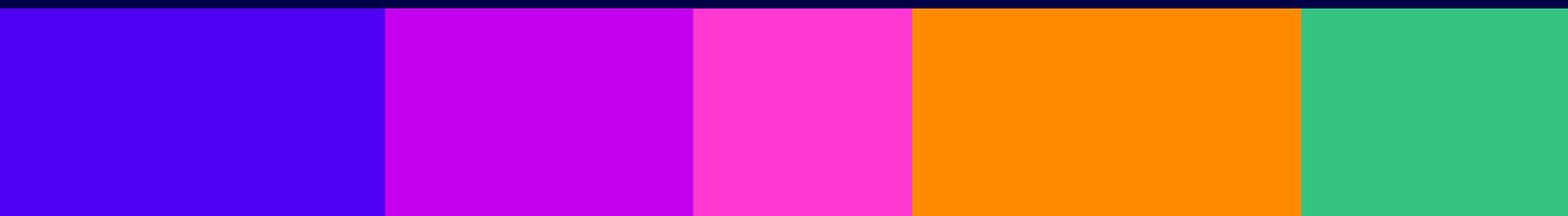




Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes

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1. Overview

Purpose of this report

The Communications Act 2003 places a responsibility on Ofcom to promote, and to carry out, research into media literacy. We define media literacy as ‘the ability to use, understand and create media and communications in a variety of contexts’.

This report looks at media use, attitudes and understanding among children aged 3-17. It also includes findings on parents’ views about their children’s media use, and how parents of children aged 3-17 monitor and manage their children’s online activity.

The report is intended to provide a comprehensive overview of children’s media experiences in 2022 as a reference for industry, policymakers, academics and the general public, and forms part of our wider Making Sense of Media programme¹. For more information about how to access and explore the data, including those of previous years, please see our resource links at the end of the report.

3-17-year-olds’ media use and attitudes: summary of key findings

Online access and usage

The majority of homes with children aged 0-18 (97%) had access to the internet in 2022², significantly higher than the average for all households (93%). Most children aged 3-17 went online (at home or elsewhere) via mobile phones (69%) and tablets (64%), although the types of devices used vary by age of child. We dedicate a section of this report to examining each age group in more detail.

Children’s viewing habits

Children’s TV watching behaviour continues to evolve. Viewing of broadcast TV live via a TV set declined again this year, falling by 20% for 4-15-year-olds, who went from viewing just under four and half hours a week in 2021 to just over three and a half hours a week in 2022. However, watching any broadcast TV, via a combination of live, recorded playback and broadcaster on-demand services (BVoD) (at just over five hours a week), on any device in the home, exceeded viewing of subscription on-demand services (SVoD) (at just under four and a half hours).³

Viewing videos on online video-sharing platforms⁴ (VSPs) such as YouTube or TikTok remained a near-universal activity (96%); and while viewing live-streamed content online remained stable at 58%, that figure rises to 80% among 16-17-year-olds vs all children.

Viewing habits relating to VSPs change by age. YouTube was the most-used VSP among all children aged 3-17 for watching videos (83%). But older children, primarily those aged 8 and over, used a

¹ More information on our Media Literacy research programme can be found here: [Our media literacy research](#)

² Ofcom’s [Technology Tracker data tables](#)

³ ‘Broadcast TV live’ refers to viewing done at the time it was broadcast on a linear channel only. [BARB | Broadcasters Audience Research Board](#)

⁴ [Regulating video-sharing platforms: what you need to know - Ofcom](#)

greater range of platforms than those aged 3-7. For example, 16-17-year-olds used an average of three VSPs for this purpose, including TikTok (62%) and Instagram (54%).

This year's Children's Media Lives qualitative research⁵ highlighted how children in 2022 were drawn to certain themes and production styles in the TV, film and video content they watched: this included a strong 'dramatic' element, often in the form of interpersonal conflict; split-screen formats; and fast-paced or deliberately choppy editing.

Overall trends for apps and sites

YouTube was the most used online platform⁶ among 3-17-year-olds (88%), followed by WhatsApp (55%), TikTok (53%), Snapchat (46%), Instagram (41%) and Facebook (34%). Use of WhatsApp, TikTok and Snapchat increased from 2021 (up from 53%, 50% and 42% respectively), while Facebook was less popular this year (down from 40%).

Playing video games

About nine in ten children (89%) played video games⁷, although not always in the same way. For example, gaming via a console or handheld games player was more common among boys (73%) than girls (45%). There were also differences in the types of games played, for example 'shooter' games such as *Call of Duty* or *Star Wars: Battlefront* were higher for boys (38%) than for girls (12%), and puzzles or quizzes were more likely to be played by girls (40% vs 23%).

In terms of shifts within specific age groups, fewer children aged 3-4 were playing video games this year, and there was also a decrease in the proportion of 5-7-year-olds gaming online.

Differences in parental attitudes towards their child's gaming were also evident; for example, parents of boys were more likely than parents of girls to have rules in place (92% vs 84%).

Interacting with others

Playing video games has a socially interactive dimension. A key reason children aged 3-17 said they played was to 'hang out with friends' (24%)⁸. On top of this, our study found that children aged 8-17 used games as a way of playing with (55%) and chatting with (47%) people they knew. Of more concern is that 25% played with, and 22% talked to, people they didn't know outside the game.

The most common way of interacting was directly communicating via messaging/calling apps or sites, which were used by 79% of 3-17-year-olds overall, and almost all children aged 12-17. The most used app for this purpose among children aged 3-17 was WhatsApp (55%), followed by Snapchat (38%) and FaceTime (32%).

Social media apps and sites allow children to actively connect with others, and 30% of 8-17-year-olds who used them 'share, comment, or post things'. Girls using social media were more likely to be active in this way than boys (34% vs 27%) and more likely to have posted their own videos on sharing apps or sites, particularly those aged 12-17 (52%, vs 41% of boys aged 12-17).

⁵ Ofcom's [Children's Media Lives: Year 9 report](#)

⁶ Within this study, a platform is a term for an app and site used for watching or uploading videos, viewing or producing live-streamed content, social media, and video calling or messaging.

⁷ Defined in our survey as playing games via an electronic device

⁸ The Insights Family asked children 'What are the main reasons you play video games?'. Asked of those aged 3-17: 7763

Attitudes and experiences in the online space

Parents and children identified positive benefits of being online, especially in relation to learning (81% children, 84% parents) and to building and maintaining friendships (68% children, 65% parents). Compared to last year, children were more positive about social media; more likely to say that it makes them happy *all or most* of the time (67%, up from 59%), and that it helps them feel closer to their friends (66%, up from 61%).

However, parents of 3-17-year-olds overall felt that the risks to their child of using social media, messaging or video sharing apps/sites outweighed the benefits (42%), although parents of children aged 12-15 (33%) and 16-17 (41%) were more likely than those of younger children (3-11) to disagree with this statement.

Children's actual experiences online were not always positive. Almost three in ten children aged 8-17 (29%) had experienced someone being nasty or hurtful to them via apps or platforms; this contrasted with two in ten having this experience face to face (20%).

Parents expressed concerns about many aspects of children's media use, including being bullied online (70%) or via games (54%), but the most common concerns among parents related to their child seeing content that was inappropriate for their age (75%), or 'adult' or sexual content (73%).

Children's use of social media in proactively positive ways has decreased over the past year. For example, fewer had sent supportive messages to friends who are having a hard time (51% in 2022 vs 61% in 2021). This behavioural shift was in evidence among our Children's Media Lives participants, who were using online communications platforms more for viewing content than for actively engaging with friends.

Critical understanding

This year, more children aged 8-17 than in 2021 correctly identified advertising in search results (41% vs 37%). Older children (aged 12-17) were also asked about paid partnerships on social media, and they were more likely to be able to identify these than to be able to identify advertising in search results (77% vs 46% respectively).

Children aged 8-17 were less likely to believe information from social media apps or sites compared to other sources they used: a third said that they believed *all or most* of what they see on social media to be true (32%), while two-thirds thought the same for news apps and sites (66%), and 77% for websites used for school or homework.

However, the level of confidence with which 12-17-year-olds felt they could identify what was real or fake online did not always match their ability. Nearly a quarter (23%) of children claimed to be confident in their ability to identify what is real or fake online but could not correctly identify a fake social media profile when presented with one during the survey. Although not an insignificant number of children, this is a reduction from 27% in 2021.

Guide to report contents

Section 1. Overview and summary of key findings

The overview section (above) outlines the purpose of this report and provides a summary of key findings related to the media use and attitudes of 3-17-year-olds.

Section 2. The children's media landscape

Much has changed in recent years in terms of the types of media children can access and the technology they use to do so. However, the key functions are broadly similar in terms of providing content to view, listen to, read, and facilitate communication.

In this section we provide a high-level overview of children's media habits: how they access media, what they watch, listen to, and engage with, with a particular focus on two key activities for children: playing and learning.

Section 3: From toddler to teen: plotting media habits by age

Almost all children are online, but media engagement looks very different depending on their age. We profile five separate age groups in ascending order, focusing on the devices used and the activities undertaken, providing insight into the balance between online and offline life for children, and how parents monitor their child's online behaviour.

Section 4: Girls and boys

Playing video games and using social media are popular for both boys and girls. However, there are differences in terms of their habits regarding these activities, and the types of platforms and devices they may use, which we outline in this section.

Section 5: Being online: experiences and attitudes

This section provides a brief overview of both the positive and the negative aspects of the online space from the perspective of children themselves, and of their parents or guardians.

We also examine the strategies and tools parents have in place to protect their child's online safety, including the role of talking about online safety.

Section 6: Online critical understanding among children

Here we focus on three key areas of online critical understanding for children: sources they trust to provide reliable and accurate information (with a focus on news); their approach to assessing what is real or fake on social media; and their ability to understand the internet as a commercial landscape.

Section 7: Media use by nation: a snapshot

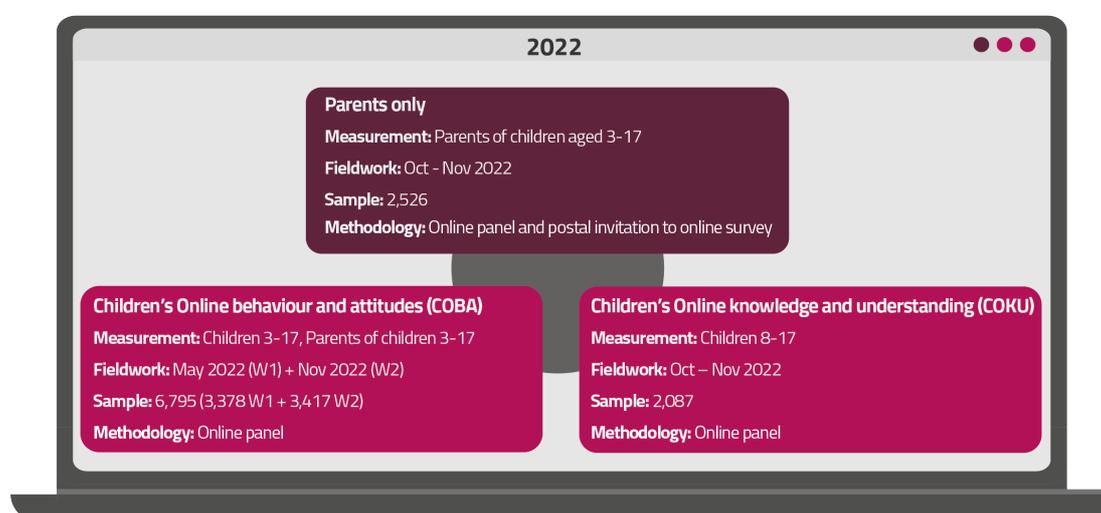
This section contains an illustrative overview of media use among 3-17-year-olds across the four UK nations – England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

Data used in this report

Ofcom's media literacy tracking studies

The key data sources for this report are our children's media literacy tracking studies (referred to in this document as 'our trackers', or 'our studies'). These quantitative studies measure a range of topics related to children's media use, including consumption habits, understanding, attitudes and experiences, and how parents view and manage their child's media consumption.

A summary of sample sizes and data collection methods is shown in the table below. A more detailed description of data collection and analysis for these studies can be found in the accompanying analytical Annex⁹ to this report, and in the Technical Report¹⁰ published alongside the data¹¹. Where data is related to children aged 3-7, this is provided by parents or guardians rather than by the children themselves.



Our survey methodology is unchanged from that used in 2021, and we can make year-on-year comparisons where there is consistency in the question text. Before 2021, comparison is not possible, due to survey reorganisation and changes to data collection due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Where year-on-year changes, or differences by age or gender, have been identified in this report, they will have been verified as 'statistically significant' which means that they are at least 95% certain to relate to a difference in the population. More detail on statistical differences can be found in the Annex.

Alongside this report we have published data tables¹² which highlight any differences for vulnerable children which we have categorised in our surveys as those who have an 'impacting or limiting'

⁹ [Annex 1: sources and methodologies](#)

¹⁰ [Technical report](#)

¹¹ Ofcom's Statistical release calendar 2023 houses the 2022 [data tables](#)

¹² Data tables with categories of 'Any impacting or limiting conditions' and 'Most/potentially/least financially vulnerable' by age group: [Statistical release calendar 2023 - Ofcom](#)

condition¹³, or are in households which are considered financially vulnerable¹⁴. This data is provided at an overall level for 3-17s, and per age group.

Supplemental contextual data

Within this report, findings and quotations from our longitudinal qualitative study Children’s Media Lives¹⁵ provide examples of the ‘why’ and the ‘how’ of the behaviours measured by our trackers.

We have also included, where relevant, data and insight from a selection of other Ofcom and third-party sources, to help build a more complete picture of children’s media activities. These sources are listed here:

- Audience measurement data from the UK’s television audience measurement body, BARB¹⁶
- Syndicated research studies from agencies CHILDWISE¹⁷ and The Insights Family¹⁸
- Ofcom data sources:

Study title	Coverage relevant to report
Adults’ Media Literacy core tracking study ¹⁹	Access to devices suitable for learning
Technology Tracker ²⁰	Household internet access, TV and radio in household
News Consumption Survey ²¹	Children’s usage of news sources
Cross-Platform Media Tracker ²²	Children’s experiences of TV
BBC Children’s Performance Tracker ²³	Uses of BBC educational resources

It is important to note that some of the sources listed above do not always align with our tracking studies in terms of age groupings, and comparison between sources can be limited due to differences in the way questions are asked, or the method of data collection used²⁴.

¹³ A definition based on parent responses to the question ‘Which of these – if any – impact or limit [your child]’s daily activities?’ Note: parents were provided a list of different types of access needs and conditions that may be associated with those.

¹⁴ Financial vulnerability is a measure that Ofcom has devised to better understand the impact of income and household composition on the ownership and use of communications services

¹⁵ Note that the names used when referring to [Children’s Media Lives](#) participants are pseudonyms to protect their identity.

¹⁶ BARB data based on the full year of 2022: [BARB | Broadcasters Audience Research Board](#)

¹⁷ [CHILDWISE](#) interviewed 2802 children aged between 5 to 18 years old from September to November 2022, more details can be found in Annex 1.

¹⁸ [The Insights Family](#) interviewed 10,173 children aged between 3 to 17 years old in 2022, more details can be found in Annex 1.

¹⁹ Ofcom’s [Adult’s Media Literacy core tracking study 2022](#)

²⁰ Ofcom’s [Technology Tracker data tables](#)

²¹ Ofcom’s [News Consumption Report](#)

²² Ofcom’s [Cross-Platform Media Tracker](#)

²³ Ofcom’s [BCC Children’s Performance Tracker](#)

²⁴ For more detail on all these sources, see [Annex 1: report sources and methodologies](#)

2. The children's media use landscape

Introduction

This section combines data across 3-17-year-olds to give a brief tour of how children are accessing media and what kinds of activities they are undertaking, including viewing, interacting, listening, reading, playing, and learning.

Almost all children aged 3-17 went online (97%) in 2022, either at home or elsewhere, with the figure only slightly lower for 3-4-year-olds (87%), and in this section we describe how the internet plays an important role in children's daily lives.

Media and communications devices used and/or accessed by children

Mobile phones (69%) and tablets (64%) were the most-used devices to go online among 3-17-year-olds overall. Older children (12-17-year-olds) were most likely to use mobile phones to go online, while those aged 3-11 were most likely to use a tablet for this purpose.

Ownership of mobile phones increases gradually up to age 8, when the rate of ownership accelerates to levels that are near-universal among children aged 12 and remains so into adulthood. This acceleration coincides with the move for many children from primary to secondary school, which occurs around age 11 and is described in the context of other media in our 'Toddlers to teens' section.

