

## Ofcom Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes – Highlights from Ofcom's 2018 Research 1

### Aims

Ofcom's media literacy research explores the extent to which people are able to use, understand and create media and communications. We began our children's research in 2005, and the latest reports were published in January 2019: *Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes*, an annual quantitative report providing evidence on media use, attitudes and understanding among children and young people aged 3-15; and *Children's Media Lives 2018*, the fifth year of a qualitative study following largely the same 18 children to provide in-depth insight into the role of media in their day-to-day lives. This year, the quantitative report also sets out findings from an additional online study looking at attitudes to, and consumption of, news among children aged 12-15.

### Key Findings

#### Device use and going online

- In 2018, two devices continue to be used by a majority of children in each age group: television sets (used by 94% of 3-4s and 97% of 5-15s) and tablets (used by 58% of 3-4s and 76% of 5-15s).
- Despite the continued ubiquity of TV sets, viewing content in this way appears to be of lessening importance: children aged 3-4, 8-11 and 12-15 spend less time per week watching TV on a TV set than in 2017; and, in each case the decrease is by around one hour per week.
- More than nine in ten (92%) children aged 5-15 go online using any type of device, and this increases with age, ranging from 52% of 3-4s to 99% of 12-15s. This is unchanged since 2017.
- The estimated time that 3-4s spend online has increased (by an hour) to nearly nine hours a week; while 12-15s spend an extra 1.5 hours gaming each week, compared to 2017. For the first time, 8-11s join 12-15s in spending more time on the internet than watching TV on a TV set.
- Around six in ten 5-15s use a tablet (64%) or a laptop (58%) to go online, while half use a mobile phone.
- Children aged 5-15 are more likely to *only* use devices other than a computer to go online (27% vs. 21% in 2017); this is in part due to an increase in the use of smart TVs for this purpose (13% vs. 9%).
- Following an increase between 2016 and 2017 (41% vs. 46%), smartphone ownership among 5-15s is unchanged in 2018 (44%).

#### A complex landscape of content and online activity

- For the first time we asked about children's viewing of 'over the top' (OTT) TV services<sup>1</sup> - services like Netflix, Amazon Prime Video and Now TV; a third of 3-4s (32%) and half of 5-15s (49%) use these services.
- The variety of content that children watch via these services is notable. Among children aged 5-15 no single programme or type of content was nominated as a favourite by more than one in ten respondents.
- Following a substantial increase in use between 2016 and 2017<sup>2</sup>, YouTube use is unchanged in 2018 with close to half of 3-4s (45%) and four in five (80%) 5-15s ever having used it.
- However, among those who watch both YouTube and TV on a TV set, there has been an increase in the proportion of 8-11s who say they prefer to watch YouTube content over TV programmes on a TV set (49% vs.

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<sup>1</sup>OTT refers to audio-visual content delivered on the 'open' internet rather than over a managed IPTV architecture.

<sup>2</sup> Between 2016 and 2017, the incidence of YouTube use increased by 11 percentage points for children aged 3-4 (48% vs. 37% in 2016), by 17 percentage points for children aged 5-7 (71% vs. 54% in 2016), and by eight percentage points for children aged 8-11 (81% vs. 73% in 2016).

40% in 2017). This increase means that there is now a clear preference for watching YouTube content over TV programmes on a TV set, both among 8-11s and 12-15s.

- Three-quarters of YouTube users aged 12-15 say they watch funny videos/ jokes/ pranks/ challenges (74%) or music videos (74%) with half watching vloggers (52%) or 'how-to' videos or tutorials (50%).
- Vloggers are increasingly popular; compared to 2017, children in each age group are more likely to watch vloggers on YouTube, with the most significant rise coming from the 12-15 age group (52% vs. 40%).
- As with using the internet, the estimated weekly hours spent gaming increases with age, ranging from 6 hours 12 minutes for 3-4s who play games to 13 hours 48 minutes for 12-15s. For most age groups this has remained relatively static since last year, but children aged 12-15 who play games say they spend an extra hour and a half gaming per week compared to 2017. Boys in each age group spend more hours than girls in a typical week playing games, with the difference by gender increasing with the age of the child
- The incidence of online gaming increases with age, ranging from 37% for 3-4s to 87% for 12-15s.

### **Social media and live-streaming**

- The likelihood of having a social media ("SM") profile increases with age: 1% of 3-4s, 4% of 5-7s, 18% of 8-11s and 69% of 12-15s have a profile on a SM or messaging site or app.
- Among those with an SM profile, 12-15s are more likely than in 2017 to use Instagram (65% vs. 47%) and WhatsApp (43% vs. 32%). Facebook remains the most-used SM/messaging site or app among this group (72%); however, a lower proportion nominate it as their main site or app (31% vs. 40% in 2017). An identical proportion name Snapchat as their main site or app, while nearly a quarter (23%) say this about Instagram.
- 78% of 12-15s who go online have heard of live streaming services such as Facebook Live or YouTube Live. Close to one in five (18%) have shared videos using a live streaming service, up from 10% in 2017.
- SM users aged 12-15s consider that using SM has both benefits and drawbacks: 78% feel there is pressure to look popular and 90% saying that people are mean to each other on SM at least 'sometimes'. However, this is balanced by the 91% of SM users of this age who say that SM has made them feel happy or helped them feel closer to their friends at least 'sometimes' and two thirds of 12-15s who use SM or messaging sites say they send support messages, comments or post to friends if they are having a hard time.

### **Policy Context**

This research helps policy stakeholders understand children's media environment and provides insight into the risks and rewards for children in going online.

### **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/carers of children aged 3-4. We interviewed a total of 2,060 parents and children, from April to June 2018. Questions are tailored to the age of the child, so not all questions are asked of each age-group. The report also draws on a complementary online news study with 1001 12-15 years olds conducted in two waves; November/December 2017 and March/April 2018.

**Source** [www.ofcom.org.uk/medialiteracyresearch](http://www.ofcom.org.uk/medialiteracyresearch) (published January 2019)

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