Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report

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Welsh language summary available

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Foreword

Ofcom has had duties to promote and research media literacy since 2003. We define media literacy as being the ability to use, understand and create media and communications across multiple formats and services. The Online Safety Act 2023 (OSA) clarified and added specificity to our media literacy duties, including by heightening the public's awareness and understanding of ways in which they can protect themselves and others when using regulated services, in particular by helping them deal with: misinformation and disinformation; content that disproportionately affects particular groups, including women and girls; content of democratic importance; and how people's personal data is being used.

Ofcom's [Making Sense of Media](#) (MSOM) programme fulfils these duties through our MSOM [Strategy](#), published in 2024, which sets out three central elements of our work: research, evidence and evaluation; engaging platforms; and people and partnerships.

Our annual studies – our Adults' and Children's Media Lives qualitative research projects, and our Media Literacy Trackers – are long-established, providing rich insights into the ways in which people's media use, attitudes and understanding have changed over time.

Our tracker questions span a range of issues, from take-up and use of different types of online platforms and services, through to children's attitudes, experiences, and beliefs about an array of media: in other words, providing a rich evidence base to understand what it means for children to be online today.

In particular, we focus on children's critical understanding, as such skills are becoming increasingly important in a world in which there is growing uncertainty about what is true and what is false. We describe the range of ways in which children deal with their personal online worlds. And we ask about benefits and concerns: the positive aspects of being online that they and their parents identify, as well as the extent to which they encounter problematic material and feel able to keep themselves safe online.

We have new questions this year about which online safety topics children are learning in schools, whether they have any restrictions on when they can use their smartphones, and who can see their profile pictures online. For the second year running we report on children's use of artificial intelligence tools, and this year we've also asked teenagers whether they would trust an AI-generated article more, less, or the same amount as they would trust one written by a human.

As in all our reports, we provide detail about different groups of children, highlighting age, socio-economic background and gender wherever it is useful or possible to do so. And we have much more material accessible in our [interactive report](#) and [data tables](#).

It is vital that children across the UK can develop an appropriate range and depth of media-literate attitudes and behaviours, to enable them to have a positive, active online experience, as well as helping them to navigate and avoid potential harms. And of course, online services also need to create a positive and safer online environment for children, enabling them to flourish online.

This report provides evidence about the extent of media literacy across the UK's children and young people, to inform our own work and that of our stakeholders and regulated services.

Overview

Key findings

The media use landscape

- **There has been an increase in 3-5-year-olds using social media platforms:** Over the past few years, there has been an increase in parents of 3-5-year-olds who say their child uses social media apps or sites. In 2021 and 2022 about a quarter used them, rising to three in ten (29%) in 2023, and almost four in ten (37%) this year. Over a third (36%) of parents of 3-5s whose child uses social media use it on their child's behalf, and over four in ten (42%) say they use these sites or apps together with their child. However, two in ten (19%) of these parents indicate that their child uses these apps independently.

- **Viewing of broadcast TV continues to decline among children aged 4-15:** Children aged 4-15 watched 3 hours 20 minutes of broadcast TV on average per week in 2024, according to Barb data (this includes linear TV channels watched live, at the time programmes were broadcast, and viewing of TV programmes that had previously been recorded via devices such as a digital video recorder). This was 24 minutes less than in 2023 (an 11% decline).

- **More children are watching livestreamed videos, a growing trend over the past three years:** This year, two-thirds (66%) of 3-17s watch livestreamed videos, up from 63% in 2023 and 58% in 2022. The increase this year has been driven by 8-12-year-olds.

- **Of the 8 in 10 (79%) of 3-17s who have their own profile on a social media, messaging, VSP or livestreaming site, 16% include a photo of themselves which anyone can see:** This varies by age group; from 8% of 3-7-year-old social media users, to 14% of 8-12s and 21% of teenagers.

- **Sixteen per cent of 3-17s livestream their own videos:** This increases to 21% of 13-17s and is more common among children living in urban areas (17% vs 9% of those in rural areas) and children in ABC1 households (19% vs 13% of those in C2DE households).

Children's experience of the online world

- **Some children are using social media/messaging apps to engage with social or political causes more than others:** Among teenage social media users, those living in urban areas and those in ABC1 socio-economic households are more likely than their counterparts to have: searched out, shared or discussed news stories with others on these apps; written their own posts about causes they care about; followed activists/campaigners who speak about causes they care about; and followed/interacted with political parties or campaign groups.

- **More children are watching videos which help them with their schoolwork, or to learn new things:** Almost half (48%) of children aged 3-17 who watch videos via apps or sites are now watching videos on VSPs which help them learn new things or help them with their school/homework, an increase from 42% last year.

- **Girls continue to be more likely than boys to experience nasty or hurtful interactions online:** There continues to be a gender imbalance between those who experience nasty/hurtful interactions online, with 34% of girls saying that they have ever experienced this compared to 28% of boys, in line with last year.

- **Some children are more likely to see 'worrying or nasty' content online than others:** 8-17s who have an impacting condition are more likely than their counterparts to say they have seen online content that they found worrying/nasty (41% vs 31%). The same is true for children this age living in urban areas compared to those in rural areas (34% vs 23%).

- **One in five teenagers are following a fitness programme online – an increase since last year:** Nineteen per cent of teenagers are using online apps/services to follow a fitness programme, up from 14% last year. This increase is driven by younger teens (13-15s), at 19%, up from 11% last year. Girls and boys are equally likely to follow a fitness programme online. However, children in ABC1 households are more likely than those in C2DE households to do so (23% vs 13%).

- **The majority of parents do not think the benefits outweigh the risks of their children being on social media, messaging and video-sharing apps**: Three in ten parents of 3-17s who go online agree that the benefits outweigh the risks of their child being on these apps. Parental perceptions improve as children grow older: four in ten (39%) parents of 13-17s see the benefits to their child of using social media outweighing the risks, compared to just over two in ten (23%) parents of 3-12s.

- **More than seven in ten (72%) parents are concerned that their child would be unable to distinguish between the real and the fake online**. This is almost the same as the proportion of parents who are concerned about their child seeing age-inappropriate or sexual content online (76% and 74% respectively).

Technology and trust

- **Awareness of recommendation algorithms has increased since 2023, and remains higher among older children and those in more affluent households:** More than six in ten (63%) 8-17s said they were aware of algorithms to direct specific content to users, up from 59% last year. As was the case last year, the proportion who are aware rises with the age of the child, from 44% of 8-9s to 81% of 16-17s in 2024. Three-quarters of children in AB households are aware of the use of algorithms, compared to about six in ten for children in C1, C2 or DE households.

- **Half of children say they use artificial intelligence (AI) tools, an increase since last year. And more children are using these tools for learning and/or schoolwork:** Half (50%) of 8-17s say they have used AI, up from 46% last year. This increase has been primarily driven by 13-15s. AI users are now more likely than last year to say that they use these tools either 'to learn' or 'for school'.

- **Teenagers who use AI are divided over whether or not to trust it:** Over a third (36%) of AI users aged 13-17 say they would trust an AI-generated news story less than one written by a human but broadly the same proportion (35%) say they would trust it to the same extent as the human version and 17% would trust an AI-generated news article more than one written by a human**.** This is more likely among younger than older teens (19% of 13-15-year-old AI users compared to 13% of 16-17s) and among teenage AI users who live with at least one impacting condition (23% vs 14% of those without such a condition).

- **For young teenagers (12-15s), although TikTok continues to be their most-used single-source for news, their most trustworthy source for news is their family.** When looking at specific sources for news (individual channels, sites etc.), 30% of news consumers aged 12-15 look to TikTok, closely followed by YouTube (27%) and then Facebook and Instagram

(both 21%). But trustworthiness is a different story; 78% of these teens said that news sourced from their family was always, or mostly, reported truthfully, compared to just over a third (36%) who said the same about news on social media sites or apps.[1]

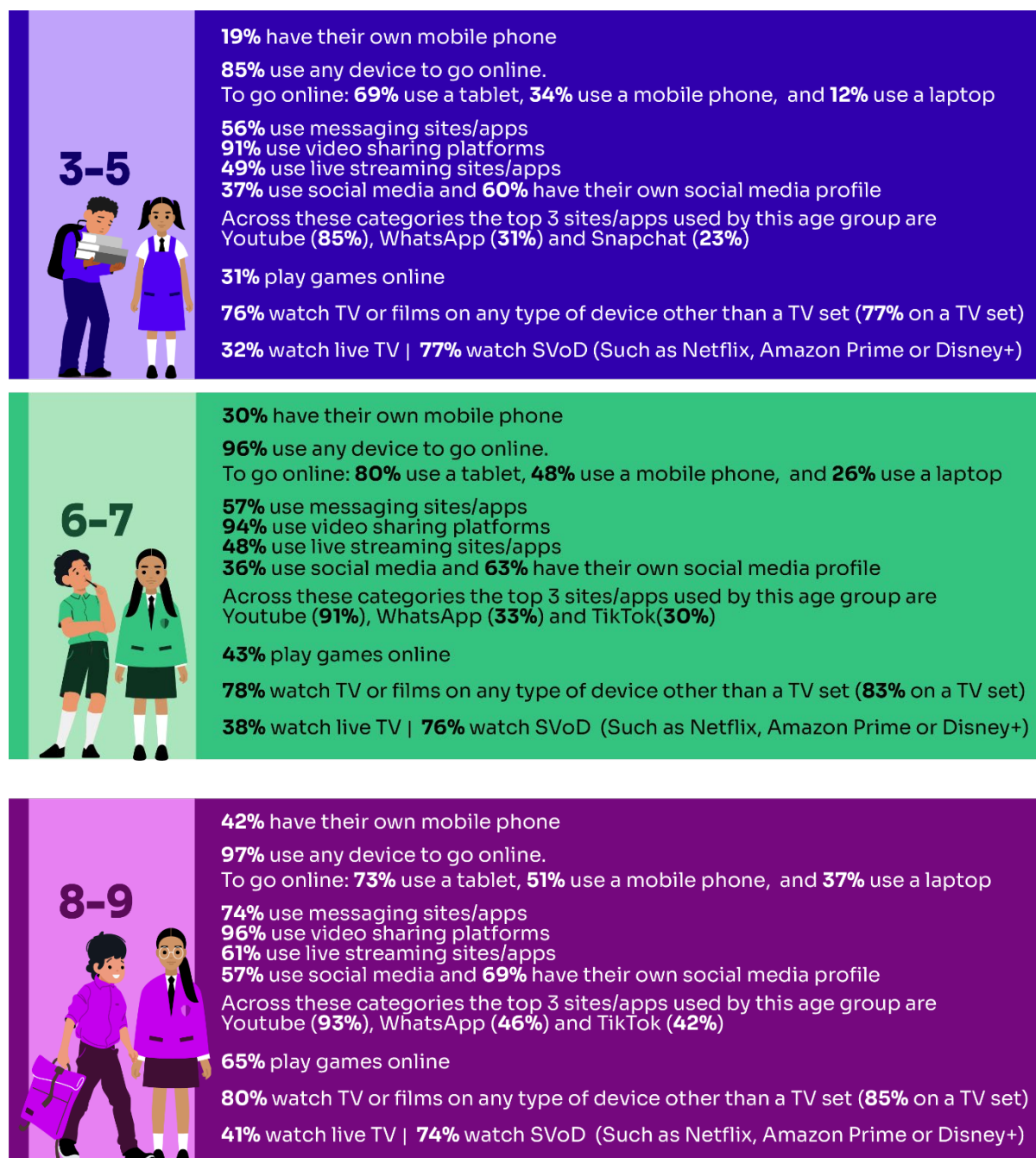# Critical evaluation of online information

- **Last year, we reported that there had been a dip in confidence among 16-17s who say they know how to distinguish between the real and the fake online, and this dip has been sustained this year:** In 2022, 82% of 16-17s said they were confident in judging what is real or fake online, with this proportion falling to three-quarters in 2023 and remaining level this year.

- **Fewer children compared to last year are able to recognise advertising on search engines:** We presented 8-17s with a screenshot of a Google search for trainers and asked them why the top four results appeared first in the list. Only a third (33%) of 8-17s who use search engines correctly identified that the only reason those results were at the top of the list was because they were paid-for advertising. This is a decline from the previous two years, when four in ten correctly identified the reason.

- **Teenagers continue to be better able to recognise influencer marketing than advertising on search engines:** When teenagers were shown a screenshot of a post from American actress Sydney Sweeney's Instagram account, nearly three-quarters (73%) recognized it as a paid endorsement for a Samsung phone. Teenagers were more likely to be confident and able to recognize influencer marketing (68%) than advertisements in search engine search results (36%).

