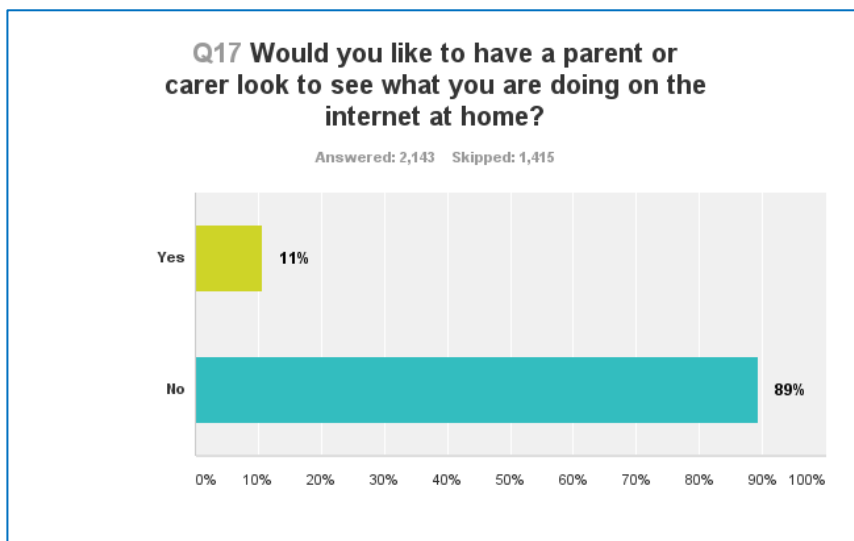


Chart 10: Would you like to have a parent or carer look to see what you are doing on the internet at home?



### Individual choice

Some young people argued that it should be down to the individual person to decide if they should play these games and whether they can handle the content.

*Play games that you want to play, if there's graphic content and you're mentally scarred, you might learn your lesson and not do it again.*

*Year 10, girl (age 14-15 years)*

*Because the higher ratings are for violence, gore or sexual content, all of which we know about and are surrounded by day after day in the real world. I believe it should be the buyer's choice whether they want to play it or not.*

*Year 9, girl (age 13-14 years)*

### 3.5 Other observations

#### *Age is insignificant*

There is a view among some of these young people that age is insignificant and that individual maturity level should determine whether children should play these games or not.

*Because not all people are necessarily mature enough to play them and can be disturbed by them. However some people are younger than the recommended age and are mature enough. It's a case of maturity not age.*

*Year 11, boy (age 15-16 years)*

*Because age is only a number, it depends if you know games aren't actually real and you can except that, and if you can take playing over 18 games.*

*Year 11, boy (age 15-16 years)*

#### *Overrated ratings*

Many think the ratings are overrated. There was also a view among some young people that the ratings have not moved with times and do not reflect the content young people are exposed anyway to through TV, news, internet and personal experience.

*I don't see how they can be dangerous in any way, and that's the only concern people should have. They may be disturbing, but then people much younger than 16 or 18 have seen things worse than a fake video game where people get shot. I don't think it bothers young people now in a way that it would have done 20 years ago because young people have access to all sorts of horrors and, as bad as it sounds, they are used to it.*

*Year 10, girl (age 14-15 years)*

*There is nothing harmful about them, adults get too worked up about age-related content when all they should be doing is educating people about dangers.*

*Year 9, girl (age 13-14 years)*

*Because a 16 year old can join the army and kill someone but not legally play [Grand Theft Auto].*

*Year 10, boy (age 14-15 years)*

Some felt that people a couple of years younger than the rating should be allowed to play, but thought it could be harmful for those much younger.

*I don't mind it unless the person is under the age of 13.*

*Year 11, boy (age 15-16 years)*

*The content of the game can influence on young children and can affect their attitude/actions. If it's a 16 or 18 and played by 14+ it's not as bad because their old enough to understand the game and act as usual, but for children under 10 it's not so good for their well-being.*

*Year 11, girl (age 15-16 years)*

### **Useful guide**

While it is felt by many that the ratings are overrated, they are considered a useful guide, rather than an absolute.

