



Teens Use of Technology

The Jamaican Experience 2025

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Introduction

It is estimated that about 64% of the global population used social media in 2025. Its popularity has increased by approximately 49% since COVID-19, and the numbers are expected to continue to grow. This growth has fundamentally redesigned society, reshaping communications, politics, business and individuals. Social media platforms have evolved from merely a means of communicating with friends and meeting new people into an immensely powerful tool for accessing information, engaging in public speech, collective action, political activism, advertising and marketing. However, social media platforms are double-edged swords and there is increasing spotlight on its negative effects on society and the individual. At the societal level concerns include misinformation, disinformation and political polarisation. At the individual level, especially among teens, the concerns include, inter alia, unplugging, privacy, cyberbullying, hate speech, mental health

issues and pornography. Despite social media ubiquity, usage patterns differ across countries and regions. It is therefore important that countries and regions conduct independent studies to understand their unique environment to guide decision making and appropriate interventions. This research entitled, *Teens Use of Technology: The Jamaican Experience 2025*, was conducted within this context.

A similar research was conducted in 2018 among teens without any known disability. This 2025 study presents a detailed examination of the digital life of Jamaican teenagers, extending the foundational 2018 survey to include deaf and blind teens. The research explores the varied experiences, accessibility challenges, and patterns of technology use among deaf, blind, and non-disabled adolescents in a rapidly evolving, post-pandemic and AI-driven digital environment. This study seeks to:



This is the only study that we know of that has examined technology use among Deaf, Blind and non-disabled teens.

Generally, a Jamaican teenager is deeply connected online and is used to surfing the internet through electronic devices that are portable and personal. Teens' internet use is almost completely widespread, with some 95% accessing it at least once daily through their smartphones, tablets, or other devices. This is a figure that hasn't changed from the earlier 2018 report.

However, the nature of that connectivity has changed. In 2018, shared household or school devices were the main ways to access the internet, but in 2025 the trend in access has shifted to use of personal, always-on smartphones and tablets. Devices used to access the internet differ among the groups: Non-disabled teens overwhelmingly used smartphones (94%), blind teens, 86%, and deaf teens, 54%.

Deaf teens have the least consistently available access among all groups. Many use family devices or school computers, which limit their privacy and connectivity. The rate of smartphone ownership is lower owing to affordability and usability. Some applications do not have captions, vibrating alerts, or visual interface-first options available that support sign language users. Therefore, during the period of set activities, such as school or community programmes, deaf teens are more irregularly participatory online than constantly present during the day. *These trends indicate the need for more accessible design and the implementation of access programmes for deaf learners.*

Blind learners exhibit enduring interconnectivity, with a significant number of them stating that they use smartphones with screen-reading software daily. Tablets and laptops are their major preferences for, as far as they are concerned, these offer drive-tactile keyboards and voice-to-text tools. The factors at work in their attention are primarily the accessibility characteristics rather than the affordability factor, which explains their level of subscription. For instance, teens from less privileged homes also actively participate in learning when their devices have user audio-friendly or operating systems that have been updated to permit screen readers. *This shows that investment in assistive technology can narrow the digital divide more effectively than device quantity alone.*

Non-disabled teens have the broadest and most independent access. Nearly all own smartphones, and many also use multiple devices interchangeably for entertainment, schoolwork, and communication. The accessibility challenges that affect deaf and blind teens are largely absent here, allowing this group to spend longer periods online and to multitask across platforms. This continuous access also correlates with higher levels of social media postings, gaming, and AI tool experimentation, as observed in later sections. Their experience represents the “always-connected” norm that now defines Jamaican teen culture.

Table 1: Digital Access by Groups

Description	Deaf	Blind	Non-Disabled
Smartphone	54	86	94 ³¹
Desk/Laptop	45	52	75 ⁷
Tablets	50	62	74 ⁴⁹
Ownership	Shared device	Own	Own
Interface	No captions/JSL	Screen reading software	Independent

Having established how teens digitally access the internet, the researchers interrogated where teens hang-out online. The researchers have no prior data on where deaf and blind teens hang out online and therefore cannot comment on changes in usage among these two groups. In 2018, WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat and YouTube were the top five favourite social media platforms. The top five in 2025 included Tumblr, Facebook, Reddit, X and Twitch. Facebook has remained resilient and in the top five over the years despite claims of its demise. The remaining platforms in the top five are all new, demonstrating the rapid changes in the non-disabled teens' platform usage trend. WhatsApp has plunged from first place in 2018 to eighth position in 2025; Instagram from second place in 2018 to seventh in 2025; Snapchat from fourth to ninth; and YouTube from fifth to tenth. Tumblr has surged from ninth to number one 2025.

The data illustrate that deaf teens preferred platforms that were more visual and that provided real-time interaction, as these correspond most closely to the teens' own communication modes. Instagram and Twitch have functionalities that facilitate visual narrative and live expression thus permitting the sharing of content through sign language, emojis, or video captions. Blind teens very frequently used Tumblr, Reddit, X (Twitter) and Twitch, with between 80% and 96% rating these platforms highest. Reddit and Tumblr are both screen

reader-friendly and offer a low-vision, text-driven atmosphere that supports independent browsing. Reddit was praised overwhelmingly by the blind teens during our focus group discussions. Such a pattern clearly highlights how inclusive design features strongly influence participation. In the case of non-disabled teens, the platforms that were frequently being used were largely varied, with Tumblr ranked as the most preferred platform (54% of respondents) and Facebook (50%) following. Reddit at 48%, X/Twitter (41%) and Twitch were quite popular. TikTok and Instagram were commonly used. The various platform choices available to non-disabled teens are the ones that have the largest accessibility features thus prompting greatest experimentation. It is interesting to observe that non-disabled teens' engagement not only covers traditional media but also extends to emerging media, thus implying that teenagers are not solely communicating via the latest media platforms like TikTok or Reddit but are also using classical channels like Facebook. An analysis and comparison of the three groups indicate the differences between the ways accessibility and digital participation intertwine. Deaf teens mainly prefer visually oriented platforms, blind teens typically choose text and community forums, while their non-disabled peers can access the widest variety of platforms. The outlined differences remind us of the critical value of design that includes all users; platforms for people with additional sensory impairment features promote fuller participation and expressiveness.

Deaf	Blind	Non-Disabled (2025)	Non-Disabled (2018)
Instagram (60%)	Tumblr (96%)	Tumblr (54%)	WhatsApp (84%)
Twitch (60%)	Reddit (86%)	Facebook (51%)	Instagram (64%)
WhatsApp (45%)	X (86%)	Reddit (48%)	Facebook (59%)
TikTok (27%)	Twitch (82%)	X (42%)	Snapchat (51%)
X (25%)	Facebook (71%)	Twitch (41%)	YouTube (50%)
YouTube (18%)	Snapchat (55%)	TikTok (32%)	Google+ (24%)
Reddit (13%)	Instagram (31%)	Instagram (25%)	Twitter [X] (20%)
Facebook (8%)	TikTok (19%)	WhatsApp (25%)	Messenger (15%)
Tumblr (7%)	WhatsApp (12%)	Snapchat (24%)	Other (13%), Vine, Tumblr
Snapchat (3%)	YouTube (7%)	YouTube (18%)	—

Online Activities

Online activities highlight both shared behaviours and distinct differences across groups. Entertainment is central for all, though patterns vary. The most common online patterns among blind teens are: 76% streaming at least once per month, followed by non-disabled teens with 73%, while only 46% of deaf teens stream at least once per month. Non-disabled teens were more active, with 83% gaming at least once per month, followed by blind teens with 72%, and, finally, deaf teens with 56%. Teens who are non-disabled tend to be more involved in social media sites and are more active creators, gamers and sharers of content. Both greater access and confidence may account for this. Non-disabled teens have better connectivity and a more diverse online community that encourage them to post, share, and invite comment on their site visits. Deaf teens, who are primarily dependent on visual expressions, can keep their videos without captions or limited sign language support to express their thoughts more freely. Blind teens prefer to read or to listen to others instead of creating a text because spaces that are text-based use screen readers. The accessibility and comfort of using technological devices directly determine the differences in participation among the groups in the online environment.

Gender trends show similar discrepancies. Boys are typically more involved in gaming and risky activities like online betting or viewing adult content, while girls are more regularly involved in creative and communicative uses of technology such as posting artwork and seeking advice online. Both genders

exhibit relatively the same levels of involvement in fun activities like pranking or meme sharing. girls, however, are more likely than boys to follow celebrities, and communicate more frequently on social networks. These trends imply that even if access is the reason for group differentials, the gender factor strongly influences teens' expression and connection on the internet. Apart from the existing gender variations, changes over time also reveal important trends in how teens use the internet for support and learning.

According to the report from 2018, 35% of teens went online to seek expert advice on personal problems, but this has risen in 2025 to 49% among non-disabled teens. The numbers show that about three out of ten deaf teens take the step to seeking advice, but blind teens mostly avoid taking this step. The differing rates here may be a manifestation of the trust and comfort the users have for each other in discussing personal issues in the forums online. Most blind and deaf teens like to have formal conversations with their teachers, family members, and/or trusted peers, instead of asking a fellow student questions in the online forum. Deaf and non-disabled teens present a more positive attitude towards peer advice on the internet, probably because social media has established itself as a natural arena for emotional support. The uptick in the use of digital communities for help among Jamaican teens since 2018 indicates an increase in their level of trust in online communication.

