

Ofcom Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes Focus on Take Up and Use

Aims

Ofcom's media literacy research explores the extent to which people are able to use, understand and create media and communications. The children's strand of this research, published in November 2016, includes:

- *Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes*, an annual quantitative report providing evidence on media use, attitudes and understanding among children and young people aged 3-15, and parental approaches to mediating children's media use.
- *Children's Digital Day*, a diary study charting children's media use across the day.
- *Children's Media Lives 2016*, the third year of a qualitative study following the same 18 children to provide in-depth insight into the role of media in their day-to-day lives.

Key Findings

Changing TV consumption

- Content remains central to children's lives, and much of this is consumed via the TV set. Watching activities made up the largest proportion of children's media and communications time (42% of total time spent) and the TV set was the only device that a majority of children in all age groups use almost every day. Our qualitative research found that watching live or on-demand content on TV is a valued family activity.
- However, the amount of time children spend watching the TV set is decreasing. The number of 5-15s who use a TV set almost every day has decreased since 2015 (80% vs. 87%), along with the amount of time they spend watching TV on a TV set, which has fallen from 14 hours 48 minutes in 2015 to 13 hours 36 minutes.
- As TV viewing time falls, children are spending more time online: for the first time 5-15s spent more time online than watching television on a TV set (15 hours vs. 13 hours 36 minutes). But these changes do not mean that children are consuming less content: the numbers of 6-15s who said they consume paid video on demand and watch online video clips has increased since 2014.
- YouTube is an increasingly important content destination: 37% of 3-4s, 54% of 5-7s, 73% of 8-11s and 87% of 12-15s said they use the YouTube website or app. The content children like to watch on YouTube differed by age: younger children (3-7) were most likely to watch TV programmes, films, cartoons, mini-movies, animations or songs, and older children were more likely to watch music videos, funny videos/pranks and content posted by vloggers.

The rise of portable devices

- Tablets were the only device, other than TV sets, that were used by a majority of each age group (55% of 3-4s, 67% of 5-7s, 80% of 8-11s and 74% of 12-15s), and 44% of 5-15s and 16% of 3-4s had their own tablet.
- Tablets and mobile phones were the most popular device for going online. The numbers of 5-15s who said that a tablet or mobile phone is the device they use most often to go online has increased since 2015 (39% vs. 33% for tablets and 28% vs. 19% for mobile phones). Tablets and mobile phones have therefore overtaken laptops, which were the second most popular device in 2015. And one in five of all 5-15s said they only go online using a device other than a desktop or laptop (21% of 3-4s and 18% of 5-15s).
- 5-15s were more likely to both use and own a mobile phone than in 2015, and 41% had their own smartphone. The increases in smartphone ownership were particularly evident for 8-11s (32% vs. 24%) and for 12-15s (79% vs. 69%). As a result, although tablet ownership is higher than smartphone ownership up to

the age of 10, the two are then fairly even until age 12, when smartphone ownership begins to outstrip tablet ownership.

- This is reflected in device preference. When asked which device they would miss the most if it was taken away, 12-15s were most likely to say their phone while 8-11s were most likely to say the TV set (30%), although the number of 8-11s who cited their mobile nearly doubled between 2015 and 2016 (16% vs. 9%).

Social media and gaming

- The likelihood of having a social media profile increases with age: 0% of 3-4s, 3% of 5-7s, 23% of 8-11s and 72% of 12-15s had a profile. The number of profiles doubled between the age of 10 and 11 (21% to 43%) and increased sharply again between 12 and 13 (50% to 74%).
- Both 8-11s (43%) and 12-15s (52%) were most likely to consider Facebook their main social media profile. This was unchanged since 2015 but has fallen considerably since 2013, when 87% of 12-15s considered Facebook their main site. The number of 12-15s using SnapChat continued to grow (51%, up from 43% in 2015), while fewer said they use Twitter (20%, down from 27%).
- While children were most likely to play games by themselves or with people they already know, 10% of 8-11s and 21% of 12-15s said they play games online with people they have never met, and 5% of 8-11s and 14% of 12-15s said they use the games' chat features to chat to people they only know through the game.

Creative activities and civic participation

- 37% of online 3-4s and 67% of online 5-15s said they use their digital devices for creative activities, with making pictures, editing photos, making videos and creating avatars the most popular. One in five 12-15s made their own digital music, while one in six made their own animation.
- In addition to regularly using media devices, a sizeable proportion of children in each group said they regularly use books, magazines or comics (37% aged 5-7, 34% for 8-11s and 26% for 12-15s).
- Six percent of 8-11s and 30% of 12-15s who go online said they have signed petitions, shared news stories on social media, written comments or talked online about the news.

Policy Context

This research helps policy stakeholders understand how children's media use is changing. An accompanying Research Highlight provides insight into children's critical understanding, risky behaviour and parental mediation.

Methodology

The report draws primarily on the Ofcom Children's Media Literacy Tracker, a large-scale quantitative survey based on in-home interviews with children aged 5-15 and their parents/carers, and with parents/carers of children aged 3-4. We interviewed a total of 2,059 parents and children, from April to June 2016. Questions are tailored to the age of the child, so not all questions are asked of each age-group.

Source www.ofcom.org.uk/medialiteracyresearch (published November 2016)

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