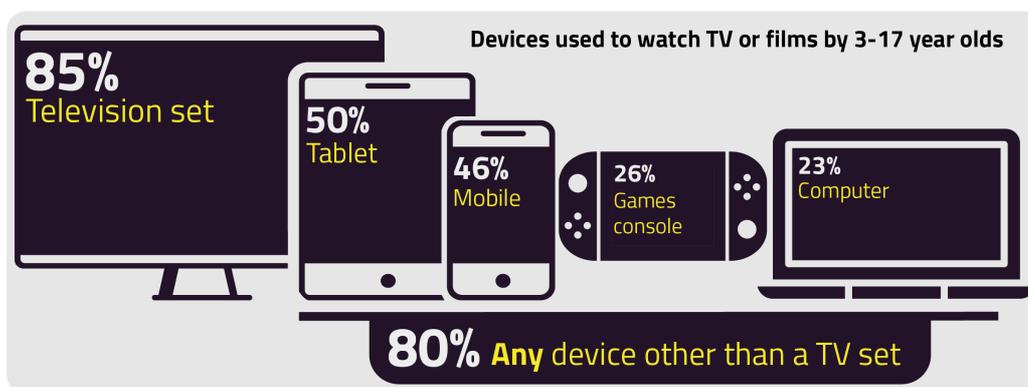


Data from CHILDWISE²⁵ also indicates that children own or have access to a range of devices beyond mobile phones and tablets, as shown below. Notably, most 7-18-year-olds²⁶ (68%) owned a games console or handheld player²⁷ and a further 9% had access to one. Our media literacy study found that consoles were more likely to be used for gaming by boys, and this, along with other gaming habits, is described in our section ‘Girls and boys’.



Ofcom’s Technology Tracker²⁸ found that a TV set was present in nearly all households with children (97%), whereas a radio (that is listened to) was found in only a minority of the households with children (29%).

While most children aged 3-17 (85%) viewed TV programmes or films via a TV set, a large majority (80%) watched this type of content via other devices, including half who used a tablet, and 46% a mobile phone. Additionally, these devices, including TV sets, were used to watch other forms of video content, such as live streams and user-generated content.



²⁵CHILDWISE report. Section 1 ownership and access to devices other than console: All 5–18-year-olds 2802/ Section 4: ownership and access to console: All 7-18-year-olds 1677

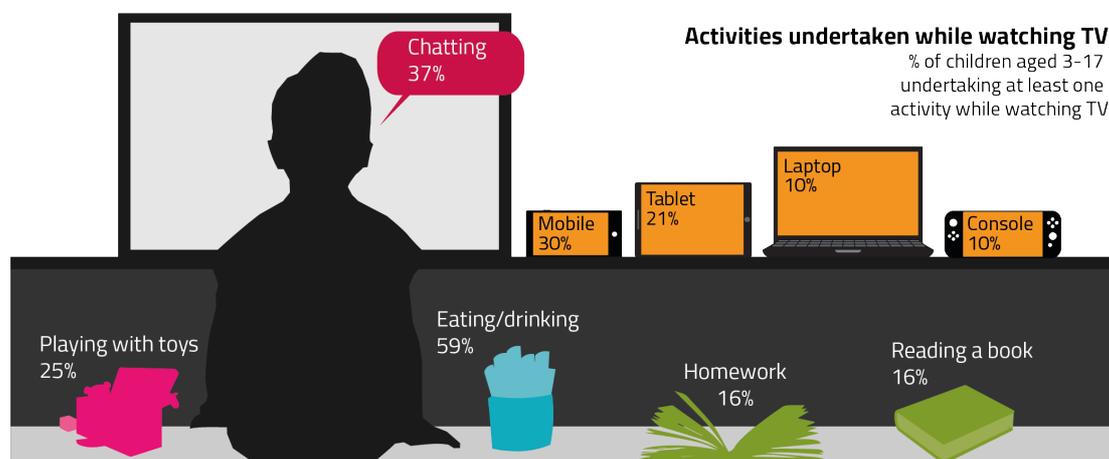
²⁶ Games console access and ownership was only asked of children aged 8 or above

²⁷ Console throughout the report is console or handheld games player

²⁸ Ofcom’s [Technology Tracker data tables](#)

TV viewing in context

Last year, Children’s Media Lives described how TV was often a backdrop to other media activities. The data in the following graphic from The Insights Family shows the activities that children undertook while watching TV, which includes using other devices, such as a mobile (30%).



The Insights Family data also showed that a minority of 3-17-year-olds (23%) *usually* watched TV alone, while about half (47%) watched with parents, and a quarter (27%) with siblings²⁹. This suggests that watching TV can be a social activity, which is illustrated by the proportion who said they ‘chatted’³⁰ while watching TV (37%).

Content consumption

As with previous years, our media literacy tracking studies show that almost all (97%) children aged 3-17 watched TV programmes or films in some way. In this section we look at the different ways of viewing this content, and how viewing habits are changing.

Sources of TV content

According to BARB³¹, viewing of live broadcast TV via a TV set declined again last year, falling by 20% for 4-15-year-olds, who went from viewing just under four and half hours a week in 2021 to just over three and a half hours a week in 2022.

However, watching broadcast TV live is only part of the broadcast picture, even just on the TV set. When viewing of catch-up TV via recordings or a streaming/on-demand player on the TV set is included, broadcast viewing rose to four and a quarter hours a week in 2022. This was still a decline from almost six hours in 2021.

²⁹ The Insights Family asked children aged 3-17 ‘What else do you do while watching your TV?’. Sample size: 10,173

³⁰ While this answer option was presented to children as “chat to people in the room” with offline coverage in mind, it does not explicitly exclude online interactions. ‘Chatting’ in this context, therefore, includes both online and offline interactions

³¹ [BARB | Broadcasters Audience Research Board](#)

Watching on the TV set is only part of the picture. Fifty-seven percent of 4-15-year-olds watched broadcast TV on a TV set at least once a week on average in 2022, a fall from 63% in 2021. Children’s TV viewing behaviour continues to evolve and, as we have seen, they are viewing TV content on devices other than a TV set. When including these alternative devices and time spent watching recordings of broadcast TV and on demand/catch-up services from the broadcasters (BVoD³²), the proportion of children aged 4-15 watching all TV from broadcasters on all devices was 73% on average per week.

Average weekly viewing time for broadcast TV (excluding BVoD viewing) was slightly exceeded by viewing of subscription services such as Netflix and Amazon Prime Video (SVoD³³) and/ or advertising funded services (AVoD³⁴) in 2022.

Type of content/ service and description	Measure	Children aged 4-15	Aged 4-11	Aged 12-15
Broadcast TV (excluding BVoD)	% weekly reach	65%	66%	63%
	Average weekly minutes ³⁵	253	37	34
BVoD	% weekly reach	38%	40%	35%
	Average weekly minutes	58	9	7
SVoD/AVoD	% weekly reach	71%	73%	66%
	Average weekly minutes	265	40	33

However, when time spent viewing all broadcast TV (4 hours 13 minutes per week) is combined with time spent using BVoDs such as BBC iPlayer and ITV X (58 minutes), the resulting total exceeds the total viewing time spent on SVoDs/AVoDs (5hours 11 minutes vs 4 hours 25 minutes).

Types of programming and content

Broadcast content

The most-viewed live broadcast programmes in 2022 on BBC One and ITV1 for children aged 4-11 reflected the landmark TV of that year: the key England matches in the football *World Cup* (on ITV1) and the *State Funeral of HM Queen Elizabeth II* (on BBC One).

³² Broadcaster video-on-demand (BVoD) is viewing content from TV broadcasters (e.g. BBC, ITV) via streaming or catch-up services

³³ Subscription video-on-demand (SVoD) is viewing content from paid-for services such as Netflix, Amazon Prime and Disney+

³⁴ Advertising-Based video-on-demand (AVoD) services where viewers can access content free in return for the inclusion of advertising.

³⁵ Average weekly minutes are rounded up to the nearer minute

The England matches in the football *World Cup* were also the most watched live broadcast programmes among the older age group of 12-17s, followed by reality show *I'm a Celebrity... Get Me Out of Here!* – both appearing on ITV1³⁶.

Video-sharing platform and live-streamed content

Almost all children aged 3-17 (96%) watched videos on any video-sharing platform (VSP³⁷), although the types of content they view varies by age, as described in the 'Toddlers to teens' section.

Live video streaming is the broadcasting of live video over the internet as it happens. It is distinct from video-calling services, in that these are streamed, but not live-streamed in real time. Our tracking study shows that the proportion of children aged 3-17 viewing live-streamed content online was unchanged from 2021, at 58%, and remained highest among 16-17-year-olds (80%). There are also some differences in live-stream viewing by gender, which we describe in the 'Girls and boys' section.

Content viewing themes from Children's Media Lives

This year's Children's Media Lives research gave us added insight into the specific styles and formats of content, viewed on TV and online, that children were particularly drawn to in 2022.

Children of all ages reported choosing to watch 'dramatic' content in various forms when selecting TV shows and films to watch. Although 'drama' was found in different types of content, there were common elements that children pulled out as motivating their interest within this genre, from interpersonal conflict to themes of violence.

"There was quite a lot of drama and it showed everything behind F1 and things like that... When you think of F1, you just kind of think of the racing aspect of it. But it showed what it was like from the team's point of view and the drivers' point of view and the team managers and all the rivalries that go on, so it's pretty cool."

Niamh, 13

As the children consumed a lot of dramatic content, it was sometimes unclear to them whether it was based on reality, or a fictional depiction. Moreover, distinguishing fact from fiction did not appear to be a priority for them. For example, Bryony's favourite show was *Dynasty*, a contemporary reboot of the 1980s soap of the same name. The show streams on Netflix and tells the fictional story of the personal and business rivalries between two of America's wealthiest families. Bryony liked that it gave an insight into how businesses worked.

"It's about this really rich family. A lot of family drama.... It's non-fiction. It's all about the business and shows like some families can be like that..."

Bryony, 14

³⁶ [BARB | Broadcasters Audience Research Board](#)

³⁷ Video-sharing platforms (VSPs) are a type of online video service which allow users to upload and share videos with the public. More information can be found on our website: [video-sharing platform \(VSP\) regulation](#)

Videos that children watched on social media platforms also had ‘dramatic’ elements. For example, ‘commentary’ formats³⁸ in online content were popular and drove the children’s interest in interpersonal drama between influencers, encouraging them to pick sides.

Popular video content on VSPs was often fast-paced, short and highly edited, and seemed to be a progression from the preference of shorter-form content that we saw in the previous wave, where some of the children were sometimes unable to sit through films or even episodes of series.

Media for leisure activities

In this section, the role of media in the way children play, listen, and read is explored.

Video gaming in the context of play

Play is a key activity for children and was described by the children’s educational pioneer Maria Montessori as “the work of the child”³⁹. While our focus in this report is play via digital media, traditional toys or games have not disappeared from children’s lives.

For example, The Insights Family⁴⁰ reported that in 2022 a large majority (84%) of 3-17-year-olds had played a board game in the last month (most commonly Monopoly). Toys and games only give way to video games, in terms of time spent, from age 8 onwards.

As we observed with our Children’s Media Lives participants, video games may be one of their activities outside school, but not their sole leisure pursuit. This is exemplified by the following summary of how both digital and non-digital play feature in the life of an 8-year-old involved in the study:

Frankie, age 8, has lots of hobbies, including multiple sports and Brownies. She likes playing with dolls and reading when she is at home. Frankie has an Amazon Kids Fire tablet, which she uses to play the game ‘Gymnastics Salon’. She also has a laptop, which she uses for schoolwork and to play free solo-player games on the website Poki.com. Sometimes, Frankie will use her mum’s phone and play the game ‘Hay Day’.

The Insights Family data indicates that video games are not always a child’s most preferred leisure activity⁴¹. Boys aged 8-17 were as likely to choose football as video games as their favourite hobby (about one in five). For girls in this age group, video games are not ranked any higher as a favourite activity than other leisure pursuits (e.g. dancing, listening to music, and arts and crafts).

³⁸ Commentary formats refers to content that involves the video creator commenting on a subject or situation.

³⁹ [The Child's Work — Montessori Guide](#)

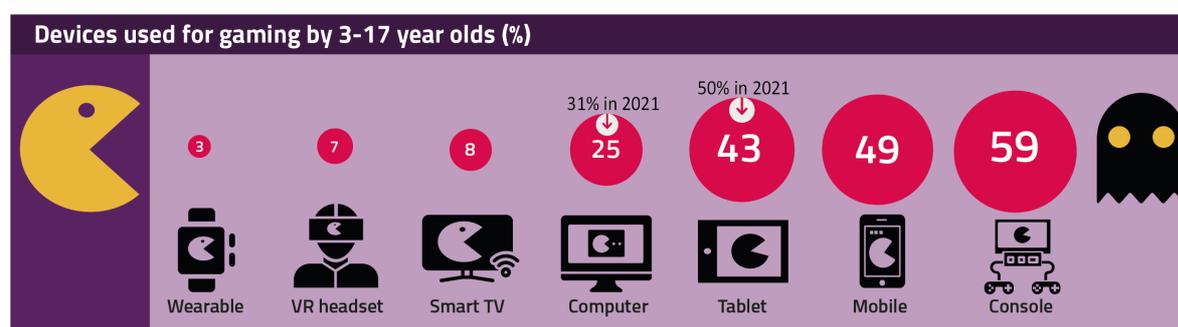
⁴⁰ The Insights Family asked children aged 3-17 ‘Which board games have you played with this month?’. Sample size: 10,164

⁴¹ The Insights Family asked children ‘What is your favourite hobby?’. Asked of boys aged 8-17: sample size 3,387 and girls aged 8-17: sample size 3,389

Video gaming in focus

Our studies show that among children’s media activities, however, video gaming ranks very highly. Nine in ten children aged 3-17 (89%) played video games using any of the devices listed in the graphic below, and of all the media activities we measure, only watching videos on VSPs (96%) and watching TV (97%) were more widespread. An exception to this is that children aged 3-4 were less likely to be playing video games (70%); this has declined from 81% year on year.

Most children were gaming using a console (59%), followed by a mobile phone (49%) and a tablet (43%). Devices used for gaming varied by the age of child, as did the types of game played, but overall use of tablets for gaming declined year on year (from 50% to 43%) as did the use of desktop/laptop computers (from 31% to 25%).



According to The Insights Family, the main motivation for children aged 3-17 to play video games was that it is fun⁴² (43%) but other more social factors emerged, such as playing ‘to hang out with friends’ (24%) and ‘to hang out with family’ (12%).

E-sports (electronic sports) are forms of organised, competitive video game competitions, which can have significant prize rewards⁴³ and attract millions of viewers. Data from The Insights Family⁴⁴ shows that 7% of 8-17-year-olds participated in e-sports and a further 20% watched them on screen or at events in 2022. This contrasts to 81% of children within this age group who participated in sports offline, and 72% who watched sports on screen.

Listening to music and reading

Children may have a varied diet of media activities that they enjoy in their leisure time. According to The Insights Family, one in ten children aged 16-17 named listening to music as their favourite hobby, more than double the average for children aged 3-17 overall (4%).

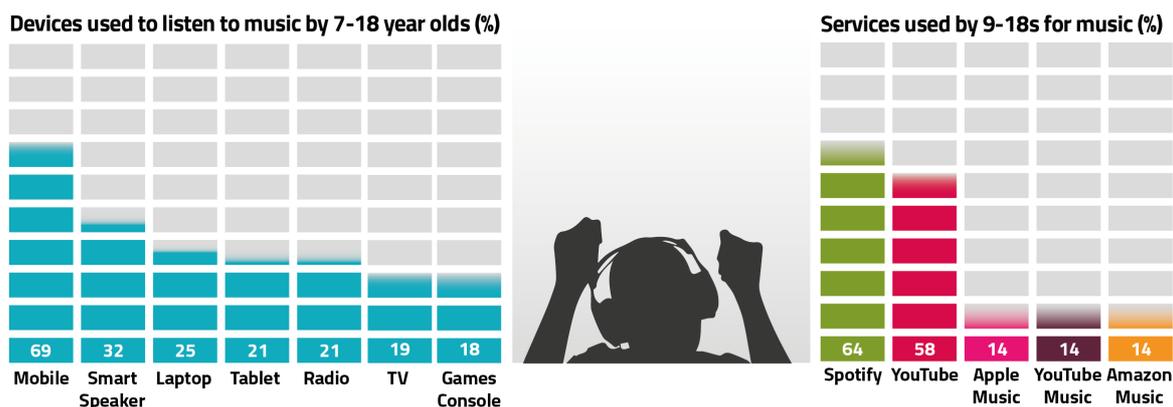
⁴²The Insights Family asked children ‘What are the main (3) reasons you play video games?’. Asked of children aged 3-17 who play video games. Sample size: 7,763

⁴³ Esports: How can they keep growing in 2023? - BBC News. [Fortnite: UK player finishes second in e-sports World Cup - BBC News](#)

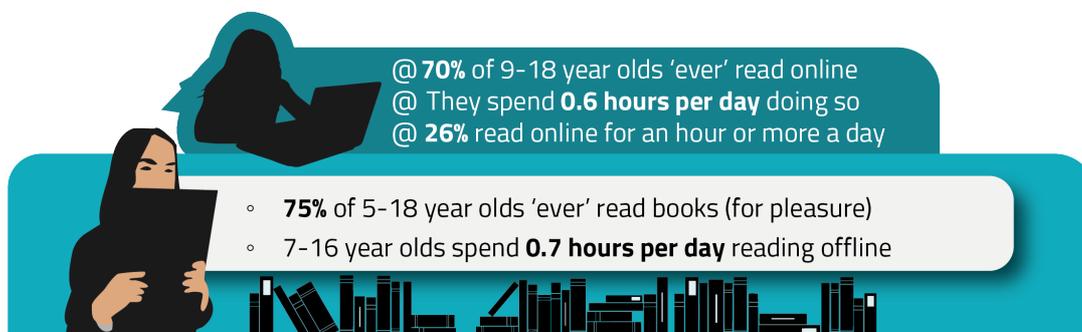
⁴⁴ The Insights Family, proportion of children aged 8-17 who said that they ‘take part in esports’. Sample size: 6,779

Children accessed music via a variety of devices and platforms. CHILDWISE⁴⁵ reported that children aged 7-18 used a range of personal devices such as a smartphone, games console or tablet to listen to music. Radios and smart speakers were the most-used audio-specific devices for listening to music, but mobile phones were used more than both of these.

