



Information Sheet

Harnessing digital data to study 21st-century adolescence

Dear Parent/Legal Guardian,

We are inviting your child to participate in the research project 'Harnessing digital data to study 21st-century adolescence' conducted by Dr Amy Orben, Professor Daniel Oberski, Dr Laura Boeschoten, Dr Sebastian Kurten, Dr Amanda Ferguson, Dr Jasmine Fardouly, Amira Skeggs, Amelia Leyland-Craggs, and Valerie Yap in collaboration with the University of Cambridge and Utrecht University.

Before beginning the research project, it is important that you take note of the procedures we will apply. Please read this information sheet carefully, and if anything is unclear do not hesitate to contact Dr. Sebastian Kurten orben.group@mrc-cbu.cam.ac.uk of the University of Cambridge.

Purpose of the research project

The online world is central to the lives of young people today, but remains understudied by scientists. This means that there is very limited understanding of how online platforms, such as social media, impact the lives of young people. It is important to conduct research on the online world to ensure we can keep it safe, and help those who need it.

The Medical Research Council (MRC) is launching a large-scale study to investigate the health and wellbeing of young people in the UK. The purpose of this research project is to show how digital data donation can be used in research, and how this might offer us the opportunity to learn more about the online world.

What is Digital Data Donation?

Digital data donation uses individuals' data rights; as users of digital platforms, they are entitled to request their data from these platforms and are then free to share it with anyone they want. To allow us to exercise these rights, most digital platforms have introduced 'download your data' pages or services on their sites. Members of our team have developed a software where individuals are able to donate their social media data to researchers in a private and ethical way. Using this software, individuals are able to see their data package in an easy-to-read format, and select what information they are willing to donate for research. For example, this software could be used to share how many hours each day they spend on TikTok, but to withhold information about how many videos they liked on these days. Anything that is not selected for donation **can not** be accessed by the research team, and **will not** be stored in our software. This gives the individual control over their own data, meaning they can participate in social media research in a way they feel comfortable.

What will happen in the study?

This project collects data electronically over approximately two weeks. During the two weeks, your child will complete two sets of questionnaires (15 mins each) about their social media use, wellbeing, and demographics. They will also complete very short questionnaires (<3 mins each) three times per day for two weeks on their mobile phone. These short questionnaires will ask about social media use and feelings in the moment. Finally, they will be asked to download their social media data from TikTok and/or Instagram. They will then have the option of viewing information about their social media use (e.g., when and how much they use it), and you will have the option of donating this data to us for research purposes.



Instructions and Procedure

Data collection for this study will take place over 2 weeks, and the procedure will be as follows:

Before the study begins, all participants will be required to provide informed consent. If the participant is under the age of 16, this consent must come from a parent or legal guardian. Once the parent or guardian have provided consent, your child will be asked to fill out some online questionnaires about their demographics, social media use, wellbeing, and attitudes towards social media. We will also ask questions about general attitudes and preferences. The initial questionnaires will take around 15 minutes to complete.

Next, they will be provided with an invitation code for an app called M-path, which they can download from Android or Apple app stores onto their mobile phone. They don't need to provide any personal information to M-path – all they need to register is the unique invitation code that we will provide to them.

After registering with the invitation code, M-path will send notifications three times per day (not overlapping with school times) for the following 2 weeks. To ensure the information is relevant to daily life, we will coordinate personalised timings based on when they wake up, go to bed, and their school schedule. On both weekdays and weekends, they will receive notifications, within specific time periods: one in the morning, one after school, and one in the evening.

The notifications will ask about their recent online and offline social activities and current wellbeing. This approach allows us to gain valuable insights into the connections between social media use, emotional wellbeing, and daily life.

At the end of the 2 weeks, they will be asked to download your social media data for TikTok or Instagram. We will provide detailed instructions of how to do this, and the research team are always happy to answer questions. We will also ask them to fill out a final set of questionnaires (which should take around 15 minutes to complete).

Once the downloaded social media data becomes available, they can enter it into the data donation software to see their social media use over the last 6 months, and decide which parts they are happy to share with researchers!

Compensation for Participation

General Policy: They will be compensated at £10/hour, and the maximum compensation achievable is £66 if all activities are completed. The total payment reflects active participation in the study. The table below describes the different study activities and their payment. Compensation will be paid out if it is 20£ or higher.

| Study Activity | Time Required | Payment |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|------------------|
| Initial Education Session and Sign Up | ~60 mins | £10 |
| Initial Questionnaire | ~30 mins | £5 |
| Final Questionnaire and Data donation | ~30 mins | £5 |
| Answering Every 5 Notifications | <3 mins each | £5 (max £40) |
| Final Two Notifications (higher rate) | <3 mins each | £3 each (max £6) |

GDPR Compliance

M-path is GDPR compliant and does not store any personally identifying information. The data collected by m-path will only be linked to participants by a unique code known only to the research team. We process participants' personal data on the basis of your consent, in accordance with General Data Protection Regulation (AGV) and the General data Protection Regulation Implementation Act (UAVG). Data will only be accessed by members of the research team in the University of Cambridge and Utrecht University, who hold up to date GDPR training.



Voluntary Participation

Your child will be participating in this research project on a voluntary basis. This means that you are free to withdraw your consent without giving reasons. This does not affect your child and they are not obligated to complete the procedures described earlier. You can decide to withdraw their consent at any stage of the study. If you decide to withdraw their consent, all of their data collected up until the time of withdrawal will be retained unless otherwise specified, but will be omitted from analysis.

You can withdraw their consent at any time by contacting orben.group@mrc-cbu.cam.ac.uk

Access to your data by third parties

Your child's personal data will **not** be accessed by third parties without your explicit consent.

Confidential treatment and storage of your data

The information collected during this study will only be used for further analysis and publication in scientific journals. Your child's personal data will not be used in these publications, and we guarantee that they will remain anonymous under all circumstances in any published output.

The data collected during the study will be encrypted and stored separately from personal data. This personal data and the encryption key can only be accessed by members of the research team. Anonymized data will be kept for up to 7 years on secure servers at the MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit, University of Cambridge.

Data Subject Request

As the parent or legal guardian of a data subject, you have the right to make a request, and have access to the personal data processed about your child. You can have their data corrected, erased or object to the processing of certain data. You can submit this request to orben.group@mrc-cbu.cam.ac.uk

Discomfort, risk and insurance

Given that we would request participants to use their social media accounts as normal in the time periods where social media data will be collected from, the risks of participating in this research are no greater than in everyday situations on social media. Previous experience with similar research has shown that participants experienced little or no discomfort. Standard liability insurance applies to all research at the University of Cambridge and Utrecht University.

Further Information

This research has been reviewed by the Cambridge Psychology Research Ethics Committee. Confidential treatment of your complaint is guaranteed. You also have the right to lodge a complaint about the handling of your child's personal data or get advice from the Information Commissioners Office. More information on this can be found here <https://www.gov.uk/data-protection/make-a-complaint>

General information about how the University uses personal data can be found here <https://www.information-compliance.admin.cam.ac.uk/data-protection/research-participant-data>



MRC Cognition
and Brain
Sciences Unit



UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE



Utrecht
University