*The ones which are PEGI 16+ are OK as they do not portray much on the violence side, but 18+ holds graphic bloody violence and language unsuitable for younger kids; however it is initially the parent's choice to allow their child to play those games.*

*Year 10, boy (age 14-15 years)*

### **Younger games are boring**

Many felt that age appropriate games in general are less good or are boring. The exception to this was Minecraft, which was rated the most popular game by the young people in this survey.

*Because most games for younger people are rubbish.*

*Year 9, boy (age 13-14 years)*

*Because games our age aren't very fun. The most fun ones are usually for older people.*

*Year 9, boy (age 13-14 years)*

### **It's the norm**

There was a general agreement among many of the respondents that it is the 'norm' for younger people to play these games, and that this is unlikely to change.

*Because it has become the norm for younger aged children to play games that are not suited for them. Like how you'd see a 12 year old kid smoking in the backstreet.*

*Year 9, boy (age 13-14 years)*

*People will play them anyways.*

*Year 9, boy (age 13-14 years)*

*Because even if it's rated 16 or 18, people can still get their hands on it and if it's that brutal to be rated at certain age, it shouldn't be released.*

*Year 10, girl (age 14-15 years)*

## **3.6 Findings by year group**

There were distinct differences in views across the year groups. As expected, the significantly highest number of young people against underage play was in Year 7. This was followed by Sixth formers who express concern for their younger peers. Across Year 8 – Sixth form, 3 out of 10 young people think it should be a discretionary decision, with discretion coming from the parent (see Table 3).

**Table 3: Attitudes by year group**

Category	Reason	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	6th form	
<b>For</b>	Not real, I'm not influenced	7%	7%	13%	23%	13%	11%	
	Fun factor	6%	12%	9%	7%	9%	8%	
	Mature and responsible enough	5%	5%	13%	10%	12%	4%	
	Ratings are overrated	5%	7%	5%	7%	3%	3%	
	It's the norm for young people to play these games	2%	2%	2%	4%	2%	4%	
	Rating is not a rule and doesn't need to be obeyed	1%	3%	0%	1%	1%	2%	
	Young games are boring	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%	0%	
	Harmful content can be muted	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	
	It's just not fair that we can't	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	
	Life lessons can be learnt	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	
		<b>Sub total</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>32%</b>
	<b>Against</b>	Age limit is there for a reason	14%	10%	8%	6%	10%	16%
Contains inappropriate content		17%	10%	8%	7%	6%	9%	
Negatively affects behaviour / thinking		10%	8%	8%	3%	11%	12%	
Rating is a rule and should be obeyed		8%	3%	1%	1%	0%	1%	
Stranger danger		2%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	
Stress / nightmares		1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%	
Parents don't allow us to play		2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	
Bullying		1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	
Addictive		0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	
Protect childhood		0%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	
		<b>Sub total</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>40%</b>
<b>Discretionary</b>	Parental choice	10%	19%	19%	19%	17%	18%	
	Individual choice	5%	5%	8%	9%	7%	7%	
	Age is insignificant, individual maturity is more relevant	0%	2%	1%	2%	4%	3%	
		<b>Sub total</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>28%</b>

**Year 7**

The majority of this age group (55%) think that the rating is specified for good reason and feel that as a rule, children their age should not play these games. Year 7's show concern for the content and believe it could have a negative effect on behaviour.

*Because they could show me and give me ideas, bad ideas.*

*Year 7, girl (age 11-12 years)*

*Because if games made for people 16 or 18 and people that at the age of 11 are playing them I think it is wrong because... 1. They are breaking the rules. 2. Most*

*games with set ages are like that for a reason so it is best just not to play if you're under the age set. 3. Some games can have violence, and that's not good for younger people who have ignored the age you have to be for the game.*

*Year 7, girl (age 11-12 years)*

Although this was only the case for a small number of children it is interesting to note that this age group identified bullying and stranger danger as a concern.