Spotify, a music-specific streaming platform, was used by 64% of children aged 9-18⁴⁶ to access music, followed by YouTube (58%), Apple Music, YouTube Music and Amazon Music (all 14%).



CHILDWISE⁴⁷ also found that most children aged 5-18 (75%) read physical books for pleasure in 2022. Children also enjoyed reading online content, in the form of blogs or news articles, with a quarter of 9-18-year-olds⁴⁸ (26%) reporting that they read online for an hour or more a day.



⁴⁵ CHILDWISE Report section 8, children who listen to music via each method: all 7-18: 1677, platforms used to listen to music: all aged 9-18: 1596

⁴⁶ Only children aged 9 or above were asked whether they used music-specific streaming platforms

⁴⁷ CHILDWISE Report section 9, children who 'ever' read online: all aged 9-18 (908), children who ever read books for pleasure: all aged 5-18 (1125)

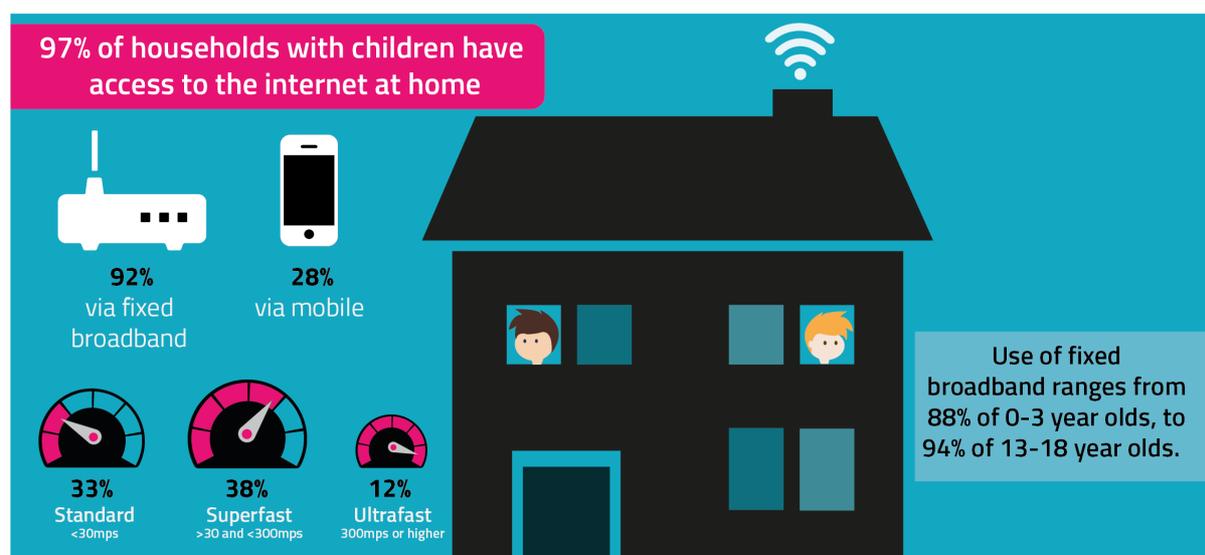
⁴⁸ Only children aged 9 or above were asked about whether they read content online

Learning online

Most children claim to enjoy learning. According to The Insights Family⁴⁹, 95% of children aged 6-17 said that it was *certainly or somewhat* true that they liked learning new things. Electronic devices and online resources can provide learning opportunities beyond schoolwork; for example, 12% of children aged 5-15 in our tracking studies had undertaken coding or programming on one of their devices and 33% had followed an online ‘how-to’ tutorial to create and do something of their own.

Our data also showed that the majority of children aged 12-15 (83%), and parents of this age group (90%), thought that being able to go online helps with schoolwork/homework. There are specific sites for learning, and our BBC Children’s performance tracker⁵⁰ notes that 52% of children aged 4-16 used BBC Bitesize for schoolwork or homework in 2022.

Of course, learning online means access to the internet and to appropriate devices. Our Technology Tracker⁵¹ data shows that 97% of households with a child aged 0-18 had access to the internet at home, which is significantly higher than the overall average of 93% of households. However, this also meant that 3% of households with a child aged 0-18 did not have internet access at home.



The impact of device poverty

Being able to use the internet to learn at home depends on access to a connected device that is suitable for learning. Our research⁵² found that in 2022 more than six in ten parents thought their child had consistent access to a device that connected to the internet and was suitable for using at

⁴⁹ The Insights Family, proportion of children aged 3-17 who agree that ‘I like learning new things’ is certainly or somewhat true. Sample size: 10,164

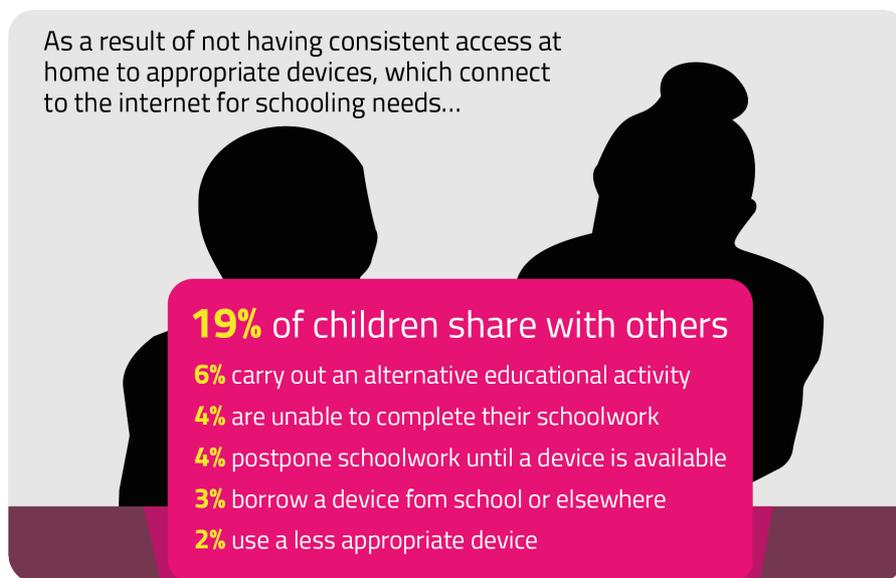
⁵⁰ Ofcom’s [BBC Children’s performance tracker](#)

⁵¹ Ofcom’s [Technology Tracker data tables](#)

⁵² Ofcom’s [Adult’s Media Literacy Tracker data tables](#)

home for schoolwork, and this was higher for children of secondary school age (77%) compared to those in primary school (57%).

However, we found that not all children had adequate access to devices for the purposes of learning. Where the parent said that access to a device suitable for home learning was not consistent, we asked them to indicate what, if any, the consequences of this were, as shown in the graphic below.



Our tracking studies indicate that more than one in ten children aged 3-17 (12%) only accessed the internet using a tablet, while one in twenty (5%) only used a mobile phone for this. Phones, and some tablets, have relatively small screens and may sometimes have less capability in terms of running office-type software and interfaces, which may make them less suitable than larger-screened devices, such as laptops, for homework.

Media for interacting

Communication apps and sites provide an array of different opportunities for children to interact with others online, including messaging and calling, social media, online gaming, posting their own videos on VSPs and live-streaming content.

Almost eight in ten children aged 3-17 (79%) used apps or sites for messaging or voice/ video calls. However, in common with many other media activities, this varied by age, from 48% of children aged 3-4 to 98% of 12-17-year-olds.

Two in three (64%) children aged 3-17 used apps for social media⁵³, while a third (32%) used apps or sites to post videos they had made, and 15% live-streamed their own content. More information on these activities is explored below in 'Girls and boys'.

⁵³ Used an app or site listed for following friends, people or organisations, reading, liking or sharing things -photos, opinions comments, news, stories, links.

In this year's Children's Media Lives, we saw less social interaction playing out on social media platforms. Children were actively curating how they appeared in more public online spaces by limiting what they posted and who could see it. For example, Bailey, age 8, and Niamh, age 13, both enjoyed making draft TikTok videos but never – or very rarely – posted them. Children in the study hardly ever used the chat functions on these platforms, apart from sending each other the odd video that they had come across on their feed. Most 'chat' took place on Snapchat, with all children in the sample using it as their main app to message friends. Several children in the sample were also part of multiple group chats, formed by geographical area, friend groups or interests.

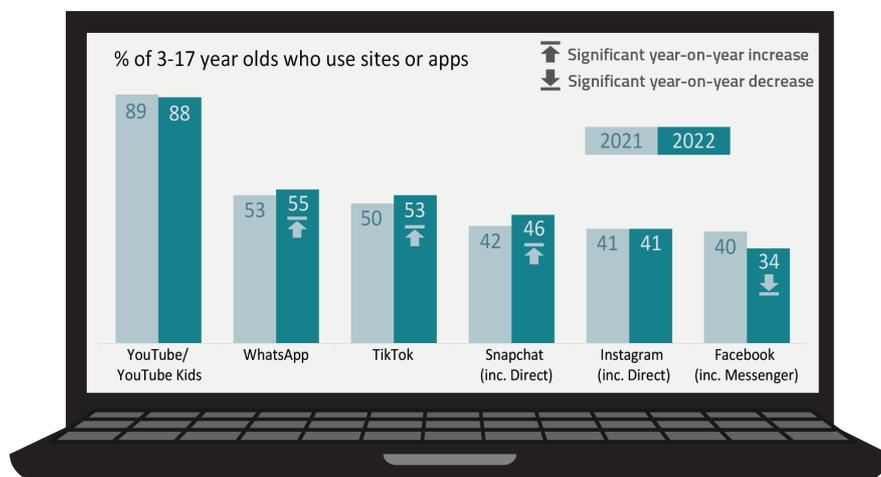
Online gaming also provides the opportunity for children to communicate with others, either through playing or via in-game chat or messaging. Three-quarters of children aged 8-17 (72%) played games online. A quarter of children this age played games online with people they *don't* know, while 22% chatted to people they *don't* know when gaming. This topic is explored in further detail below, in 'From toddler to teen'.



Apps and sites used by children

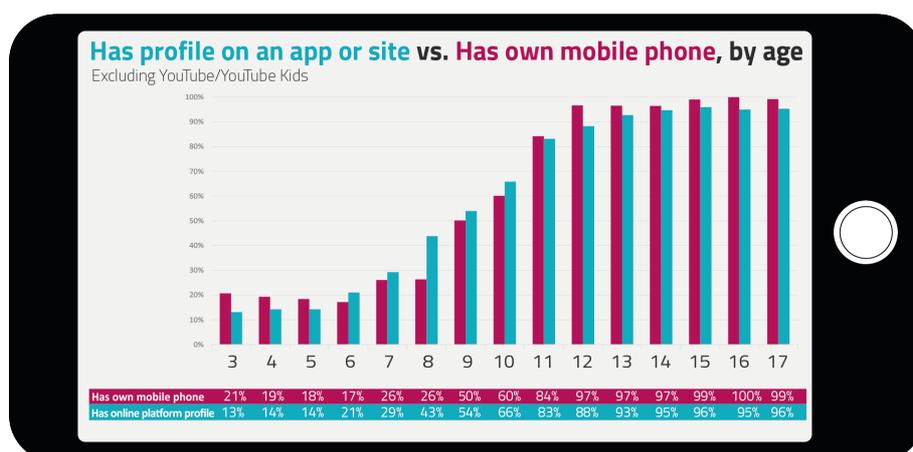
YouTube was the most used site or app among children, visited by 88% of the 3-17-year-olds who go online. This is not surprising, considering that 96% of 3-17-year-olds watch videos online.

WhatsApp and TikTok were used by about half of 3-17-year-olds overall, and as indicated by the arrows on the graphic, our data shows that the reach of WhatsApp, TikTok and Snapchat was higher in 2022 than in 2021. In contrast, use of Facebook among children aged 3-17 dipped from 40% in 2021 to 34% in 2022.



As the age of children increases, the use of different apps also increases. For example, 25% of children aged 3-4 used WhatsApp (according to their parents) compared to 54% of 8-11-year-olds and 80% of 12-17-year-olds. The exception to this is YouTube, which had similar reach across all age groups – this may be due to children referring to YouTube’s children’s version YouTube Kids, rather than just the main version.

As observed earlier, mobile ownership increases with the age of the child and is almost universal by age 12, and the proportion of children who had their own profile⁵⁴ on an online communications app or site⁵⁵ grows alongside this. This pattern is illustrated in the figure below.



⁵⁴ Parents or 3-7s and children themselves aged 8-17 were asked: ‘Below is a list of some of the apps/ sites that you said earlier that your child uses. Some can be used by anyone, but others need a profile to be set up first. This may involve choosing a user name, password and a picture for the profile. Please click on those where you have set up a profile for your child [to parent]/ where you have your own profile [to child]’

⁵⁵ This could include apps or sites used for messaging/ calls/ video sharing/ social media or live streaming, and excludes children with profiles on YouTube/YouTube Kids, which ranges from 38% of 3-4 -year-olds to 35% of 16-17-year-olds.

3. From toddler to teen: plotting media habits by age

There is huge variation by age in the way children engage with media, especially when we consider how children go online, what they do while online, and the types of apps, sites, or platforms they use for different activities. In this section we have developed a ‘typical’ profile of key media behaviour for each age band in our study⁵⁶ to illustrate the variation by age, as depicted in the graphics below.

However, as many aspects of an individual child’s life have a bearing on their media behaviour, in addition to their age, we include a range of supplementary data in addition to our own, to paint a richer picture of each age group.

Overview of age and stage of media consumption

Aged 3-4

Supervised Explorers



Aged 5-7

Increasingly Independent



Aged 8-11

Developing Skills



Aged 12-15

Connecting and Creating



Aged 16-17

Branching Out



⁵⁶ Our tracking studies collect data in relation to children aged 3 or above. However, many children do start their media journey at a younger age, including using devices. CHILDWISE interviews parents of children aged up to 2 years old, and reports that children of this age may already be able to undertake certain activities using a touch screen, for example, 26% were able to open apps that they wanted to use and 22% were able to take photos with the device.

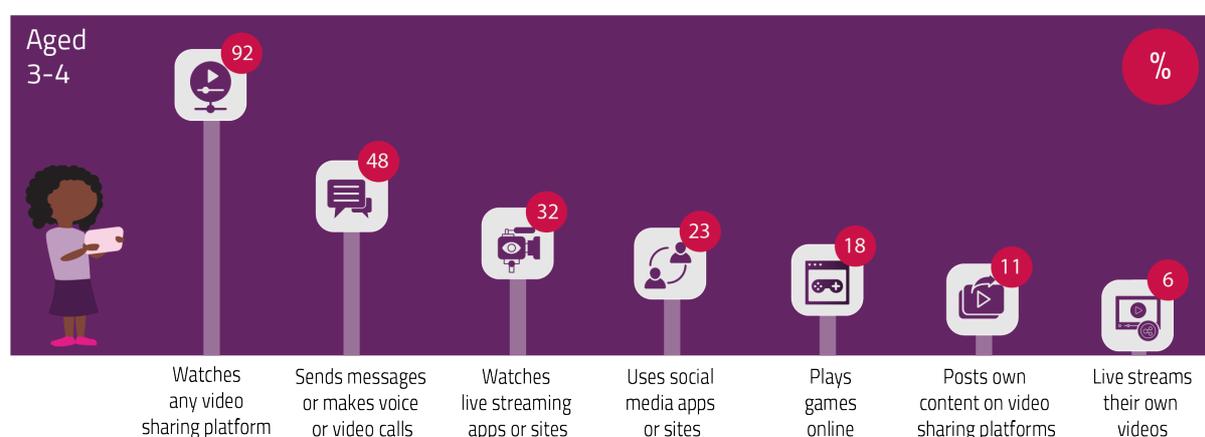
Age 3-4: Supervised Explorers



By the time children reach 3-4 years old, most will be able to string together a short sentence of four or more words and answer very simple questions. They may be able to create basic drawings and name colours. Their motor skills may also be developing, allowing them to hold objects independently. However, children aged 3-4 require help from an adult for more complex tasks, such as serving food or pouring a drink⁵⁷.

