

## Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes - Take Up and Use

### Aims

The Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report provides a one-stop resource on Ofcom's research on children's and parents' media use and attitudes.

### Key Findings

#### New ways of consuming content

- **Older children are spending more time online, and are more likely to go online alone**  
While children aged 5-15 continue to spend most time watching TV, children aged 12-15 are spending more time online (rising from 14.9 hours a week in 2011 to 17.1 in 2012) and now spend as much time in a week using the internet as they do watching television. They are also more likely than they were in 2011 to mostly use the internet in their bedrooms (43% in 2012 vs. 34% in 2011). Children who use the internet mostly alone comprise 14% of internet users aged 5-7, 24% aged 8-11, and 55% aged 12-15.
- **Children are going online via a wider range of devices**  
Internet access via a PC, laptop or netbook is increasingly being supplemented by access via other devices. All age groups are more likely in 2012 to go online using a tablet computer, and children aged 5-7 and 12-15 are more likely to go online using a mobile phone. Children aged 5-7 are less likely than in 2011 to go online using a PC, laptop or netbook (58% vs. 65% in 2011).
- **Media multi-tasking is popular, particularly among 12-15s**  
One in three 8-15s (34%) with a mobile phone, who watch television and who go online at home, say they undertake some form of cross-media multi-tasking "most times" when using these media; for example, texting or browsing the internet while watching TV. This is more likely for 12-15s than 8-11s (44% vs. 14%).
- **Smartphones are becoming more widespread...**  
Since 2011 smartphone ownership has increased among all children aged 5-15 (28% vs. 20% in 2011), primarily driven by a 21% increase among children aged 12-15 (62% in 2012 vs. 41% in 2011). From age 12 onwards smartphone ownership outstrips that of other mobile phones.
- **... and more important to children**  
Half of all 12-15s with a smartphone (52%) say that of all regularly-used media, they would miss using their mobile phone the most, with the next most-missed medium being using the internet (18%). Children are using their smartphones more than they did last year, and 15% of girls aged 12-15 say their phone is the device they most often use to go online at home.
- **There has also been growth in the use of tablets**  
The growth in tablets is less marked but still significant. Around one in seven (14%) of all children aged 5-15 use a tablet computer (such as an iPad) at home, a threefold increase since 2011 (5%). Use of a tablet computer has increased for 5-7s (11% vs. 2%), 8-11s (13% vs. 6%) and 12-15s (17% vs. 6%). For a small number of internet users this has become their main means of accessing the

internet, with children in each age group more likely than in 2011 to mostly use a tablet computer to go online at home (4% for 5-7s, 3% for 8-11s and for 12-15s).

### **Social networking**

- **Older children are prolific social networkers**
  - 22% of 8-11s say they have a social networking profile, as do 80% of 12-15s. 26% of 12-15s say they have set up a Twitter profile. Data from Nielsen show that Facebook is among the top ten most-visited websites for 5-7s, 8-11s and 12-15s.
  - In 2012 we asked children for the first time how many friends they had on their social networking profile. Children aged 8-11 have an average of 92 friends, and those aged 12-15 have 286. Children aged 8-11 estimate that they have not met around one in eight (12%) of these friends in person (an average of 11 people per child), while 12-15s say they have not met around one in four (25%) - an average of 72 people per child.

### **Media use among 3-4 year-olds**

- **Over one in three 3-4 year-olds use the internet**

This year, for the first time, the survey included questions on media use among 3 and 4 year-olds. The findings indicate that 37% use the internet via a PC, laptop or netbook, 6% via a tablet computer, and 3% via a mobile phone. 2% use a games console or games player to go online and 2% use a portable media player.

### **Policy Context**

The Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report provides information on trends in the media usage patterns of children and young people, including their potentially risk-taking behaviour. It aims to help policy stakeholders identify which elements of media literacy to develop and promote, with a specific focus on internet use and attitudes.

### **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 (N = 1717 conducted from March to April 2011). Questions are tailored to the age of the child, so not all are asked of each age-group. In 2012 the *Media Literacy Tracker* was also conducted with parents of children aged 3-4 (N= 190 interviews conducted in-home in March 2012). As the overall base of interviews is relatively low, these data have not been weighted and should be treated as indicative only. The report was published in October 2012. The report also includes new qualitative research on parents' use of, and attitudes to, parental controls on internet-enabled devices, and analysis of children's television viewing habits sourced from BARB, the UK's television measurement panel. Data is also included from UKOM/Nielsen on most-accessed websites by children aged 5-15 and relevant findings on the views of parents from Ofcom's *Media Tracker*, a *face-to-face* survey with a UK-representative quota sample of approximately 1,750 adults (aged 16+), 34% of whom are parents.

Source [www.ofcom.org.uk/medialiteracyresearch](http://www.ofcom.org.uk/medialiteracyresearch) (published October 2012)

Research Team Saville Rossiter-Base/Ofcom

Contact information [emily.keaney@ofcom.org.uk](mailto:emily.keaney@ofcom.org.uk), [Alison.preston@ofcom.org.uk](mailto:Alison.preston@ofcom.org.uk)

RH#40 has been produced by Ofcom for the UKCCIS Evidence Group

[www.education.gov.uk/ukccis/](http://www.education.gov.uk/ukccis/)