Online safety and parental control

- **Children aged 8+ who have had lessons in online safety at school are more likely to say they are very useful to them, compared to last year:** Almost all (92%) 8-17s can recall having had at least one lesson at school about being online and the possible risks. Of these children, 45% reported finding these lessons very useful to them, an increase from 39% in 2023. This increase is mainly driven by the 10-12 age group.

- **The three most common online safety topics taught in schools are: How to recognise harmful content (63%), how to keep personal information safe (63%), and being kind and respectful to others online (62%).** Secondary school children are more likely to be taught a broader range of topics, and children in ABC1 households are more likely to be taught certain topics compared to those in C2DE households: how to take care of themselves and feel good while spending time online; how to search for accurate information; and how to identify online advertising. Fewer children are being taught about how to spot fake news (23%) and what to do if they do spot it (19%).

- **More than half of children aged 8-17 who use smartphones to go online are not allowed to use them at any time in school:** Almost all (94%) 8-17s who go online using their phones say they have at least one restriction imposed on them regarding their use, either in school or at home. This is more likely among 8-12s than 13-17s. Over eight in ten (82%) say that there are times when they are not allowed to use their phones at school, and over half (56%) say they are restricted from using them all the time while at school.

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[1] Source: Ofcom News Consumption Survey

Media use, by age

3-5

19% have their own mobile phone

85% use any device to go online.
To go online: **69%** use a tablet, **34%** use a mobile phone, and **12%** use a laptop

56% use messaging sites/apps
91% use video sharing platforms
49% use live streaming sites/apps
37% use social media and **60%** have their own social media profile

Across these categories the top 3 sites/apps used by this age group are Youtube (**85%**), WhatsApp (**31%**) and Snapchat (**23%**)

31% play games online

76% watch TV or films on any type of device other than a TV set (**77%** on a TV set)

32% watch live TV | **77%** watch SVoD (Such as Netflix, Amazon Prime or Disney+)

6-7

30% have their own mobile phone

96% use any device to go online.
To go online: **80%** use a tablet, **48%** use a mobile phone, and **26%** use a laptop

57% use messaging sites/apps
94% use video sharing platforms
48% use live streaming sites/apps
36% use social media and **63%** have their own social media profile

Across these categories the top 3 sites/apps used by this age group are Youtube (**91%**), WhatsApp (**33%**) and TikTok(**30%**)

43% play games online

78% watch TV or films on any type of device other than a TV set (**83%** on a TV set)

38% watch live TV | **76%** watch SVoD (Such as Netflix, Amazon Prime or Disney+)

8-9

42% have their own mobile phone

97% use any device to go online.
To go online: **73%** use a tablet, **51%** use a mobile phone, and **37%** use a laptop

74% use messaging sites/apps
96% use video sharing platforms
61% use live streaming sites/apps
57% use social media and **69%** have their own social media profile

Across these categories the top 3 sites/apps used by this age group are Youtube (**93%**), WhatsApp (**46%**) and TikTok (**42%**)

65% play games online

80% watch TV or films on any type of device other than a TV set (**85%** on a TV set)

41% watch live TV | **74%** watch SVoD (Such as Netflix, Amazon Prime or Disney+)

10-12

82% have their own mobile phone

100% use any device to go online.
To go online: **81%** use a mobile phone, **68%** use a tablet, and **48%** use a laptop

94% use messaging sites/apps
99% use video sharing platforms
73% use live streaming sites/apps
81% use social media and **86%** have their own social media profile

Across these categories the top 3 sites/apps used by this age group are Youtube (**90%**), WhatsApp (**71%**) and TikTok (**63%**)

77% play games online

79% watch TV or films on any type of device other than a TV set (**87%** on a TV set)

41% watch live TV | **77%** watch SVoD (Such as Netflix, Amazon Prime or Disney+)

13-15

97% have their own mobile phone

100% use any device to go online.
To go online: **96%** use a mobile phone, **47%** use a tablet, and **56%** use a laptop

99% use messaging sites/apps
98% use video sharing platforms
82% use live streaming sites/apps
95% use social media and **96%** have their own social media profile

Across these categories the top 3 sites/apps used by this age group are Youtube (**87%**), WhatsApp (**82%**) and TikTok (**80%**)

84% play games online

79% watch TV or films on any type of device other than a TV set (**84%** on a TV set)

39% watch live TV | **75%** watch SVoD (Such as Netflix, Amazon Prime or Disney+)

16-17

99% have their own mobile phone

100% use any device to go online.
To go online: **98%** use a mobile phone, **44%** use a tablet, and **59%** use a laptop

99% use messaging sites/apps
99% use video sharing platforms
82% use live streaming apps/sites
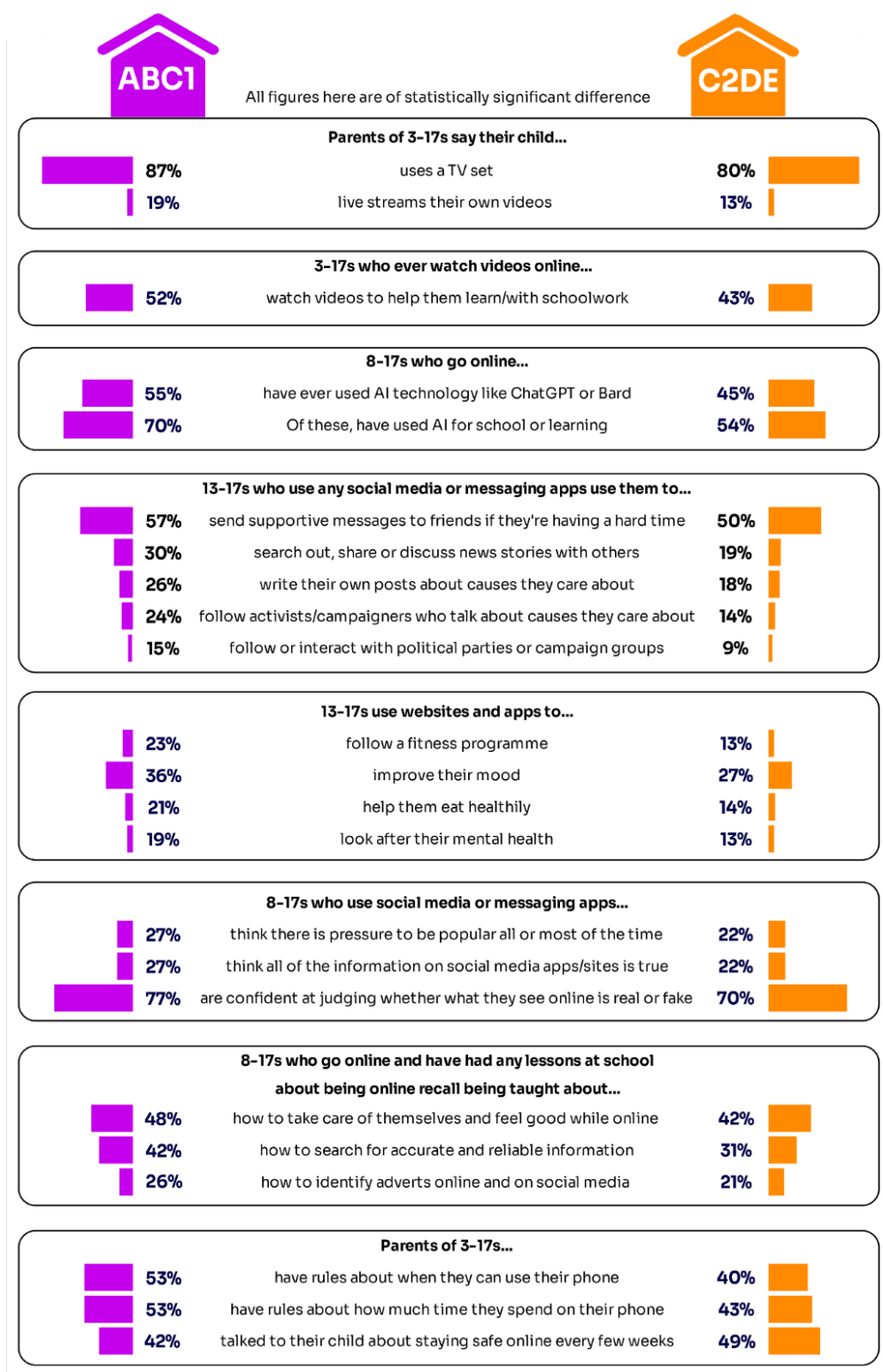**98%** use social media and **98%** have their own social media profile

Across these categories the top 3 sites/apps used by this age group are Youtube (**86%**), WhatsApp (**84%**) and TikTok (**83%**)

83% play games online

86% watch TV or films on any type of device other than a TV set (**83%** on a TV set)
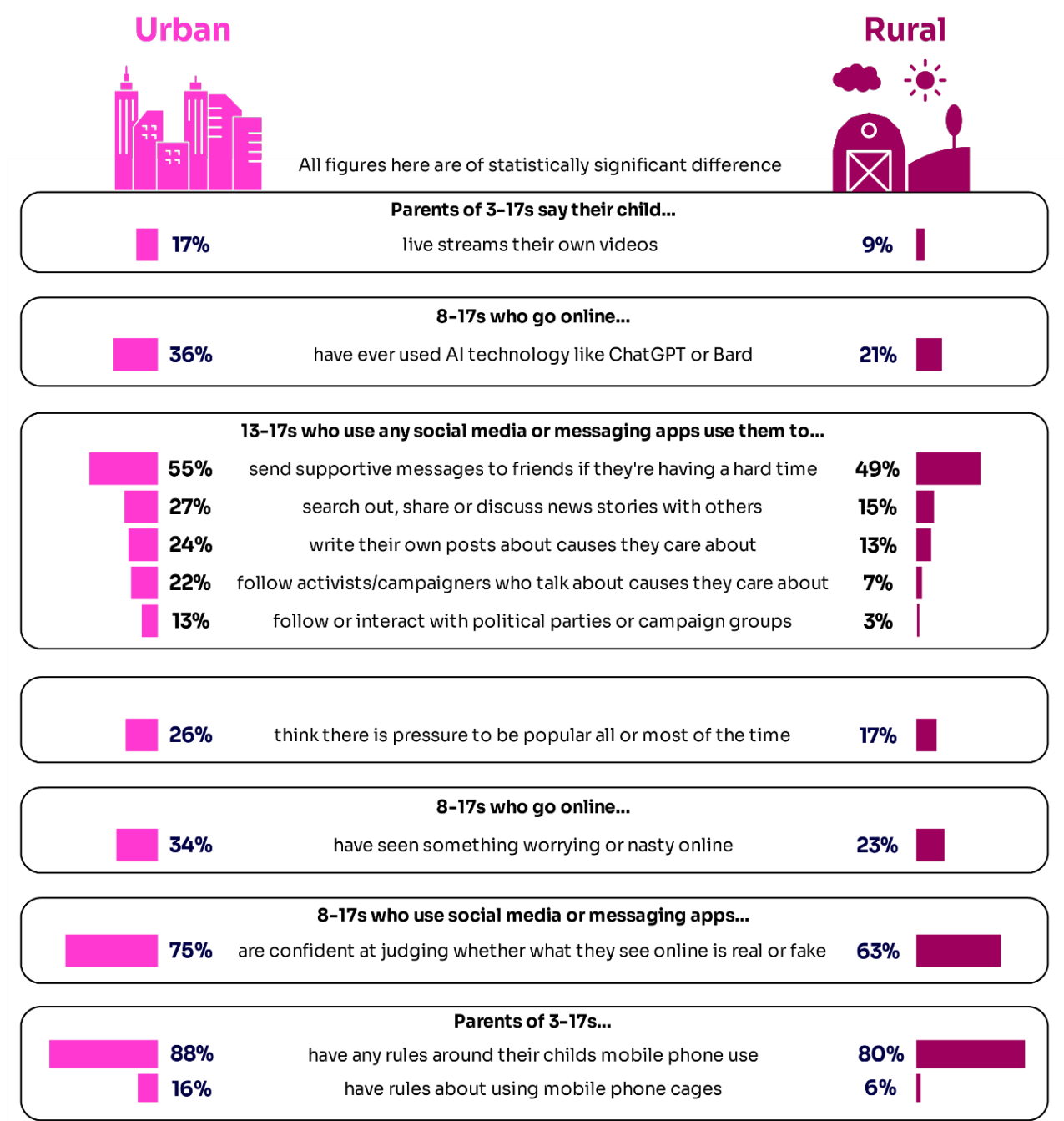
33% watch live TV | **81%** watch SVoD (Such as Netflix, Amazon Prime or Disney+)

Differences by socio-economic group[2]

ABC1

C2DE

All figures here are of statistically significant difference

Parents of 3-17s say their child...

ABC1		C2DE
87%	uses a TV set	80%
19%	live streams their own videos	13%

3-17s who ever watch videos online...

