

# Behind the Screens of the Nation

by Three



## Foreword

From psychologist  
and well-being expert  
Honey Langcaster-James

It's no surprise to say 2020 has been a highly unusual year with a unique set of challenges. Social distancing and lockdown regulations have often kept us apart from those we love but fortunately we've still been able to find ways to stay connected through technology.

This report looks behind the screens of Britain's phone use throughout this landmark year, highlighting how our connectivity habits have changed both in and out of lockdown and our phones have brought us closer together than ever before despite spending much of the year cooped up indoors.

From the very moment we're born, our ability to connect with others is of vital psychological importance and significance to us. Connecting to others in a meaningful and supportive way is key to our mental health and wellbeing throughout our lives. Mobile communications have enabled us to communicate with our loved ones, remain actively socially engaged, and also to feel more secure in the knowledge that even though times may be hard, we are never truly alone. There is always someone out there, be it on social media, or on a helpline, or just by calling someone we care about: we just have to pick up the phone and reach out.

From the sheer number of video calls made and huge increase in messages sent – it's safe to say the only thing not on lockdown has been our phones. They've certainly been through a lot this year!

## Your Phone's Seen A Lot This Year (2020 in Numbers)

This year alone, Brits have sent an additional...

364

Whatsapp  
messages

156

calls

104

social media  
posts

...than in 2019

Savvy grandparents  
(over 55's) have sent an  
additional

312

messages on  
Whatsapp this year.

Whereas younger  
people have only sent  
an extra

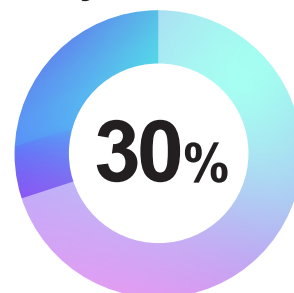
156



Northern Ireland  
has been the most chatty  
region in the UK  
this year, making  
an average of 24 calls  
a week, compared  
to Scotland who  
made just 13



30% of people said their  
phone has allowed some  
normality in 2020



\*Survey results gathered from nationally representative sample of 2,000 people who own a smartphone, conducted November 2020

## Working from home

One of the biggest changes this year has been swapping our offices for lounges, bedrooms or even a desk space under the stairs. Though there is no doubt that this makes it harder to read social queues and connectivity problems have prompted frustrated conversations – it has also meant we have learned how to adjust, progress and achieve at work. Productivity has increased and as such, many have been able to achieve a better work and life balance.

**Half of UK workers** agreed their productivity has actually improved this year since working from home



**3.2m**

people have avoided work video calls because they're still in their pyjamas – with 36% of women admitting to this, compared to just a quarter of men

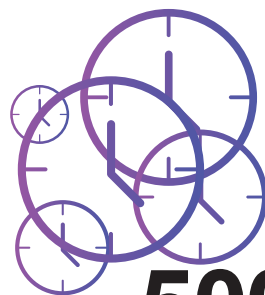
### Younger people

(18 - 24) more self-conscious with almost 70% actively avoiding being on camera for work calls, compared to just one third of over 55's



**21 million**

meetings have been held over video



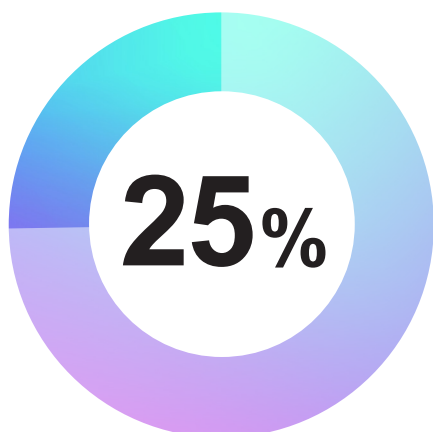
Almost 500 thousand Brits have spent over 25 hours on video calls alone every week

**500,000 Brits**

## Family and kids

Family life has changed significantly this year. Whether it's being kept a part, or quite the opposite and having the kids stuck at home, we have all found clever and creative ways to cope. Whilst parents have turned to their phones as their side-kick to help navigate homeschooling, others have relied on their phone as a way of staying connected to loved ones. Some even say that they have never felt closer to friends and family than before this year...

