Internet safety and online harms: Ofcom’s children’s media literacy research

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Ofcom’s media literacy duty

• Ofcom has a statutory duty to promote media literacy under Section 11 of the Communications Act 2003.

• This includes a duty to “take such steps ... as appear to Ofcom calculated to... bring about, or encourage others to bring about...” a set of aspects of public awareness and understanding related to “the electronic media”. Under Section 14 (6a) of the Act we have a duty to make arrangements for the carrying out of research into the matters mentioned in Section 11 (1).

• Ofcom’s media literacy activity focuses solely on conducting and disseminating research.
Ofcom’s media literacy research programme

**Quantitative studies:**

- Adults’ Media Use and Attitudes
  - 1,875 adults 16+

- Children’s Media Use and Attitudes
  - 1,388 parents and children (5-15)
  - 677 parents of 3-4’s

**Qualitative studies:**

- Adults’ Media Lives
- Children’s Media Lives

The objectives of this research are:

- To provide a rich picture of the different elements of media literacy across the internet, television, radio, games and mobile phones.
- To identify emerging issues and skills gaps that help to target stakeholders’ resources for the promotion of media literacy.
Take-up
Average weekly internet use up 3 Hours 2013-17


- **Aged 3-4**
  - 2007: 6 hours 30 minutes
  - 2010: 8 hours 18 minutes
  - 2013: 7 hours 54 minutes

- **Aged 5-7**
  - 2007: 4 hours 36 minutes
  - 2010: 5 hours 12 minutes
  - 2013: 6 hours 42 minutes

- **Aged 8-11**
  - 2007: 7 hours 48 minutes
  - 2010: 8 hours 24 minutes
  - 2013: 9 hours 12 minutes

- **Aged 12-15**
  - 2007: 13 hours 42 minutes
  - 2010: 15 hours 36 minutes
  - 2013: 17 hours 0 minutes

Source: Ofcom’s Children’s Media Literacy Tracker 2017, QP25A-B– How many hours would you say he/ she spends going online on a typical school day/ on a weekend day? (unprompted responses, single coded).
Base: Parents of children aged 3-7 who use the internet at home or elsewhere and children aged 8-15 who use the internet at home or elsewhere (VARIABLE BASE) - Significance testing shows any change between 2016 and 2017
More children online: by device

Devices ever used by children aged 5-15 to go online at home (2010, 2013) or elsewhere (2016, 2017)

Source: Ofcom’s Children’s Media Literacy Tracker 2017, QP23/QC10 – Including any ways you may have already mentioned, does your child ever use any of the following devices to go online at home or elsewhere? (prompted responses, multi coded) Responses from parents for 5-7 year olds and from children aged 8-15. In 2013 parents/children were asked about going online at home whereas since 2014 they were asked about going online at home or elsewhere. Base: Parents of children aged 5-15 (1388) - significance testing shows any change between 2016 and 2017.
Tablets and smartphones are also important for children: a fifth of 3-4s have their own tablet.
Over 8 in 10 12-15s have their own mobile phone – mostly now a smartphone
In 2017, Smartphone ownership increased to close to half of 5-15s, driven by increases among 5-7s and 8-11s


Source: Ofcom’s Children’s Media Literacy Tracker 2017, QP3F/QP4 - I’m going to read out a list of different types of equipment that you may or may not have in your home, and which your child may or may not use (prompted responses, single coded). You mentioned that your child has their own mobile phone. Is this a Smartphone? A Smartphone is a phone on which you can easily access emails, download apps/applications and other files as well as view websites and generally surf the internet/go online. Popular brands of Smartphone include iPhone, BlackBerry and Android phones such as the Samsung Galaxy. (unprompted responses, single coded)

Base: Parents of children aged 3-4 (677) or 5-15 (1388 aged 5-15, 412 aged 5-7, 497 aged 8-11, 479 aged 12-15) - significance testing shows any change between 2016 and 2017.
BARB shows that children’s TV viewing on a TV set continues to decline.
Children’s interest in and views around the truthfulness of news

TV is the primary news source for 12-15s

96% of 12-15s are interested in news
Where do they get it from?

- TV: 64%
- Social media: 56%
- Friends & family: 48%
- Radio: 32%

Social media is second most popular news source, but is seen as less truthful

... and how many think these sources are truthful

- TV: 59%
- Social media: 32%
- Friends & family: 61%
- Radio: 59%
Social media
A quarter of 8-11s and three quarters of 12-15s have a social media profile.
A quarter of 8-11s and three quarters of 12-15s had a social media profile in 2017

Children who go online with an active social media profile, by age: 2010, 2013, 2016 and 2017

Source: Ofcom’s Children’s Media Literacy Tracker 2017, QP43/ QC19 – I’d now like to ask you some questions about your child’s use of social media or messaging sites or apps* - so websites or apps like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr, Snapchat, What’s App and some activities on YouTube. Does your child have a profile or account on any of these types of sites or apps?( prompted responses, single coded). Responses from parents for 3-7 year olds and from children aged 8-15. Since 2014 responses are taken from the child aged 8-11 or aged 12-15 rather than the parent.