ABC1		C2DE
52%	watch videos to help them learn/with schoolwork	43%

8-17s who go online...

ABC1		C2DE
55%	have ever used AI technology like ChatGPT or Bard	45%
70%	Of these, have used AI for school or learning	54%

13-17s who use any social media or messaging apps use them to...

ABC1		C2DE
57%	send supportive messages to friends if they're having a hard time	50%
30%	search out, share or discuss news stories with others	19%
26%	write their own posts about causes they care about	18%
24%	follow activists/campaigners who talk about causes they care about	14%
15%	follow or interact with political parties or campaign groups	9%

13-17s use websites and apps to...

ABC1		C2DE
23%	follow a fitness programme	13%
36%	improve their mood	27%
21%	help them eat healthily	14%
19%	look after their mental health	13%

8-17s who use social media or messaging apps...

ABC1		C2DE
27%	think there is pressure to be popular all or most of the time	22%
27%	think all of the information on social media apps/sites is true	22%
77%	are confident at judging whether what they see online is real or fake	70%

8-17s who go online and have had any lessons at school about being online recall being taught about...

ABC1		C2DE
48%	how to take care of themselves and feel good while online	42%
42%	how to search for accurate and reliable information	31%
26%	how to identify adverts online and on social media	21%

Parents of 3-17s...

ABC1		C2DE
53%	have rules about when they can use their phone	40%
53%	have rules about how much time they spend on their phone	43%
42%	talked to their child about staying safe online every few weeks	49%

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[2] A child's household socio-economic status is based on the type of work the chief income earner of their household does, or what they used to do if they are retired. AB: higher and intermediate managerial,

Differences by urban/rural location

Urban   Rural

All figures here are of statistically significant difference

Parents of 3-17s say their child...

Urban		Rural
17%	live streams their own videos	9%

8-17s who go online...

Urban		Rural
36%	have ever used AI technology like ChatGPT or Bard	21%

13-17s who use any social media or messaging apps use them to...

Urban		Rural
55%	send supportive messages to friends if they're having a hard time	49%
27%	search out, share or discuss news stories with others	15%
24%	write their own posts about causes they care about	13%
22%	follow activists/campaigners who talk about causes they care about	7%
13%	follow or interact with political parties or campaign groups	3%

Urban		Rural
26%	think there is pressure to be popular all or most of the time	17%

8-17s who go online...

Urban		Rural
34%	have seen something worrying or nasty online	23%

8-17s who use social media or messaging apps...

Urban		Rural
75%	are confident at judging whether what they see online is real or fake	63%

Parents of 3-17s...

Urban		Rural
88%	have any rules around their childs mobile phone use	80%
16%	have rules about using mobile phone cages	6%

administrative, professional occupations; C1: supervisory, clerical and junior managerial, administrative, professional occupations; C2: skilled manual occupations; DE: semi-skilled and unskilled manual occupations, unemployed and lowest-grade occupations.

Methodology

This report draws its data largely from our quantitative Children's and Parents' (CaP) Media Literacy Tracker surveys, and discusses media use, attitudes and understanding among children aged 3-17 in the UK, and in subsets of this group. Where the data relates to children aged 3-7, this is provided by parents or guardians rather than by the children themselves. More detail, including additional demographic analysis, and responses to the full set of survey questions, can be found in the accompanying interactive report and data tables. A summary of sample sizes and data collection methods is shown in the infographic below. A more detailed description of the data collection and analysis process for these studies can be found in the Technical Report, published alongside the data tables.

To support us in providing an over-arching narrative on the key themes of children's media experience in 2024, this report also draws on our Children's Media Lives research. The Children's Media Lives study is a qualitative longitudinal, ethnographic project which has been running since 2014 and complements our quantitative survey data to provide an over-arching narrative on children's media experience. As far as possible, the research has followed the same 21[3] children, aged 8-17, over consecutive years, interviewing them on camera each year about their media habits and attitudes.

The Children's and Parents' Media Literacy tracker comprises three surveys: the Parents Only survey, Children's Online Behaviour and Attitudes (COBA) and Children's Online Knowledge and Understanding (COKU).
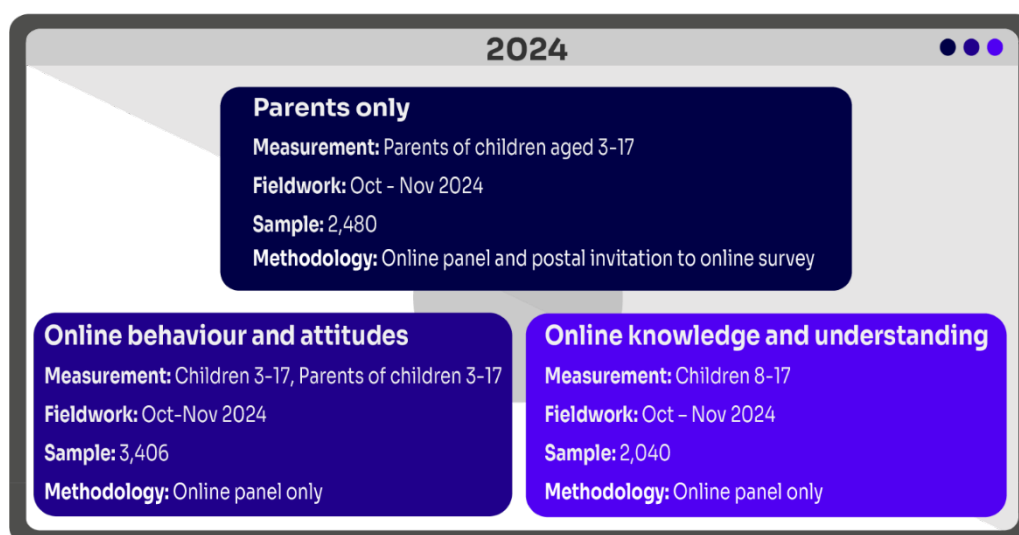
This year, we have changed the age bands by which we group and report on the data of the three surveys. This is to align with Ofcom's Protection of Children statement, in which we propose five age categories for understanding children's risk of harm online: 0-5, 6-9, 10-12, 13-15 and 16-17. These

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[3] In 2021, the CML sample was increased from 18 to 21 to allow us to explore the media lives of children in a wider range of circumstances, including those with additional vulnerabilities.

are based on evidence that shows the important changes in children's development and online behaviour, aligning with the ICO Age Appropriate Design code.[4]

Only children aged 8 and over are asked questions directly. Therefore, the data on children under 8 has been provided by parents only. This means that our data analysis for the age group of 6-9 year-olds is split into two different data points of 6-7-year-olds and 8-9-year-olds, due to the methodological difference. No data is collected on under-3s' online use. We have outlined the changes in the table below:

Previous age bands	New age bands
3-4s	**3-5s**
5-7s	**6-7s**
8-11s	**8-9s and 10-12s**
12-15s	**13-15s**
16-17s	**16-17s**

Throughout the report, we will refer to 'children' when we are talking about the 96% of children who go online. However, when we refer to '*all* children' we are including the relatively low proportion of predominantly very young children who do not go online (this is primarily drawn from the 3-5 age group). Please note that 96% of children aged 6-7 do go online and once children reach the 10-12 age group, more than 99% of them do so.

The same principle applies when we refer to parents: 'parents of 3-17s' means parents of children who go online. When we refer to 'parents of *all* 3-17s', we include those parents whose children do not go online.

There are other cases where we will refer to a more specific subset of children; for example, children who use a particular type of app or undertake a particular media activity. We will specify these throughout the report.

We also frequently refer to 'teenagers' throughout the report, by which we mean 13-17s rather than 13-19s.

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[4] Age appropriate design: a code of practice for online services

The media use landscape

Introduction

This section looks at children aged 3-17 and their patterns of media use, how they access different sources of media online, and the types of online activities they are participating in. This includes their behaviours and habits in terms of viewing, playing, learning, and communicating.

Almost all children age 3-17 (96%) went online in 2024, highlighting the centrality of the internet in children's lives.


Proportion who go online, by age

Age	3-5	6-7	8-9	10-12	13-15	16-17
	85%	96%	97%	100%	100%	100%
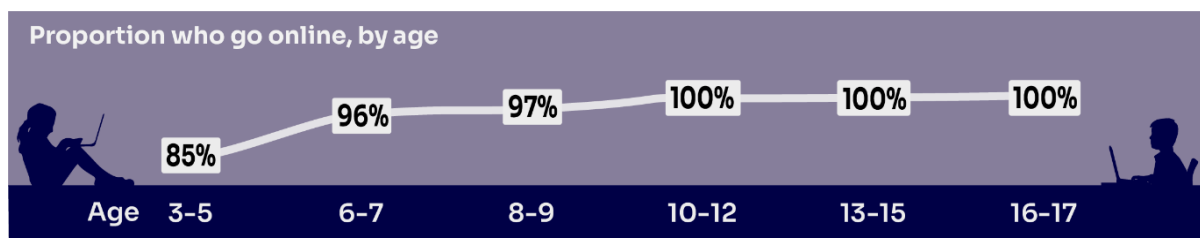
Children's use of apps and sites

YouTube continues to be universally popular, and the appeal of other social media platforms increases with age

YouTube is the most-used app or site across all ages of children in our study, which has been the case consistently over recent years, with 88% of 3-17s using it in 2024 and in both the two preceding years. This finding is also borne out by our Children's Media Lives study, where YouTube was the most popular platform among the sample. All the participants reported that they used it to varying degrees, whether for school or personal use, to watch YouTube Shorts, or for watching longer-form content.

Among children as a whole (i.e. all 3-17s) their use of the other apps and sites about which we ask is largely unchanged since 2023. That said, there has been an increase in the proportion of 3-17s who use Facebook (39% compared to 36% in 2023), a change driven by 8-9 year olds, and who use phone messaging apps (20%, up from 17%).

As shown in the infographic below, use of the most popular social media, VSP, livestreaming and messaging apps increases as children age. As in 2023, nearly half (48%) of 16-17s use all of the top five apps/ sites that we asked about (YouTube, WhatsApp, TikTok, Snapchat and Instagram).

Top 5 online communication apps/sites used – by age group

YouTube
WhatsApp
TikTok
Snapchat
Instagram
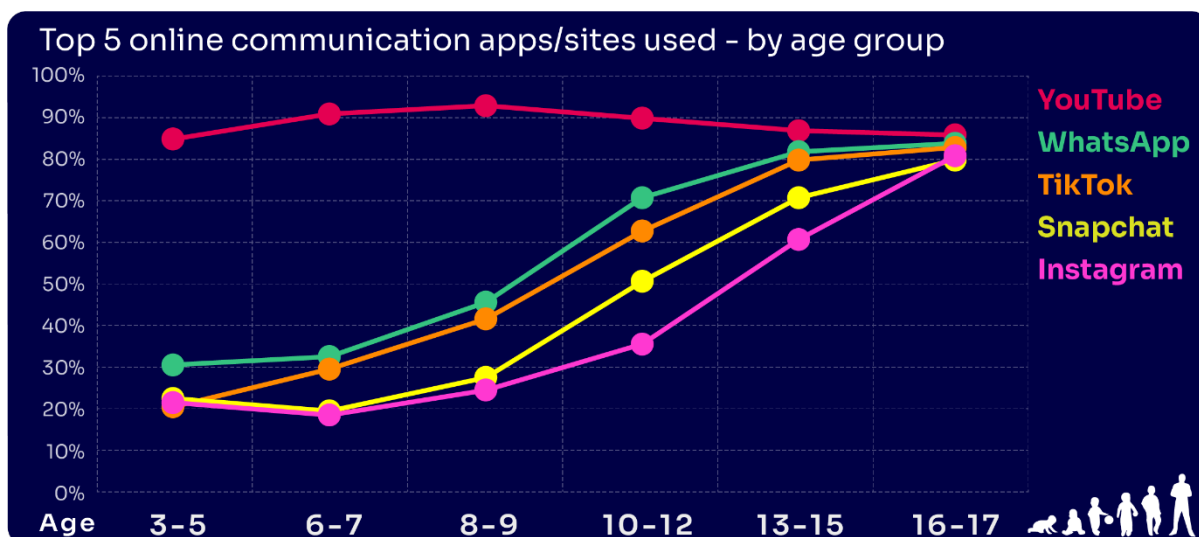
Over half of young children (3–7s) use sites/apps to communicate with others

Over half of 3-5s and 6-7s (56% and 57% respectively) use sites or apps to make or send messages or make video or voice calls. The two most popular apps for this purpose among 3-7s are WhatsApp, used by about three in ten children this age (31% among 3-5s and 33% among 6-7s respectively) and Snapchat, with just under two in ten children in the 3-5 and 6-7 age bands using it for this purpose (18% and 17% respectively). Three- to five-year-olds in particular are increasingly using Telegram[5] and Discord[6] for this purpose. This year, 5% of 3-5s used Telegram to send messages/make calls compared to 1% in 2023. Similarly, 3% used Discord compared to 1% in 2023.