Table 3: Online Activities among Teens by Groups

Groups	Stream	Games	Post Picture	Read Post	Seek Advice
Deaf	46	56	37	56	
Blind	76	72	38	66	
Non – disabled	73	83	65	68	

Figure 1: Gender Difference in Online Activities

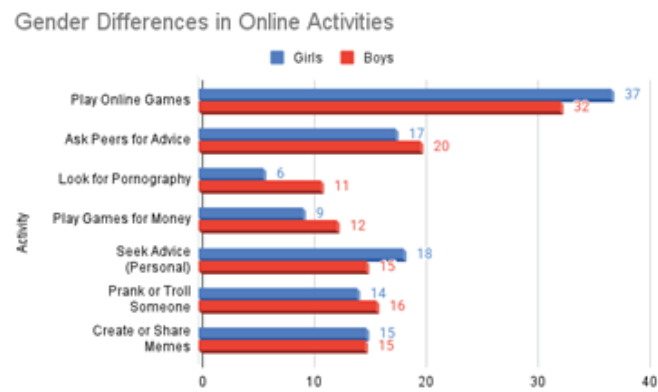
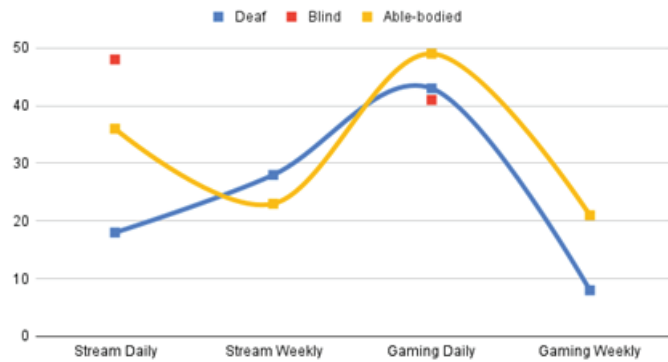


Figure 2: Online Activities among Teens by Groups



News

In our focus group discussions, we delved further into understanding teens' online activities. We found that many similarities and differences were based only by degrees. Reading of physical newspapers and watching television is a rarity among teens regardless of group. According to one student, "The only paper I have ever read was Children's Own", and another said, "We don't even watch School's Challenge Quiz!". News is sourced from One Spot Media, Observer Online and Gleaner Online. However, there are other sources, depending on the type of news required. There is Miss Triple, described as "TikTok Jamaican sensation", PopEye News Lynx, described as "one of Jamaica's most Credible and Reputable Newz Source bringing you DE REALIST NEWZ", and Pink Wall, "Bringing news and views since 2009". Non-disabled teens had a wider range of news sources and were more likely to source news and entertainment from non-traditional sources. One deaf student indicated that they sometimes watch the news on television but usually don't understand what is being said and therefore will have to ask family members to explain. Generally, TikTok, Instagram and YouTube are also sources of news.

Gaming/Entertainment

The game of choice among all three groups was Free, formerly known as Garena Free Fire, a free-to-play battle royale game played by both girls and boys. Deaf teens mentioned FC Mobile - a football game Call of Duty, and Roblox. Blind teens mentioned Block Blast - a puzzle game, and Real World, both games for blind people. Non-disabled teens mentioned Call of Duty, Cube Z - a game with several variations including a puzzle game, Block Blast - a puzzle game, and Real World (the last two being games for blind individuals). Among non-disabled teens the other games of choice were Call of Duty (a popular shooter game) and Cube Z which refers to several games, the most popular being a puzzle game or a zombie survival shooter game.

The artiste, Vybz Kartel, was popular among all three groups. Other artistes mentioned were Alkaline, Chronixx and, as one blind student said, "I love Bruno Mars Uptown Funk". Movies are generally accessed via Netflix or from pirated sites.

Civic Engagement

Civic engagements such as sending links to news articles and posting comments on the news websites are not frequent among deaf (31%) and blind (less than 20%) teens. Non-disabled teens are more likely to take part in these activities (57%) and this represents an increase over the previous research finding of 45%.

The upward shift of this point shows that teens are progressively moving to the online world to catch up with and talk about the contemporary issues prevailing in the world. Nevertheless, the involvement of deaf and blind teens is still very inadequate, owing mainly to the incompatibility of many news websites with assistive technologies or video captioning. Additionally, the prevalence of text-only layouts and the unavailability of navigation menus make it hard for teens with disabilities to make frequent visits to the websites. To support the inclusive civic participation initiative, platforms should be required to acquire accessibility rules that allow all teens to participate equally in public discussion.

Risky Behaviour

Patterns of online risk-taking vary not only by disability but also by gender. Non-disabled teens are more likely to be involved in risky behaviours online, including playing games that involve money, 31%, prank or troll, 45%, and watching porn, 27%. These actions are usually not practised by deaf and blind teens. The variances in the risk behaviour are probably due to the contrasting norms in society and the poor quality of adult supervision. Deaf and blind

teens very often say that active parental or teacher oversight is a factor in limiting their access to risky advertisement or other content. On the other hand, non-disabled teens have more freedom online and are more independent, which can lead to experimentation. Despite this, most teens across all groups show an understanding of online boundaries and demonstrate caution when interacting with unfamiliar or potentially unsafe content.

Relationships and Sexuality

One teenage activity that creates trepidation among parents is sexting. Sexting is defined as receiving, sending and forwarding sexy, nude or partially nude photographs. The study examined teens' behaviours surrounding sexting by asking a series of questions in relation to sending and receiving nude photographs. Sexting behaviour is primarily reported among non-disabled teens, and remains rare among deaf and blind teens. Non-disabled teens are more likely to send sexts of themselves to someone and to receive forwarded sexts about others. Though many teens are showing self-control and refrain from sending explicit pictorial forms of communication, the data show gender variations in attitudes towards sexting. Boys are more active than girls in both sending and forwarding sexts. For example, among the respondents, 12% of boys had sent images of themselves, while nearly seven percent (7%)

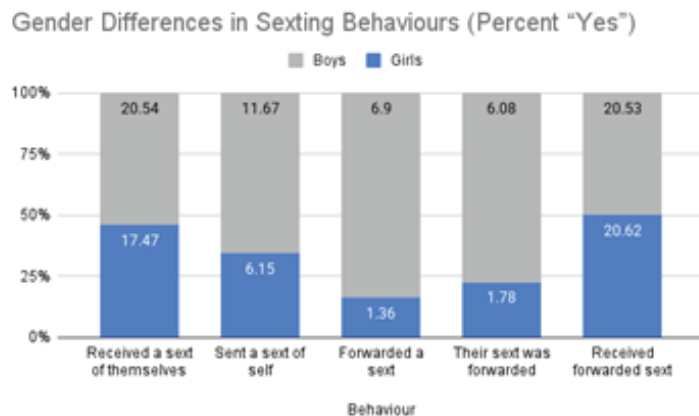
admitted to sending images of others. The data reveal that both girls and boys are as likely to have received a forwarded sext, but girls are more likely than boys to express unhappiness or fear for their privacy regarding this activity. The results of the study suggest that it is boys who are more participative in sharing sexts. On the other hand, girls are much more reserved and careful in personal content discussion.

Sexting, which is typically seen by minors as socially improper and legally precarious, is similarly regarded in the broader Jamaican cultural norms. The extremely low numbers of deaf and blind teens participating in sexting may be because of their smaller peer circles and the higher level of community supervision to which they are subjected. The comparatively greater participation rate of non-disabled teens reflects the reality that in various regions of the world, the use of private messaging and image-sharing tools has become commonplace and, in turn, increases visibility of sexting. The overall rates of sexting are still very low but, still, it is very important to introduce education programmes on digital ethics, privacy, and consent to ensure awareness of the dangers associated with sexting, and to encourage practice of safe online behaviour. Table 4 and Figure 3 below show group and gender patterns; boys are the ones experimenting more, while girls adopt more caution and control.

Table 4: Differences in Sexting Behaviour by Groups (% "Yes")

Groups	Someone sent a sext of themselves	Did you Forward	Sent a sext of yourself	Did they forward	Reviewe sext that someone else forwarded
Deaf	13	6	5	0	21
Blind	14	0	0	0	14
Non-disabled	40	9	19	9	43

Figure 3: Gender Differences in Sexting Behaviours



The patterns combined highlight that although teenagers' main online activities are entertainment and social interaction, factors like access, gender and adult supervision influence how teens present online and deal with risk.