As **Supervised Explorers**, children of this age enjoy all sorts of activities, and not just media. Below we start with their online activities specifically:

Online activities of 3-4-year-olds



As reported by their parent/guardian in our surveys⁵⁸, the large majority of children aged 3-4 went online (87%) in 2022, lower than among older age groups.

Children aged 3-4 went online mainly to watch videos (92%) and were more likely to do so than in 2021 (89%). YouTube was by far their most-used app (87%), and they were more likely to use YouTube Kids (51%) than the 'main' YouTube site (31%). Just under two-fifths of 3-4-year-olds (38%) had their own profile on YouTube⁵⁹, and 14% had a profile on at least one other app or site.

Cartoons, animations, mini-movies or songs were the most watched types of videos among 3-4-year-olds (81%) and The Insights Family found that Ryan's World and Blippi were their favourite YouTubers⁶⁰.

Half of 3-4-year-olds (48%) were reported by the parent or guardian in the survey to have used apps or sites to send messages or make video or voice calls, and those who did had mainly used WhatsApp (25%) and Facetime (19%). It's likely that children of this age were receiving help with these communication activities as they are still developing basic reading and writing skills.

⁵⁷ Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, *Important milestones for children to hit by 4-years-old*: <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/milestones-4yr.html#openPretends>

⁵⁸ Parents of children aged 3-4 and 5-7 complete surveys on their behalf.

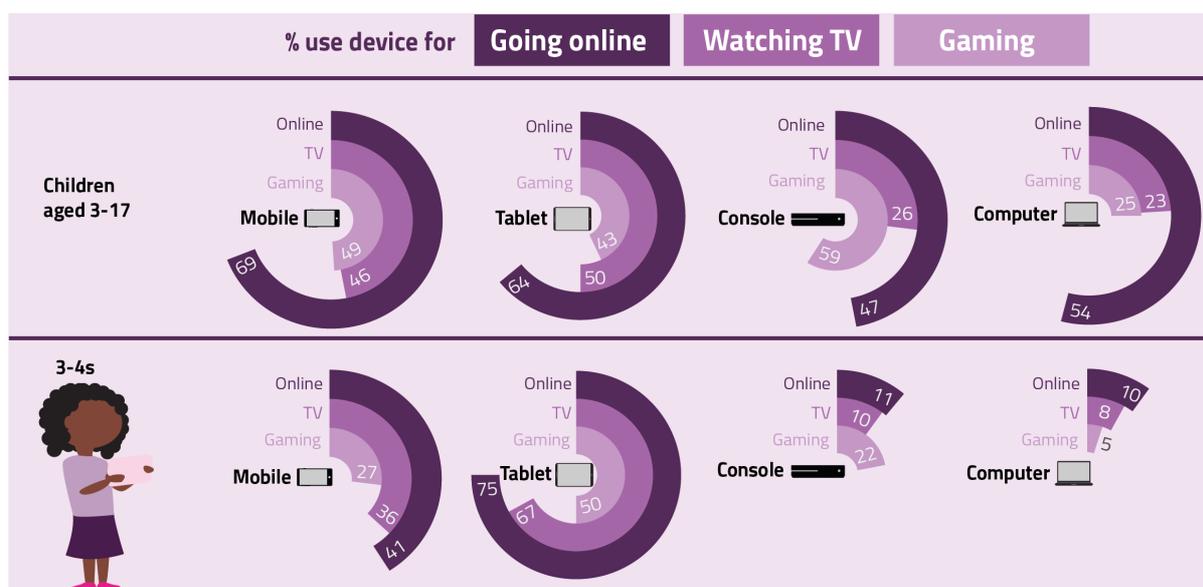
⁵⁹ This includes children who have a profile on YouTube Kids.

⁶⁰ The Insights Family asked children aged 3-4 'Who is your favourite YouTuber?'. Sample size: 1,357.

Seven in ten 3-4-year-olds played video games, down from 81% in 2021. The top game categories among this age group were puzzles or quizzes (35%), creative and building (34%) and action or adventure (23%). At this age, only a minority played games online (18%).

Devices used by 3-4-year-olds

Tablets were the most-used devices among 3-4-year-olds for going online (75%), playing games (50%), and watching TV (when excluding a TV set) (67%). However, there was a decline in the number of children using tablets for gaming purposes, dropping from 63% in 2021 to 50% in 2022. Less than one in five owned a smartphone, and phones were therefore less-used for each of these activities than by other age groups.



3-4s: parental oversight

Setting them apart from parents of older children, two-thirds (65%) of parents of children aged 3-4 said they supervised what their child does online by sitting beside them and watching or helping them with what they are doing. Half of parents of children aged 3-4 reported that their main approach to online safety was to directly supervise their child, while 21% said their main approach was to talk to their child.

Although 30% of parents of 3-4-year-olds said they found it hard to control their child’s screen time, the majority felt that they had achieved good results: over seven in ten (73%) agreed that their child had a good balance between screen time and doing things offline. This balance is reflected in The Insights Family⁶¹ data, which shows that 3-4-year-olds spend more time playing with toys/games than they do video games (101 minutes compared to 38 minutes).

⁶¹ The Insights Family, average time children aged 3-4 spent on a range of online and offline activities. Sample size: 1,355.

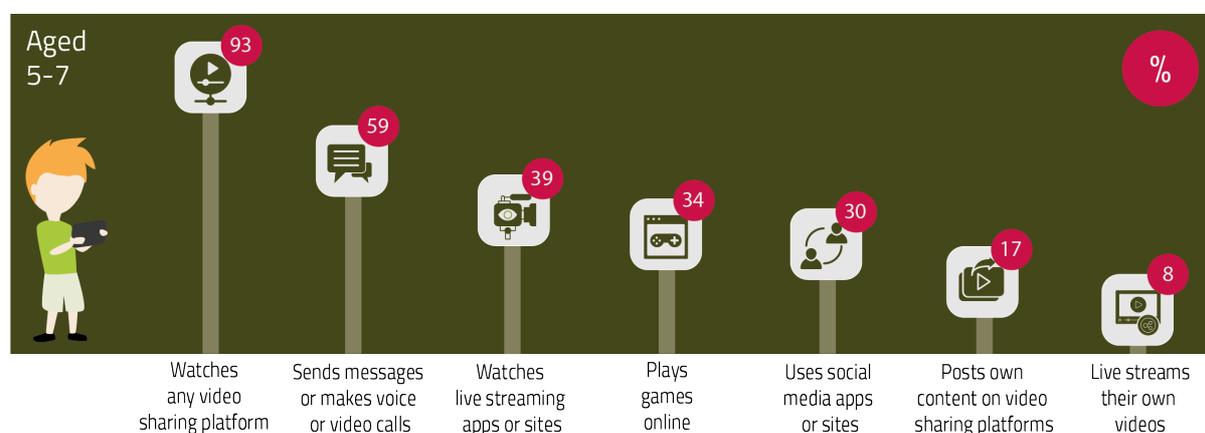
Age 5-7: Increasingly Independent



Between the ages of 5 and 7, children socialise with children of their own age and form friendships independent of their family. Motor skills become stronger at this stage, meaning they can carry out more complex tasks without help from an adult, such as cutting with scissors or tying their shoes. Reading and writing skills also progress, allowing them to talk more fluently, and their sense of humour develops, enabling an understanding of simple jokes.⁶²

Children at this age are **Increasingly Independent** when it comes to their media behaviour. Broadly, they enjoy similar media to 3-4-year-olds, but their development means that they start to explore content and make choices, although parents are typically still close by to supervise.

Online activities of 5-7-year-olds



Like children aged 3-4, most 5-7-year-olds (93%) watched videos online, as reported by their parents/guardians. YouTube⁶³ was again the most popular app or site among this age group (89%), and they were more likely to use YouTube Kids (41%) than the 'main' YouTube app or site (38%). Nearly two fifths (39%) of 5-7-year-olds had their own profile on YouTube⁶⁴. Their use of several apps, including TikTok (25%) and Instagram (14%), fell this year, unlike for older children.

Reflecting children's developing sense of humour at this stage, funny videos or 'joke, prank, challenge' videos were popular, watched by six in ten 5-7-year-olds (58%). The Insights Family⁶⁵ identified Ryan's World (8%) and A for Adley (3%) as the most popular YouTubers for this age band.

Although parents/guardians indicated that 59% of 5-7-year-olds used apps or sites to send messages or make video or voice calls, their child may have been assisted by an adult in this activity, as reading and writing skills are not yet fully developed at this stage. WhatsApp (29%) and FaceTime (23%) were the most-used apps for this purpose at this age.

⁶² Development milestones of 5-7-year-olds as outlined by Welsh Government: [development of child aged 5-7](#).

⁶³ This includes use of YouTube Kids.

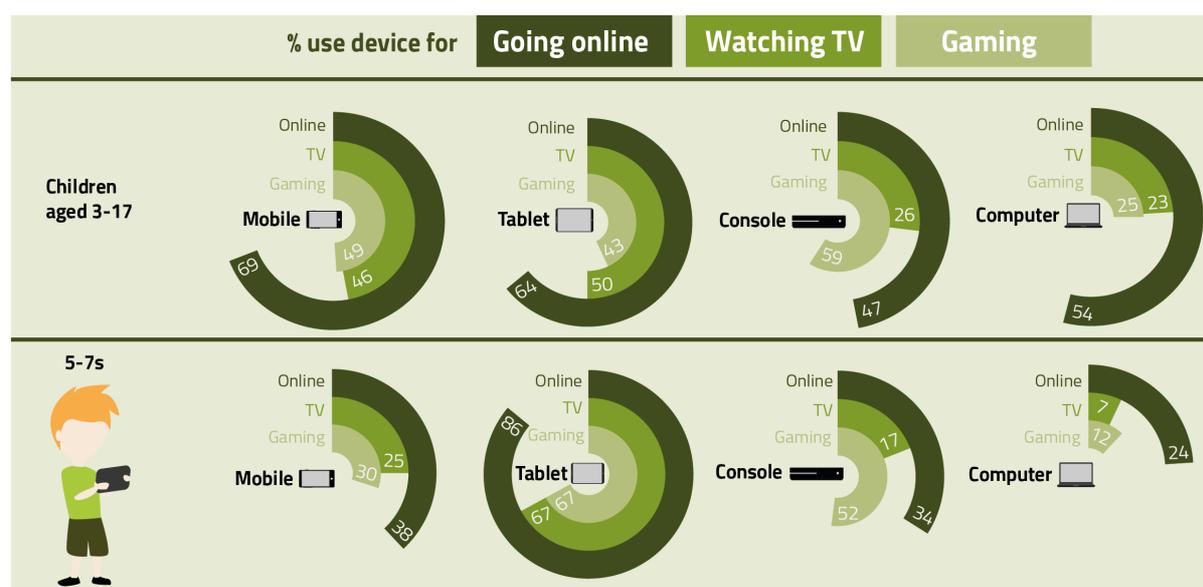
⁶⁴ This includes children who have a profile on YouTube Kids.

⁶⁵ The Insights Family, favourite YouTubers of children aged 5-7. Sample size: 2,037.

Nine in ten 5-7-year-olds (89%) played video games and a third (34%) played video games online, significantly more than the 3-4 age group. The most-played types of game at this age were creative and building games (53%), action/ adventure games (37%), and puzzles or quizzes (35%). According to The Insights Family⁶⁶, Roblox was their favourite gaming app.

Devices used by 5-7-year-olds

Tablets were the most-used devices by 5-7-year-olds for going online (86%), watching TV programmes or films (apart from on a TV set) (67%), and gaming (67%). With gaming more popular at this age, games consoles were more widely used by 5-7-year-olds for going online (34%) and playing video games (52%) than 3-4-year-olds.



5-7s: parental oversight

Parents of 5-7-year-olds were most likely to monitor their child’s online activity by staying nearby and regularly checking (75%) or by asking their child about what they are doing online (59%). Although still supervising their child, parents do so at a greater distance than parents of younger children, with less than half (45%) sitting beside their child and watching or helping with what they do online. This suggests that children aged 5-7 were using devices more independently than those aged 3-4.

Most parents of 5-7-year-olds (72%) agreed that their child had a good balance between screen time and doing other things. As with 3-4-year-olds, The Insights Family⁶⁷ indicated that the time 5-7-year-olds spent playing with toys/games offline was higher than the time they spent playing video games (1hr 20 minutes compared to 54 minutes). However, our study found that a third of parents still said they found it hard to control the screen time of their 5-7-year-old.

⁶⁶ The Insights Family. Children who play video games. Favourite gaming app of children aged 5-7. Sample size: 1,466.

⁶⁷ The Insights Family. Average time children aged 5-7 spent on a range of online and offline activities. Sample size: 2,033.

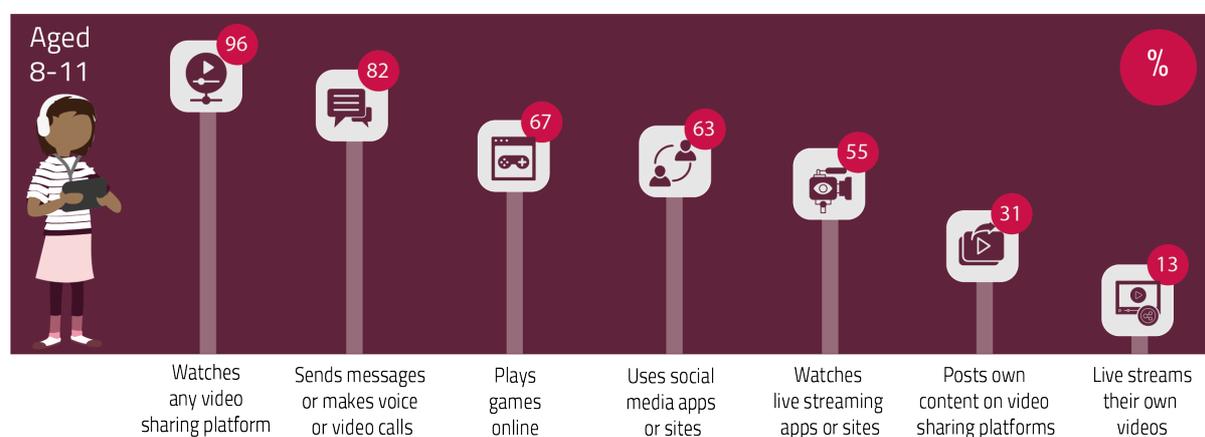
Age 8-11: Developing Skills



Between the ages of 8-11 children further develop the ability to talk about their thoughts and feelings⁶⁸. Alongside this, they attach emotional importance to having friends, and their relationships with friends may be strong. However, 8-11-year-olds are also more susceptible to peer pressure and the influence of others. Cognitively, they might have an increased attention span and the ability to understand the viewpoints of others⁶⁹.

Children aged 8-11 could be described as **developing skills** in media. Smartphone ownership shifts markedly in this group, which correlates with the children's transition to secondary school, and they are likely to be starting to undertake a wider range of online activities without parental intervention.

Online activities of 8-11-year-olds



Children aged 8-11 were doing a wide range of activities online. Most (96%) said they watched videos online, but unlike 3-7-year-olds, the majority (63%) also reported using social media platforms. Children aged 8-11 were also more likely than younger children to interact with others by messaging or calling via an app or site, playing video games online, or watching live streams.

The increase in children who used social media apps at this age was reflected in the types of apps they had profiles on. It was most common for 8-11-year-olds to have profiles on TikTok (32%) and WhatsApp (32%), ahead of YouTube (27%) and Snapchat (24%).

As with children aged 3-7, the most-used apps for sending messages or making calls were WhatsApp (54%) and FaceTime (32%). However, 8-11-year-olds also used social media platforms for this activity, most commonly Snapchat (28%) and TikTok (26%).