* Prior to 2017 this question asked only about use of social media sites or apps, this definition was expanded in 2017 to include messaging sites or apps.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Media Site</th>
<th>Aware of Minimum Age Requirement and Correct Age</th>
<th>Aware of Minimum Age Requirement but Incorrect Age</th>
<th>Says There Is No Minimum Age Requirement</th>
<th>Unsure Whether There Is a Minimum Age Requirement</th>
<th>Total Aware of Minimum Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook/ Facebook Messenger</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instagram</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snapchat</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WhatsApp</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most parents are not aware of the minimum age requirements.
Negative experiences
Close to half of 12-15s have encountered hateful content online in the last year

- Often see this
- Sometimes see this
- Never see this
- Don't know

34% 2016
- Often see this: 7
- Sometimes see this: 27
- Never see this: 62
- Don't know: 4

46% 2017
- Often see this: 9
- Sometimes see this: 37
- Never see this: 49
- Don't know: 6
Around two in five teens and adults took some sort of action against the most recent example seen.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Adults</th>
<th>12-15s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I ignored it/ didn't do anything</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I reported it to the website</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I blocked the person who shared or made the comments</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I commented on it to say I thought it was wrong</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I responded by 'disliking' the post/comment/video</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I shared it with my friends to say I thought it was wrong</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other reason</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL - Took some sort of action</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The majority of adults and teens agree there should be protection from or rules about inappropriate or hurtful content

**Adults**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Slightly agree</th>
<th>Neither/ Don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Internet users must be protected from seeing inappropriate or offensive content

**12-15s**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither/ Don't know</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I think there should be rules about what people can say online so that people can't say hurtful things about others
For 12-15s, bullying is as likely to happen in person, on social media and via group chat

- In person/ face to face: 6% (Aged 8-11), 6% (Aged 12-15)
- On social media: 2% (Aged 8-11), 2% (Aged 12-15)
- Group chat/messaging service/text: 1% (Aged 8-11), 1% (Aged 12-15)
- Online games: 2% (Aged 8-11), 2% (Aged 12-15)
- Telephone calls: 2% (Aged 8-11), 2% (Aged 12-15)
- Photo message/video: 2% (Aged 8-11), 2% (Aged 12-15)
- ANY OF THESE WAYS: 11% (Aged 8-11), 13% (Aged 12-15)
- Not personally been bullied: 88% (Aged 8-11), 83% (Aged 12-15)
- Prefer not to say: 1% (Aged 8-11), 3% (Aged 12-15)
Staying safe online/Critical understanding
Around a $\frac{1}{4}$ of 12-15s are not aware of online reporting functions

- Ever reported something they have seen online that they considered was worrying or nasty
- Seen something worrying or nasty but not reported it
- Aware of online reporting function but not seen anything worrying or nasty
- Not aware of online reporting function and seen something worrying/nasty
- Not aware of online reporting function and not seen something worrying/nasty
Children’s belief in truthfulness of sites

On sites or apps used for school work/ home work

%  

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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8-11s</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-15s</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All is true | Most is true | Some is true | Don’t know

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Older children are ‘getting wise’ to fake news

73% of children aged 12-15 are aware of ‘fake news’

39% say they have seen something online or on social media that might have been fake news.

Six in ten are prepared to do something about it:

- 35% would tell their parents or another family member.
- 21% would tell a friend.
- 14% would report it to the social media website directly.
- 18% would leave a comment saying they thought the story was fake.

Source: Ofcom, Children’s Media Literacy 2017
...however making judgements about truthfulness is tricky

90% of 12-15s using social media for news say they ever think about whether a story is true

86% of 12-15s using social media for news say they would make potentially make checks from a list

But, close to half using social media for news think it is difficult to tell whether it is true
Giving personal details: 2017

Agreement among 12-15s with the statement “I will give details about myself to a website or app to be able to get something that I want”: 2016 and 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither/ Don't know</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ofcom’s Children’s Media Literacy Tracker 2017, QC29A - I’m going to read out some things about being online, for each one please say which of the options on the card applies to you – I will give details about myself to a website or app to be able to get something that I want. (prompted responses, single coded). Base: Children aged 12-15 who go online (475). Significance testing shows any change between 2016 and 2017.
For some 12-15s popularity is more important than privacy

Getting more followers is more important to me than keeping my information private

Amended in 2017 to: Getting likes or followers is more important to me than keeping my posts, comments or photos private

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither/ Don't know</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Children aged 12-15 are more likely to say TV adverts ‘mostly’ tell the truth than to say this about online adverts.
A quarter of 8-15’s believe that if a website is listed by a search engine it can be trusted

- I think that if they have been listed by Google these websites can be trusted
- I think that some of these websites can be trusted and some can’t
- I don’t really think about whether the websites can be trusted
- Don’t know
Six in ten 12-15s who go online are aware of personalised advertising

- Some people might see different adverts to the ones that I see
  - 58%
  - 32%

- Everyone will see the same adverts as me
  - 18%
  - 32%

- Don't know
  - 24%
  - 22%

Children aged 12 to 15: 58%
Children aged 8 to 11: 58%
The same proportion are aware of vlogger endorsement

- They are being paid by the company or brand to say this
  - 2016: 57%
  - 2017: 62%
- They want to share this information with their followers
  - 2016: 23%
  - 2017: 25%
- They think these products or brands are cool/good to use
  - 2016: 29%
  - 2017: 27%
- Don't know
  - 2016: 16%
  - 2017: 18%
Want to know more?

www.ofcom.org.uk/medialiteracy

www.ofcom.org.uk/marketresearch

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