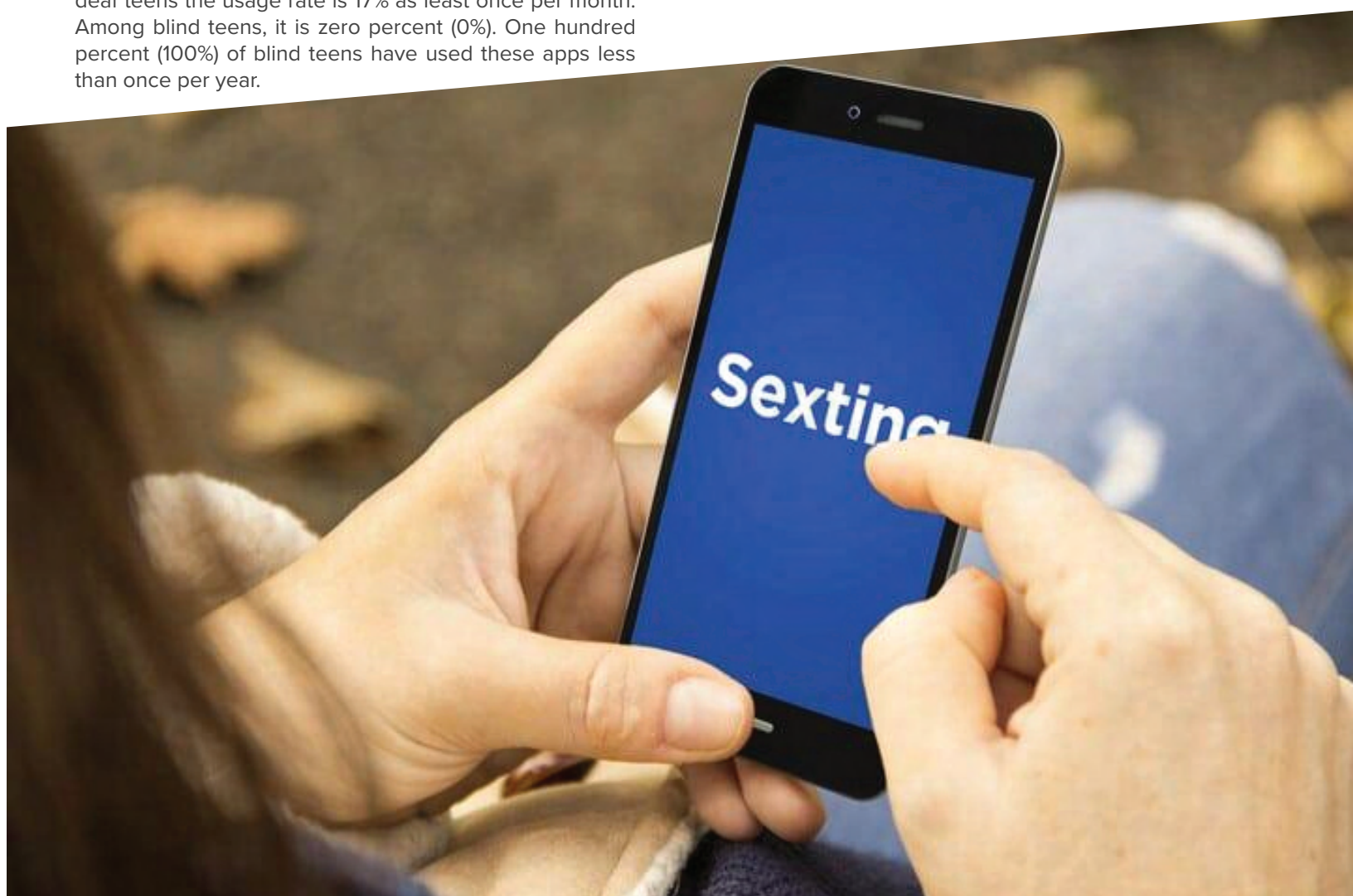
Pornography

In our 2018 study, pornography, or porn, was not very popular among teens; only a very small minority (3.3% of respondents) had it as a favourite app, or watched it intentionally. By default, the teens in the previous study were non-disabled. The percentage of these teens that have admitted using these apps at least once per month is 27%, a large increase over those in the 2018 study. Among deaf teens the usage rate is 17% as least once per month. Among blind teens, it is zero percent (0%). One hundred percent (100%) of blind teens have used these apps less than once per year.

Table 5: Frequency of Porn Search by Groups

How often do you search for Porn	Deaf	Blind	Non-disabled
Never	59	76	54
More than once /year	16	14	8
Less than once/year	5	10	3
At least one/year	3	0	8
Once per week	5	0	9
Once per month	6	0	9
Once /day	6	0	9
Total	100	100	100

In our focus groups deaf and blind teens were more open to talking about this topic than non-disabled teens. A female deaf student admitted, "I am being honest because I am asexual, so I'm not interested in different sexuality and stuff like that, therefore I'm not interested in porn". Another said, "I stopped watching because it is not interesting". One male student candidly admitted that he thought that he is addicted to Fetish Form, a dating and social networking website for people with various fetishes and kinks. A male blind student openly said, "Unno nuh waan admit it, but me watch it". A female blind student said, "I used to watch it, but I realized that it can get addicting so I stopped. I shut it down". The non-disabled were more reluctant to discuss the topic. One female student said, "Personally, I don't watch it because that's just disgusting, and I think certain things should wait".



Frequency of Use

Widespread smartphone ownership and generally reliable internet access have led to more persistent online activity. Deaf teens are the lightest users among the groups, with 46% of respondents reporting four or more hours online each day. Older teens (16-19 years old) spend considerably more time online than their younger counterparts. Six percent of deaf teens reported zero time spent on the internet daily.



Figure 3: Hours Spent on Technology per Day (Deaf Teens)



Blind teens are the second-heaviest users, with 66% of respondents reporting four or more hours online daily. Unlike deaf teens, younger blind users (13 – 15 years) spend more time online than their older counterparts.

Figure 4: Hours Spent on Technology per Day (Blind Teens)



Non-disabled teens were the heaviest users, with 69% reporting four or more hours online each day.

Figure 5: Hours Spent on Technology per Day (Non-Disabled Teens)



Overall, the frequency data reveal a clear gradient linked to access and inclusion. Non-disabled teens dominate heavy-use categories, typically spending four or more hours online each day. Blind teens follow closely, showing consistent daily use but with slightly shorter sessions often aligned to school tasks or leisure-time audio streaming. Deaf teens' lighter usage reflects both connectivity barriers and differing communication modes - visual media require more

bandwidth and uninterrupted signal, resulting in reduced online usage. The generational pattern also stands out: older deaf teens and younger blind ones are the most active within their respective groups, suggesting that maturity and adaptation play opposing roles in shaping engagement. Together these findings show that device quality and accessibility features, in addition to internet availability, determine how deeply teenagers participate in digital life.

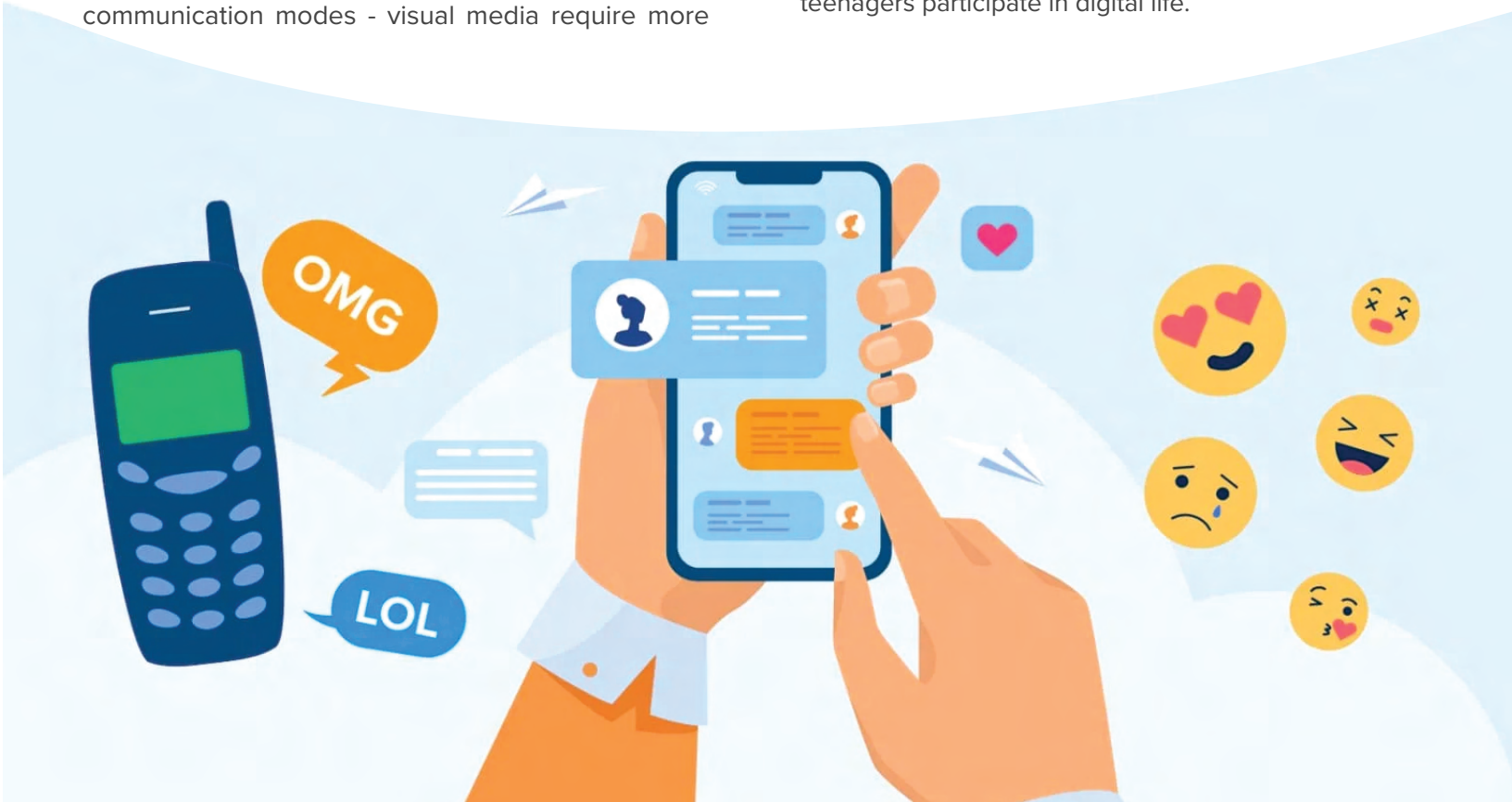
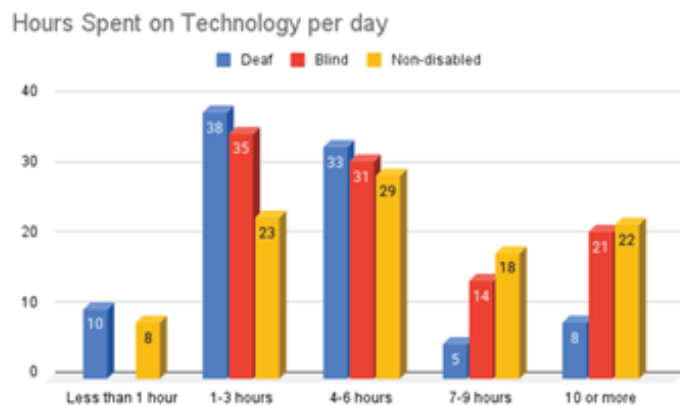