Two-thirds of 8-11-year-olds reported playing games online (67%). Video games involving playing against multiple people or teams were becoming popular at this age, played by nearly half (46%)

⁶⁸ Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, Important milestones for children aged 6-8: <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/positiveparenting/middle.html>

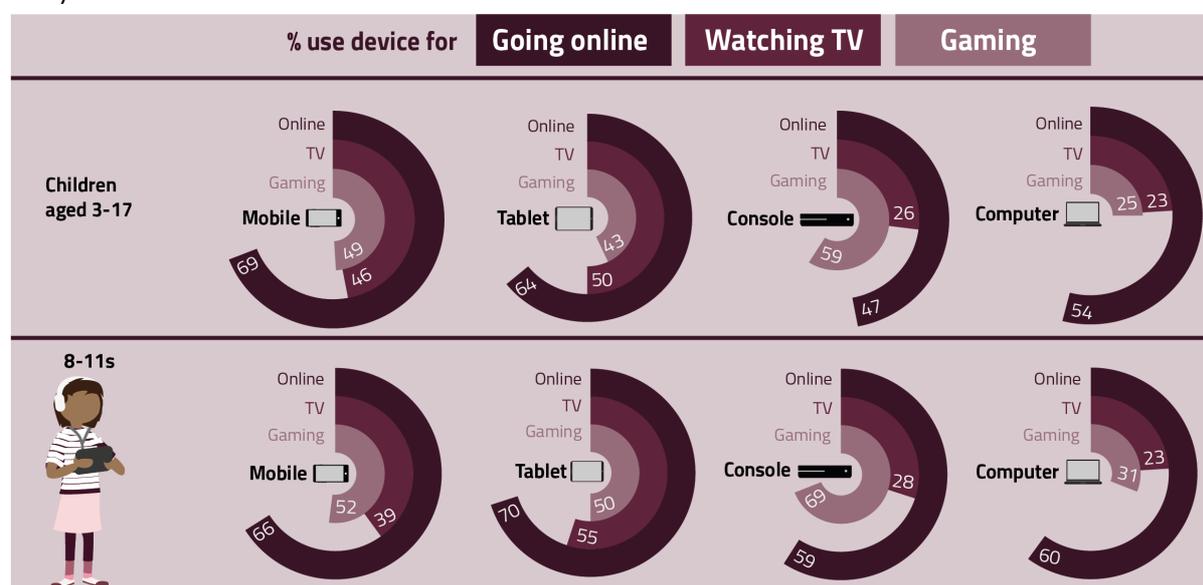
⁶⁹ Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, Important milestones for children aged 9-11: <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/positiveparenting/middle2.html>

who play games. In line with this, seven in ten 8-11-year-olds (71%) who played games online said they had talked to other players through messaging functions or a headset.

Devices used by 8-11-year-olds

As reported by parents, more than half of 8-11-year-olds (55%) owned a mobile phone, a significant increase on children aged 3-4 and 5-7 (both at 20%). This increase correlates with the move to secondary school at this stage, which often prompts parents to give their child a phone.

Taking this into account, although tablets were the most-used devices among 8-11-year-olds for going online (70%) and for watching TV programmes or films (excluding via a TV set) (55%), mobile phones were also popular for these activities (66% and 39% respectively). Consoles were the most-used device by this age group for gaming (69%). The move to secondary school also contributed to the increasing use of desktop or laptop computers to go online (60% of 8-11s vs 24% of 5-7-year-olds).



8-11s: parental oversight

At this age there was less direct parental supervision of children’s online activities compared to younger age groups. Less than a quarter of parents (22%) said they sat beside their 8-11-year-old child and watched or helped with what they were doing online. Instead, more parents supervised their child’s online activity by asking their child (70%) or remaining nearby and regularly checking (69%) what they had been doing online. Parents of this age group were also more likely than parents of any other age group to have looked at their child’s browsing history (52%).

Seven in ten parents of 8-11-year-olds (68%) agreed that their child had a good balance between screen time and doing other things. This may reflect increased social activity among this age group: The Insights Family⁷⁰ found that 8-11-year-olds spent more time being with friends per day (1hr 4 minutes) than they did going online or social media (55 minutes).

⁷⁰ The Insights Family. Average time children aged 8-11 spent on a range of online and offline activities. Sample size: 2,710

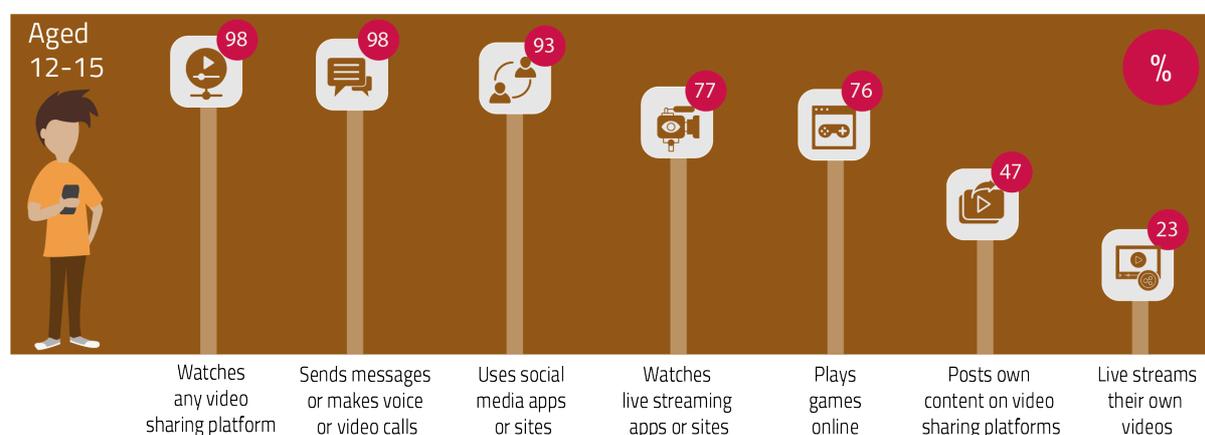
Age 12-15: Connecting and Creating



Between the ages of 12-15 most children begin puberty and may experience concerns about self-image as a result. Parents are still very important in their lives, but children aged 12-15 become more socially independent from them. They develop and assert their personality by making choices about their interests, friendship groups, and school⁷¹. Towards the older end of this age bracket children may develop an interest in romantic relationships⁷².

We have characterised 12-15-year-olds as **connecting and creating** in media. Most children at this stage communicate with others, including via video games or creating and sharing content online. Their use of screen-based media may be heavier than their parents would like.

Online activities of 12-15-year-olds



The social independence of children in this age group was reflected in their use of apps or sites for sending messages or making calls (98%) and social media (93%), activities that were undertaken by far fewer 8-11-year-olds (82% and 63% respectively).

WhatsApp was the most-used app among 12-15-year-olds for sending messages or making calls (80%), closely followed by Snapchat (62%). The use of Instagram (46%) and TikTok (44%) for this purpose are also by now very well established.

As well as communicating with others via message or video/voice calls, it was more popular for children to create and upload content at this age. Almost half of 12-15-year-olds (47%) had posted their own video content online and were most likely to have uploaded them to TikTok (34%) or Snapchat (20%).

Three-quarters of 12-15-year-olds (76%) said they played video games online. Games that involve playing against other people or teams were most popular at this age (49%) and 'shooter' games were played by more children within this age bracket (38%) than by those aged 3-11. Similarly, more

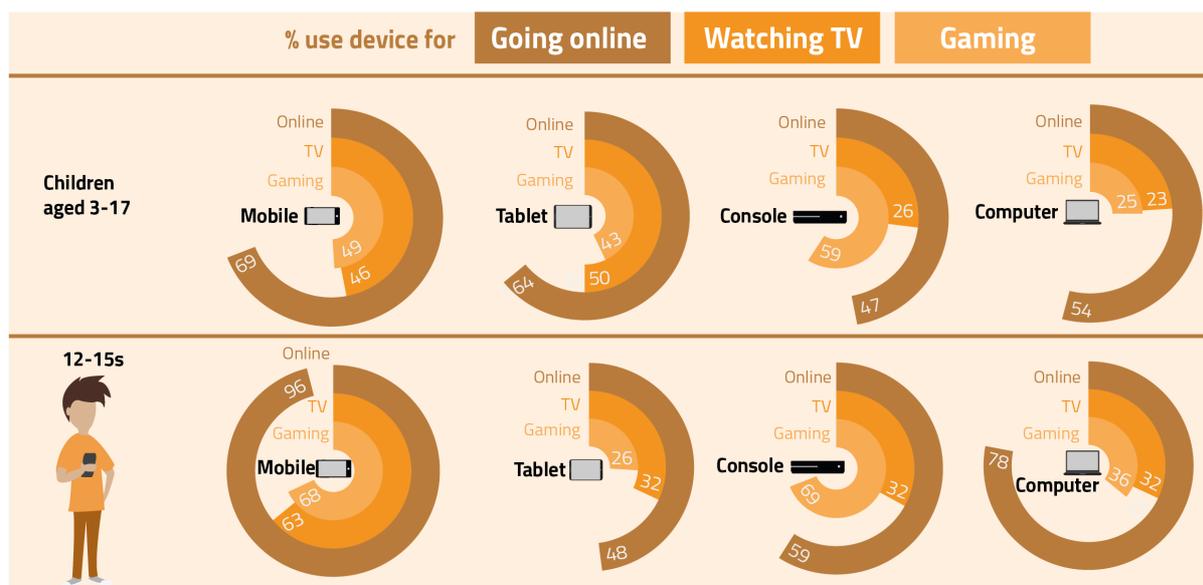
⁷¹Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, Important milestones for children aged 12-14: <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/positiveparenting/adolescence.html>

⁷²Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, Important milestones for children aged 15-17: <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/positiveparenting/adolescence2.html>

children aged 12-15 said they played games with or against people they *didn't* know offline (35%) than younger children. And of the 79% of 12-15-year-olds who said they spoke to others while gaming, 42% reported having spoken to people they only knew *through* the game.

Devices used by 12-15-year-olds

As nearly all 12-15-year-olds (98%) owned a mobile phone, it is unsurprising that phones were their most-used devices for going online (96%) and watching TV or films when not including a TV set (63%). At this age, as many played games on a mobile phone (68%) as on a console (69%).



12-15s: parental oversight

Although most parents of 12-15-year-olds (79%) said they supervised what their child did online, this was much lower than for parents of 8-11-year-olds (97%). Perhaps in response to increased demands for independence at this age, it was most common for parents to supervise their child's online behaviour by asking what they had been doing online (62%). The move away from direct supervision at this age was also evidenced in parents' approach to online safety. Parents of 12-15-year-olds were most likely to talk to their child about this topic (45%) or simply trusted their child to be sensible when online (40%).

As seen, children aged 12-15 were active online, and parents of this age group were less likely than parents of 8-11-year-olds to agree that their child had a good balance between screen time and doing other things (51% vs 68% respectively). The Insights Family⁷³ found that 12-15-year-olds spent more time online or on social media (1hr 24 minutes) per day than they did being with friends⁷⁴ (1hr 12 minutes) – the first age group to show this bias towards being online. In parallel, our study found that the proportion of parents of 16-17-year-olds who found it hard to control their child's screen time increased for this age group, at 44% compared to 36% of parents of 8-11-year-olds.

⁷³ The Insights Family. Average time children aged 12-15 spent on a range of online and offline activities. Sample size: 2,710.

⁷⁴ The answer code 'being with friends' did not explicitly exclude online interactions

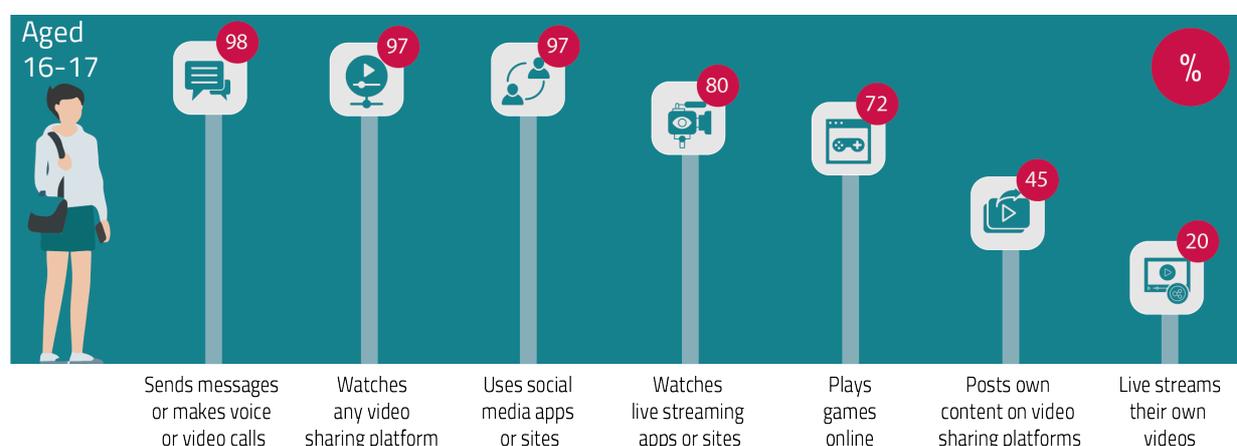
Age 16-17: Branching Out



Between the ages of 16 and 17 children may spend increasingly more time with friends and may also be in search of intimacy, whether through strong platonic or romantic relationships. Children develop a stronger sense of who they are and the ability to think critically about their own choices. Most have gone through puberty, which may raise concerns for them around body image⁷⁵.

At this stage, 16-17-year-olds are **branching out** in media, using a wider and more diverse diet of apps and sites. Platforms that are used by relatively few younger age groups such as Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest feature more for 16-17-year-olds. Their use of screen-based media is often heavier than their parents would like.

Online activities of 16-17-year-olds



Like those aged 12-15, nearly all 16-17-year-olds watched videos online and used apps or sites for messaging or calling and social media, and the pattern was similar regarding watching live streams and playing games online. Where these two age groups differed was in their use of specific apps or sites, and their engagement on social media platforms.

Unlike those aged 12-15, Instagram was used by more 16-17-year-olds (87%) than TikTok (80%). Two-thirds of children aged 16-17 said they used Facebook (65%), three in ten (29%) Twitter, and a quarter (24%) Pinterest, all of which were used by significantly fewer 12-15-year-olds.

As well as having a slightly different diet of apps or sites than 12-15-year-olds, those aged 16-17 were more likely to be 'active' users of social media than younger children; almost two in five 16-17-year-olds (37%) said that they shared, commented or posted things on social media, compared to 31% of 12-15-year-olds.

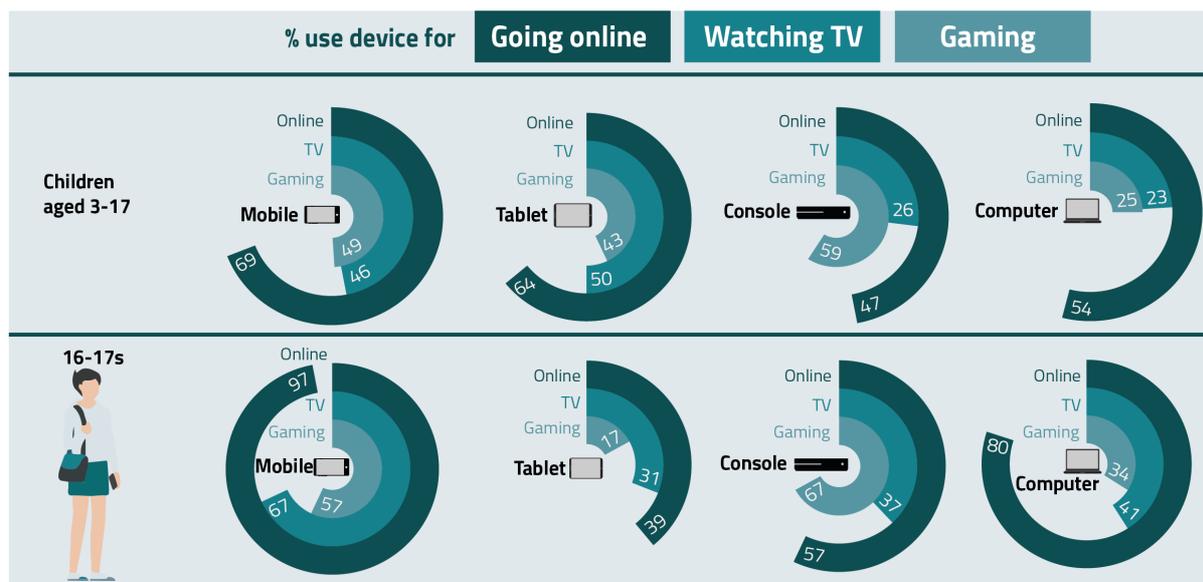
About seven in ten 16-17-year-olds said they played video games online. The majority of online gamers this age said they chatted to others while gaming (79%) and nearly half (47%) indicated they

⁷⁵ Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, Important milestones for children aged 15-17: <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/positiveparenting/adolescence2.html>

talked to people that they *only* knew through the game. Games that involve playing against people or teams were the most-played type of game among 16-17-year-olds (45%).

