

Assessing Public Perception of the Metaverse and Exploring Social Risks for Marginalised Groups

AUTHORS

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AFFILIATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

The metaverse is a new method of social communication using 3D virtual reality where users interact with each other within a perpetual and persistent computer-generated environment. This new technology gives users previously unseen liberty on shared networks but also risks reinforcing existing concerns for minority communities online. I posit that further research - particularly on disabled communities - is necessary to capture the whole public perception of the metaverse.

OBJECTIVE

To assess how the adoption of the metaverse will affect different marginalised groups - notably disabled people. I will analyse physical and socioeconomic barriers to participation through a literature review of secondary sources.

METHODOLOGY

A synthesis of existing peer-reviewed articles, with additional evaluation from the researcher.

Separated into three sections:

- The History of the Metaverse
- Business in the Metaverse
- Wellbeing in the Metaverse

RESULTS

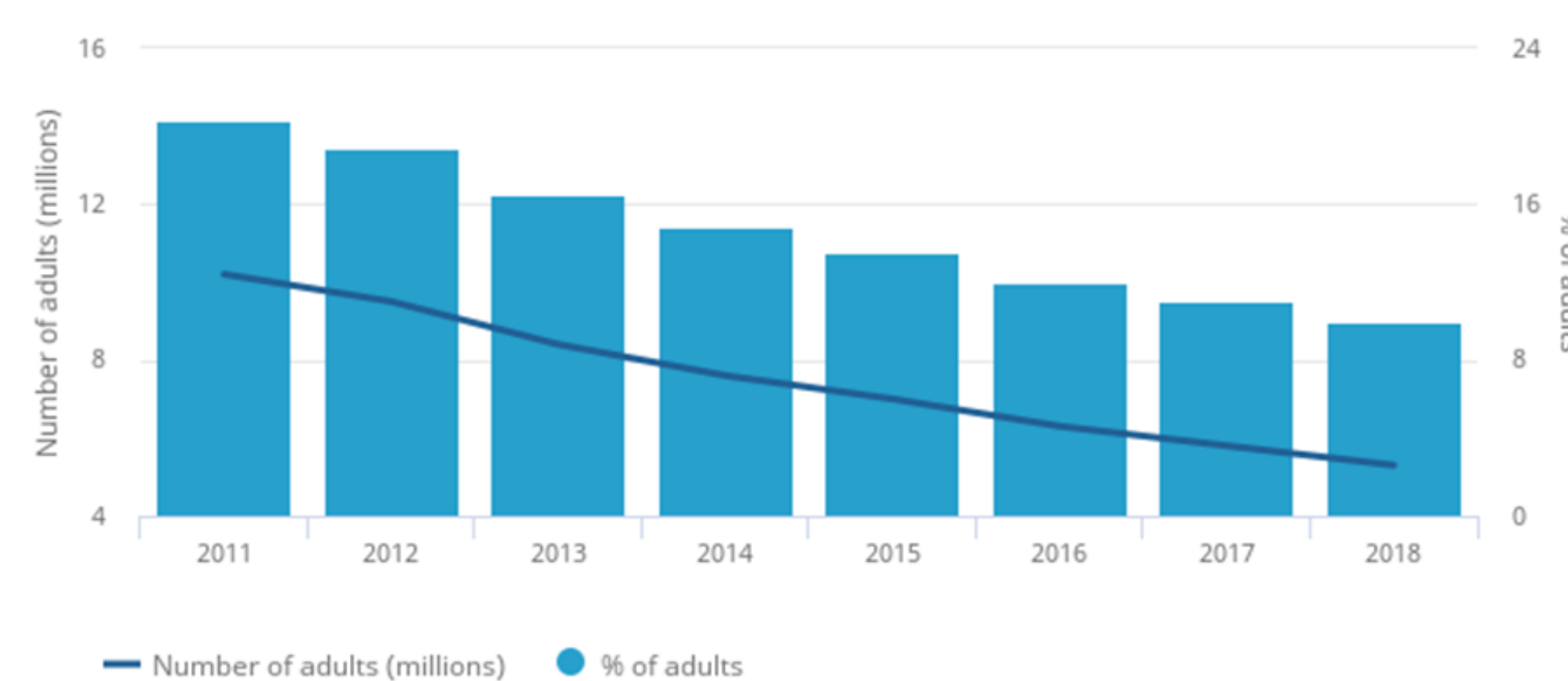
Marginalised communities' experiences of the metaverse will likely vary from that of the general public due to status-specific risks. For example, the need for access requirements and the risk of cyberbullying.

ANALYSIS

- Groups from poor socio-economic backgrounds usually lack the initial capital to invest in metaverse resources, preventing economic mobility.
- Metaverse opportunity exclusion is an extension of the digital divide.
- Even if people can afford the technology required, they may not have the experience to effectively and safely navigate the Metaverse.

Figure 1: The number of internet non-users has declined over time

Number (millions) and percentage of adult internet non-users, UK, 2011 to 2018



Source: Office for National Statistics - Internet Users, Labour Force Survey (LFS)

Number (millions) and percentage of adult internet non-users, UK, 2011 to 2018

"Internet non-users" refers to those who have never used the internet or last used it more than three months ago.

- Metaverse technology could further blur the boundary between work and home.
- Disabled people are more likely to overwork themselves, which has negative impacts on health.
- Minority communities are more likely to be cyberbullied than their peers, which is linked to suicidal ideation.
- Avatar choices could reinforce internalised prejudices.

CONCLUSION

My recommendation is to facilitate an ongoing dialogue with minority groups through interviews. Primary data can be collected and synthesised. Responses can be subjected to trend analysis to uncover the most common concerns.

RELATED LITERATURE

Chatzitheochari, S., Parsons, S. and Platt, L. (2016) 'Doubly Disadvantaged? Bullying Experiences among Disabled Children and Young People in England'

Douglas, I., 2020. Is technology making us sick?

Mystakidis, S., 2022. Metaverse

Stephenson, N. (1992). Snow Crash