Figure 6: Hours Spent on Technology per Day by Groups



Unplugging

There are several trends that make it convenient for Jamaican teens to be plugged into online media more than ever before: High penetration of social media, the proliferation of portable networked devices like smartphones and tablets, and the expansion of broadband connectivity. There is ongoing debate among school administrators and parents regarding the dangers of being too connected to online platforms. Unplugging involves intentional actions such as setting time limits, deleting apps, turning off notifications, and replacing online time with offline activities. This section examines the extent to which teens feel the need to be always connected.

The findings suggest that constant connectivity has become a defining feature of teenage life. For many teens, going offline feels inconvenient or even isolating. While access to technology supports learning and communication, it also reinforces habits of continuous engagement. Analysing the ways teens go about balancing these two things sheds light on the way they keep healthy digital habits. Non-disabled teens worry disproportionately at a higher level about their screen time than deaf and blind teens. About 50% of deaf and blind teens worry or sometimes worry, and 73% of non-disabled teens feel the same way. In our 2018 study, 68% of respondents worried or worried sometimes.

The higher incidence of concern among non-disabled teens may be linked to heavier overall screen time and greater dependence on social media for interaction and entertainment. Deaf and blind teens, who face more access barriers, spend less time online and therefore report lower anxiety about overuse. This difference indicates that the intensity of use, rather than access itself, drives

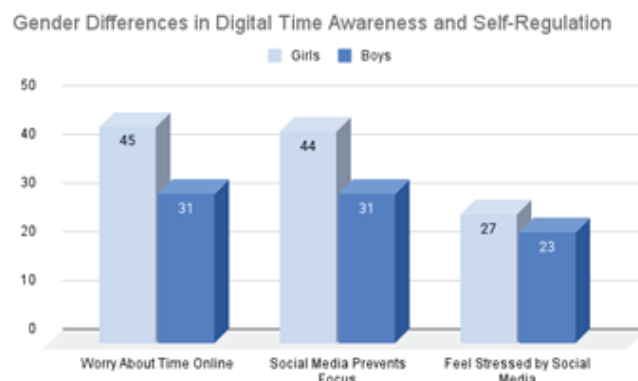
worry about screen time. It also shows how awareness of digital wellbeing has grown since 2018.

Table 6: Worry Over Time Spent Online by Groups

Do you ever worry that you spend too much time online			
Responses	Deaf	Blind	Non – disabled
Yes	25	17	30
Sometimes	25	28	47
No	50	55	23
Total	100	100	100

Gender differences further illustrate how digital habits affect self-awareness and balance. Girls are more likely to report worrying about spending too much time online (45% versus 31% of boys), and a higher proportion also acknowledge that social media sometimes interferes with focus. In contrast to girls, who seem to be more reflective about their online routines, boys appear to be less likely to consider their use as a problem, which indicates that they probably are socializing on screen time or multitasking. Girls seem to be more emotional regarding the effect of overuse and distractions may have on their internal state.

Figure 7: Gender Differences in Digital Time Awareness and Self-Regulation



All three groups accept the notion that social media is a tool that diverts attention. Seventy-five percent (75%) of non-disabled teens reported this, while only a little more than a half of the deaf and blind teens said the same. Social media's distracting effect together with digital multitasking affect teens' focus and academic performance. Many individuals depict social media both as a learning resource and a factor of disturbance, and record that it is difficult to disentangle leisure from the learning process. Advising teens to practise digital communication mindfully and to use digital time-management strategies could enable them to enjoy the benefits of technology without suffering the adverse consequences.

Table 7: Social Media and Distractions by Groups

Does social media create a distraction?			
Responses	Deaf	Blind	Non – disabled
Yes	13	21	28
Sometimes	53	34	47
No	34	45	25
	100	100	100

The stress level associated with social media is highest among non-disabled teens, with 51% indicating that it created stress. About a third (34%) of blind teens, and less than one-fifth (18%) of deaf teens reported stress.

These results point to differences in emotional exposure. Non-disabled teens, who interact more frequently on social platforms, experience higher levels of stress from constant notifications and the urge to compare themselves with their online counterparts. Blind teens’ moderate levels of stress may stem from sensory overload when using assistive devices for long periods. Deaf teens’ lower stress levels could reflect stronger in-person community ties and less reliance on digital validation.

Table 8: Social Media and Stress by Groups

Does social media create stress?			
Responses	Deaf	Blind	Non – disabled
Yes	18	34	51
No	82	66	49
	100	100	100

When asked why they go offline, most teens said they do so to spend time with friends or family. Deaf and blind teens were the most likely to disconnect for social or relaxation reasons, while non-disabled teens more often cited the need for quiet time and leisure as reasons. Reading and outdoor play also featured strongly among deaf teens, reflecting their preference for calm, self-directed offline activities.

Gender patterns reveal similar themes. As shown in Figure 8, girls are slightly more likely to go offline to connect with family or enjoy quiet time, while boys more often associate offline time with recreation such as playing games or sports. Girls spend more time than boys reading. Both genders confirmed low levels of disconnecting to avoid harassment which indicates, generally, that there is little pressure to disconnect.

Table 9: Reasons for Going Offline by Groups

Reasons	Deaf	Blind	Non – disabled
Enjoy quiet time	33	34	56
Spend more time with friends/family	60	62	53
Go outside to play	53	34	45
Read a book	53	17	34
Avoid someone that's harassing you	13	14	17

Figure 8: Reasons for Going Offline by Gender



Overall, gender and ability modify teens’ management of screen time and their emotional well-being. Girls tend to be more likely than boys to acknowledge the pressure to be constantly connected to the internet. While boys do not readily admit this, they nonetheless experience as much attention deficit and stress as girls. Deaf and blind teens seem to have lower anxiety symptoms, which would imply that their exposure to less screen time is protective against digital overload.

Social media and other platforms employ a consumer surveillance model whereby companies collect and analyse personal data to tailor content, marketing and pricing to individuals, with the goal of maximizing profit. The rise of artificial intelligence (AI) makes this practice ubiquitous and seamless. This section examines teens’ views and behaviours relating to online privacy.

Jamaican teenagers’ main concern regarding their social networking is the alarming threat to their privacy. Today, most of the teens are aware that social media platforms routinely collect personal data to tailor advertisements aimed at users, though the degree of teens’ knowledge about how the platforms secure this data differs widely among the groups. Privacy behaviour differences among groups are the reflection of digital literacy and access difficulties. The disabled teens’ main emphasis is more on handling the online world’s visibility and social space comforts rather than on data protection.

Teens across categories are concerned about technology's impact on privacy. Non-disabled teens tend to be the most worried (79%), followed by deaf teens (70%). On the other hand, the opinions of blind teens on this subject were rather evenly divided (52%). Such findings indicate that even though most of the teens are conscious of the problem, they view it in different ways. The greater participation of non-disabled teens in social media discussions has made them more aware of data misuse, thus they report a heightened degree of worry. The greater emphasis on visual sharing and the anxiety around the misuse of personal videos or sign-language clips are the reasons for deaf teens' higher concern (the Chabot data refer). The divided views of blind teens are believed to be due to their lesser exposure to visual materials and their focus on accessibility, which leaves them little time to focus on privacy settings.

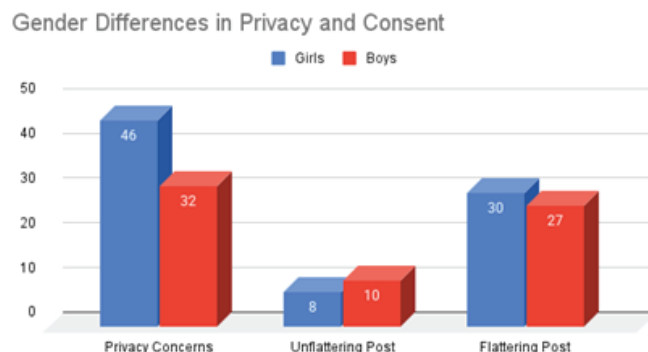
Gender as a factor also influences the perception of privacy and consent among the teens. Most girls (46%) are primarily worried about the effects of technology on one's personal privacy, as opposed to boys (32%). Also, girls are mostly uncomfortable with their friends' posting pictures and videos of them without prior permission, especially when these are embarrassing. On the other hand, boys are a little bit more straightforward about visibility and sharing, which suggests that they have a higher tolerance for visibility and social exposure. All in all, the girls tend to exercise more caution towards social exposure while the boys tend to be more confident in their ability to address privacy challenges once these arise (Figure 9).