Devices used by 16-17-year-olds

Like those aged 12-15, mobile phones were the most-used devices by 16-17-year-olds for going online (97%) and watching TV programmes or films when excluding a TV set (67%). Consoles were the most-used device for gaming among this age group (67%), and although used by the majority, fewer 16-17-year-olds than 12-15s (57% vs 68%) used mobile phones for this activity.



16-17s: parental oversight

More than two-fifths of parents of 16-17-year-olds (44%) said they did *not* supervise their child’s online access and use, significantly more than for all other age groups. Parents of this age group were also the most likely to rely on ‘trusting their child to be sensible’ for their online safety (53%).

Almost six in ten parents of 16-17-year-olds (56%) agreed that their child had a good balance between screen time and doing other things. Compared to other age groups, The Insights Family⁷⁶ found that children aged 16-17 spent the most time going online or on social media per day (1hr 38 minutes) compared to children aged 3-15. However, they also spent the most time being with friends⁷⁷ (1hr 20 minutes).

⁷⁶ The Insights Family. Average time children aged 16-17 spent on a range of online and offline activities. Sample size: 1,356.

⁷⁷ The answer code ‘being with friends’ did not explicitly exclude online interactions.

4. Girls and boys

Introduction

In this section we turn to how media use varies between girls and boys⁷⁸. At a high level, there were as many similarities as differences in girls' and boys' media behaviour; for example, girls and boys had equally high use of VSPs for viewing content, and both were most likely to use YouTube to do this. However, there are some interesting differences relating to the overall habits of girls and boys in relation to social media, posting videos on VSPs, viewing live streaming content, and playing video games.

Platform use

Girls aged 3-17 were slightly more likely than boys to use apps or sites for social media (65% vs 62%), but there were marked differences between girls and boys in the individual apps used, and still greater differences in what they were using social media for.

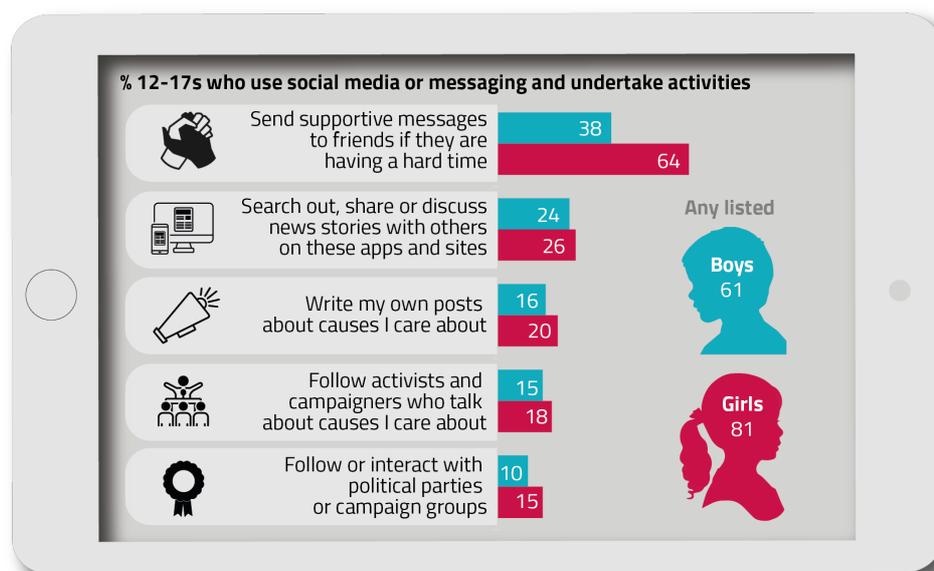
In terms of individual apps or sites used for social media functions, use of TikTok among 3-17-year-olds was higher for girls (45% compared to 41% of boys), as was Snapchat (41% vs 34%), Instagram (36% vs 32%), Pinterest (13% vs 6%), and BeReal⁷⁹ (5% vs 2%). Boys' usage was higher for Reddit (6% vs 4%).

More girls than boys aged 8-17 who used social media said that they shared, commented, or posted things (34% vs 27%). Conversely, from age 12, girls were less likely than boys of the same age to *only* read or watch things on social media: 16% of girls aged 12-15 (vs 27% of boys aged 12-15) and 14% of girls aged 16-17 (vs 21% of boys aged 16-17).

As shown in the graphic below, 61% of boys aged 12-17 had undertaken one of the activities listed, compared to 81% of girls in this age group. In particular, girls were more likely than boys to send supportive messages to friends (64% vs 38%) and to follow or interact with political parties or campaign groups (15% vs 10%).

⁷⁸ Our media literacy surveys have quotas set for children's gender within age (plus other demographics), asking parents to select from 'Male' or 'Female' for each child to be interviewed. In line with this, we have used the grouping of 'girls' and 'boys' for this section.

⁷⁹ 'BeReal' was included in our tracking study in 2022 and use increased from 1% of 3-17s in wave 1 (summer) to 6% in wave 2 (autumn).



Posting videos on VSPs

In the same way that their engagement on social media was higher, girls were more likely to post their own videos on VSPs. A third of girls aged 3-17 (34%) had posted self-made videos online compared to 29% of boys of this age. Unlike watching content, posting videos on VSPs is not something children of all ages commonly do, so this skews towards 12-17-year-olds; among girls of this age, five in ten (52%) had posted videos, compared to four in ten (41%) boys.

TikTok was the most-used platform for posting videos, used by 20% of children aged 3-17 for this purpose (up from 18% in 2021). More girls than boys used TikTok for posting videos (24% vs 16%); and girls were also more likely than boys to post videos on Snapchat (14% vs 9%) and on Instagram (12% vs 8%). Conversely, boys were more likely than girls to post videos on YouTube (14% vs 9%).

Viewing live-streamed content

About three in five (58%) children aged 3-17 had viewed live-streamed videos, and boys aged 5-11 were more likely than girls of the same age to do this (52% vs 44%). YouTube Live was most popular overall but was used by a higher proportion of boys (43%) than girls (35%), as was Twitch (12% vs 6%). Girls were more likely to use TikTok LIVE (30% vs 26%) and Instagram Live (20% vs 17%).

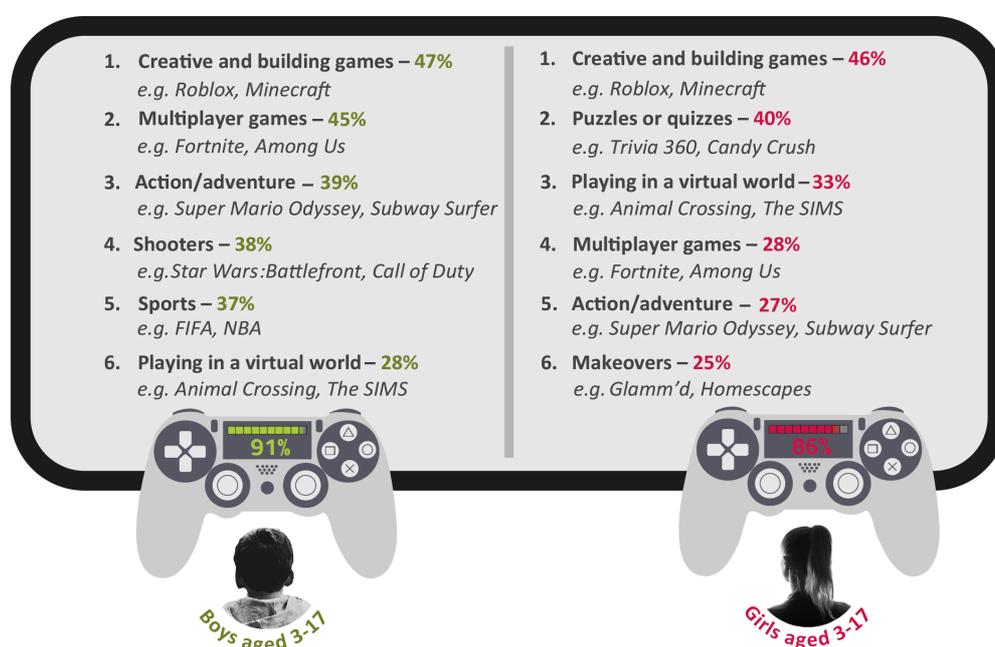
Similar skews for boys and girls for these apps and sites are also evident in the VSPs used to consume video content. Notably, Twitch was used by nearly one in five boys aged 12-17 to view video content, twice the level for girls. Pinterest was twice as likely to be used for viewing videos by girls than by boys (6% vs 3%).

Gaming activities

About nine in ten children aged 3-17 (89%) played video games, and girls and boys were equally likely to do this until the age of 16-17, when boys were more likely to game than girls (94% vs 80%).

Almost three-quarters of boys aged 3-17 (73%) used a games console or handheld games player for gaming, compared to less than half of girls (45%), whereas tablets were more likely to be used by girls (47% vs 38%).

Creative and building games were the most popular type of game overall, enjoyed by almost half of both boys and girls aged 3-17 who game. Other types of game were less universally popular; for example, use of sports games such as FIFA or NBA was higher for boys (37% vs 11% girls), and puzzle or quiz games were higher for girls (40% vs 23% boys).



Our data also pointed to differences between girls and boys regarding the rules their parents had put in place relating to their gaming. Parents of boys aged 3-17 who played video games were more likely to have at least one gaming rule than parents of girls who played (92% vs 84%).

These rules for boys were more likely to be about time spent gaming (60% vs 51% for girls); when they game (54% vs 43%); purchasing or downloading of games (70 vs, 55%); appropriate age ratings (55% vs 47%); and with or against whom they can play games (51% vs 40%).

In-game purchasing

The Insights Family⁸⁰ data suggests that children aged 8-17 who spent money on video games (including in-app purchases) had spent an average of £38 in the past month.

When asked about whether they had any concerns relating to their child's gaming, responses were broadly similar among parents of boys and girls in most areas, except for in-game purchases. While over half of all parents (55%) of children who game said they worried that pressure is placed on their child to make in-game purchases, more parents of girls aged 3-17 claimed *not* to be concerned about this than parents of boys aged 3-17 (32% vs 24%).

Boys in our Children's Media Lives study seemed to be more inclined to play games that required a high level of commitment to progress in the game, such as FIFA and NBA 2K. Girls were playing a variety of games such as Bit Life and Taco World which did not require as much practice or investment to play but involved creative or life simulation elements. We can see from our tracking data that these trends correlate with the types of games that boys and girls reported playing. The examples of Alfie and Ben shows how involving games can be, in terms of challenge and competition:

Alfie (8) wanted to improve his game play in Fortnite. Real players online presented more of a challenge than the in-game Zombie modes, so Alfie preferred to play against those.

Ben's (15) gaming had reduced since the previous wave, but he still gamed for about two hours per night. He preferred playing other online players in the online game modes of FIFA and NBA 2K because they felt more competitive. New NBA 2K players were released each evening, and the better, more desirable players cost more. Playing several hours every day allowed Ben to earn more credits, which he could use to buy new players and improve his team.

The example of Amber illustrates a different approach that was more common among girls within our qualitative sample. Less time, money and effort were invested within individual games, with new games picked up at a greater frequency:

Amber (10) also had over 25 free solo-player games saved to a folder on her phone. She would download an app whenever it was advertised to her on the app store or on TikTok to see if she liked it. She had so many that she couldn't remember the premise of a lot of the games. She would often only play them once and switch to another game when she got bored.

⁸⁰ The Insights Family, average spend of children aged 3-17 who spent money in the past month (at time of survey completion). Sample size: 10, 173. Based on responses collected between 1st January 2022 to 31st December 2022

5. Being online: experiences and attitudes

Having explored how media fits within the lives of children, we now consider their experiences in this landscape. This section provides an overview of the positive and negative aspects of the online space, from the viewpoints of children and parents, and explores the types of activities parents undertake in managing their child’s media use. In the latest wave of Children’s Media Lives research we observed, and discuss below, some shifts in behaviour. For example, some of our participants were less likely to post personal content than in previous years, which raises a number of questions about the type of media literacy being displayed.

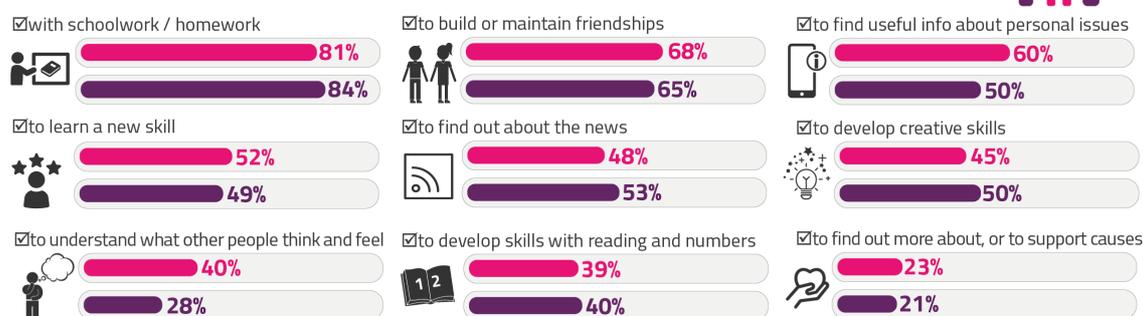
Benefits of being online

Children aged 12-17⁸¹ often recognised there were benefits to going online, and parents of children that age could also see these positives. Similar proportions of 12-17-year-olds and parents of children of this age agreed that being able to go online helps with schoolwork/homework (81% children, 84% parents), building or maintaining friendships (68%, 65%), and developing creative skills (45%, 50%).

Some benefits of being online were more apparent to children in 2022; specifically, helping with their school/ homework (81%, up from 77% in 2021), building and maintaining friendships (68%, up from 64%), and finding out about the news (48%, up from 44%).

Children aged 12-17 vs. parents’ views on the benefits of the internet

Being online helps **me** / **them**...



Specifically, in relation to social media, a majority of children aged 8 to 17 using these apps or sites were able to identify the benefits of these apps or sites, *all or most of the time*. About seven in ten said they felt safe using these types of apps (73%). There was a positive year-on-year shift in the proportion of children aged 8-17 claiming that that these platforms made them feel happy (67%, up from 59% in 2021), while 66% thought that it helped them stay close to their friends (up from 61% in 2021)⁸².

⁸¹ We only asked children aged 12 or above and their parents to answer questions related to the benefits of going online.

⁸² We did not ask parents of younger children (3-7) to answer questions about how their child felt about social media or messaging apps as it likely to be difficult for them to express how such apps may or may not benefit them.

Downsides of being online

While going online can be of great benefit to children and enrich their lives, there can also be risks to children’s wellbeing and safety.

Children aged 8-17 identified the negative aspects of using social media or messaging apps or sites: two fifths of 8-17-year-olds thought that people were mean or unkind to each other on social media and messaging apps or sites *all or most* of the time, while 26% believed there was pressure to be popular on these types of platforms *all or most* of the time.

In Children’s Media Lives, concern about how they came across had stopped some children from posting publicly.

“I used to post. When I first downloaded it, it was mortifying. About two years [ago], I used to post photo dumps and stuff, just cringy things that I don’t like anymore, so I hid them. I’ve deleted those ones, but I have other ones that I post just straight into My Eyes Only⁸³.”

Taylor, 14

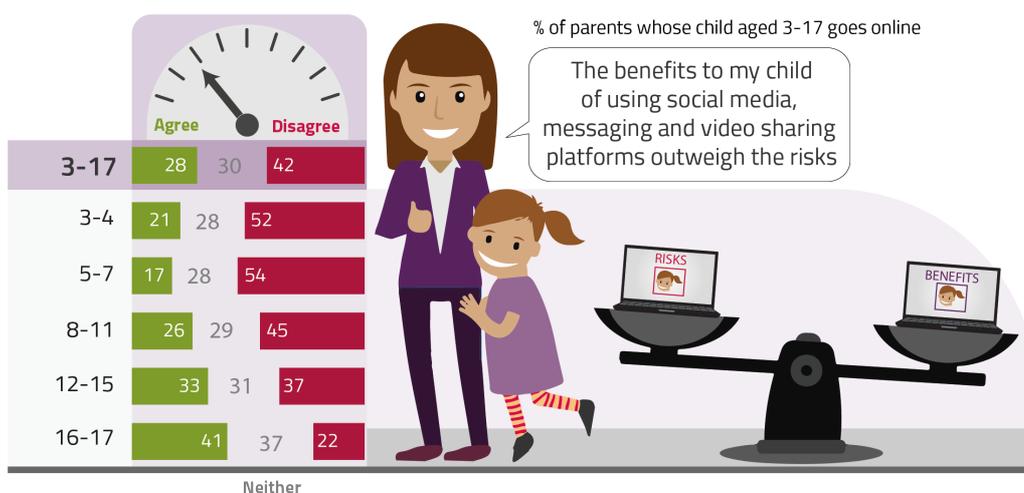
When children did post, they often copied trends that had created popularity for others, sometimes without even understanding what the trends meant.