Media and communication devices used by children

Younger children continue to more commonly use tablets to go online, while older children are more likely to use mobiles

As reported in previous years, in the period before they progress to secondary school, children become more likely to use a mobile phone to go online, while younger children (those aged 10 and under) are more likely to use a tablet. This aligns with the point at which most children are starting to own their own mobile phone rather than sharing devices with their families – by the age of 11 nine in ten (91%) children aged 3-17 own their own mobile phone.

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[5] Telegram is a cloud-based mobile and desktop messaging app where users can also make end-to-end encrypted voice and video calls. This app also offers groups and channels, as well as the option to have secret chats.

[6] Discord is a voice, video, and text chat app. Discord is most widely used by small and active groups of people who talk regularly. Most servers are private, invitation-only spaces for groups of friends and communities to stay in touch and spend time together. There are also larger, more open communities, generally centred around specific topics such as popular games like Minecraft and Fortnite.

Use of mobile phone or tablet to go online: by age
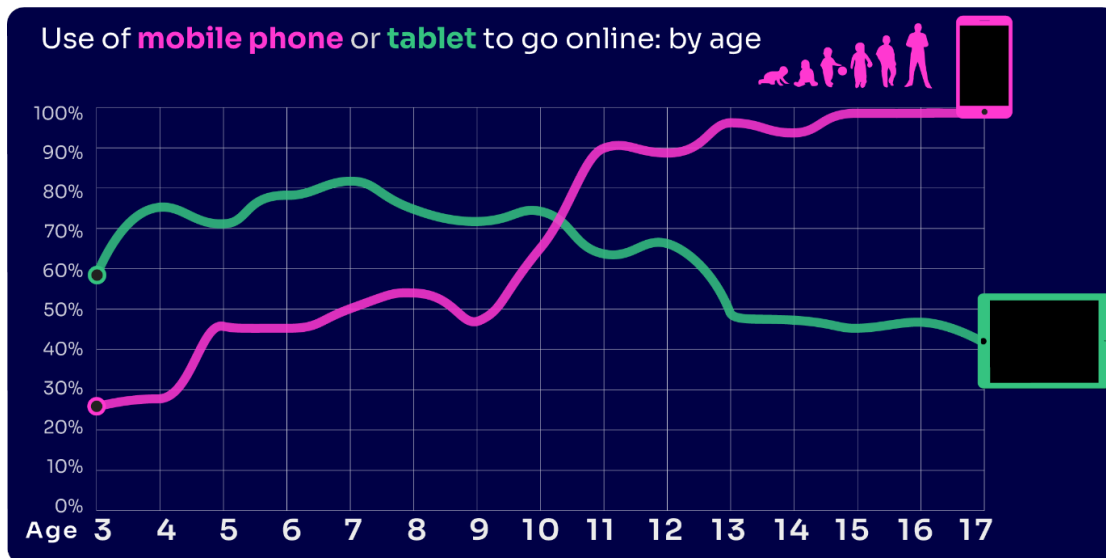
While use of a mobile to go online is almost universal among older children (97% of 13-17s say they ever do this), a relatively high proportion of children this age also say that they use games consoles (58%) and/ or laptops or netbooks (57%) to go online.

There were no year-on-year changes in the proportions of children aged 3-17 using mobiles (69%) and/or tablets (63%) to go online, and the same is true for devices used less commonly for this purpose, such as games consoles (47%), laptops or notebooks (40%), and desktop computers (18%). The infographic below shows the longer-term trend of 5-15-year-olds[7] who use a tablet and/or a smartphone to go online:

2012 – 2024: Use of smartphones and tablets to go online (% of 5-15 year olds)

- - - indicates methodology change
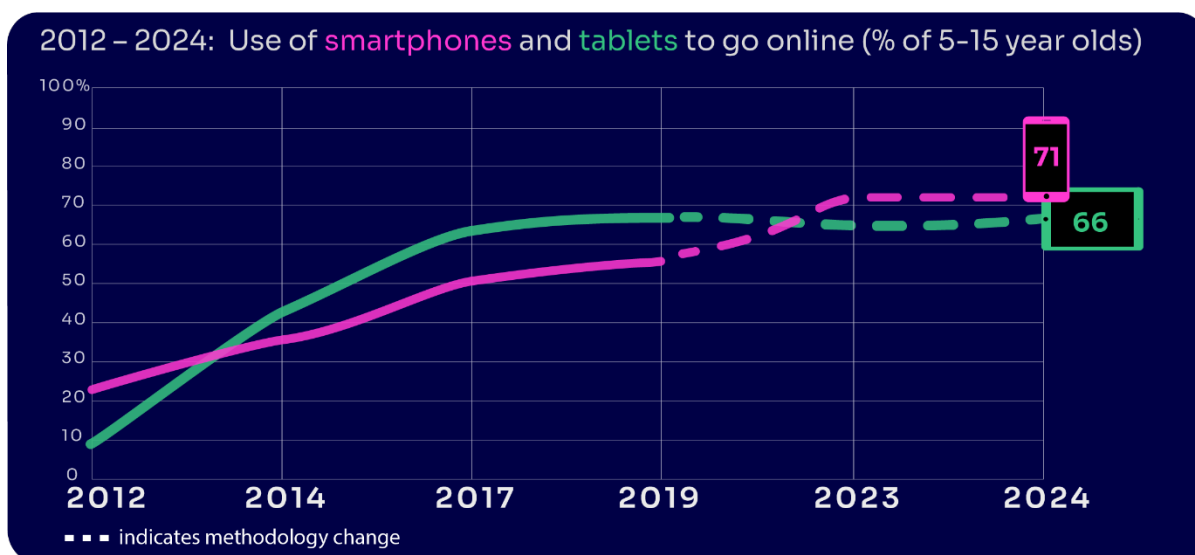
Gaming continues to play a significant role in children's lives, with nine in ten (89%) parents of children aged 3-17 reporting that their child plays games on at least one of the devices we asked about. The games console remains the most popular device for this purpose, with 56% of parents of

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[7] We can only look at 5-15-year-olds longer term, as we did not ask the relevant questions of a wider age range long term.

3-17s reporting that their child uses one to play games. Younger children are more likely to play games on a tablet (53% of 3-12s compared to 22% of 13-17s), while older children are more likely to game on a console or handheld player (66% of 13-17s vs 51% of 3-12s) and/or on a mobile (56% of 13-17s vs 40% of 3-12s).

For activities like watching movies and television series, the TV set remains a popular device among all children. In 2024, 83% of parents with children aged 3-17 reported that their child ever uses a television set to watch TV programmes or films at home or elsewhere, making it the most-used device for watching this type of content. Parents of older children are just as likely as those of younger children to report that their child ever uses a TV set to view this type of content, although parents in ABC1 households are more likely than those in C2DE households to say this (87% vs 80%).

Almost a third of school children don't have continuous access to a device at home for learning, unchanged since last year

Children's ability to learn online and complete their homework is connected to their having uninterrupted access to an online device that is suitable for their learning needs.

Our Adults media literacy survey found that 30% of parents of school-aged children reported that their child did not have continuous access to an appropriate device for learning at home on which they could do their online schoolwork, all of the time. This is unchanged since last year. Parents of younger children are more likely to report this issue than those with older children. In 2024, four in ten (39%) parents with primary school-aged children said their child did not have continuous online access for learning via a suitable device at home, compared to two in ten (18%) parents with secondary school-aged children.

To manage this issue, parents of these children reported that their child either shared online devices with other household members (61%); carried out an alternative educational activity (21%); used a less appropriate device (12%); and/or borrowed a device externally (7%). However, 13% of these parents[8] (i.e. parents of school-aged children who lacked consistent access to a suitable online learning device at home) reported that, as a result of this issue, their child postponed their schoolwork until a device became available. A further 14% stated their children did not complete their schoolwork.

39% of primary school aged children, and **18%** of secondary school aged children
don't always have access at home to appropriate devices which connect to the internet for schooling needs
Parents of these children say...

61% share with others
21% carry out an alternative educational activity
14% are unable to complete their schoolwork
13% postpone schoolwork until a device is available
12% use a less appropriate device
7% borrow a device fom school or elsewhere

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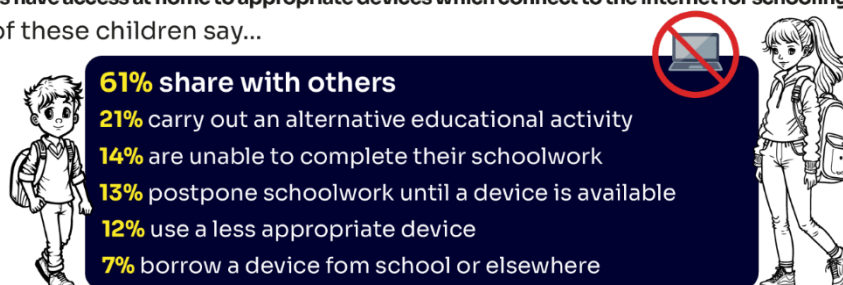
[8] This equates to just over 4% of all parents of school-aged children.

The content that children watch

While nearly all children still watch TV, the way they do so continues to move away from traditional viewing. The following section sets out the various ways in which children view content, and how this continues to evolve.

## Viewing of live broadcast TV continues to decline among children

According to industry measurement from Barb, children aged 4-15 watched 3 hours 20 minutes of broadcast TV on average per week in 2024 (this includes linear TV channels watched live, at the time programmes were broadcast and viewing of TV programmes that had previously been recorded via devices such as a digital video recorder). This was 24 minutes less than in 2023 (an 11% decline) and continues the downward trend that has been happening for many years. The decline was driven by the decrease in children watching live, at the time programmes were broadcast on TV channels; watching programmes previously recorded remained relatively stable.[9]

In 2024, children watched an average of 1 hour 28 minutes a week of broadcaster video-on-demand services (BVoDs) such as BBC iPlayer, ITVX or Sky On-Demand. Although viewing to BVoDs has increased over time, the 11-minute increase (14%) since 2023 was not enough to compensate for the decline in linear viewing. Overall, viewing to all broadcaster content (live, recorded catch-up and on-demand) in 2024 was down 13 minutes (4%) since 2023, to 4 hours 48 minutes per week.[10]

While viewing to broadcaster content has been declining over the years, viewing to subscription video-on-demand services (SVoDs) and advertising video-on-demand services (AVoD) such as Netflix, Disney+, Amazon Prime Video and Paramount+, had previously been increasing year on year. But in 2024, viewing to SVoDs/AVoDs by children declined by 7 minutes (2%) from 2023 to 4 hours 46 minutes. This means that children were still viewing two minutes more broadcast TV than SVoD/AVoD inside the home, but the gap in viewing time between the services was much smaller than it had been in 2023 (when viewing to broadcaster content was eight minutes more than SVoD/AVoDs).

Fig 1: Average weekly minutes to identified in-home video viewing, all devices: children aged 4-15

Average weekly minutes to identified in-home video viewing, all devices: Children aged 4–15

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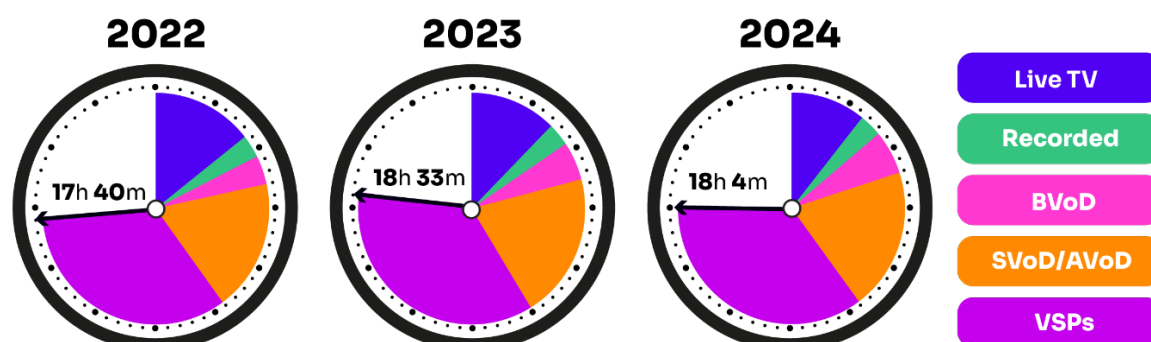
[9] Barb as-viewed, total broadcast TV excluding on-demand. 'Children' in this section refers to those aged 4-15, unless otherwise stated

[10] Barb as-viewed, TV sets and all devices connected to the home broadband. BVoD viewing includes live streaming via on-demand services as well as catch-up and non-linear and archive content.