The notion of friends' posting embarrassing content without consent is almost universally opposed by all teens regardless of their backgrounds. Yet, the opinions about flattering content differ more starkly. Most of the non-disabled and deaf teens are accepting of it, while blind teens are more cautious, and prefer permission. The continual request for consent evidences the strong digital ethics that teens have. Blind teens are generally more sensitive to the issues of representation and the power of controlling how they are seen online. Deaf and non-disabled teens are, to a certain extent, more open to the sharing of casual content because of their better acquaintance with social media culture. Girls are more insistent on giving prior consent to posts about themselves, while boys are more accepting of spontaneous sharing.

Table 10: Online Anonymity Activities by Groups

Groups	Flattering post	Unflattering post	Privacy Concerns
Deaf	56	9	70
Blind	34	3	52
Non – disabled	58	19	79

Figure 9: Differences in Privacy and Consent by Gender



Catfishing, or pretending to be someone else online, is used by teens for a range of reasons. Across all groups the most consistent theme is for privacy purposes, however, the intensity differs: non-disabled, 71%, deaf, 65%, and blind, 52%. Teens across all groups frequently use anonymity for pranks and pretending to be older to access restricted websites.

These behaviours reveal the dual nature of anonymity; it can protect privacy, but it also enables mischief or risk-taking. Many teens use alternate identities not to harm others but to explore safely, test social boundaries, or avoid judgment. However, the habit of masking identity can make them vulnerable to misinformation or inappropriate interactions.

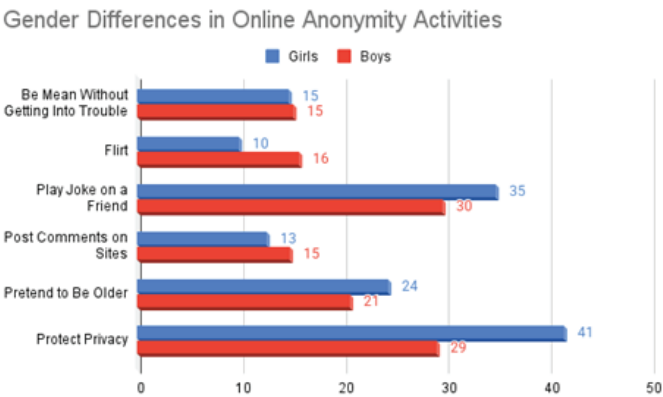
Gender differences are also visible in how teens use anonymity. Girls are more likely to adopt alternate profiles to protect privacy or observe safely, while boys use them more for interaction, flirting, or pranks. Some 41% of girl's report using anonymity for privacy protection compared to 29% of boys, but boys are twice as likely to use it for flirting or posting comments, as shown in Table 8. This contrast highlights how girls associate anonymity with safety, whereas boys link it with exploration and play.

This underscores the importance of teaching responsible use of anonymity and reinforcing that online freedom should be balanced with accountability.

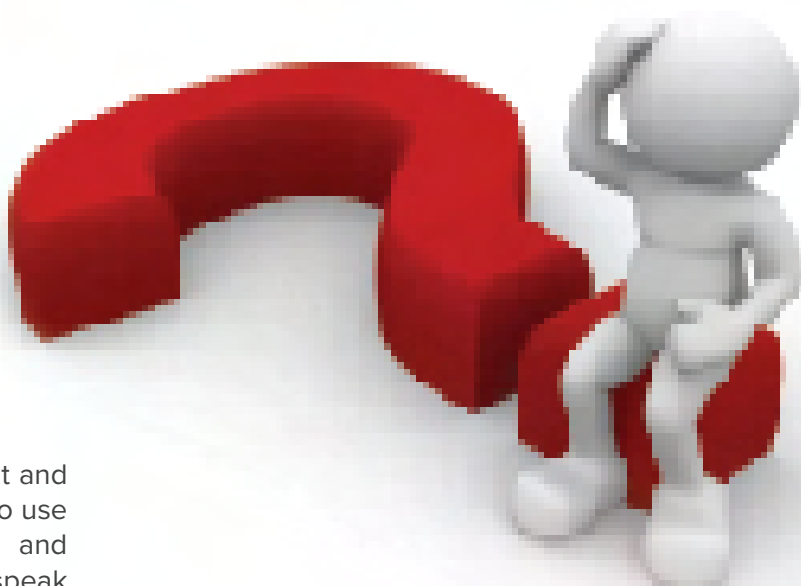
Table 11: Online Anonymity Activities by Groups

Online Anonymity Activities	Deaf	Blind	Non – disabled
Be mean to someone without getting into trouble	33	28	30
Flirt	16	34	26
Play joke on a friend	50	41	66
Post comments on social media	16	3	28
Pretend you are older so you can register on website	41	34	46
Protect your privacy	65	52	71

Figure 10: Differences in Online Anonymity Activities by Gender



Handling Online PROBLEMS



Teens use the internet mainly for entertainment and socialisation. Nevertheless, there are those who use technology for the purpose of intimidating and harassing others. The teens had the chance to speak about their experiences of being cyber-bullied, bullying others, or witnessing cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is a form of online communication involving threats, embarrassment, gossip, or demeaning the victim. Cyberbullying

In this survey interrogating teens' online interactions, we presented the question, "Have you ever received any nasty remarks or faced any rude attitudes from anyone on the internet that made you feel bad?" Forty-seven percent (47%) of non-disabled teens said they were indeed targeted, which represents an increase over the 40% recorded in the 2018 study. Deaf (36%) and blind (31%) teens also reported incidents of cyberbullying, even though their rates were lower. These levels are still concerning. The teens in all categories often do not view these actions of bullying seriously.

As the data show, a portion of every group is subjected to some form of online harassment, though there are differences in exposure rates. Among non-disabled teens the extremely higher numbers correlate with their general high use of social media and larger peer networks, which increase the chances of conflict. Deaf and blind teens claim to experience less conflict, perhaps because of their smaller online community and little involvement in public forums. Nevertheless, being invisible on the web does not imply safety; bullying that occurs can be even more isolating for the disabled because their support networks are not well established.

We also asked teens if they themselves had been mean or cruel to someone over the internet. A total of forty percent (40%) of the non-disabled teens

admitted to this, while 34% of blind teens and 27% of deaf teens did likewise. Such responses made it very clear that unkind behaviour is not limited to any specific group. Certain learners who spoke of direct bullying also confessed to bullying their companions, which may be viewed as a cycle of acts rather than an intention to hurt. The necessity therefore for digital empathy programmes that enable teenagers to rethink their actions and how these affect other people on the internet is stark.

The most common reasons for the initiation of bullying were: (1), "The targeted persons said something mean or cruel about me first", (2), "I was just joking around", (3), "I don't know", (4), "I did not like the person", and (5), "The person said something mean or cruel about my friend". The responses are indicating the very same reasons emanating from the 2018 research.

This constancy observed in the two research periods indicates that the foundational reasons of cyberbullying have not undergone major transformations because of new technologies. Practical jokes and revenge are still the major instigators. This points to deficiencies in emotional self-regulation and the attitudes towards online communication, and suggests that education should focus not only on punishment but also on helping teens develop empathy and conflict resolution strategies for digital spaces.

How teens respond to cyberbullying shows similarities and differences across the groups. All three groups have the propensity to ignore the bullying, however, deaf teens are more likely to do so. All three groups will also speak to their parents about the issue, however, while 100% of deaf teens

Technology at School

There is a growing call to have cell phones banned or restricted in schools. Several countries, including the United Kingdom, Australia, China, France, Italy and Brazil have enacted varying rules while accommodating exceptions for teens with disabilities. In the survey, we did not ask teens their opinions about the banning of cell phones, however, we addressed the question in the focus groups. Non-disabled teens had mixed views on the issue; some teens agreed that cell phones should be banned completely as their use in schools is a distraction. Some teens took a compromise position suggesting restrictions, with access for senior teens only. Others argued that they are essential for communication and should not be banned. Among deaf and blind teens, especially the latter, there was no debate. Blind teens indicated that communications without the technology would be challenging because of limited braille literacy, and a ban would limit their independence as they would have to depend constantly on others to explain things, and to persistently ask whether they were allowed to do this or the other. Another blind student said, “Blind persons generally value their independence more than anything. They don't like going around and asking ... feeling like, oh, I am inferior to you because I have to come to you and basically beg you to do something for me”.

Teachers appear to integrate social media in lessons most often with blind teens, less so with non – disabled teens, and least with deaf teens. This aligns with classroom realities where text-forward platforms and curated links can support accessibility for blind learners, while deaf teens may need captioned video or visual resources that teachers do not consistently provide. Reports of blocked educational sites are most common among non – disabled teens, who also report the highest ability to bypass filters. Together, these patterns suggest that policy and practice are uneven across schools and that accessibility training for teachers would increase equitable use of digital tools. These classroom conditions shape how teens later evaluate information and decide which online sources to trust.