“I just posted this. I don’t really know what it means. It just says ‘who ate all the Nutella?’ and then ‘Jamal’ so I did that.”

Amber, 10

Less than three in ten parents of 3-17-year-olds (28%) believed the benefits of their child using social media, messaging and video-sharing apps or sites outweighed the risks, rising to four in ten parents of 16-17-year-olds (41%), and twice the proportion of parents of 3-4-year-olds.

About one in three parents (28%) were unable to express a positive or negative opinion about the risks and benefits of these types of internet use, and it may be that they find it difficult to evaluate it, or that they perceive the impact to be neutral.



⁸³ My Eyes Only is a functionality of Snapchat, which allows users to save ‘Snaps’ and ‘Stories’ to ‘Memories’ and protect images with a passcode so that only they can only view them after this is entered. Source: [How does My Eyes Only work? – Snapchat Support](#)

Sharing personal information online

An equal proportion of parents with children aged 3-17 expressed concern about companies collecting information about what their child does online (65%) and their child giving out personal details to inappropriate people online (65%). Proportions feeling these concerns did not differ greatly among parents of different age groups. Parents of 3-11-year-olds were as likely as those of 12-15s to be concerned about companies collecting information (65% vs 63%); but were slightly more likely to be concerned about their child giving out personal information (66% vs 61% of parents of 12-15s).

Children themselves, on the other hand, expressed varying degrees of caution about sharing personal information. A fifth of 12-15-year-olds claimed that they never felt comfortable sharing personal information online, and more than half (56%) claimed they sometimes avoided using apps or sites that asked them to share personal information. Conversely, about one in ten (13%) claimed they always shared personal information online, even if they were not comfortable about it.

Almost half of 12-17-year-olds (46%) were aware of the ability to use a privacy mode on a web browser and 22% said they had done so. This could be a method used by some to protect their personal data but is likely to leave parents less able to check what they are doing online.

Exposure to age-inappropriate content

More than seven in ten parents of children aged 3-17 were concerned about their child seeing age-inappropriate content (75%) and or their child seeing 'adult' or sexual content online (73%). In contrast, fewer parents (49%) expressed concerns about the content their children were seeing on the TV programmes they watched, in terms of featuring violence, bad language, disturbing content, sexual content or any other form of age-inappropriate content.

Experiencing harm or detriment

Parents of 3-17-year-olds were concerned about how some content could harm or negatively influence their children. Seven in ten parents were concerned about their child seeing content online that would encourage them to harm themselves. Six in ten were worried about the possibility of their child being influenced by extreme views online, whether political, social or religious.

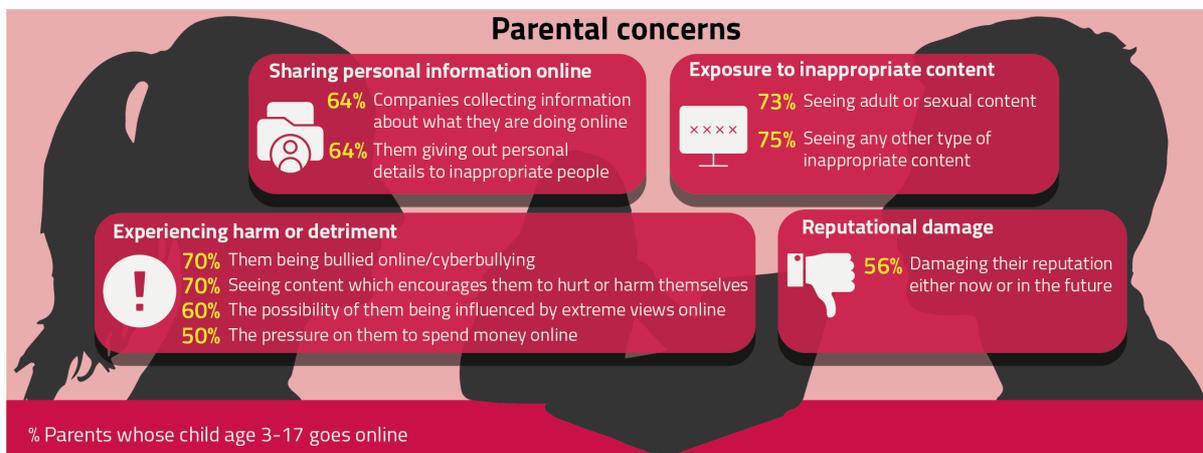
Alongside worries around harmful content, parents were concerned about their child being bullied in some way online or via communications technologies. For example, 70% of parents of 3-17-year-olds said they were worried about their child being bullied online, and about 54% of parents whose child played games online expressed concern about their child being bullied by other players while gaming. More than half of parents overall (52%) were worried about their child being bullied via calls, texts, emails, or messages on their mobile phone and parents of children aged 8-11 (55%) and 12-15 (57%) were more likely to have this concern than parents of 16-17-year-olds (40%).

Reputational damage

Parents also showed concern about how their child's behaviour online might affect how they are perceived by others. Over half of parents (56%) said they were concerned that their child's reputation might be damaged, either now or in the future, by their online behaviour.

Summary of parental concerns

The graphic below summarises these concerns among parents of 3-17-year-olds surrounding their child’s online behaviours and use.

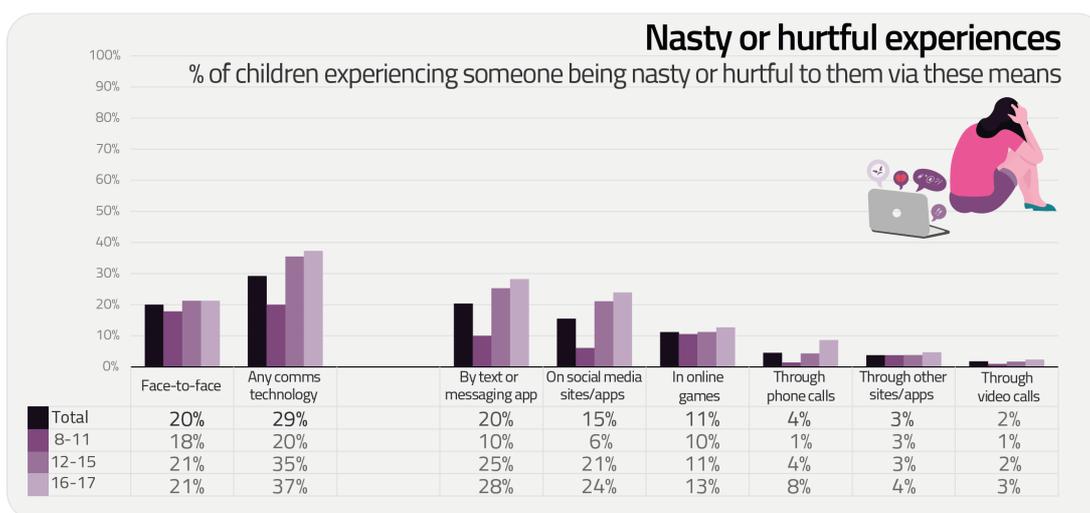


When considering how age of child may impact parental concern, our data indicates that parents of 16-17-year-olds were less likely than average to say they were concerned about each of the nine aspects of their child’s online use.

Negative experiences online

Experiencing something nasty or hurtful

Almost three in ten children aged 8-17 (29%) had experienced a person being nasty or hurtful to them via a communication technology⁸⁴, while two in ten had had a nasty or hurtful face-to-face experience. Those aged 12-15 (35%) and 16-17 (37%) were more likely to have experienced this than children aged 8-11 (20%). This year there was a decrease in 8-11-year-olds saying they had experienced someone being nasty or hurtful via comms technology, from 27% in 2021 to 20%.



⁸⁴ As listed in the graphic, communications technology includes text messaging or app, social media site or app, in online games, through phone calls, through other sites or apps or through video calls.

Encountering unpleasant content in media

There was a decrease in the proportion of 8-17-year-olds who said they had seen something they found worrying or nasty online in the last 12 months, from 36% in 2021 to 29% in 2022, across all age groups.

As outlined in ‘the children’s media use landscape’, a significant proportion of children watch TV in some way, and our Cross-Platform Media Tracker⁸⁵ collects information from 12-15-year-olds regarding any negative experiences they have had from content they have seen on TV. We have included this for completeness and provided the data for the same age group in our tracking data related to negative online experiences, although comparisons need to be made with caution as the data come from different studies with different research criteria, measures and outcomes.

Among 12-15-year-olds who had watched broadcast TV in the past 12 months, about a quarter (23%) had, in that timeframe, personally seen something on TV which *offended* them and about a fifth (18%) had personally seen anything on TV they thought was *harmful or damaging*⁸⁶. Among 12-15-year-olds in our media literacy tracking studies, three in ten (31%) had seen something they found *worrying or nasty* online.

Actions taken by children to protect themselves

Most children aged 8-11 who had encountered something worrying or nasty online (84%) told someone about it. However, children aged 12-15 (82%) and 16-17 (79%) were less likely to have told someone in this situation than those aged 8-11 (91%).

As well as talking about negative experiences, children aged 12-17 may also use technical controls or tools to manage their experiences with others online. Two-thirds of 12-17-year-olds indicated that they had blocked someone on social media that they did not wish to hear from, and a third had changed their settings so that fewer people could view their profile.

However, only one in seven children aged 12-17 (14%) had used a reporting or flagging function to report inappropriate content, which may be because they are not aware of this feature. Awareness levels for this type of function (35%) were lower than for other types of protective measure, such as blocking people on social media (84%).

Use of parental controls

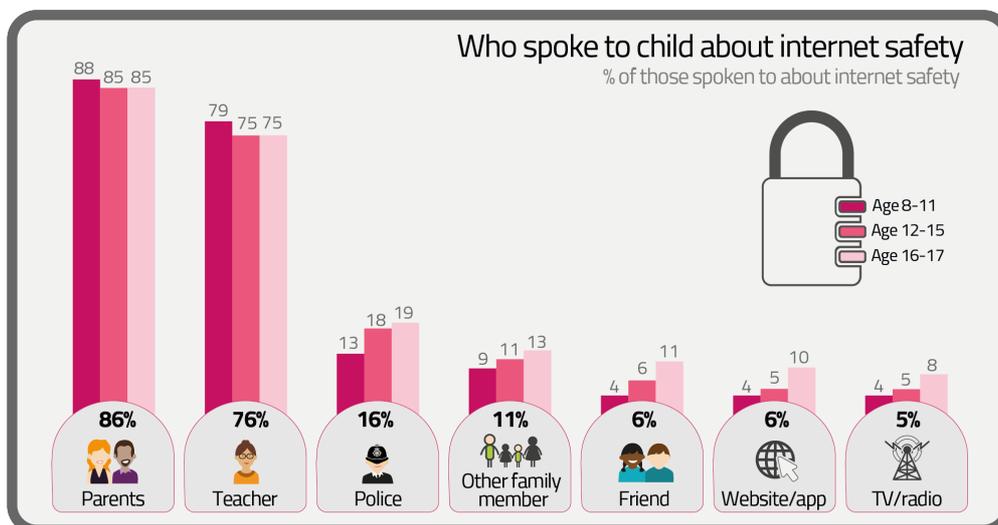
Seven in ten parents of children aged 3-17 said they had some form of technical control in place to manage their child’s access to content online. Overall, the most-used technical controls were those that are built into the device by the manufacturer (34%). Parents were far less likely to use controls that required them to download specific software or apps. For example, only 13% of parents said they used security apps that can be installed on their child’s device to monitor the apps they use and for how long.

⁸⁵ Ofcom’s [Cross-Platform Media Tracker](#), 2022

⁸⁶ Ofcom’s [Cross-Platform Media Tracker](#), 2022

Talking about online safety

About nine in ten 8-17-year-olds (91%) had talked to someone about how to use the internet safely, and of those who had, 88% had done so with *any* family member, usually a parent (86%). Similarly, 80% had received information about how to use the internet safely by someone outside the family, most commonly a teacher (76%). The graphic below shows these measures by age group.



Almost nine in ten (86%) parents said they had previously spoken to their child about how to stay safe online. This may have included talking about the potential dangers of content on sites or apps that might be unsuitable for their age, about sharing too much information online, and about contact with people they do not know. About half (47%) of parents who had talked to their child about how to stay safe online claimed to do so at least every few weeks.

6. Critical understanding among children

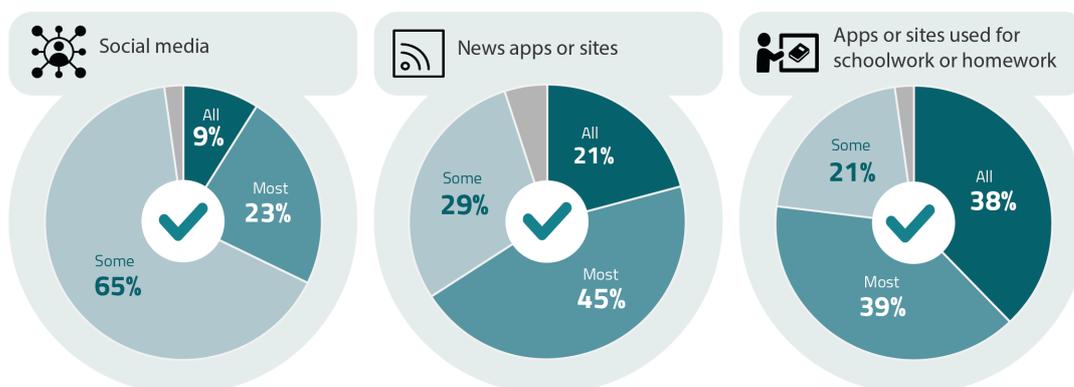
Critical understanding is a core component of media literacy; it enables children to understand, question, and manage their media environment. This is important if they are to get the benefits that the internet and other media can offer while avoiding potential risks or harms.

The focus on critical understanding in our surveys has been expanded and enhanced over the past two years. In this section we examine critical understanding in relation to how children view information from different sources, with a focus on news and social media. We gather the quantitative data via a combination of direct questions and visual scenario assessments; some of these are directed only at children over the age of 8 or of 12, and we indicate where the age group changes⁸⁷. We also presented these visual scenarios to our Children’s Media Lives participants who showed a reliance on visual clues when assessing trustworthiness. We discuss their use of social media as a source of news, and the potential impact of this behaviour.

Children’s views of accurate or truthful sources of information

A third of children aged 8-17 (32%) said that they believed *all or most* of what they saw on social media to be accurate and true, much lower than the proportions who believed this of news apps and sites (66%), or those used for school or homework (77%, up from 74% in 2021 and the only measure to change year-on-year).

Children's assessment of whether info on an app/site is accurate and true



⁸⁷ Data is taken from our ‘Children’s Online Knowledge and Understanding’ study which is among children aged 8 to 17. Data for children aged 3-7 is collected from parents or guardians via the survey and for this reason it is not appropriate to ask questions regarding understanding among children this age.

Our News Consumption Survey found that children appraised different sources of news in different ways: 12-15-year-olds were more likely to feel that news they had heard from family was *always or mostly* true and accurate (79%), followed by 72% feeling this way about news on the radio, and 65% in relation to TV news. When considering the reliability of online news, over half of children aged 12-15 (54%) believed that that news stories on websites or apps were *always or mostly* true or accurate. The sources *least* likely to be thought of as accurate and truthful were friends (37%) and social media (30%).

Despite the scepticism shown by most children about the information they see on social media, our News Consumption Survey also found that almost three in ten children aged 12-15 used TikTok⁸⁸ as a news source in 2022 (28%), up from 22% in 2021.

Our Children's Media Lives study showed how children use social media platforms for getting information. This information was wide-ranging; three children reported receiving news of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth's death on TikTok or YouTube Shorts:

"I was on TikTok and I was refreshing it over and over again and the next minute 'RIP Queen Elizabeth' and I was like 'Oh my God, she has died' so I rang up my mum."

Bryony, 14

Others more actively sought out opinions on current affairs from social media. For example, Alice followed Instagram pages that she felt gave a more nuanced viewpoint on Israel than the mainstream news outlets reporting on the Israel-Palestine conflict.

