

Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes - Parental Concerns and Mediation

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 parental concern and mediation.

Key Findings

Parental concerns and mediation

- **Concerns about TV and gaming content have decreased among parents of 3-4s**
Parents of 3-4s whose child uses each medium are less likely to be concerned about television content (13% vs. 22%) and gaming content (9% vs. 15%) than in 2014, with no change for online content (12% in 2015). Concerns among parents of 5-15s are unchanged, with 25% saying they are concerned about online content, followed by television content (22%) and gaming content (21%).
- **Fewer parents are very concerned about pre-watershed television content than in 2014**
Parents of children who watched television are less likely than in 2014 to say they are very concerned about what their child has seen on television before the watershed, with overall concern now standing at 10% of parents of 3-4s and 20% of parents of 5-15s. Children aged 3-4 (48% vs. 36%) and 5-7 (60% vs. 50%), in households where the child watches television on a television set, are now more likely than in 2014 to have parental controls set on their television service.
- **Concerns about collection and use of children's personal information, and about advertising, are higher than or similar to those about content**
At least three in ten parents of 5-15s whose child goes online say they are concerned about companies collecting information about what their child is doing online (34%) or about their child giving out personal details online to inappropriate people (32%). A quarter of parents of 5-15s whose child plays games are concerned about the amount of advertising in games (24%), with one in five (21%) concerned about their child feeling pressured to make in-game purchases.
- **Most parents agree they know enough to help their child to manage online risks**
Half of parents of 3-4s who go online (51%) and 65% of parents of 5-15s agree that the benefits of the internet outweigh the risks. 80% of parents of 3-4s and 76% of parents of 5-15s agree that they know enough to help their child to manage online risks, all unchanged from 2014. However, there has been a decrease from 2014 in the number of those who trust their child to use the internet safely among parents of both 3-4s (44% vs. 56%) and 5-15s (78% vs. 83%).
- **More parents than in 2014 say they have looked for or received information or advice about how to help their child manage online risks**
More than half of parents of 3-4s (58%) and 75% of parents of 5-15s who go online say they have looked for or received information or advice about how to help their child manage online risks, an

increase from 48% for 3-4s and 70% for 5-15s in 2014. The most common sources of information, among parents of 5-15s are the child's school (53%), followed by friends or family (40%).

- **Awareness and use of ISP content filters has increased among parents of 5-15s**

Almost two-thirds (65%) of parents of 3-4s and 57% of parents of 5-15s with home broadband are aware of home network-level content filters provided by ISPs, and a quarter use them (25% for 3-4s and 26% for 5-15s). Awareness (57% vs. 50%) and use (26% vs. 21%) have both increased among parents of 5-15s since 2014, and both measures are unchanged among parents of 3-4s. Almost all parents of 5-15s who use ISP network-level filters think they are useful (97%), an increase from 2014 (93%), and about three-quarters think that they block the right amount of content (77%).

- **Awareness and use of tools for restricting app installation and use has also increased**

Four in ten parents of 3-4s (42%) and 5-15s (41%) whose child uses a smartphone or tablet are aware of at least one of the tools for restricting app installation or use that we asked about, and 18% of these parents (of both 3-4s and 5-15s) use any of them.

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.

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