Table 13: Technology at School Composite Table by Groups

Groups	Teachers' use of social media	Trouble finding something for school-on-school computer because it was blocked	Access site at school even if it is blocked
Deaf	27	11	27
Blind	90	14	17
Non – disabled	53	27	31

Authenticating Content

Most teens try to ensure that the information that they find online for schoolwork is credible. However, there are sharp differences in how different groups authenticate information online. Deaf teens are heavily dependent on recommendations from their teachers (80%), and 80% generally check to see if the online information is from credible sources. Blind teens, however, rely less on their teachers (69%) than do deaf teens. Both groups also check other sources to verify that information is from experts (45%). The range of verification methods used by blind teens is more limited than for the other two groups.

Accessibility influences verification behaviour. When platforms are hard to navigate with a screen reader or lack clear authorship and update information, blind teens are less likely to employ deeper checks. Deaf teens, who receive more teacher-mediated guidance, lean on teacher recommendations and expert signals. Non-disabled teens diversify verification steps more often, perhaps because they encounter a wider mix of sources in daily use.

The non-disabled rely primarily on checking other sources and confirming that facts are from experts (74% and 72%, respectively). Their third choice is the recommendation from teachers (67%) and, generally, they use a more diverse range of authentication methods. Teachers are the main conduits among the three groups for obtaining recommendations regarding credible sites and for confirming that the information is from experts. Generally, teens pay little attention to who owns the site when they are evaluating information. Ownership and funding transparency remain weak spots across all groups. Embedding quick lessons on “about” pages, funding disclosures, and last-updated dates would raise the baseline of source evaluation without adding heavy workload for teachers.

Table 14: Authenticating Content by Groups

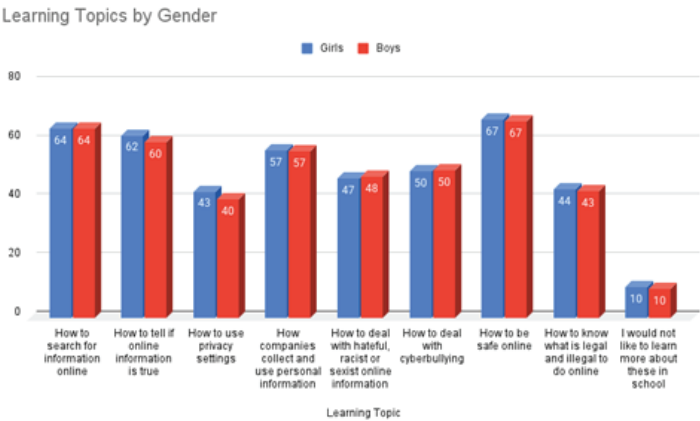
Groups	Teacher	Sources	Facts	Balanced	Owner	Contact	Updated	Experts
Deaf	80	53	64	64	21	64	48	80
Blind	69	45	10	31	3	10	21	45
Non-disabled	67	74	65	60	31	47	58	72
Average	72	57	46	52	18	40	42	65

Finally, in this section we asked teens what they would like to learn more in school regarding technology. These responses will help to guide teaching strategies.

Table 15: Topics Teens Want to Learn More About in School by Groups

Learning Topic	Deaf	Blind	Non- disabled
How to tell if information is true	60	93	50
How to search for information online	67	96	46
How to be safe online	67	81	44
How companies collect and use data	50	81	42
How to know what is legal and illegal online	40	52	39

Figure 11: Topics Teens Want to Learn More About by Gender



As shown in Table 15, interest in learning about online safety and information literacy is high across all groups. Both deaf and blind teens show particularly strong curiosity about how to search for information and evaluate what is true, with approximately two-thirds of deaf, and over ninety 90% of blind teens selecting these topics. Blind teens also show higher interest in learning about privacy, company data practices, and dealing with harmful online content. In contrast, non-disabled teens express more moderate levels of interest, suggesting that the lessened need for instruction may be because of the teens’ levels of exposure and confidence. These results indicate that tailored digital literacy lessons especially in safety, critical thinking, and recognizing credible sources would be most beneficial for teens with disabilities. Furthermore, in addition to differences among deaf, blind, and non-disabled teens, we also examined gender patterns in learning preferences, and found that gender differences in learning interests were minimal. Both girls and boys expressed similar priorities, with the highest interest being in learning how to stay safe online, find reliable information, and recognize trustworthy sources. This indicates that awareness and curiosity about digital literacy are shared across genders, as shown in Figure 11.



Generative



Since 2023, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has surged and is transforming work, personal lives and education. Powerful Generative AI (GenAI) tools, such as ChatGPT, are now readily available and easily accessible to teens. We asked teens a range of questions on their use of AI.

The use and frequency of GenAI differ considerably among the three groups. Lower usage among blind teens likely reflects interface and screen-reader limitations rather than lack of interest. Deaf and non-disabled teens interact most easily with text-first chatbots, thus accounting for the higher uptake. This indicates that accessibility design is a primary driver of adoption differences.

Across the groups, the most widely used GenAI tool is ChatGPT. Usage varies by groups: Deaf (54%), blind (24%) and non-disabled (69%). The other GenAI software used were Gemini and Copilot. Another crucial bit of information is the number of teens who do not use GenAI: Blind teens 33%, deaf teens 23%, and non-disabled teens 6%.

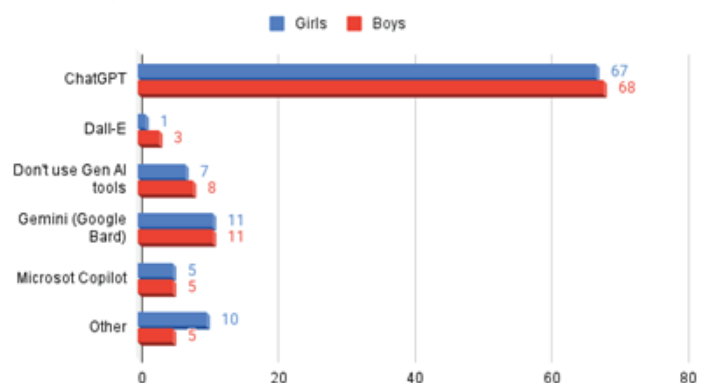
When comparing by gender, there was almost no difference in GenAI usage patterns. Both girls and boys reported similar use of ChatGPT and other tools, suggesting that access and interest in AI are evenly distributed across genders (Figure 12).

Table 16: GenAI Usage by Groups

Groups	ChatGPT	Don't Use	Gemini	Copilot	Other
Deaf	54	23	11	3	9
Blind	24	31	21	17	7
Non – disabled	69	6	11	5	8

Figure 12: GenAI Usage by Gender

GenAI Usage by Gender



ChatGPT is a dominating leader in teens’ use of GenAI, while the survey findings reflect that Gemini and Copilot are auxiliary instruments. The relatively high percentage of blind teens who don’t use GenAI highlights the need for fully compatible screen-reader features. In relation to that, the “don’t use” rate of non-disabled teens is not high, which implies that they have quickly normalised the use of AI for school tasks.

We investigated the instances of utilisation of GenAI by the varied groups. Daily use is most common among non-disabled teens, followed by deaf teens, with blind teens least likely to report daily use. Weekly use is a frequent pattern among blind teens, indicating more occasional reliance. Monthly use remains the least common cadence across groups.

Table 17: Frequency of GenAI Usage by Groups

Groups	Once/several times daily	Once/several times weekly	Once/several times monthly
Deaf	54	23	11
Blind	24	31	21
Non – disabled	69	6	11

The school assignments that teens primarily used GenAI were for Language Arts/Writing (61%), Math (52%), and Science (39%).

We examined teens’ views on how GenAI impacted their creativity. Creativity was defined as “generating original ideas, using existing ideas in new ways, and having an active imagination”. Almost two-thirds (65%) of non-disabled teens indicated that their creativity had improved, compared to just under half (49%) of blind teens, and 38% of deaf teens. An interesting observation is that though blind teens use GenAI less frequently than the other groups, almost half still reported an increase in creativity.

Table 18: GenAI Usage Impact on Creativity by Groups

Groups	Increase	Decrease	Neither	Don’t know
Deaf	38	24	19	19
Blind	49	11	19	21
Non-disabled	65	17	15	3

The creativity gains reported by non-disabled and deaf teens likely reflect the ease of iterating on text prompts and drafts. Nearly half of blind teens also reported creative benefits, which suggests that when interfaces are accessible, AI can support ideation even with lower overall usage. Targeted improvements in audio output and structured formatting would further increase perceived value.

We examined teens’ views on how GenAI affected their critical thinking for school assignments. Critical thinking was defined as one’s ability to analyse, evaluate, synthesise, and expand information. Non-disabled and blind teens were less inclined to attribute AI’s usage to improved critical thinking than to improved creativity. For deaf teens it was the reverse; more thought that it increased critical thinking more than it did creativity. Note, however, that most deaf and non-disabled teens reported that GenAI increased critical thinking.

Table 19: GenAI Impact on Critical Thinking by Groups

Groups	Increase	Decrease	Neither	Don’t know
Deaf	57	24	15	4
Blind	38	27	34	1
Non-disabled	58	27	15	0

Teens distinguish between creativity and critical thinking gains. Non-disabled and deaf teens report clearer benefits to analysis and synthesis, while blind teens are more divided, likely owing to friction in navigating and verifying longer AI outputs. Embedding explicit “check and explain your sources” steps can help translate AI assistance into stronger critical-thinking habits for all groups.