It is not only the amount of time which children are spending on broadcaster TV that has been declining, the proportion of all children who watched it on a weekly basis (average weekly reach) also declined in 2024. This year, 66% of children aged 4-15 watched any broadcaster TV, down from 70% in 2023.[11]

There are slight variations in TV viewing habits between younger and older children. Younger children (those aged 4-11) watched more broadcaster TV and more SVoD/AVoD than older children (those aged 12-15) in 2024. The proportion of children aged 4-11 who watched broadcast TV and SVoD/AvoD on average in a week was also higher than the proportion of children aged 12-15.

Type of content/service and description	Measure	Children aged 4-15	Children aged 4-11	Children aged 12-15
Broadcaster TV (including BVoD)	% weekly reach	66%	69%	60%
	Average weekly minutes	288	307	250
BVoD only	% weekly reach	42%	46%	36%
	Average weekly minutes	87	99	65
SVoD/AVoD only	% weekly reach	71%	73%	66%
	Average weekly minutes	286	299	261

Source: Barb, as-viewed, all devices, 3+ consecutive minute average weekly reach.

The most-viewed broadcast programmes watched live in 2024 by children aged 4-11 were *the Euro 2024* final between England and Spain (BBC One), the *Euro 2024* England vs Slovakia match that saw England progress to the quarter-finals (ITV1), *New Year's Eve Fireworks* (BBC One), and the new film *Wallace & Gromit: Vengeance Most Fowl* on Christmas Day (BBC One). Among 12-17-year-olds, the two Euro matches and *New Year's Eve Fireworks* were also the most-watched live broadcasts, followed by *Eurovision Song Contest* (BBC One).[12]

Children's in-home viewing on video-sharing platforms declined in 2024

After a year-on-year overall increase in 2023, video watched on video-sharing platforms (VSPs) YouTube, TikTok, Twitch and DailyMotion, across TV and all other devices connected to the home broadband, decreased slightly in 2024 among 4-15 year-olds. They watched 8 hours 29 minutes a week in 2024, down by 9 minutes (2%) since 2023. This decline was driven by 12-15-year-olds, while viewing among 4-11-year-olds increased year on year. As shown in the table above, VSP viewing still made up the highest proportion of 4-15 year-olds' in-home video viewing in 2024.[13]

Of the four VSPs measured by Barb, YouTube was the only service on which children aged 4-15 spent more time than in the previous year viewing videos inside the home. This increased by 18 minutes

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[11] Barb as-viewed, 3+ consecutive minutes weekly reach.

[12] Barb, live viewing (including live BVoD) on the TV set only, top programmes by best performing transmission.

[13] Barb as-viewed. This has been set out as a proportion of identified video viewing only.

(5%) in 2024, averaging 6 hours 37 minutes a week among children aged 4-15. Those aged 4-11 averaged 6 hours 38 minutes a week, a 30-minute (8%) year-on-year increase. However, YouTube viewing was down by 6 minutes (2%) among children aged 12-15, to 6 hours 34 minutes a week.

Broadcaster content viewed on YouTube

The most popular measured Channel 4 title on YouTube via TV sets in 2024 by children aged 4-15 was the documentary series *Educating Greater Manchester*, followed by the final of the three-part competition miniseries *Lucky Days*. Children's animation topped the list for the most popular measured broadcaster content on YouTube for both BBC and ITV, with *Hey Duggee* the most-viewed BBC title and *Booba* the most-viewed ITV title on YouTube among children.[14]

#	Title	Broadcaster
Top 5 broadcaster titles viewed on YouTube by children 4-15, TV sets only		
1	Educating Greater Manchester	C4
2	Lucky Days	C4
3	The Snowman	C4
4	Educating Yorkshire	C4
5	Educating Cardiff	C4
1	Hey Duggee	BBC
2	Swashbuckle	BBC
3	Yakka Dee!	BBC
4	Mr Tumble	BBC
5	Digley and Dazey	BBC
1	Booba	ITV
2	Blippi	ITV
3	Blippi and Meekah Deliver Gifts With Santa: The Musical	ITV
4	Pocoyo	ITV
5	Meekah	ITV

Source: Barb, as-viewed, on YouTube via TV sets only. Measured programmes only.

Almost all children aged 3–17 watch videos on VSPs, but their video-watching preferences vary by age and demographic.

Turning back to data from our Children's Media Literacy Tracker surveys, we found that almost all children aged 3-17 (96%) watch videos on video-sharing platforms (VSPs), a figure that has remained steady since 2021. However, there has been a slight increase since last year in the proportion of 16-17-year-olds watching videos via VSPs (99%, up from 97% in 2023). YouTube remains the most popular VSP, used by 84% of children aged 3-17, followed by TikTok, used by 44% of 3-17s to watch videos, both unchanged since 2023. There have been a couple of changes in VSP viewing habits since last year, with children aged 3-17 more likely to watch videos on Instagram (26% compared to 23% in 2023) and Facebook (19% compared to 16% in 2023).

As noted above, YouTube has universal appeal for children across all age bands. However, once children reach their teens, they start to branch out into watching videos via a wider range of VSPs. For example, almost seven in ten (68%) 13-17-year-olds watch videos on TikTok, compared to 32% of

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[14] Barb, as-viewed, on YouTube via TV set only. Measured programmes only.

3-12-year-olds, and 44% of 13-17-year-olds watch videos on Instagram, compared to 17% of 3-12-year-olds.

We also asked about the types of content that children watch on VSP sites or apps. Funny videos or those showing pranks or challenges continue to be the most popular type of VSP content for children, watched by 68% of 3-17-year-olds who watch videos on any app or site. This type of content is more popular among older children (with 75% of 13-17s watching it compared to 65% of 3-12s) and also among children in C2DE households (71% vs 66% of ABC1 households). Conversely, the second most popular type of VSP content – cartoons, animations, mini-movies and songs (which 56% of children in this group watch) – was more likely to appeal to younger than older children (66% of 3-12s compared to 37% of 13-17s).

This year, we have seen an overall increase in the proportion of 3-17-year-olds watching music videos via VSPs (50% vs 47% in 2023). Music videos are more popular among teenagers than younger children (62% of 13-17s vs 44% of 3-12s) and among girls than boys (58% of girls vs 43% of boys).

Children aged 3-17 who watch videos via apps or sites are now also more likely to watch videos to help them learn new things or to help with their schoolwork (48% compared to 42% in 2023). The popularity of this type of video content does not vary much by age, but does vary by socio-economic background and gender. Girls are more likely than boys to watch videos to aid their learning (52% of girls compared to 44% of boys) as are children in ABC1 households; 52% of children in these circumstances watch videos to help them learn or do schoolwork, compared to 43% of children in C2DE households.
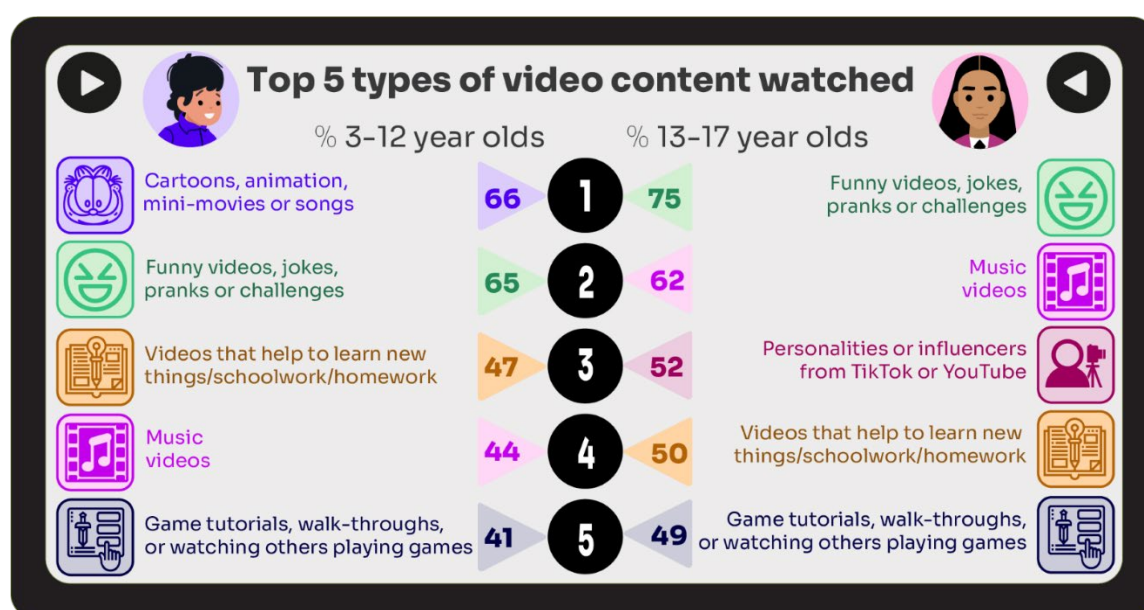
Our [Children's Media Lives] research supports these findings, showing that the type of video content that the 21 participants consumed varied by age and gender. For example, younger children in the study are more likely than older ones to report watching games and challenge-based content on YouTube. Boys across the sample enjoyed watching sports content and commentary, with some particularly enjoying game 'walkthroughs', while in contrast, girls across the sample were more likely to report watching lifestyle content.

'Brain rot'[15] is an emerging genre of video content consumed by some participants in our Children's Media Lives study

In last year's *Children's Media Lives* report, we noted a continued increase in the use and appeal of short-form content among children in our study, as well as a preference for videos that are 'loud and dramatic in nature' and use choppy, fast-paced editing styles with overlaid sound effects, animations, and rapid transitions. While this still holds true, for some participants this appears to have developed into a habit of watching seemingly meaningless content. This year, for the first time, the phrase 'brain rot' was used by several children in the study to describe both the genre of content they were watching, and also the negative feeling they experienced after engaging with this type of content. 'Brain rot' videos can be described as frenetic, choppy, and loud and usually include contextless, random, non-sequitur clips that do not seem to make sense. One participant, Amber, discovered the term on TikTok:

> "It's really hard to explain brain rot. It's, like, something that's like so annoying that it rots your brain kind of." Amber, 13

The proportion of children watching livestreamed videos has grown since 2022

In 2024, two-thirds (66%) of 3-17s watched livestreamed videos, up from 58% in 2022. The increase this year is driven by children aged 8-9 (61% of 8-9s watch livestreamed videos, compared to 53% in 2023) and by 10-12-year-olds (72% vs 66% in 2023). Notwithstanding these increases among younger children, watching livestreamed videos remains most popular among teenagers, with 82% of 13-17s watching them, compared to 58% of 3-12s.

YouTube Live remains the most popular of the video-streaming apps used by 3-17s to watch live videos, and its use has increased since 2023 to 48% (up from 41%). While there are minimal differences between the proportions of older and younger children on this measure, boys are more likely than girls to watch YouTube Live (53% vs 43%). Looking at other VSPs, 31% of children aged 3-17 use TikTok Live to watch livestreamed videos; 18% use Instagram Live, and 16% use Facebook Live. These apps are especially popular among older children. For example, 51% of 13-17s are using TikTok Live to watch livestreamed videos, compared to 21% of 3-12s. TikTok Live is also more popular with girls than boys (33% vs 29%).

Media for interaction and self-expression

## More than two-thirds of children aged 3-17 use social media apps

Over two-thirds (68%) of children aged 3-17 reported using social media apps, and while this has not changed since last year, it is evident that there has been a gradual increase in use over time, as in 2021 63% were doing so. Predictably, the proportion of children using social media increases with age; 55% of 3-12s are reported to use these types of apps or sites, compared to 96% of 13-17s.

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[15] 'Brain rot' was named Oxford Word of the Year in 2024 and defined as: *"The supposed deterioration of a person's mental or intellectual state, especially viewed as the result of overconsumption of online material considered to be trivial or unchallenging"*.

Three- to five-year-olds are more likely than last year to use social media, but only a small proportion do this independently from parents

Despite there being a minimum age requirement of 13 for using most social media apps, over half of 3-12-year olds (55%) were reported as using at least one social media app or site, an increase on last year, when 51% of these children did so.

There has been an increase in the proportion of the youngest children in our study using social media. In 2024, 37% of parents of 3-5s reported that their child used at least one social media app, compared to 29% in 2023. This growth is spread across various sites, with an increase in the proportions of young children using each of the following sites: Instagram (16% vs 9% in 2023); Snapchat (15% vs 8%); Facebook (13% vs 9%; and Pinterest (5% vs 2%).