**A quarter of over 55's** said they have developed closer bonds this year with family who they would not have spoken to so much otherwise



**4.7 million**

phones have been given to loved ones to stay connected

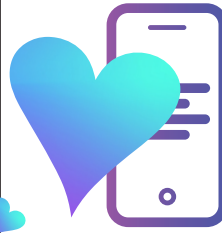
Just over half of UK mums were happy to admit to Googling the answers to their children's schoolwork – whilst just 2 in 5 Dads were willing to put their hands up to this



A third of us have spoken to friends and family more than ever in 2020

## Socialising and Dating

Research for this report found that one third of the population would have been lost without their phones for socialising this year – whether it was a Zoom quiz, sending a flirty message on a dating app or navigating the pandemic by swapping physical pubs to ordering through an app – a truly British approach to perseverance has been observed this year. Even in a global pandemic, we still know how to have a good time.



**In fact, men have stepped up their game,** sending an average of two more messages a week on dating apps compared to last year – compared to women who stayed the same

over **9 million**

drinks were ordered on an app this year



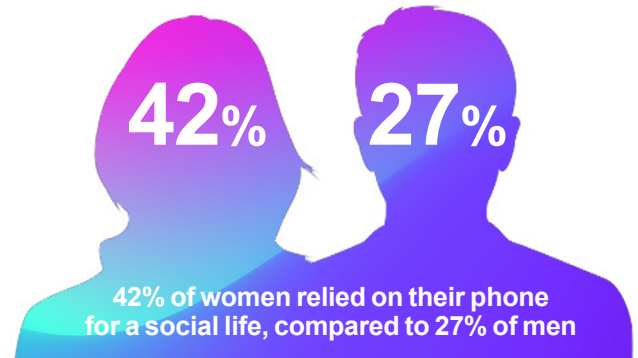
**88.2 million**

messages sent on dating apps every week



**10.9 million**

Brits have taken part in a virtual quiz



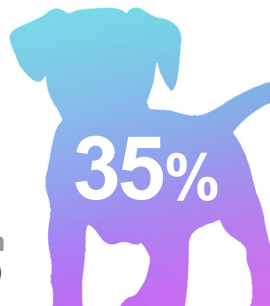
## Entertainment and Health

Our phones have helped keep us entertained, snap happy and healthy during 2020.

**Twice** the number of women took part in a virtual fitness class compared to men



Turning to our cameras, snapping our pets (35%) came above capturing those special moments with the kids (32%)



**1 in 4**

said they'd been hooked on TikTok videos

**Men were happy to show off their handiwork** however, with a sixth saying their camera rolls were filled with their latest DIY endeavours



**Northern Ireland**

can be posed as the most photogenic of us all, taking an average of just four selfies to get that 'insta-ready' shot, compared to London perfectionists who take over double the amount (8) for the same result



# Tips from Honey to stay connected in 2021

## 1 Make Connectivity Part of Your Daily Routine

Time spent connecting with others should be seen as an essential daily activity to ensure you're getting much-needed social nourishment. It is just as important for your emotional and psychological wellbeing that you reach out and connect with others, as it is to eat, exercise and sleep for your physical wellbeing. Scheduling in a daily call with a different friend, family member, or online group can be a good way to make sure you're creating good social habits, and connecting with others regularly.

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## 2 Embrace Technologies

Make sure to give new apps and technology a try. Whilst this might sound daunting if mobiles, apps, and technology is usually out of your comfort zone, there is so much out there now to help you stay connected. Group calling on WhatsApp or Zoom can be a great way to virtually connect with friends and family who may otherwise be miles apart. Social media can also help you to stay connected and get a glimpse of what's going on beyond your own home. Don't be afraid to try new things, you may be glad you did.

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## 3 Multi-tasking while chatting is okay!

This past year, a lot of people have said they just really miss hanging out with friends and having social contact with others. It is okay to call someone up, even while you're both doing something else. Whether you're cooking a meal, or playing an online game, you can both still communicate even whilst multi-tasking. Simply speaking to others on your phone whilst getting on with other things can give you a sense that you're still connected. Casual human contact is a valuable part of our social lives.

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## 4 Use your phone to boost your immune system

Psychological Studies have shown that believing you have a good social support system to call upon in times of need can actually boost your immune system and may also help you to recover quicker if you get sick. So to stay in tip top physical health, make sure to take steps to build your social network. One great way of doing that is to have regular calls, messages and online engagement with others. Some people are lonely and isolated at the moment, so be a good friend to others by letting them know they have you to call upon.

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## 5 Look after your brain by staying connected

Even though you may be spending time physically alone, your phone is actually a gateway to other real-life human beings who you can connect and spend time with. A good social network is a source of support, and messaging or chatting to others may reduce stress, act as an antidote to depression and even keep your mind active through intellectual stimulation. So make sure you use your phone to connect to others, even if you can't connect in real life at the moment, it's likely to be good for your mood and also your overall brain health.