*Because many children are getting cyber bullied through sites that are inappropriate for them, also games that show too much violence, if played from a very young age, may encourage people to be violent.*

*Year 7, girl (age 11-12 years)*

*Because you could talk to people that you think are the same age of you but they are really 30 or older.*

*Year 7, girl (age 11-12 years)*

### **Year 8**

Among Year 8 students there was an almost equal split between those who were 'for' (39%) and 'against' (35%) playing older games, with the remainder thinking it should be discretionary (26%). Those who were 'for' see the games as fun while those 'against' think the rating is there for a reason. There is however greater emphasis on the ratings being there as guidance, rather being a rule.

*Because I play it like always and like it is fab and awesome.*

*Year 8, girl (age 12-13 years)*

*Games have an age restriction for a reason, and it's putting you at risk to use the games you aren't supposed to be. There could be inappropriate content that shouldn't be viewed by a young audience.*

*Year 8, girl (age 12-13 years)*

Year 8's believe that the choice to play games should be discretionary and that if the child is mature enough to handle the content they should be allowed to play, with the consent of their parents.

*Because if their parents let them buy the game they should be able to play it with an age rate on it or not, everybody has different opinions.*

*Year 8, girl (age 12-13 years)*

*Age ratings are discriminating. It should be up to the parents to decide.*

*Year 8, boy (age 12-13 years)*

A very small number of children expressed a highly mature view that playing these explicit games has an impact on the experience of childhood and that young people are growing up too fast:

*To be honest, it's terrible that young people haven't grown up properly and have skipped the whole stage called childhood. Another fact, it's really the parents'*

*choice... Why would they buy their child any age rated game (which is clearly above their age) if they didn't want them to play it. In conclusion, I think our generation; (2000-2014) has aged way too fast! Most of the population of children in the world won't even know the meaning of survival nor life.*

*Year 8, girl (age 12-13 years)*

### **Year 9**

Nearly half (46%) of students in Year 9 were not concerned by younger people playing these games, over a quarter (28%) felt it should be discretionary and a quarter (26%) were 'against' it.

Students confidently argued that these were 'just games' which will not influence them and that adults should therefore stop being anxious. The young people feel they are exposed to similar content in real-life through the news and personal experiences and ask that more trust is placed in them and their ability to discriminate and make choices.

*Although it is targeted at a higher [aged] audience, I think we should be trusted more because we are more mature than people assume.*

*Year 9, boy (age 13-14 years)*

*Because the higher ratings are for violence, gore or sexual content, all of which we know about and are surrounded by day after day in the real world. I believe it should be the buyer's choice whether they want to play it or not.*

*Year 9, girl (age 13-14 years)*

There was a strong opinion expressed by young people that the decision to play these games is predominantly down to parents and only secondly to the young, under-age student.

*Because I think it's up to the parent to decide whether their child is mature enough to play the game, but I think giving games an age rating helps the parents decide if it's suitable.*

*Year 9, girl (age 13-14 years)*

*It is the parents' decision as to whether they think their child is mature enough to access games meant for older people.*

*Year 9, boy (age 13-14 years)*

### **Year 10**

At this age attitude is expressed *in favour* of playing these under-age games (53%), while almost one third (30%) think it should be discretionary and less than one in five (17%) are 'against' under-age playing of games. By Year 10, 14-15 years old, playing such games is considered the 'norm' and these young people express little concern, often using phrases such as 'not bothered', 'don't care', 'doesn't matter' when explaining their opinions. According to these young people 'games are just games'.

*Because there is only about 5% of people that actually follow these guidelines.*

*Year 10, boy (age 14-15 years)*



*Everyone plays it and doesn't make a difference.*

*Year 10, boy (age 14-15 years)*

*End of the day it's a game.*

*Year 10, girl (age 14-15 years)*

*The contents of the game doesn't affect me, after playing I don't feel the need for violence or bad language, it is simply fun.*

*Year 10, boy (age 14-15 years)*

*Because I enjoy it and I strongly feel that it is only rated at that age because it includes swearing, violence and sexual scenes/references. But to be honest, most kids my age have learned about sex and use swearing often so [Grand Theft Auto] isn't a big influence on them.*

*Year 10, boy (age 14-15 years)*

### **Year 11**

Whilst the majority (42%) of people in this age group think it is fine for people of their age to play these games, there is an increased number (30%) who show concern and worry about the effects on children younger than them. Many young people in Year 11 are very clear about when such games are appropriate to be played by young children.