In August 2025, the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) officially announced that, starting in 2026, artificial intelligence (AI) will be permitted in school-based assessments for the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE), Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC), and Caribbean Certificate of Secondary Level Competence (CCSLC). We therefore wanted to know whether schools had banned AI tools for assignments prior to the CXC announcement. Very few teens reported that there was an outright ban at their school. Most teens either did not know if there was a ban, or reported that there was no ban of GenAI at their school.

Table 20: Use of GenAI Banned in School by Groups

Groups	Yes	No	Don’t know
Deaf	6	35	59
Blind	7	55	38
Non-disabled	22	41	37

Before the CXC policy, most schools had not formalised an AI position, or teens were unaware of the school’s position. Clear communication of acceptable use, citation expectations, and examples will reduce uncertainty and unintentional misuse.

Within the same context, we asked teens how many of their teachers allowed Gen AI tools for school assignments. The results indicate that there is no system-wide approach to teachers’ allowing the use of GenAI. Some teachers allow its use, especially among blind teens. A large percentage of (especially deaf and blind) teens didn’t know, while only a few teens reported that their schools explicitly disallowed its use. With the CXC announcing that it will allow the use of GenAI in 2026, a uniform policy should be developed.

Table 21: Do Teachers Allow use of GenAI for School Assignments

Groups	Most/All	Some	Few	Not allowed	Don’t know
Deaf	9	20	17	23	31
Blind	28	41	0	3	28
Non-disabled	25	22	22	13	18

The wide “don’t know” responses, especially among deaf and blind teens, indicate inconsistent classroom guidance. Teacher-training under the CXC 2026 AI policy should include accessibility standards and model lesson plans. A common rubric for transparent AI use would help align expectations across subjects.

General Views on Social Issues

We wanted to understand teens’ views on general social issues, and their outlook on their own future. Despite greater exposure to modern technology, traditional Jamaican values remain strong, with some noticeable changes. Similar questions were asked of non-disabled teens in the 2018 study and Table 23 indicates the comparison between the two studies. The desire to get married has fallen sharply by 10 percentage points (76% to 66%). This decline in the desire to get married reflects trends in the Western world where the average age of marriage is increasing, and marriage rates are declining. Living a very religious life has declined moderately from 78% to 75% of teens describing it as desirable. Teens are also seeking to have more free time than before, up from 66% to 73%. Free time is primarily used to manage stress and enhance overall development.

Table 22: Social Issues Comparison 2018 and 2025

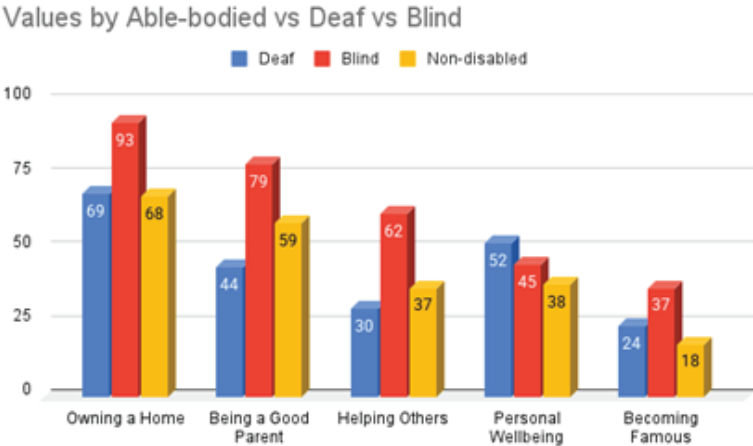
Social Issues: Non-disabled Teens	2018 Study: Most/Very Important	2025 Study: Most/Very Important
Career	95	95
Marriage	76	66
Religious life	78	75
Being a good parent	91	90
Free time to relax and do things	66	73
Becoming famous	37	38
Helping other people in need	85	80
Owning your own home	95	93

Looking across groups, the shared pattern is clear: “Home,” “Parent,” and “Career” anchor teens’ aspirations, while “Fame” is consistently among the least valued priorities. The most noticeable thing about non-disabled teens is their main concern with careers, which correlates with their exploration of more digital platforms and increased search for career opportunities. Blind teens, particularly, rate highly connectedness to parents and helping people, which is consistent with their strong community involvement. Deaf teens also consider family and health as most important, which in turn, emphasises their emphasis on endurance as opposed to well-being. Helping others in need is the fourth most desirable value, with 90% of blind teens and 80% of non-disabled teens rating it highly. In the current study, less than 50% of deaf teens have the desire to get married.

Table 23: Importance of Social Values by Groups

Groups	Career	Marriage	Religious	Parent	Free	Famous	Help	Home
Deaf	91	48	69	85	73	36	69	88
Blind	90	66	55	100	66	52	90	97
Non – disabled	95	66	75	90	73	38	80	93
Average	92	60	66	92	71	42	80	93
Pre-Avg.	95	76	78	91	66	37	85	95

Figure 13: Importance of Social Values by Groups



Detailed analysis by groups can be viewed online at: https://lookerstudio.google.com/reporting/8981c99d-f79a-4372-bde4-327c00b5cf5d/page/p_su57ouhavd



Policy Discussion

Commercial Media

The research focused, inter alia, on deaf and blind teens in the disabled community, however the panellists in discussion forum suggested that the discussion should be broadened to include other groups like autistic children when considering digital inclusion and the media landscape.

It was explained that the media landscape has evolved, and media organisations have had to adopt: “the transition from black and white newspapers to colour, then to tabloids, and eventually to websites and social media platforms, was driven by the market's demands for access”. One example of this adaptation was 1spotmedia, an internet media service operated by the RJRGLEANER Communications Group – a leading traditional Jamaican media company. It was admitted that while efforts have been made towards inclusivity, especially for the disabled community, they haven't been as impactful or significant as they ought to be. The limiting factor in providing content to the disabled community was cost. It was elaborated that, for example, with sign language interpretation, people may volunteer to provide services initially but at a later stage their serviced become "strongly commercial," making it more difficult to access these services. To overcome commercial barriers and ensure access, the importance of finding partnerships and sponsorships from those who provide relevant products was emphasised, suggesting that technology and willingness are present, but partnerships are required.

In distinguishing the difference in news content for traditional media versus social media, it was explained that traditional media stress the importance of identifying sources so the audience can determine the information's weight. Traditional news media need to verify and authenticate content before publishing to ensure accuracy, reliability and accountability to build trust and credibility. It was emphasised that the work to build trust and

credibility was ongoing and that while mistakes do occur, the traditional media invariably own the mistake, apologise, and provide the corrected accurate information. Social media on the other hand, emphasize speed over accuracy. Consequently, it was recommended that the skill of content authentication should be integrated into education systems and curricula for teens.

Banning Social Media

There has been widespread international discussion on banning social media for children, and several countries have set the wheels in motion to follow Australia which was the first country to introduce a ban on social media for under-16s in December 2025. In the panel discussion it was posited that these platforms are intentionally designed to be addictive, suggesting that the problem lies with "big tech" companies, not solely with the children. It was argued that there is a big tech double standard as it was highlighted that executives of big tech companies often impose bans or severe restrictions on their own children's use of these devices at home, while their companies promote widespread access. Despite the double standard it was argued that banning technology was responding to a symptom, not the cause, and could inadvertently drive activity underground or create new "enterprises" for older teens to sell accounts to younger ones. Concerns were raised that bans might make children feel blamed and punished instead of holding big tech accountable. It was suggested that the focus instead should be on restrictions rather than outright bans, emphasising that restrictions must be justified, proportionate, and evidence based.

It was cautioned that the Australian context may not be applicable to Jamaica or small island developing countries. Australia has a 1:1 technology ratio in schools which means that every student is provided with a dedicated device for personalised learning. While Jamaican teens have ubiquitous access, school usage is restricted and there is a dearth of school-provided devices. The Australian justification

for the ban was to protect mental health and safety with aims to reduce anxiety, depression and risks from online predators.

The Teens and Technology 2025 findings are not necessarily consistent with the Australian experience. However, in contexts like Jamaica, where students might rely on their personal devices for schoolwork owing to lack of school-provided devices, a ban could significantly hinder their learning and access. An alternative solution suggested was that instead of bans it was advocated that digital media and information literacy be embedded into the curriculum from as early as kindergarten. "Safety by design" should also be mandated in device creation, and civil and criminal sanctions considered for companies that create harmful or negligently managed devices. The panel emphasised that digital media and information

literacy is the best defence against the challenges posed by new technologies like AI, rather than a reactive response to each new technological product.

One panellist representing the deaf/blind community aptly summarised the challenge they face with banning devices/social media in schools: "For persons without disabilities, technology makes things easy. But for persons with disabilities, technology makes things possible".

Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) Generative Artificial Intelligence (Gen AI)

The Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC), the regional examining body that provides examinations for secondary and post-secondary candidates in Caribbean countries, had announced that it would be integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) into its schools-based assessment starting in 2026. The CXC explained that they were more than just an examination body but were actively involved in ensuring accessibility in education across CARICOM member states. In addition, CXC ensures that standards are established for various levels of education, including literacy, numeracy, and now AI, which are benchmarked globally. They work with expert groups, UNESCO, and ILO to ensure students acquire portable and employability skills through the education and training system. This includes both technical and non-technical skills like critical thinking, evaluative, analytical, communication, and problem-solving skills. CXC's council has approved a responsible generative AI policy framework for

secondary education in the Caribbean. This framework aims to provide guidance for the integration of AI into teaching, learning, and assessment, addressing concerns such as academic integrity and ensuring quality of instruction. It's intended to be a flexible framework that allows member states to develop their own national policies. Within this framework the CXC recognises that teachers, guidance counsellors, principals, and other education professionals need training and knowledge to effectively transmit digital skills and integrate AI into the classroom and assessment space. The CXC also clarified that they are not looking at AI as compulsory in the education system; the expectations were that national education ministries would conduct research on access and use, and prepare stakeholders.