Proportion of 3-5 year olds who use social media

Year	2021	2022	2023	2024
	24%	23%	29%	37%
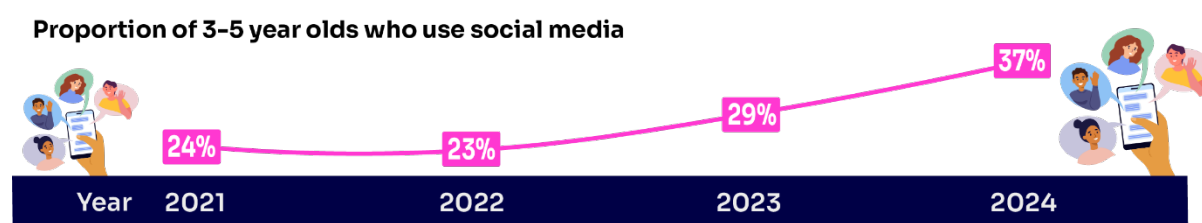
This growth in use among very young children may reflect the finding that parents of 3-5s who use social media are more likely to feel positive about the impact these sites can have on their child, compared to last year. In 2024, 63% of parents with children this age believed that the benefits to their child of using social media sites or apps outweighed the risks, up from 52% in 2023.

More than a third (36%) of parents of 3-5s whose child uses at least one social media app or site state that they use social media on their child's behalf, and over four in ten (42%) say they use these sites or apps together with their child. However, a further two in ten (19%) parents of 3-5s who use social media say that their child uses these apps independently.

We saw a similar pattern when we asked parents of all 3-5s which approach they tended to rely on to keep their child safe online. Six in ten (59%) said they 'directly supervise' their child (up from 46% last year) with much lower proportions of parents of 3-5s reporting that they either 'talk to' their child (19%) or 'trust their child to be sensible' (7%).

We note that the average age of parents of 3-5s who use social media is 32. This may be a factor in explaining the increase in social media use among 3-5-year-olds; in contrast to previous generations, many parents with children this age will have come to maturity during the rise of social media. The attitudes among parents of younger children towards supervision of their child's online activities is something we will continue to monitor in years to come.

As last year, 8-17s continue to be more likely to be 'passive' than 'active' users of social media

In a similar picture to previous years, in 2024, 70% of 8-17s who use at least one social media site or app are passive users. Among these children, 41% mainly use social media to 'like' things and follow accounts, while 29% only read or watch content.

Three in ten (29%) social media users aged 8-17 are 'active'.[16] Among these 'active' social media users, 85% comment on things, 77% share things and 74% post things on social media apps or sites. The likelihood of 8-17s who use social media being 'active' increases with age, reaching 38% among 16-17s, compared to 21% of 8-12s. While 16-17-year-olds are more likely than younger children to be 'active' social media users, the likelihood of their posting content has decreased from 85% in 2023 to 76% in 2024.

These findings align with what we have seen in our [Children's Media Lives](#) studies over the past few years. Children in the study continue to use social media primarily for content consumption. They very rarely create or post their own content. When they do, they tend to follow prescribed templates and established trends in order to decrease the perceived risk of social backlash. Indeed, this year several participants reported that there was this risk if they posted in public spaces online:

"People hate on other people...say if it's a 'Get Ready with Me', but the person had like a condition or something, and then you press on new comments, people would like, make fun of other people." Amira, 14

"When I post something, I don't know why I always feel like someone's gonna say something about it at school." Suzy, 13

Sixteen per cent of children livestream their own videos

Although the majority of children are passive in their online behaviours, a steady proportion of 3-17s livestream their own videos, with 16% doing so. For 3-9s, the proportion stays at about one in ten, increasing to two in ten once children reach 10-12 years old. Children living in urban areas are more likely than those living in rural areas to livestream their own videos (17% vs 9%), and the same is true for children living in ABC1 households compared to C2DE households (19% vs 13%).

Almost eight in ten children have their own profile on at least one social media site, messenger or livestreaming app or VSP.

Eight in ten of all children (79%) aged 3-17 have their own profile on at least one VSP, messaging or livestreaming app, or social media site. While seven in ten 3-12 year olds have at least one such profile, this is almost universal among teens; 97% of 13-17s report that they have at least one profile on these types of sites or app. When focusing on social media apps/sites alone, four in ten (40%) under-13s have a profile on this type of service.

The younger group (3-12s) are most likely to have a profile on YouTube/YouTube Kids (44%), WhatsApp (23%) and/ or TikTok (23%), while 13-17s are most likely to have profiles on WhatsApp (62%), Snapchat (62%) or TikTok (61%).

In 2024, children aged 3-17 are more likely to have profiles on YouTube (42% vs 37% in 2023) and Facebook (26% vs 23% in 2023). In addition, children aged 8-9 are more likely to have their own profiles on Instagram and Facebook compared to last year. The proportion of 8-9s with an Instagram profile increased from 8% in 2023 to 14% in 2024, while those with a Facebook profile rose from 12% in 2023 to 19% in 2024.

Four in ten (37%) parents of 3-17s said they would allow their child to have a profile on social media

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[16] By 'active' social media users we are referring to the children who say they share, comment and/or post things on social media.
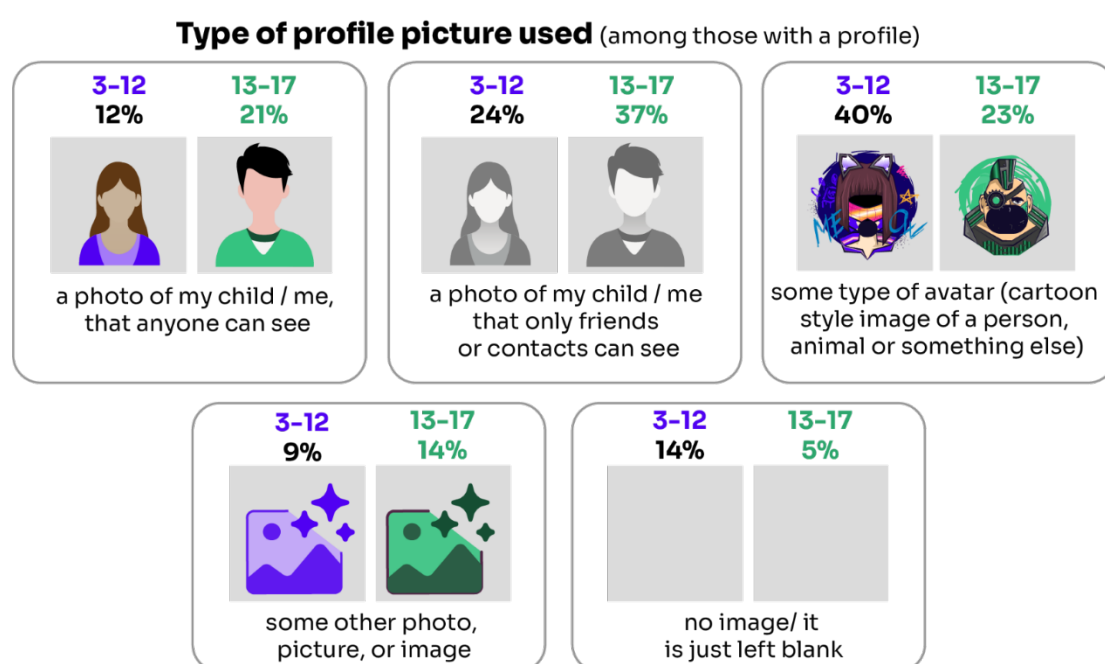
sites or apps before they had reached the minimum age requirement.[17] Agreement with this statement was highest among parents of 10-12-year-olds, at 50%.

We also asked children aged 8-17 who had profiles whether they had more than one on these platforms. More than half (56%) of 8-17s who had registered profiles on these types of apps had more than one profile on the same VSP, social media or messaging/calling app or site. The proportion remains similar across the age bands with the exception of 16-17-year-olds, who are less likely than younger children to have multiple profiles on one app/site (49%). When we asked these children why they had multiple profiles, the most common reasons given were: having one profile just for their parents or family to see (23%), followed by having one profile just for their closest friends (19%), and having one account they used for the 'real me' as well as one that has edited/filtered posts or photos (15%).

Sixteen per cent of children who have a social media profile include a photo of themselves which anyone can see

For the first time, we asked children who had at least one profile on a social media, messaging, livestreaming site or app or VSP what type of image or picture they included in their profiles. We found that over three in ten children with a profile included either an avatar, i.e. a cartoon-style image of a person, animal or something else (33%) or a photo of themselves that only their friends or contacts could see (30%). However, 16% of 3-17s with a profile included a photo of themselves which anyone could see.

Among teenagers (13-17s) who have a registered profile on these sites/apps, the most common image was one of themselves that only their friends or contacts could see (37%), followed by some type of avatar (23%) and a photo of them that anyone could see (21%). For 3-12-year-olds with a profile, the most common image was some type of avatar (40%), followed by a photo of themselves that only their friends/contacts could see (24%) or having no image at all (14%).

Type of profile picture used (among those with a profile)

3-12 12%	13-17 21%
a photo of my child / me, that anyone can see	

3-12 24%	13-17 37%
a photo of my child / me that only friends or contacts can see	

3-12 40%	13-17 23%
some type of avatar (cartoon style image of a person, animal or something else)	

3-12 9%	13-17 14%
some other photo, picture, or image	

3-12 14%	13-17 5%
no image/ it is just left blank	

[17] The minimum age requirement for the majority of these services is 13.

In addition to age, we see a few other demographic differences in the use of specific types of image within children's profiles. Girls with a registered profile are more likely than boys to report including photos of themselves in profiles that are only available to specific contacts (34% vs 25%). Boys in the same group are more likely than girls to use some type of avatar (36% vs 30%). And children in ABC1 households who have a registered profile are more likely than their C2DE counterparts to include photos of themselves that are visible to anyone in the profile(s) (18% vs 13%).

Children's experience of the online world: risks, rewards and parental concerns

Introduction

In this section we discuss the benefits and pitfalls of children being online. We see children continuing to use online spaces to learn, to be social and to explore their many interests and hobbies. Of course, the online world also contains various hazards, and content that is inappropriate for these young audiences, and with this in mind, we look at parents' concerns around their children being online.

Reaping the benefits

Children can learn about the world and benefit socially through access to online spaces
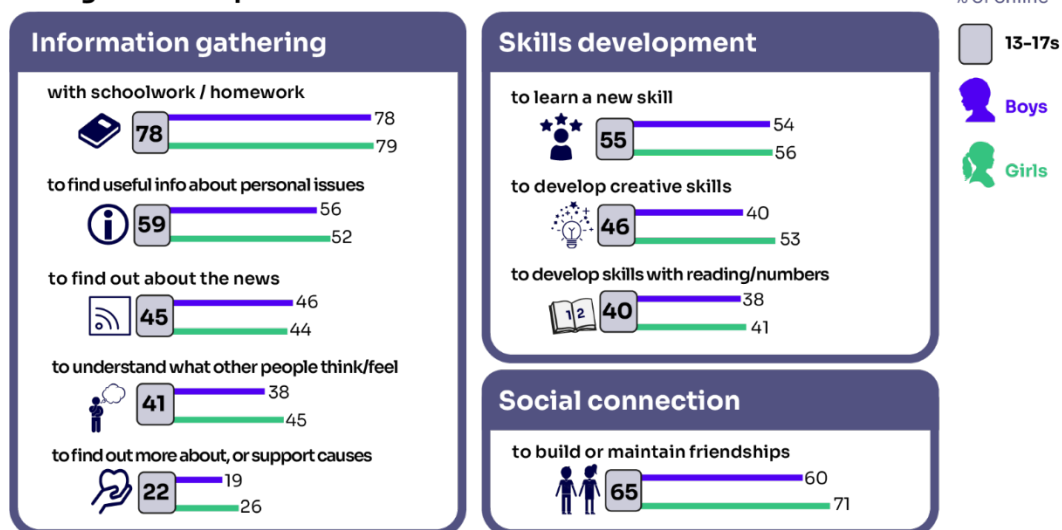
Children continue to find various benefits to being online. In response to a prompted list, nearly all (99%) 13-17s say that they see at least one benefit to being online, and this is unchanged since 2021. These benefits can be grouped into three broad areas – information-gathering, skills development, and social connection.

Nearly eight in ten (78%) of 13-17s agreed that the internet helped them with their schoolwork/ homework – the most commonly-selected potential benefit. Six in ten (59%) say they find useful information about any problems or issues they may have, with 45% saying they regard finding out about the news as a benefit of being online, and four in ten (41%) say that it helps them to understand what other people think and feel about things. A smaller proportion (22%) of 13-17s say that a benefit to being online for them is to find out more about/support an organisation or a cause, although this is higher for girls (26%) than boys (19%).

In terms of learning and developing skills, over half (55%) of 13-17-year-olds nominated 'to learn a new skill' and 46% 'to develop creative skills' as a benefit of being online. Girls are more likely than boys to see the latter as a benefit (53% vs 40%). Four in ten (40%) also said that being online benefits them by developing their skills with reading and numbers.