*It depends how young they are because I don't think they would be suitable for someone who is younger than 13 but anyone older I don't think it really matters.*

*Year 11, boy (age 15-16 years)*

While nearly one in five (17%) argue that it is a parental decision, some express anger towards parents who are letting younger children play these games.

*Kids are presented with various games that are too old for them, but their incompetent parents think that it's a good idea to give them.*

*Year 11, boy (age 15-16 years)*

Other comments illustrate that some of these young people are simply irritated by younger people playing these games:

*Because they are annoying and extremely immature and ruin the game for people who are old enough to have the game.*

*Year 11, boy (age 15-16 years)*

### **Sixth form**

At this age young people are showing an intelligent and thoughtful view of the issues that surround under-age games playing. Four out of ten (40%) sixth form students are against young people playing these games, nearly one third (32%) are 'for' underage game playing and over a quarter (28%) think it should be discretionary. While sixth formers express concern about young people playing underage games, such concerns tend not to be founded

on the encouragement of a propensity for violence, but rather concerns about exposure to inappropriate content.

*An age restriction is placed for a reason, despite not believing that violent video games lead to violent children, with online multiplayer introduced, minors may pick up bad traits from older gamers.*

*Sixth Form, boy (age 16-17 years)*

*They pick up things they shouldn't earlier and start to pick up habits from the game and then think it's acceptable to play other games and personalities change and they also learn and utilise bad language. In all fairness every child is going to want to play these games it's up to the parents to teach them better.*

*Sixth Form, boy (age 16-17 years)*

These young people take a pragmatic view that while the age limit is there for a reason, it is inevitably 'the norm' that young people will play these games. Therefore it should be the responsibility of the parents to control the content their child is exposed to and monitor their activity.

*Because it is socially acceptable to play them anyway, and the content featured in the games are nothing new to what they see every day.*

*Sixth Form, boy (age 16-17 years)*

*Because it's the adults' responsibility to censor content for their children, and if they don't mind allowing their kids to access games or content not deemed appropriate for them, that's their decision. Everyone I know from the age of 12 upwards has been in contact, both through games and movies, with "Age inappropriate" content. It's not realistic to assume otherwise.*

*Sixth Form, boy (age 16-17 years)*

## Overview of attitude towards gaming by age

What is interesting in this research is the overall passion and interest that young people displayed in responding to the notion of underage gaming. In many ways the responses from different age groups reflect the developmental stages, beginning with the somewhat conforming year 7's (first year of secondary school, 11-12), to the rebellious, wanting to be autonomous Year 9's (13-14) progressing through to the more mature, thoughtful sixth formers who are mature enough to see the pitfalls of exposing younger children to what might be inappropriate content found in games with a 16 or 18+ age rating.

### Summary of findings by year group

The viewpoints for each year group are summarised below:

**Table 4: Summary of findings by year group**

Year 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•There is an age limit there because it contains controversial content, therefore we should obey this rating and not play...</li> </ul>
Year 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•They are fun and I want to play them but there is an age limit for a reason. If my parents say it's ok then I can play...</li> </ul>
Year 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•More trust please! We are mature enough to not get influenced by the content and it should be the choice of parents if I can play...</li> </ul>
Year 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•We don't care! It's just a game and we are not influenced by it. It should be my parent's choice if I can play...</li> </ul>
Year 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•We are mature enough but think the age limit is there for a reason to protect younger children. It should be the choice of the parent and they should monitor their child's gaming...</li> </ul>
Sixth Form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•I'm not influenced but I worry about the negative impact on younger children. Parents should be monitoring their child's gaming...</li> </ul>

