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Young 'lost' without computers

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TWO-THIRDS of British youths would be "lost" without computers because they spend more time online than watching television, according to new research.

More than three-quarters (82%) of 16 to 25-year-olds believe technology has made their lives better, with the internet being used to run their social life, keep in touch with family and do shopping.

Use of the internet continues to surge, with 76% spending more time online than they did 12 months ago.

Particularly prominent is the growth of social-networking and photo-sharing websites, such as YouTube and MySpace, with more than half (51%) using such sites every week.

Time spent on the internet each week is now 35% greater - 23 hours compared with 17 hours for the average youth - than that spent watching television.

According to the survey, 25% of all shopping is being done online.

Gadgets such as iPods are also being bought in greater numbers. Research commissioned by Face, a marketing agency, showed that 62% of those at school who were surveyed had bought an mp3 player in the past year. More than three-quarters (76%) now own one.

The survey was based on 1,379 online interviews conducted by **Opinionpanel Research**, which were weighted to reflect the 7.48 million of 16 to 25-year-olds in Britain.

Brian Baglow, a computer and interactive technology consultant based in Kinross, said: "It's a revolution which has created new communities giving people the opportunity to do things that they never dreamed of before. My daughter uses Instant Messenger and my son wants an mp3 player for Christmas. They'd rather communicate or listen to music than watch Coronation Street."

But although youths rely on technology, they are reluctant to let go of more traditional lifestyles, with 80% expecting to get married and have children. In contrast, they are not interested in mainstream politics.

Andrew Needham, managing director of Face, said, "This generation is at ease with technology and uses it to embrace the world, friends, family and a whole range of interests from politics to music."

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