

## Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes - Children's Media Access, Use and Critical Understanding

### Aims

*Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes* is an annual Ofcom report providing detailed evidence on media use, attitudes and understanding among children and young people aged 5-15. It also examines media access and use among children aged 3-4 and parental attitudes and approaches to mediating children's media use. Research was conducted in 2015 and where possible findings are compared with data from previous years. This Research Highlight presents the results relating to children's media use and critical understanding.

### Key Findings

#### Changes in children's media access and consumption

- **The amount of time children spend online increased from 2014 to 2015**  
5-15s now spend an average of 13.7 hours a week online, compared to 12.5 in 2014. 12-15s now spend 18.9 hours a week online, up from 17.2 in 2014. This is nearly three and a half hours more than they spend watching television on a TV set (15.5 hours).
- **Over half of 3-4s and three-quarters of 12-15s use a tablet**  
The number of children who use a tablet has risen to over half (53%) of 3-4s from 39% in 2014, and 75% of 5-15s, up from 64% in 2014. Children aged 5-15 are less likely than in 2014 to use a laptop or netbook (62% vs. 66%) or a desktop computer (28% vs. 32%) to go online. Watching TV on a tablet increased between 2014 and 2015 among all age groups.
- **12-15s are more likely than in 2014 to mostly use their mobile to go online**  
Unlike younger children, 12-15s are more likely to own a smartphone than a tablet. They are also most likely to use their phones to go online: 34% say they mostly use a mobile to go online, compared to 27% in 2014.
- **12-15s who watch TV and YouTube content are now more likely to say they prefer YouTube**  
Traditional TV is being challenged by other types of audio-visual content. 12- 15s who watch both TV and YouTube content say they prefer to watch YouTube videos (29% vs. 25% in 2014) than TV programmes (25% vs. 30% in 2014)
- **Fewer 12-15s name Facebook as their main social media profile, with more naming Snapchat**  
There has been no change in the likelihood of having a social media profile from 2014. Among all children, 1% of 3-4s, 2% of 5-7s, 21% of 8-11s and 74% of 12-15s have a profile. However, among those with a social media profile, 12-15s are less likely now than in 2014 to say Facebook is their main profile (58% vs. 75%) and are more likely to nominate Snapchat (11% vs. 3%).

#### Knowledge and understanding about online information

- **Children are now more likely to think that various kinds of online information are "always true"**  
Compared to 2014, there have been increases in the numbers of 8-11s and 12-15s who visit news websites or apps and feel that all the information on these sites is true (23% vs. 12% for 8-11s and

14% vs. 8% for 12-15s). There has also been an increase in the number of 8-11s who say this for sites used for school work or homework (28% vs. 20%), and among 12-15s who say this for social media sites or apps (9% vs. 4%).

- **There has also been an increase in the number of 12-15s who go online saying they would turn to YouTube for true and accurate information about serious things that are going on in the world**  
8% of 12-15s would do this, compared to 3% in 2014. The BBC is still the preferred online source for this kind of information, with 52% of 12-15s who go online saying they would turn to it first, while 17% say they would turn to Google first. YouTube (8%), social media (7%) and Wikipedia (2%, down from 6% in 2014) are all selected by less than one in ten.
- **One in five 12-15s who use search engines believe that the information they list must be true**  
50% of search engine users aged 12-15 make some type of critical judgement about search engine results, believing that some of the sites returned will be truthful while others may not be. However, one in five (19%) believe that if a search engine lists information then it must be true, and a similar proportion (22%) don't consider the veracity of results but just visit the sites they like the look of.
- **Less than one in six 8-11s and a third of 12-15s can identify advertising in online search results**  
Despite sponsored results at the top of a Google search being distinguished by an orange box with the word 'Ad' written in it, only a minority of 8-11s (16%) and 12-15s (31%) correctly identified these sponsored links as advertising. Furthermore, less than half of 12-15s who go online (47%) are aware of the potential for vloggers to be paid for endorsing products or brands.

### Policy Context

The Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report provides information on trends in the media and 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.

### 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 of children aged 3-4. From April to June 2015, 1,379 in-home interviews with parents and children aged 5-15 were conducted, along with 688 interviews with parents of children aged 3-4. Questions are tailored to the child's age, so not all questions are asked to each age-group. The report was published in November 2015.

The report also includes analysis of children's television viewing habits sourced from BARB, the UK's television measurement panel, and comScore data on the internet habits of children aged 6-14 (2014 and 2015). The slides, data tables, questionnaire and other resources are available on the Ofcom website.

**Source** [www.ofcom.org.uk/medialiteracyresearch](http://www.ofcom.org.uk/medialiteracyresearch) (published November 2015)

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