

## Ofcom Adults' Media Use and Attitudes – Highlights from Ofcom's 2020 Research

### 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 adults' research in 2005, and the latest reports were published in June 2020: *Adults' Media Use and Attitudes*, an annual quantitative report providing evidence on media use, attitudes and understanding among adults aged 16+; and *Adults' Media Lives 2020*, the fifteenth year of a qualitative study following largely the same 19 adults to provide in-depth insight into the role of media in their day-to-day lives. The quantitative report includes a particular focus on critical understanding, which is a core component of media literacy, enabling people to assess and evaluate their media environment, as well as those groups who tend not to participate digitally. We also conducted follow up interviews with our *Adults' Media Lives* sample in April 2020 to understand how the first national lockdown imposed by UK government as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic was impacting their media behaviour.

### Key Findings

#### **Digital media take-up and use**

- Adults increasingly prefer smaller, portable devices for going online: 34% only use devices other than a computer to go online, an increase since 2018, and 11% only use a smartphone to go online.
- Connected devices and smart technologies are increasingly being adopted.
- Thirteen per cent of UK adults do not use the internet, unchanged since 2014, and threequarters of them say that nothing would encourage them to go online in the next 12 months.
- Those aged 55+ or in the DE socio-economic group remain less likely to go online.
- Two-thirds of UK adults access content on demand, an increase since 2018.
- Social media users are increasingly using multiple social media sites/apps.
- Internet users are less likely than in 2018 to agree that people should be able to hide their identity online to express their views anonymously.
- Device use and online activity can also impact critical engagement.

#### **Critical understanding**

- Internet users are less likely than in 2018 to validate online information sources, and one in ten internet users do not consider the truthfulness of factual information they find online.
- People are increasingly aware of personal data issues, but there is still a gap between their stated confidence in managing personal data and their understanding of the different ways in which companies collect personal data online.
- Similarly, there is a continued gap in confidence vs. understanding of online advertising; only half of search engine users can correctly identify advertising on Google search results and understand that this is the only reason these results appear at the top of the list.

### **During lockdown**

- Most, but not all, participants were consuming more news, from a variety of sources and platforms. BBC News in particular was being used more often than usual by most participants.
- Most participants felt well-informed about what was happening and claimed to be confident in their ability to separate credible sources from fake news.
- Those who were already highly connected in terms of using the internet for work, learning, etc. had adapted most easily to the lockdown.
- There had been a growth in the claimed use of social media, particularly for activities such as streaming live content and participating in challenges.
- Almost all participants reported a much-increased use of video chat apps such as FaceTime and Zoom for keeping in touch with family and friends, and for participating in social events.

### **Policy Context**

This research helps policy stakeholders understand adults' media environment.

### **Methodology**

The report draws primarily on the Ofcom Adults' Media Literacy Tracker, a large-scale quantitative survey based on in-home interviews with adults aged 16+. We interviewed a total of 1,883 participants, from September to November 2019.

**Source** [www.ofcom.org.uk/medialiteracyresearch](http://www.ofcom.org.uk/medialiteracyresearch) (published June 2020)

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