

New 'generation isolation' spend most time alone on their phones



Recluse... children hide away in their bedrooms

CHILDREN and young people are forming "generation isolation" by escaping alone to their bedrooms instead of socialising, a study claims.

One in five aged between 11 and 18 spend most of their free time on their own – meaning 988,000 have reclusive lives in a trend made worse by lockdowns.

Just one per cent admit to hanging out on the streets.

OnSide, a charity for young people that runs youth clubs, got YouGov to ask 5,000-plus youngsters in England what they did in their down time.

More than a third (37 per cent) said they were gaming more now than before Covid with another third (32 per

By **James Murray**

cent) watching more TV. Computer games are the most time-consuming leisure activity for a quarter of those quizzed while 22 per cent watch streamed content and 21 per cent spend the time using their phones.

More than half are holed up in their bedrooms and 48 per cent do not have opportunities to meet new people or make friends.

Benjamin Cunliffe, 16, who attends the OnSide Youth Zone at Wigan, Greater Manchester, admitted: "I was spending more and more time gaming at home. On some of the games, I've logged more than 1,000

hours. I couldn't be bothered going out and found I felt angry and frustrated.

"So I started attending more sessions at Youth Zone, mostly playing sports. My mental health is much better, I feel just naturally happier."

More than half (56 per cent) of 11 to 18-year-olds told the survey they have medium to high anxiety levels in their lives.

Kathryn Morley, boss of OnSide, said: "We cannot watch an entire generation of young people sleepwalking into social isolation.

"They are not developing qualities necessary for mental wellbeing, those that lay the foundations for them to thrive into adulthood."