

Children's and Young People's Internet Use and Parental Attitudes: Ofcom's Children's Media Literacy Tracker 2010 – 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

- Half of parents (48%) with children aged 5-15 who use the internet at home think they know less about the internet than their children do. This rises to 70% of parents of 12-15 year olds.
- At the same time, there has been increased online activity among children in the past year, including higher usage of mobile and games consoles to go online. Around one fifth (18%) of 5-15 year olds own a smartphone, and 16% go online via a games console. However, among 12-15 year olds this rises to over one third (35%) owning a smartphone and nearly a quarter (23%) going online via a games console. 41% of 12-15s now access the internet in their bedroom, up from 31% in 2009.
- Parents of children who use the internet at home appear to be less concerned about how their children use the internet. They are less likely to say they have internet parental controls set – 37% in 2010 compared to 43% in 2009. Those that don't have parental controls mainly say it's either because they trust their child or because they are supervising them.
- 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:
 - 22% of 12 – 15s say that they'd be happy to give out their email address online. A further 29% would have some concerns, but would still give out their email address.
 - 8% of 12 – 15s say that they'd be happy to give out their mobile phone number online. A further 20% have some concerns but would still give out their phone number.
 - 12% of children aged 8-15 who use the internet at home say they forget about the safety rules when online. An additional 9% said they don't know whether they forget.
 - 6% 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.
- 10% 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.

- One third (34%) 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.
 - 7% of children aged 8-15 with a currently active social networking account say that their profile that can be seen by anyone.
 - 13% of parents of 10-12 year olds who have a profile on a social networking site that requires registration to be 13+ say that either they don't check their child's activity on the site or they don't know if they check.

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 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 quantitative survey based on in-home interviews with children aged 5-15 and their parents/carers. 2,071 interviews with parents and children aged 5-15 were conducted from April to May 2010 and from September to October 2010. Sample sizes for each age group were as follows: 5-7 years: 558; 8-11 years: 760; 12-15 years: 753. Questions are tailored to the age of the child and so not all questions are asked of each age-group.

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 www.ofcom.org.uk/medialiteracyresearch

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RH15 has been produced by Ofcom for the UKCCIS Evidence Group