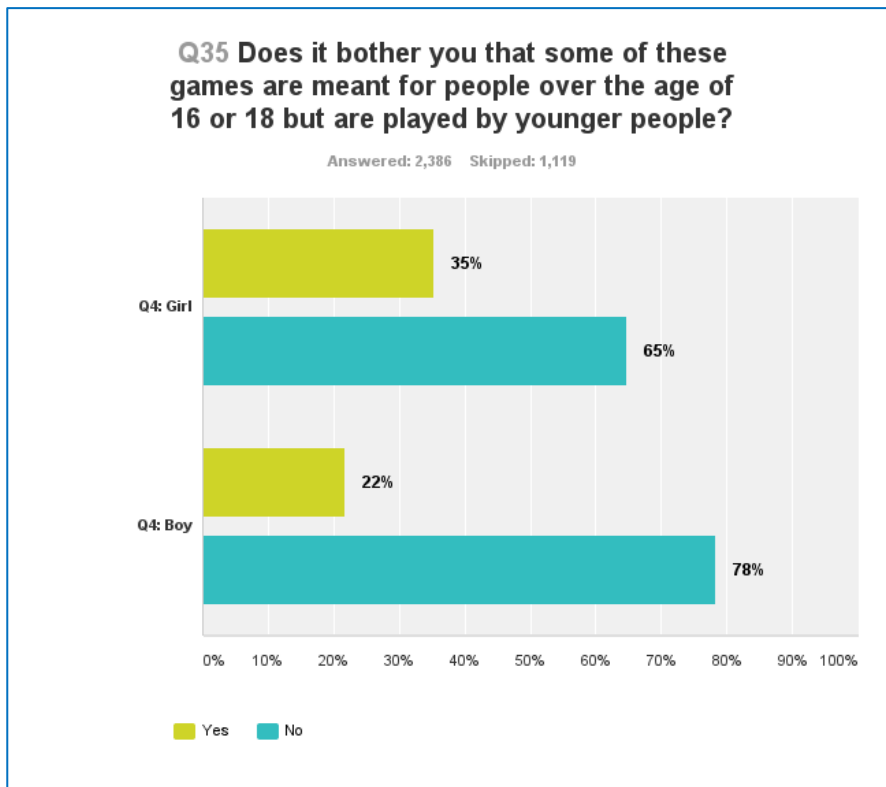
### 3.7 Findings by gender

Girls were more likely than boys to feel that children should not play games intended for older people. When asked to expand there was an almost equal split of opposite views by gender. While the half of all girls (50%) were against younger people playing these games 55% of boys were not concerned about this. Almost one-quarter (24%) of both genders felt it should be discretionary.

**Table 5: Does it bother you that some of these games are meant for people over the age of 16 or 18 but are played by younger people?**

	Girls	Boys
<b>Yes</b>	35%	22%
<b>No</b>	65%	78%

**Chart 11: Does it bother you that some of these games are meant for people over the age of 16 or 18 but are played by younger people?**



**Table 6: Why is that?**

	Girls	Boys
<b>For</b>	26%	55%
<b>Against</b>	50%	21%
<b>Discretionary</b>	24%	24%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%

While boys and girls expressed contrasting opinions on whether younger people should be able to play games intended for older people, their reasons for being for or against this were fairly similar.

**Table 7: Reasons for and against younger people playing games made for those over the ages of 16 and 18**

For		Against	
Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Not real / not influenced (16%)	Not real / not influenced (6%)	Affects behaviour thinking (7%)	Age limit is there for a reason (15%)
Fun factor (12%)	Fun factor (6%)	Inappropriate content (6%)	Inappropriate content (15%)
Mature and responsible enough (11%)	Mature and responsible enough (6%)	Age limit is there for a reason (5%)	Affects behaviour thinking (10%)
Mature and responsible enough (11%)	Overrated (4%)		
Overrated (7%)			

Across both age groups there is a clear opinion that parents should be taking responsibility to monitor their child’s gameplay with an equal proportion (16%) of references to this in both groups.

#### 4.0 Educational use of games

Games play several roles in children's lives. Increasingly, games are being used in schools as an alternative way to explore new content or practice new skills. Previous research for Tablets for Schools has found that many children enjoy playing educational games and feel these games help them learn.