"I follow a couple of pages that stand with Israel. I think I found it when there were terror attacks going on. So, they post a lot of updates about Israel, because obviously the news doesn't really portray Israel. You don't really even hear about it on the news. So that's kind of how I find out about things in Israel."

Alice, 17

⁸⁸ According to our News Consumption Survey, TikTok was used by significantly more 12-15-year-olds for following news stories in 2022 compared to 2021. Although Instagram was used more overall for this purpose (29%), there was not a significant increase in use of this apps since 2021 (28%).

How children identify what is genuine or fake on social media

Almost all children aged 12-17 use social media, and nine in ten have least one profile. To understand how children assess the types of information that they may see on social media, we presented them with images of a post from the NHS Instagram page (relating to Covid-19 vaccinations), and a social media profile that had been created specifically for the study.

Assessing a social media post



Respondents aged 12-17 were shown this NHS Instagram post⁸⁹ and asked whether they thought it was genuine or not. The majority (80%) recognised that it was a genuine post, whereas 11% claimed it was fake and 9% were unsure.

As a follow-up diagnostic question, they were then asked to identify (by clicking/touching directly on the image) the different parts of the post which indicated to them that it was either genuine or not. The presence of the NHS logo was the most common indicator selected by those who felt that the post was genuine (61%), followed by the HM Government logo (39%), the 'verified' tick (28%), and the NHS username (28%). These responses suggest that children place weight on visual cues such as logos – which can easily be copied or duplicated – rather than information such as web links.

Children who felt that the post was *not* genuine selected the text on the post to make this decision, with half selecting 'Get a booster dose' (48%) and almost a quarter selecting 'Join us, let's get protected' (22%).

Reviewing these scenarios in Children's Media Lives, children identified the visual cues that implied trustworthiness. Bryony, age 14, pointed out the NHS logo:

"They are reliable social media posts because they're from the NHS who are a well-known medical company throughout the whole of the UK."

Bryony, 14

Peter explained why the 'verified' tick was significant to him.

"On Instagram you're going to have to be fairly reputable to have a verified account."

Peter, 17

⁸⁹ NHS Instagram account, 16th January 2022 (NHS on Instagram - [Get a booster dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, and protect yourself, your family and the NHS.](#)) Contains public sector information licensed under the [Open Government Licence v3.0](#). Please note, sources were shown at the end of the survey during fieldwork.

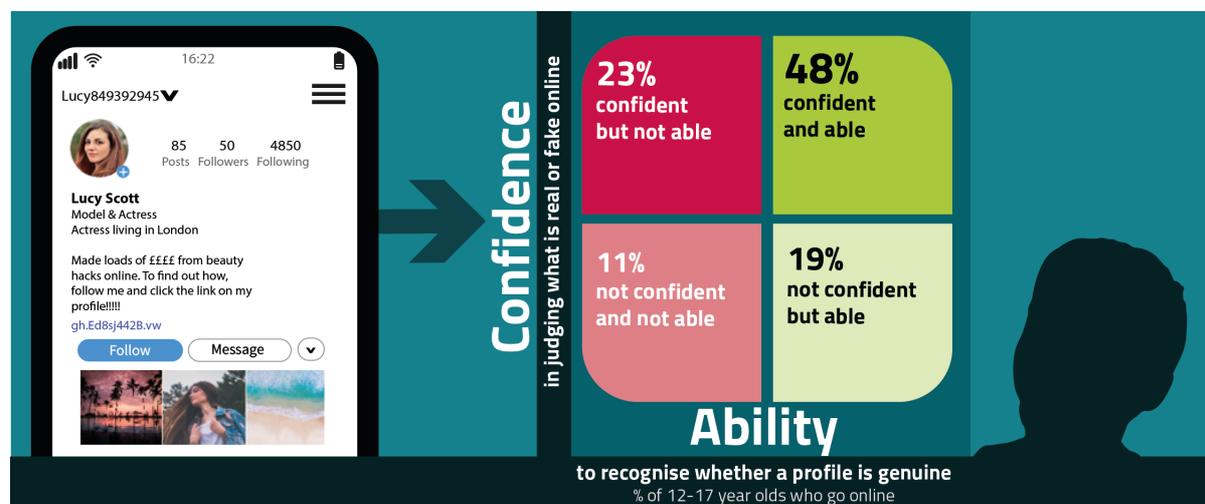
Assessing a social media profile

We also presented 12-17-year-olds with a fake social media profile and asked them to judge whether they thought the profile was real or not. Two-thirds recognised that the profile was not genuine. However, the remainder were split between thinking that the profile was genuine (18%) and being unable to give an answer either way (15%). Girls were more likely than boys to recognise the profile as fake (71% compared to 61%).

Of the 12-17-year-olds who *incorrectly* identified the social media profile as real, three in ten (31%) highlighted the main profile picture as an indicator of authenticity, a quarter (24%) selected the number of people the account was following, and 22% clicked on the picture of a person posted on the account (who resembles the person in the profile picture).

Those who correctly identified the social media profile as fake were less influenced by aesthetic features and were more likely to have been made suspicious by areas of the profile that included references to ‘making money online’ (78%), following a high number of people (34%), and a link that was not easily recognisable (47%).

Seven in ten children aged 12-17 (70%) said that they were confident in their ability to judge what is real and what is fake online, rising to eight in ten (82%) 16-17-year-olds. The following graphic shows the relationship between the stated level of confidence of the child and their identification of the profile in our scenario as fake.



90

Twenty-three per cent of children aged 12-17 who had claimed to be confident in their ability to differentiate between real and fake online, failed to identify the profile as fake. Although this proportion was down from 27% in 2021, it still means that nearly a quarter were overconfident in their ability, and in a position of potential vulnerability.

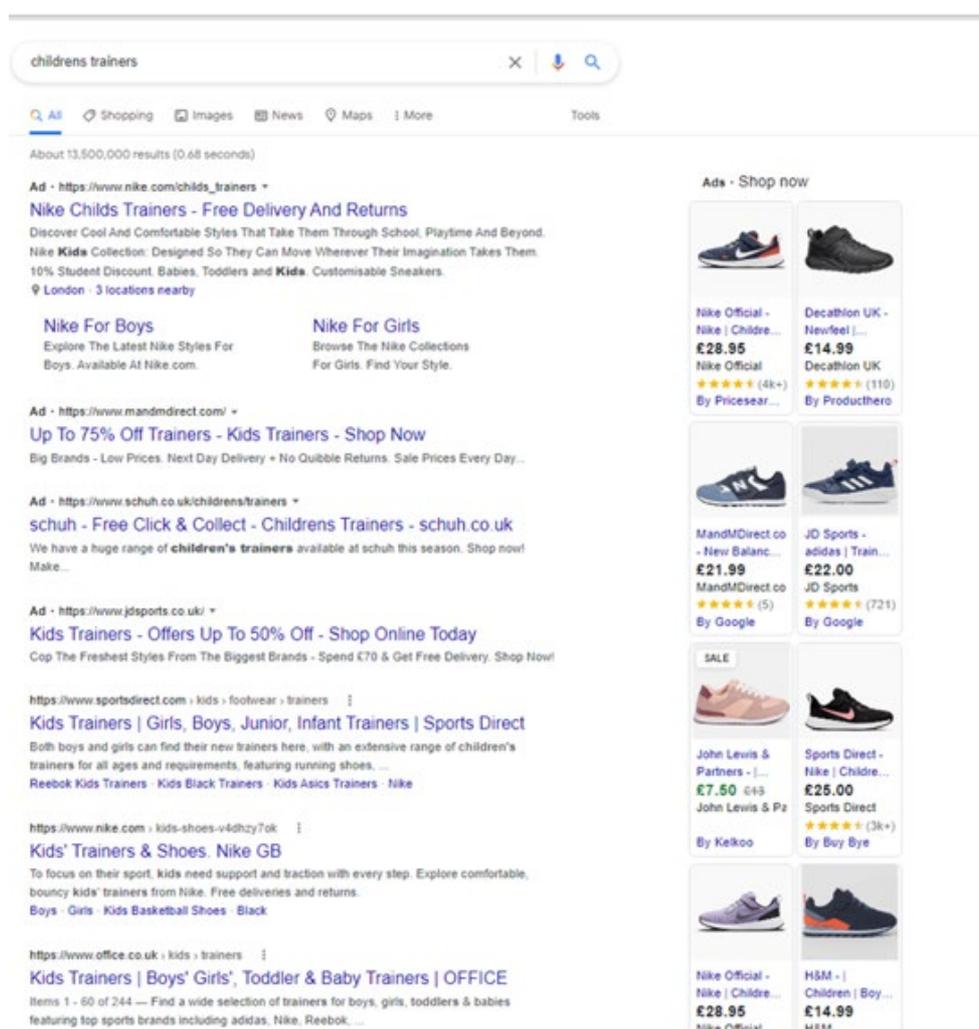
⁹⁰ This profile is a fictional profile. Image source: Pexels. Sources were shown at the end of the survey during fieldwork

Understanding the internet as a commercial landscape

Online critical understanding can also help children to navigate some of the commercial incentives at play in the online landscape. We explored this in terms of advertising.

Recognising advertising within search results

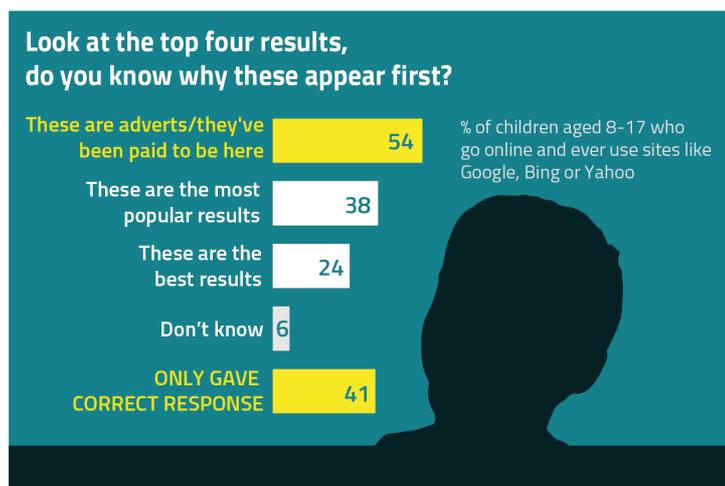
More than nine in ten (93%) children aged 8-17 in our study claimed to use search engines⁹¹. To measure their understanding of advertising in search engine results, we presented them with a screenshot of a Google search for trainers (see image below) and asked why the top four results appeared there (these were marked with the word ‘ad’)⁹².



⁹¹ To clarify what we meant by search engine for respondents, we asked children aged 8-17 whether they used sites or apps like Google, Bing or Yahoo to look for things online.

⁹² Source: Google search for children’s trainers. Images of trainers (reading top to bottom): Nike Official; Decathlon UK; M and M Direct, New Balance; JD Sports, Adidas; John Lewis & Partners; Sports Direct, Nike; Nike; H&M. Sources were shown at the end of the survey during fieldwork.

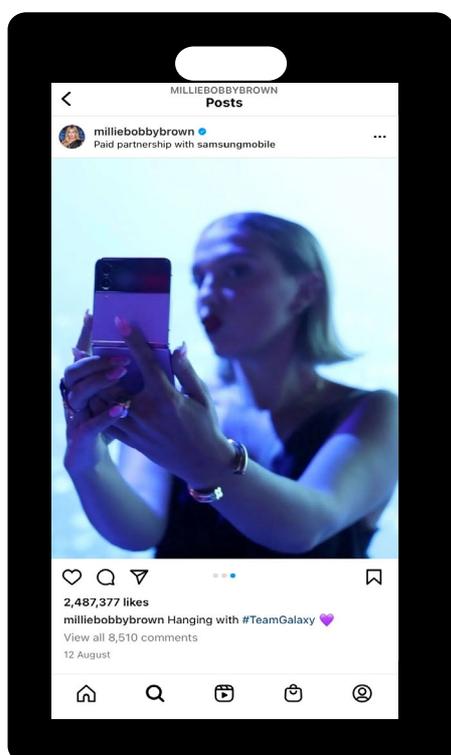
More than half of the 8-17-year-olds who use search engines (54%) correctly recognised these as sponsored results. However, a proportion also selected other, incorrect, reasons such as ‘they are the most popular results’ (38%) and/or ‘these are the best results’ (24%).



Older children, especially those aged 16-17 (50%), were more able than those aged 8-11 (33%) to identify advertising correctly in this scenario.

When comparing confidence in spotting advertising with the ability to do so, we found that two in five children aged 12-17 (41%) claimed to be confident in their ability to detect advertising and correctly identified *only* the top search results as ‘paid for’, an increase from 36% in 2021.

Detecting influencer paid partnerships



To understand whether children aged 12-17 can recognise influencer advertising on social media, we presented children with a real social media post shared by actress Millie Bobby Brown on her Instagram feed and asked them why they thought she might share a post about the product shown (a Samsung Galaxy mobile phone).⁹³

Three-quarters of 12-17-year-olds correctly recognised that Millie Bobby Brown had been paid to promote the product, as indicated by the ‘Paid partnership with Samsung mobile’ text visible in the post.

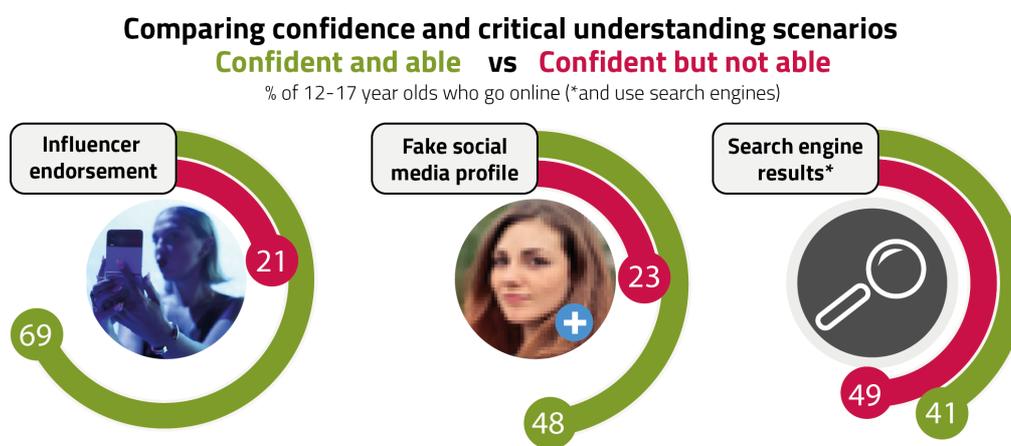
However, three in ten 12-17-year-olds thought that the actress had posted this to her feed because she thought the product was *cool* or *good to use*, and a similar proportion thought she wanted to simply share this information with her followers (27%). However, considering that influencers may have more than one reason to promote one product rather than another (e.g. they may actually like or use the

⁹³ Source: Millie Bobby Brown Instagram account, 12th August 2022, ([Millie Bobby Brown on Instagram: “Hanging with #TeamGalaxy”](#)). Sources were shown at the end of the survey during fieldwork.

product they are being paid to promote), *any* mention of being paid is considered a correct response.

Comparing our scenarios

The graphic below summarises the confidence and ability findings we have described for the three scenarios where we have applied this analysis. More children aged 12-17 (69%) were both confident in their ability and able to identify advertising in the example influencer post, higher than the proportions being both confident and able in recognising a fake social media profile (48%) or search results (41%).



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⁹⁴ Influencer endorsement image: Source: Millie Bobby Brown Instagram account, 12th August 2022 ([Instagram handle – milliebobbybrown](#)), ([Millie Bobby Brown on Instagram: “Hanging with #TeamGalaxy ❤️”](#)). Sources were shown at the end of the survey during fieldwork.

Fake social media profile image. Image source: Pexels.

7. Media use by nation: a snapshot

In this section we provide an overview of media use among 3-17-year-olds across the four nations – England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. The key points can be found in the graphic below.



Resources to further explore the data

This report and accompanying Annex documents provide an overview of the key data that we collect via the children’s media literacy tracking studies. All the data collected is available here in several different formats:

<p>Via an interactive tool, which provides data from all the children’s studies, with questions grouped into similar themes. Data can be viewed at a total level, or can be filtered for individual age bands, by gender, nation and socio-economic group</p>	<p>Link to Interactive data</p>
<p>In the form of associated documents, published on Ofcom’s Statistical Release Calendar 2023, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fixed data tabulations which provide data for each question split by demographic groups, including by age band, gender and nation • Open data in .csv and SPSS format that can be used for bespoke analysis • Survey questionnaires for each of the four children’s and parent’s surveys • Technical report covering all children’s media literacy surveys 	<p>Link to children's media literacy survey documents</p>
<p>Links to our media literacy research</p>	<p>Link to Ofcom’s media literacy research pages</p>