Turning to older teenagers specifically (16-17s), there has been an increase in the proportions of those who feel that being online benefits them by helping them to: 'learn a new skill' (58% up from 50% in 2023); 'develop creative skills' (49% up from 41%; and/ or 'find out about the news' (53% vs 45%).

Being online helps me...

% of online

▢	**13-17s**
👤	**Boys**
👤	**Girls**

Information gathering

with schoolwork / homework
📖 **78**
78
79

to find useful info about personal issues
ⓘ **59**
56
52

to find out about the news
📶 **45**
46
44

to understand what other people think/feel
🧑 **41**
38
45

to find out more about, or support causes
🤲 **22**
19
26

Skills development

to learn a new skill
👤 **55**
54
56

to develop creative skills
💡 **46**
40
53

to develop skills with reading/numbers
📖 **40**
38
41

Social connection

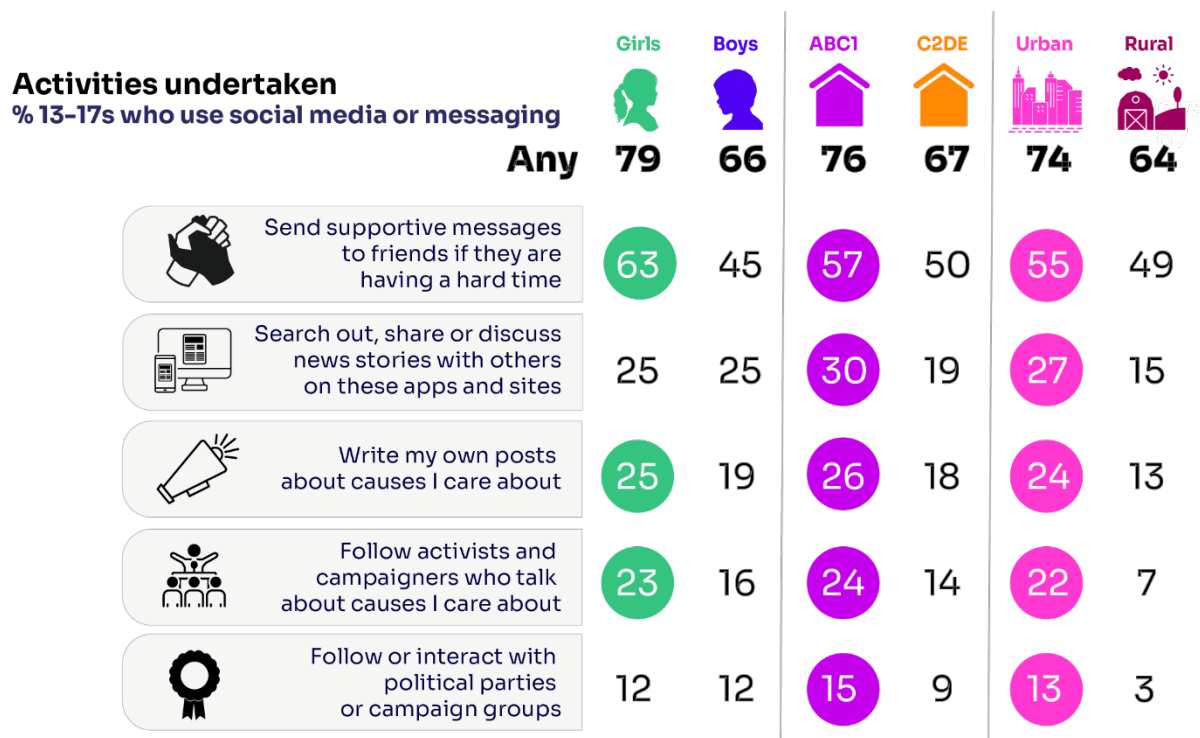**to build or maintain friendships**
👥 **65**
60
71

Finally, children benefit from the social aspects of being online. Almost two-thirds (65%) of teenagers see the online world as beneficial in building and maintaining their friendships. Notably, as we have seen in previous years, girls of this age are more likely to see this as a benefit than boys (71% vs 60%). Social media and messaging apps play a big role in this, as almost three-quarters (72%) of 13-17s who use these sorts of apps agree that using them helps them feel closer to their friends all or most of the time, and over half (54%) of this group say they send supportive messages to friends if they are having a hard time (again, there is a gender difference on this measure, with 63% of girls who use these sites or apps saying they ever do this compared to 45% of boys).

A significant minority of children use social media and messaging apps to engage with social or political causes

At least two in ten 13-17-year-old users of social media and messaging apps visit these sites to: search out, share or discuss news stories with others (25%); write posts about causes they care about (22%); and/ or follow activists and campaigners who talk about causes they care about (20%). Twelve per cent say they use them to follow/interact with political parties or campaign groups. There are, however, variations when we look at gender, socio-economic background and urban/rural location.

Girls are more likely than boys to say they ever write their own posts about causes they care about (25% vs 19%) and/or follow activists and campaigners who speak about causes they care about (23% vs 16%). The same is true for those living in urban compared to rural areas, and those in an ABC1 household compared to a C2DE household – both of these demographic groups are more likely than their counterparts to have performed any of the aforementioned activities around sharing news stories, writing posts about causes, following activists/campaigners and following/interacting with political parties or campaign groups.

Activities undertaken
% 13-17s who use social media or messaging

	Girls	Boys	ABC1	C2DE	Urban	Rural
Any	**79**	**66**	**76**	**67**	**74**	**64**
Send supportive messages to friends if they are having a hard time	63	45	57	50	55	49
Search out, share or discuss news stories with others on these apps and sites	25	25	30	19	27	15
Write my own posts about causes I care about	25	19	26	18	24	13
Follow activists and campaigners who talk about causes I care about	23	16	24	14	22	7
Follow or interact with political parties or campaign groups	12	12	15	9	13	3

Note: Circles show that the figure is statistically higher than the group on the right

Younger children are also socialising online with their peers

It is not only teenagers who are using these sites and apps to socialise online. While the proportions are lower among younger children, a majority (61%) of 8-12s who use social media or messaging apps agree that using these sorts of apps helps them to feel closer to their friends all or most of the time. And nearly seven in ten (67%) of 8-12s say that using these apps and sites makes them feel happy all or most of the time.
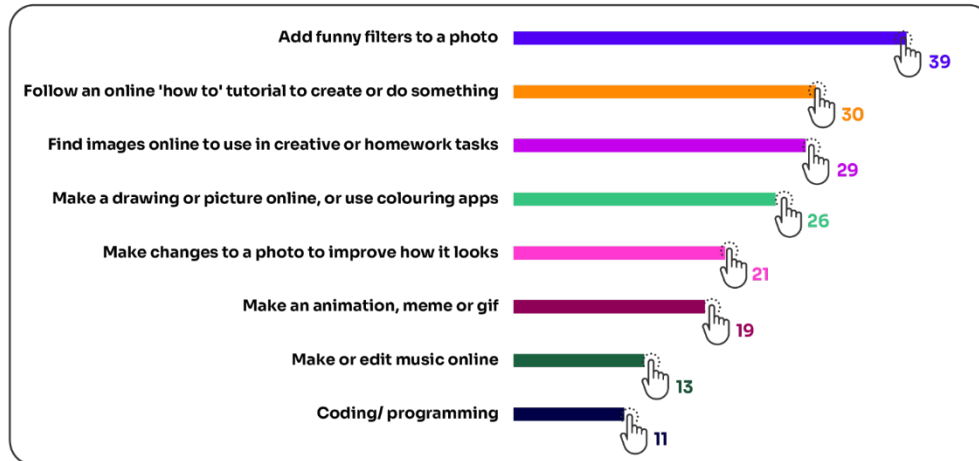
Online spaces continue to be places where children can explore their hobbies and interests

The online world provides a range of ways for children to pursue hobbies or be creative. For example, nearly four in ten (37%) of all 3-17s watch 'how-to' videos or tutorials about hobbies or things they are interested in. This is more likely among teenagers (43% of 13-17s compared to 35% of 3-12s) and girls (42% compared to 33% of boys). Children living in ABC1 households are also more likely to watch these types of videos compared to their C2DE counterparts (40% vs 34%).

Four in five (80%) 3-17s participate in at least one of a range of creative activities online that we asked about. This proportion decreases as the child ages, falling from about nine in ten among 3-5s and 6-7s (90% and 87%, respectively) to three-quarters (74%) of 16-17s.

When looking specifically at what children aged 8-17 say about their own creative activities online, we found that three in ten (29%) 8-17-year-olds say they find images online to use in creative/homework tasks, and two in ten edit photos to improve how they look (21%) and/or make animations, gifs and/or memes (19%). Parents recognise this benefit to their children being online, with over half (56%) of parents of online 3-17s saying that being online helps their child develop creative skills.

Creative activities undertaken on devices by children aged 8-17 (%).

Activity	%
Add funny filters to a photo	39
Follow an online 'how to' tutorial to create or do something	30
Find images online to use in creative or homework tasks	29
Make a drawing or picture online, or use colouring apps	26
Make changes to a photo to improve how it looks	21
Make an animation, meme or gif	19
Make or edit music online	13
Coding/ programming	11

In our Children's Media Lives study this year, we spoke to several participants who use online platforms to explore their hobbies and found that the content they are shown by platforms is hyper-personalised to these hobbies. Ben, for example, has been interested in basketball for years. He regularly plays for two different teams, training twice weekly, with matches at the weekend. Ben acknowledged that the content he sees on his feeds is often basketball related.

"So I follow a few of my friends on TikTok, like people I know. Then I follow brands I guess, like the NBA, and like teams I'm interested in, like the Lakers." Ben, 16

Another participant, Zak, is a passionate Taylor Swift fan who uses social media to get updates about her:

"I'm normally just watching Taylor really... she's, like, my favourite...I use Instagram mostly just for Taylor Swift because she doesn't really post as much on X anymore. She posts on Instagram on her stories." Zak, 14

Learning online

More children this year are watching videos which help them with doing their schoolwork and learning new things

Parents continue to see the educational benefits of their children being online, aligning with findings from the previous two years. At least half of parents of 3-17s whose child goes online agreed that doing so helped their children with developing skills with reading and numbers (55%) and/or learning a new skill (51%); and seven in ten (72%) felt that that being online helped their children with their schoolwork/homework. And nearly six in ten (57%) of these parents felt that the benefits outweighed the risks of their child going online for information-gathering purposes, unchanged over the previous two years.

Turning back to children's own experiences, as noted in the Media Use Landscape chapter, we have seen an increase (across all age bands from 3 to 17) in the proportion of children who are watching videos that help them learn new things or help them with their school/homework (48% compared to 42% in 2023).

Another recent trend in a child's learning life is the introduction of artificial intelligence tools. We will cover AI more thoroughly in the Technology and Trust chapter, but it is worth noting that 45% of

children aged 8-17 who have ever used AI technology, say they used it 'to learn' and the same proportion said they used it for school purposes. These uses have increased since last year (from 35% and 37% respectively in 2023).

Gaming

Over half of children game online, increasing to three-quarters once they reach 10-12 years old
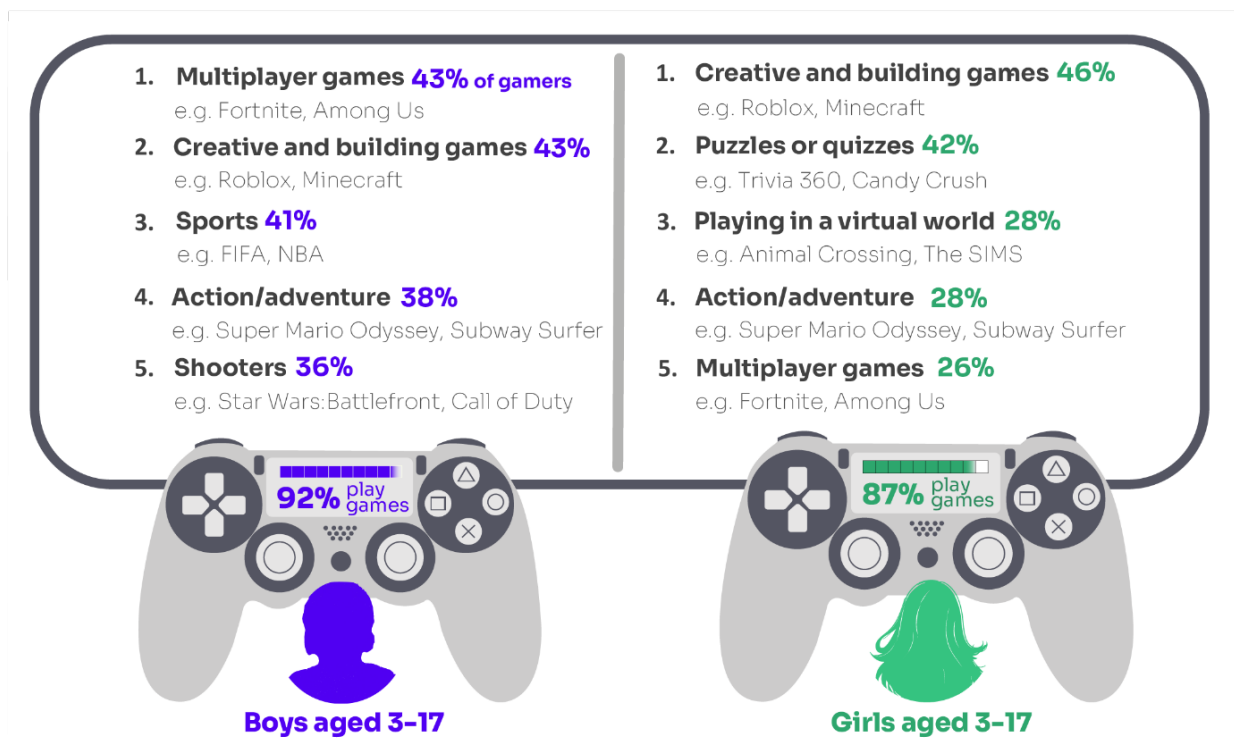
Gaming continues to be a key part of children's lives, with nine in ten (89%) children playing games on some sort of device: games consoles (56%), mobile phones (45%) and tablets (43%) are the most common.