*I find that some learning games help me like maths because I struggle with maths but the maths games help.*

*Year 9, girl (age 13-14 years)*

*In Maths you can do maths games, so you can take a break and play a few maths games...education games.*

*Year 7 Girl, (age 11-12)*

The most popular game among the young people in this study, Minecraft, is an example of this. According to the BBC<sup>6</sup>, 200 schools internationally are adopting Minecraft as a learning tool each month. These schools are hoping to harness the motivation children have to play games and to re-engage students who otherwise have less interest in schoolwork. Minecraft was also the only game to be almost equally popular with boys (41%) and girls (30%).

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-27936946>

## 5.0 Conclusion

The young people in this survey were largely not concerned about children playing games that are intended for older people. To the question: *Does it bother you that some computer games are meant for people over the age of 16 or 18 but are played by younger people?*, 72% of young people said they were 'not bothered'. Further analysis of 1,378 open ended responses however showed that these young people had strong and varied opinions on this topic. The responses were coded into the following three categories:

1. **For (40%)** – those that think it is ok for younger people to play games rated 16-18 years
2. **Against (36%)** – those that do not think it is ok for younger people to play games rated 16-18 years
3. **Discretionary (25%)** – those that think their choice of games should be left to the discretion of the parents or individual, not governed by an age rating.

These responses were then grouped into subcategories. The most common reason young people thought it was ok for younger people to play these games was perception that these were 'only games' and not real and that they would therefore not be influenced by their content. This was followed by beliefs that these games were 'just fun' and that young people are mature enough to deal with the content.

The most cited reasons among those young people against children playing these games was a belief that the ratings were there for a reason and should be respected. Others argued that these games contain inappropriate content and that this could negatively impact thinking and behaviour.

A third group of students felt that it should be up to parents to decide whether their child is allowed to play these games. Some also felt that it should be up to the individual young person to decide.

Students in Year 7 were much more concerned about children playing games intended for older people than other year groups and from Year 8 to Year 10 there is a steady decline in concern. Across Year 8 to Sixth form, three out of ten young people think it should be a discretionary decision, with discretion coming from the parent. In Year 11 students began expressing concern about younger peers playing these games and this increased among Sixth form students. Sixth form students were after Year 7 the year group that expressed the most concern about underage game play.

There were also significant gender differences. While 50% of girls were against younger people playing these games 55% of boys were not concerned about this. Almost one-quarter (24%) of both genders felt it should be discretionary.

## Appendix 1: Sample and Methodology

This survey was sent to nine secondary schools that have been using one-to-one Tablets for over a year and are taking part in the Tablets for Schools research programme. The survey was completed online between 13 -22 January 2014. In total over 3,500 responses were received (total 3,557) from pupils aged 11-18 (49% girls and 51% boys). 2% of the sample were aged 18, and for the purposes of analysis have been removed from the sample. One school was in Scotland, the remaining eight schools were spread across England, from Northumberland in the north-east, to Cornwall in the south-west, Essex and Kent in the south-east and Bath in the west.

### Confidence Level

Based on a fully completed sample size<sup>7</sup> of 3,482, at the 99% confidence level the confidence interval is +/- 2.19. We can therefore be 99% sure that if the whole of the 11-17 population undertook this survey, the response given would be +/- 2.19% of that reported in this survey.

### The report

2,228 young people responded to the question ‘in what ways do you sometimes think you are addicted to the internet?’. These open-ended responses have been fully analysed using NVivo 10 software. The analysis was split into the following sections:

- Findings across total sample – brief overview of categorised data
- Findings by year group – in-depth analysis of data for each year group with quotes
- Findings by gender – analysis of categorised data by gender

Research and analysis was carried out by FK&Y January – August 2014.

Family Kids and Youth (FK&Y) is a full service social and market research agency. It is a company partner of the Market Research Society (MRS) and abides by the MRS’s strict code of conduct in relation to conducting research with children and young people. FK&Y is on the government roster for market research with children and young people and its team of researchers has post-graduate qualifications in psychology, psychotherapy, sociology and research methodology.

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<sup>7</sup> All questions responded to



## Appendix 2: Charts and Tables

### Charts

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