

Children and parents: media use and attitudes Ofcom's Children's Media Literacy Tracker 2011

Key findings related to children's internet safety

Aims

Ofcom's Media Literacy Tracker maps trends in the media use and attitudes of children aged 5 – 15. It also monitors parents' views about their child's media use including any rules, concerns, interventions etc.

Selected Key Findings

Internet take-up and use

- Nine in ten (91%) children aged 5-15 live in a household with internet access via a PC/laptop, up from 87% in 2010. This increase is driven by a rise in home internet access among 12-15s (95% vs. 89% in 2010) and among 8-11s (90% vs. 86% in 2010).
- Use of a mobile phone to go online at home has increased since 2010 among children aged 12-15 (29% vs. 23%) and 8-11 (9% vs. 4%). This is driven by an increase in smartphone ownership since 2010 among 12-15s (41%¹ vs. 35%). Younger children are less likely to own a smartphone, accounting for 12% of 8-11s and 2% of 5-7s.
- While there has been an increase in the take up and use of the internet and of smartphones (among 12-15s), television remains the most consumed medium across each age group. Children in each age group spend most time watching TV. For 12-15s the next most-used medium is the internet, while for 5-7s and 8-11s it is gaming.

Social networking

- Social networking activity has not increased since 2010 - 3% of 5-7s, 28% of 8-11s and 75% of 12-15s have an active profile. One third (34%) of 8-12s have a profile on sites that require users to register as being aged 13 or over, unchanged versus 2010. While most 8-15s with a social networking site profile say their profile can only be seen by their friends and no-one else, a substantial minority of both 8-11s (17%) and 12-15s (28%) have a profile which is either open to anyone, or open to friends of friends.

Children's dislikes

- Dislikes about inappropriate content (defined as that which makes them feel sad, frightened or embarrassed, or which they feel is too old for them) range widely between different media, but remain at relatively low levels. The vast majority of children say they feel they know how to stay safe online.
- When asked about their own particular experiences online, 13% of 12-15s said that they had seen something online in the past year that is worrying, nasty or offensive. This compares to 8% of 8-11s.

¹ Research published in Ofcom's 2011 Communications Market Report found that 47% of 12-15s have a smartphone. Please note that there is a difference in methodologies between the two surveys - online panel versus face-to-face - and the difference is not statistically significant.

Parents' rules and controls

- Four in ten (39%) households where a child aged 5-15 uses the internet at home have internet controls or filtering software in place – unchanged since 2010. However, since 2008 there has been a decline in the incidence of controls/filters.
 - In terms of other types of settings, fewer than half of those whose child uses each type of service have safe settings in place for search engine websites (47%), the YouTube website (28%) or UK TV broadcasters' websites (18%).
 - Across all these types of 'technical' parental controls, six in ten (59%) parents of 5-15s say they have at least one of these in place.
- Over half (54%) of parents of 5-15s say they have rules about the internet related to active supervision, with parents of 5-7s (63%) and 8-11s (61%) being more likely to do so than parents of 12-15s (42%). This has increased since 2010.
- Four in five parents of 5-15s say they have spoken with their child about staying safe online (83%) and a similar proportion say they feel they know enough about how to help their child stay safe online (82%). Nine in ten children aged 8-15 say they have been given information about staying safe online.

Policy Context

The Ofcom Children's Media Literacy Tracker provides information on trends in the media usage patterns of children and young people, including their potentially risk-taking behaviour, to help policy stakeholders identify which elements of media literacy to develop and promote. It focuses in particular on internet use and attitudes.

Methodology

The Ofcom Children's Media Literacy Tracker is a large-scale quantitative survey based on in-home interviews with children aged 5-15 and their parents/carers. 1717 interviews with parents and children aged 5-15 were conducted from March to April 2011. Questions are tailored to the age of the child and so not all questions are asked of each age-group. The report was published in October 2011.

Background

Since 2005, Ofcom has run the Media Literacy Tracker survey, publishing several Media Literacy Audits for both children/young people and adults. It is therefore possible to illustrate trends over time for with much of the data gathered in the survey.

This Media Literacy Audit gives an accessible overview of media literacy among UK children and young people aged 5-15 and their parents/carers. It covers a range of topics, including levels of access to particular media devices, the location in the home where children use the internet, and opinions and behaviours across various media. Several questions in the Media Literacy Tracker survey address aspects of online safety and parental attitudes to child internet use.

Source <http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/market-data-research/media-literacy-pubs/>

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