

Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes Take up and Use

Aims

The Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes report provides a one-stop resource on Ofcom's research on children's and parents' media use and attitudes.

Key Findings

Changes in children's media consumption

Children opt for tablets and smartphones

Around one quarter of children aged 12-15 (26%) and 18% aged 8-11 have their own tablet computer, while household ownership of a tablet has more than doubled since 2012 (51% vs. 20%). Use of a tablet computer at home has tripled among 5-15s since 2012 (42% vs. 14%).

Ownership of mobile phones among children aged 5-15 has decreased to 43%. This is a decline of 6 percentage points since 2012, driven by a 10 percentage point decline in ownership for 8-11s (33% vs. 43%) and a 5 percentage point decline for 12-15s (82% vs. 87%). However, smartphone ownership has remained stable for 8-11s (18%) and 12-15s (62%). Compared to 2012, 12-15s are sending more text messages in a typical week (255 vs. 193 texts) while smartphone users are sending an estimated 184 instant messages (IM) in a typical week.

Children are less likely to have other media devices in their bedrooms

Children aged 5-15 are less likely to have a television in their bedroom (52% vs 59% in 2012), and are also less likely to have a radio (15% vs. 19%) or a games console/ player in their bedroom (47% vs. 56%). This reflects a decline in the use of fixed and handheld games players (81% vs. 86%) compared to a threefold increase among 5-15s in using tablet computers to play games (23% vs. 7%). Around one in five 8-11s (17%) now say they use the internet mainly in their bedroom; this is up from 12% from 2012.

Children are more likely to go online using a range of devices

The incidence of children mostly accessing the internet via a laptop/netbook/PC has decreased to 68% - down from 85% in 2012. The number of children who are now mainly using an alternative device to go online has doubled to 32%, from 15% in 2012, with tablets (13%) and mobiles (11%) the most popular devices. Almost a quarter of children are using tablets to go online – nearly three times as many as last year (23% vs. 9%). Over half of 12-15s use a mobile phone to go online at home (52% vs. 44% in 2012).

Watching TV is still important

Overall, children aged 5-15 spend more time watching television than using other media. Over four in ten children aged 5-15 are using alternative devices to watch TV content (compared to 34% in 2012).

Television continues to be the medium that children aged 5-15 say they would miss the most. However, children aged 8-11 are more likely than in 2012 to say they would miss using the internet (15% vs. 10%). Children aged 12-15 are still twice as likely to say that, of all the media they use regularly, they would most miss their mobile phone (39%). This rises to half (51%) of 12-15s with a smartphone.

The majority of TV viewers and internet users aged 12-15 feel that these media help them understand what is going on in the world, make them aware of different types of people and opinions, and help them form their own opinions.

Social Networking

Compared to last year, 12-15s are now less likely to say they have set up a social networking site profile (68% vs. 81%). There has also been a decrease since 2012 in the proportion of children aged between 8-12 (under-age users) with an active profile on Facebook/Bebo or MySpace (22%; down from 30% in 2012).

Nearly all 12-15s with an active social networking profile continue to use Facebook (97%) Since 2012, they are more likely to have a profile on Twitter (37% vs 25%).

Four in ten (41%) 12-15s with an active profile say they mostly use a mobile phone to visit their main social networking site profile - which makes this the most popular device for accessing their profiles. The majority of 12-15s (85%) access their main social networking site profile every day and one in five (20%) do so more than ten times a day.

Media use among 3-4 year-olds

Half of 3-4s (51%) have access to a tablet computer at home and one-quarter (28%) use a tablet computer at home. One in eight 3-4s go online at home via a tablet computer (12%). One in five 3-4s (22%) have a TV in their bedroom while a quarter of 3-4s watch TV at home using an alternative device, and 20% use on-demand services. Games are the most commonly mentioned online activity carried out at least weekly by the majority of 3-4s (58%).

Policy Context

The Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes report 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 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. 1689 interviews with parents and children aged 5-15 were conducted in April/May/June 2013 along with 685 interviews with parents of children aged 3-4. 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 2013. The report also includes analysis of children's television viewing habits sourced from BARB, the UK's television measurement panel and comScore data on most-accessed websites by children aged 6-14 (2011, 2012, 2013) and frequency of instant messaging among 13-17 year olds.

Source www.ofcom.org.uk/medialiteracyresearch (published October 2013)

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