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Children's and Young People's Internet Use and Parental Attitudes: Ofcom's Children's Media Literacy Tracker – Wave 1 2010 – Key interim findings related to children's internet safety

Aims

Ofcom's Media Literacy Tracker aims to identify and map trends in children and young people's ability to use, understand and create media and communications.

Key Findings

- Children (aged 8 – 15) in the UK who use the internet at home have high levels of belief in their ability to keep themselves safe online – only 2% say that they are not confident. However:

    o 22% of 12 – 15s say that they'd be happy to give out their email address online. A further 30% would have some concerns, but would still give out their email address.
    o 8% of 12 – 15s say that they'd be happy to give out their mobile phone number online. A further 21% have some concerns but would still give out their phone number.
    o 14% of children aged 8-15 who use the internet at home say they forget about the safety rules when online. An additional 10% said they don't know whether they forget.
    o 4% of 12-15s who use the internet at home or elsewhere say they'd be happy to give out their home address online. A further 13% would have concerns, but would still give out their home address.

- 9% of children aged 8-15 who use the internet at home or elsewhere say that they wouldn't tell anyone or don't know who they would tell/if they would tell someone if they saw something worrying, nasty or offensive online.

- 9% of children aged 8-15 with a currently active social networking account say that their profile that can be seen by anyone.

- One third (33%) of 8-12 year old home internet users say they have a profile on Facebook, Bebo or MySpace – social networking sites intended for those aged 13+. Of these users, 7% say their profile is visible to anyone.

- 20% of parents of 8-12 year olds who have a profile on a social networking site say that either:

    o they are unaware that their child is on such a site
    o they don't check their child's activity on the site or
    o they don't know if they check

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Policy Context

The Media Literacy Tracker provides vital information on trends in the internet usage patterns of children and young people, including risk-taking behaviour of interest to policy makers.

Methodology

The Ofcom Media Literacy Tracker is a large scale, quantitative survey based on in-home interviews with children aged 5-15 and their parents/carers. Fieldwork for wave 1 of the 2010 Tracker was carried out in April-May 2010, and comprised 1046 interviews with children aged 5-15 and their parent/carer, broken down as follows: 5-7 years: 283; 8-11 years: 386; 12-15 years: 377.

Please note that *the results included in this Research Highlight are interim results only* and should not be compared with previous full year's results – findings from waves 1 and 2 will be combined and made available in Ofcom's Children's Media Literacy report in early 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 Wave 1 Ofcom's Children's Media Literacy Tracker; last accessed 9/11/10
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