The CXC didn't speak specifically about a regional framework which incorporated deaf/blind teens or persons with disability. However, they welcomed collaborations and were already in ongoing conversations about AI with the University of the West Indies (UWI), the Caribbean Telecommunications Union (CTU), and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). There was also the view already stated that national education ministries would conduct research on access and use, and prepare stakeholders.

Ministry of Education, Skills, Youth, and Information
The Ministry of Education, Skills, Youth, and Information (MOESYI) highlighted both school-based and ministry-based initiatives geared specifically to teens with disabilities. At the school level special education institutions have taken the initiative to incorporate assistive technology (AT: hardware and/or software that maintains or improves the functional capabilities of persons with disability) as a timetabled subject. At the ministry level there are several initiatives which are either proposed or in operation. The Ministry is moving to incorporate more character education and social and emotional learning into the curriculum, which includes digital literacy skills, online etiquette, and addressing issues like privacy and safety for students, particularly those with disabilities. In addition, the Ministry in collaboration with UNICEF have embarked on an "Accessible Digital Textbook Project". This project aims to create learning resources that are inclusive, featuring text-to-speech, audio narration, sign language interpretation, and different interactive activities.

Policy Takeaways

Within the policy and inclusivity discussion there were three takeaways.

Consideration for Diverse Needs in Policy: There is a general view that any policy regarding the restriction of technology use in schools must take into consideration the nuances among different groups, especially between the disabled and non-disabled communities. There's also an acknowledgment that the industry needs to learn from communities like the deaf community to better serve them and understand specific nuances and challenges in providing inclusive access.

Necessity of Digital Literacy versus Banning: There was a consensus that the digital age necessitates that digital literacy skills be instilled in young people. This includes teaching teens how to authenticate content and distinguish between viewpoints and verified information. This should be done instead of imposing bans.

Broader Foundational Skills: Beyond just digital skills, the discussion highlighted the importance of foundational "soft skills" which are critical in the digital age, such as: critical thinking, evaluative skills, analytical skills, communication skills and problem-solving skills. These are considered fundamental to every discipline and are crucial for employability standards and benchmarking.

Methodology

Research Design

The purpose of this study was to investigate the benefits and challenges experienced among Jamaican teenagers since COVID-19, and the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on their lives. This report is based on the findings of an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design with three groups of Jamaican high school teens administered in 2025. The explanatory sequential mixed method design has two phases. Phase one, the quantitative phase, involves sampling, data collection and analysis of all three groups' responses. Phase two, the qualitative phase, builds on the results of phase one to dig deeper into the quantitative insights.

Quantitative Phase

Participants and Sampling

The participants were three groups of teens: Deaf teens, blind teens and teens without known disabilities (non-disabled) in the 13 to 19 age group. The sample frame for the survey is a list of secondary and technical high schools operated by the Ministry of Education, Skills, Youth, and Information (MOESYI) in Jamaica. Excluded from the sample are teens who are enrolled in privately owned and operated schools that are not on the list of schools operated by the MOESYI.

The sampling strategy differed based on student group. The population size of deaf and blind teens was under 50, so we sampled the entire population. We did not, for example, sample every deaf student as there were some teens with multiple disabilities who were unable to respond to the survey, so these were excluded.

A probability sample was used for the non-disabled teens. In the first stage of sampling, the schools were stratified by parish, then a sample proportional to the



Because of the risk associated with surveying minors, ethical approval was received from Utech's Research Ethics Committee, and informed consent was received from the parents of participating teens through each of the participating schools prior to conducting the survey.

The survey was conducted between January 2025 and June 2025. The administration of the survey differed based on student group. Deaf teens received a hardcopy which was translated into Jamaican Sign Language, which the teens completed. Blind teens did the survey online, however, the questions were read to them in small groups, which they answered. Non-disabled teens completed the survey online and received no assistance. Each student, regardless of group, was given an incentive of a \$200 phone credit after survey completion. On survey completion, participants received an electronic confirmation which was presented to the school coordinator to receive the phone credit.

After collection, the data was cleaned to account for missing values, errors and duplicates. The responses were then grouped to compare deaf, blind and non-disabled teens. The data was analysed using Microsoft Excel, in the main, Excel's pivot tables, and formulas and charts to calculate percentages, show frequency patterns, and visualise comparisons among groups.

Qualitative Phase

Focus Group

The quantitative data was analysed, ten themes associated, and questions were developed to elicit further clarification and insight. Three focus groups with 8 – 10 teens were convened, one for each category/group of teens. The participants selected had previously completed the survey. The focus group for deaf teens was done in-person, while the focus groups for blind and non-disabled teens were done online, each separately. Blind and non-disabled teens' focus groups were conducted on October 14, while the deaf teens' group was conducted on October 28. Teachers were generally not involved in the focus groups except for the deaf group where teachers were needed to translate to Jamaican Sign Language. Zoom was used for transcription for all three groups. The average duration of each focus group was 70 minutes. The responses were incorporated with, and further explained, the quantitative findings.

Panel Discussion

On January 22, 2026, the findings of this research were presented at a public forum. At this forum a panel discussion was conducted with experts including the Gleaner (Jamaica's leading newspaper); Caribbean Examination Council (Examination Board of the Caribbean); Ministry of Education, Skills, Youth & Information (Government entity responsible for the management and administration of public education in Jamaica); and the Broadcasting Commission (responsible for monitoring and regulating electronic media, broadcast radio and television and subscriber television). The panellists were provided with a non-exclusive area of concentration, a copy of the research findings a week before the launch, and a preliminary discussion was had with all the panellists together to clarify procedure.

Demographics

There were 26 deaf and 29 blind participants. Deaf students were mostly in the older age group (69% aged 16–19), while blind students were younger

overall (62% aged 13–15). Gender distribution was balanced among deaf teens (51% boys, 49% girls), but boys made up a larger share among blind teens (59%). In terms of family wealth, deaf respondents included a sizeable "very wealthy" group (29%), while blind students were more concentrated in average-income households (52%), with a higher share describing themselves as not at all wealthy (28%).

There was balanced mix of participants among the 1,056 non-disabled teens. A majority were 13–15 years old (60%), with 40% aged 16–19. Gender distribution showed more girls (57%) than boys (43%). Regarding family wealth, most respondents reported being from average-income households (55%), while others identified as not very wealthy (16%), not at all wealthy (11%), quite wealthy (9%), or very wealthy (9%).

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- School of Graduate Studies Research and Entrepreneurship - University of Technology, Jamaica
- Broadcasting Corporation of Jamaica (BCJ).

Expert Panel:

- Cordel Green - Executive Director, Broadcasting Commission – Jamaica
- Dr Eduardo Ali, Pro-Registrar and Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Caribbean Examination Council
- Gary Allen CD, JP – Chairman, RG CARES Foundation, Group Senior Executive, Corporate and External Affairs, RJRGLEANER Communications Group
- Vivian Blake: Education Officer, Braille Operations, Special Education Unit, Ministry of Education, Skills, Youth and Information (MOESYI).

Participating Schools: Our gratitude to all twenty-eight (28) schools, principals, teachers, coordinators and students that participated in the data collection.

List of Participating Schools

#	Schools	Address
1	Tarrant High	31 Molyne Road, Kingston 10
2	Covenant of Mercy	26 South Camp Road, P.O. Box 9057, Kingston CSO
3	Excelsior High	137 Mountain View Avenue, Kingston 3
4	Jamaica College	189 Old Hope Road, Kingston 6
5	The Queens School	4-10 Central Avenue, Kingston 8
6	Norman Manley High	8 Norman Manley Drive, Kingston 13
7	Yallahs High	Lloyds Avenue, PO Box 31, Yallahs
8	Happy Grove High	Happy Grove, Hector's River P.O.
9	St. Mary Technical High	Richmond District, Richmond PO
10	York Castle High	PO Box 77, Browns Town
11	Marcus Garvey Tech	Seville Road, P.O. Box 159 St. Ann's Bay
12	Muschett High School	Wakefield District, Wakefield PO
13	Mount Alvernia High	P.O. Box 124, Montego Bay
14	Maldon High	Summer Hill, Point P.O.
15	Green Island High	P.O. Box 24 , Green Island
16	Godfrey Stewart High	P.O. Box 131, Savanna-La-Mar
17	Black River High	Black River, Black River P.O.
18	Lewisville High	P.O. Box 56, Newmarket
19	Holmwood Technical High	Christiana P.O., Manchester
20	Belair High	43 Decarteret Road P.O. Box 156, Mandeville
21	Clarendon College	Chapleton District, Chapleton, P.O.
22	Lennon High	Mocho District,, Mocho P.O.
23	St. Catherine High	35 St. John's Road, Spanish Town P.O.
24	Spanish Town High	Young & Ellis Street, Spanish Town
25	Jose Marti Technical High	Twickenham Park, Spanish Town P.O.
26	Lister Mair Gilby School for the Deaf	Gordon Town Road, Kingston
27	Salvation Army. School of the Blind	57 Mannings Hill Road, Kingston 8
28	Caribbean Christian School for the Deaf	4 Cassia Park Road, Kingston 10