Following an increase in the proportion of children gaming online in 2023, this year the level has stayed steady, with six in ten (61%) of all children aged 3-17 doing this activity. This proportion increases with age, starting with a quarter of 3-5s (25%), rising to four in ten 6-7s (41%), and then jumping to over six in ten 8-9s (63%). When children reach 12 years old, at least three-quarters are playing games online: 75% of 10-12s, 80% of 13-15s, and 78% of 16-17s.

Children play a variety of games which understandably vary by age and gender. For teenagers (13-17s) who play games, the most popular types are games played against multiple people/teams (49%), creative and building games (42%) and shooter games (40%). Turning to younger children (3-12s), the most commonly-played genre is creative and building games (46%), followed by puzzles or quizzes (36%) and action/adventure games (32%).

Looking at gender differences, the most popular types of games played by girls are creative and building games (46%), puzzles or quizzes (42%), playing in a virtual world (28%) and action/adventure (28%). For boys, it is playing against multiple people/teams (43%), creative and building games (43%) and sports games (41%).

This year we have seen an increase in the proportion of 3-17 gamers who play makeover games (from 13% last year to 15% this year) and/or simulation experience games (from 12% to 14%). This finding is mirrored in our Children's Media Lives study, where role-play and dress-up games such as *Dress to Impress* on Roblox were identified as being particularly popular among some participants this year.

Boys aged 3-17 — 92% play games

1. **Multiplayer games 43% of gamers**
   e.g. Fortnite, Among Us
2. **Creative and building games 43%**
   e.g. Roblox, Minecraft
3. **Sports 41%**
   e.g. FIFA, NBA
4. **Action/adventure 38%**
   e.g. Super Mario Odyssey, Subway Surfer
5. **Shooters 36%**
   e.g. Star Wars:Battlefront, Call of Duty

Girls aged 3-17 — 87% play games

1. **Creative and building games 46%**
   e.g. Roblox, Minecraft
2. **Puzzles or quizzes 42%**
   e.g. Trivia 360, Candy Crush
3. **Playing in a virtual world 28%**
   e.g. Animal Crossing, The SIMS
4. **Action/adventure 28%**
   e.g. Super Mario Odyssey, Subway Surfer
5. **Multiplayer games 26%**
   e.g. Fortnite, Among Us

Three in ten children who game online play against people they don't personally know, and a similar proportion chat to strangers while playing

The majority of children aged 3-17 who game online do so with either someone they know, or have met outside the game (72%) and/or by themselves (67%). However, three in ten (31%) of this group play with or against someone they don't personally know. While this is more likely among older children (35% of 13-17s vs 29% of 3-12s), significant minorities of younger children do play against people they have not met in person: 14% of 3-5s, 25% of 6-7s and about a third of 8-9s and 10-12s (33% and 32% respectively).

In addition to exploring who children play against or with, we ask 8-17s whether they use the chat function (through messaging or via a headset) within games, and, if so, who they chat with. These metrics have stayed broadly similar throughout the past four years, with three-quarters (74% in 2024) of children who game online reporting that they use the in-game chat functions while gaming, and over six in ten (63%) of the same group saying they chat to people they know outside the game via these in-game chat functions. Three in ten (31%) 8-17s who game online reported chatting to people that they don't know while gaming, and the likelihood of doing this increases with age (25% of 8-9s, 30% of 10-12s and 34% of 13-17s).

Boys continue to be more likely than girls to communicate with others while gaming (81% of 8-17 boys who game online vs 66% of girls in the same group). This is true both for chatting with their friends/people they know (68% vs 57%) and with those they don't know (36% vs 25%). We see a similar pattern in our Children's Media Lives study, with a number of boys in the study often speaking with their friends while gaming.

"We would invite each other in one party, so the party is like the group, like a call, but on the PS4 or PS5." Majid, 16

While communication via games is a valuable social tool for many children, it can sometimes leave them vulnerable to unwanted interactions. Last year, nearly one in ten (9%) of all children aged 8-17 said someone had been nasty/hurtful to them through an online game – this has risen to 12% of children this age this year. The proportion of those who had experienced this sort of interaction does not vary by age or gender.

Potentially harmful contact or content online

Nearly four in ten 8–17s believe that people are mean or unkind to each other online all or most of the time

Children's attitudes to being online are mixed and have remained broadly unchanged over the past few years (2022-2024). However, a significant minority continue to have negative feelings about social media and messaging apps.

A quarter of 8-17s who use social media or messaging apps believe that there is pressure to be popular on these apps all or most of the time. This has become increasingly true among some younger children in this cohort; those aged 10-12 are now more likely than last year to agree with this statement (28% vs 21%). There is also a difference between children living in urban and rural areas; 26% of the children in this group who live in an urban environment agreed with the above statement, compared to 17% of rural children. The same is true for children in ABC1 compared to C2DE households (27% vs 22%). Finally, we see that children living with at least one impacting or limiting condition are more likely to agree that there is pressure to be popular on these apps all or most of the time, compared with those who don't have such conditions (29% vs 23%).

In line with previous years, just under four in ten (37%) 8-17-year-olds in this group agree that people are mean or unkind to each other on these apps *all or most* of the time. However, when we look at 16-17-year-olds specifically, we see that the proportion who agree with this statement has fallen to 35%, from 42% last year. There is no in-year difference by age band on this measure.

Girls continue to be more likely than boys to experience nasty or hurtful interactions online

Turning to children's negative experiences online, three in ten 8-17s who chose to answer these questions said they had experienced someone being 'nasty or hurtful' to them via communications technology (31%) and this likelihood increases with age (from 20% of online 8-9s to 36% of 13-17s). As in 2023, girls are more likely than boys to say they have experienced this type of online bullying (34% vs 28%).

The most common way in which children had experienced someone being nasty or hurtful to them was through social media (16%) – as likely as face-to-face bullying (15%) – and this was more common among teens in this group than their younger counterparts (20% of 13-17s compared to 11% of 8-12s said they had been bullied via social media). This was followed by text or messaging apps (15% overall), with girls and older children both more likely to have experienced this than boys and younger children, and then by bullying in online games (14%) which is more likely among younger children. A much smaller proportion of 8-17s who opted to answer the question said they had experienced this via other websites/apps (6%), through phone calls (5%) and/or through video calls (5%).

Staying with the topic of unpleasant interactions online, a third (34%) of teenagers agree that it is important that people can say what they want online, even if it offends or upsets other people. This proportion is in line with 2023 (34%), following an increase since 2022 (30%) Younger teenagers (13-15) are more likely than their older peers to think this (37% vs 30%).

For the past three years we have also been tracking the proportion of 8-17-year-olds who use social media or messaging apps and agree that they feel safe using these apps or sites. These proportions have stayed the same throughout this period, with just under three-quarters (74% in 2024) saying that they feel safe using social media or messaging apps 'all or most of the time'. The proportion who feel safe using these types of apps or sites 'all or most of the time' increases with age (61% of 8-9-year-olds, 72% of 10-12s, 77% of 13-15s and 81% of 16-17s. This leaves two in ten (21%) 8-17s who use these sites or apps but only 'sometimes' feel safe when using them, and 2% who 'never' feel safe when doing so.

Certain demographics are more likely to see worrying or nasty content online

A third (33%) of 8-17s say they have seen something online that they found 'worrying or nasty' in the past 12 months, unchanged since 2023. There was no variation in this measure by either age or gender. However, 8-17s who live with at least one impacting condition are more likely than those without such a condition to say they have seen online content that they found to be worrying or nasty (41% vs 31%), as are children in ABC1 households compared to those in C2DE households (38% compared with 27%). Differences also appear between types of geographic location – while a third (34%) of 8-17s who live in an urban area say they have seen something worrying or nasty online in the last 12 months, this only applies to 23% of those who live in a rural area.

We asked those children who had seen something that worried them online whether they had told anyone about their experience, and the majority had done so (86%). This is more likely among 8-12-year-olds than teenagers (90% compared to 82% of 13-17s), with no other demographic differences.

Wellbeing

One in five teenagers are following a fitness programme online

Although some parts of the online world may be worrying or nasty for children, many children see it as a means to aid their mental or physical wellbeing.[18] Last year we introduced a new question asking whether teenagers (13-17s) use apps or online services to help with various aspects of wellbeing. While there has been no change in the past year in the overall proportion of teenagers who use apps or online services in this way – seven in ten (69%) continue to do so – we have seen an increase in the numbers following fitness programmes. One in five teenagers (19%) are following a fitness programme online, compared to 14% last year. The increase is driven by a rise in the proportion of younger teens (13-15s) who are doing this (19% up from 11% in 2023). Girls and boys are equally likely to follow a fitness programme online. However, children in ABC1 households are more likely than those in C2DE households to do so (23% vs 13%).

Teens in ABC1 households are also more likely to use online apps or services to improve their mood, help them eat healthily and look after their mental health, compared to those in C2DE households.

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[18] This question is about children's own perceptions; the question of whether the types of sites or apps about which we asked actually do improve users mental or physical health is another matter.

Returning to the broader findings, similar proportions of teenagers as last year are using apps or online services to help them relax (45%), improve their mood (32%), eat healthily (18%), sleep (17%), look up health symptoms (17%), look after their mental health (16%) and/or get support when feeling anxious (14%).

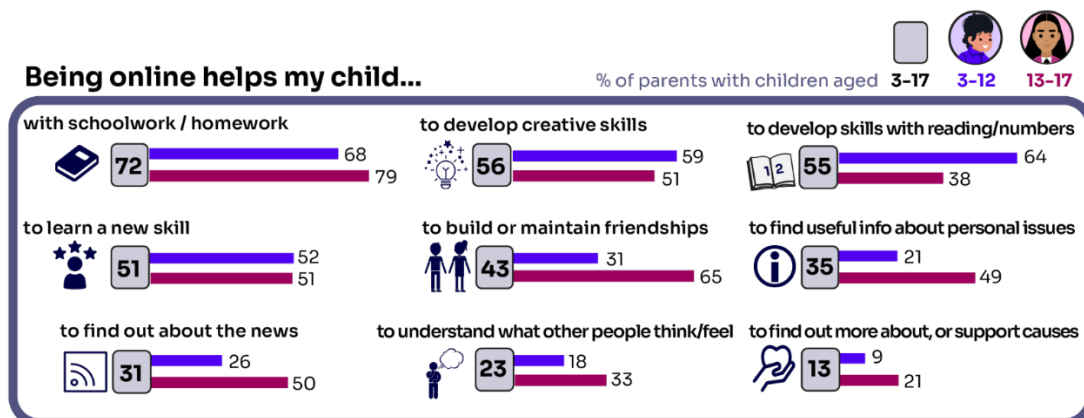As was the case last year, more teenage girls are using apps or online services to aid their wellbeing than their male counterparts (74% vs 65%). This includes a higher proportion of girls who are using apps to look up health symptoms (21% vs 13% of boys), look after their mental health (19% vs 14%) and/ or get support when they are feeling anxious (18% vs 11%).

% of online 13-17s who use websites or apps to help...

↑ Statistically higher than boys

	Boys	Girls
Relax	42	48
Improve my mood	29	35
Follow a fitness programme	19	18
Healthy eating	17	19
Sleep	16	18
Look up health symptoms	13	21 ↑
Look after my mental health	14	19
Get support when feeling anxious	11	18

Any listed
Boys 65
Girls 74 ↑
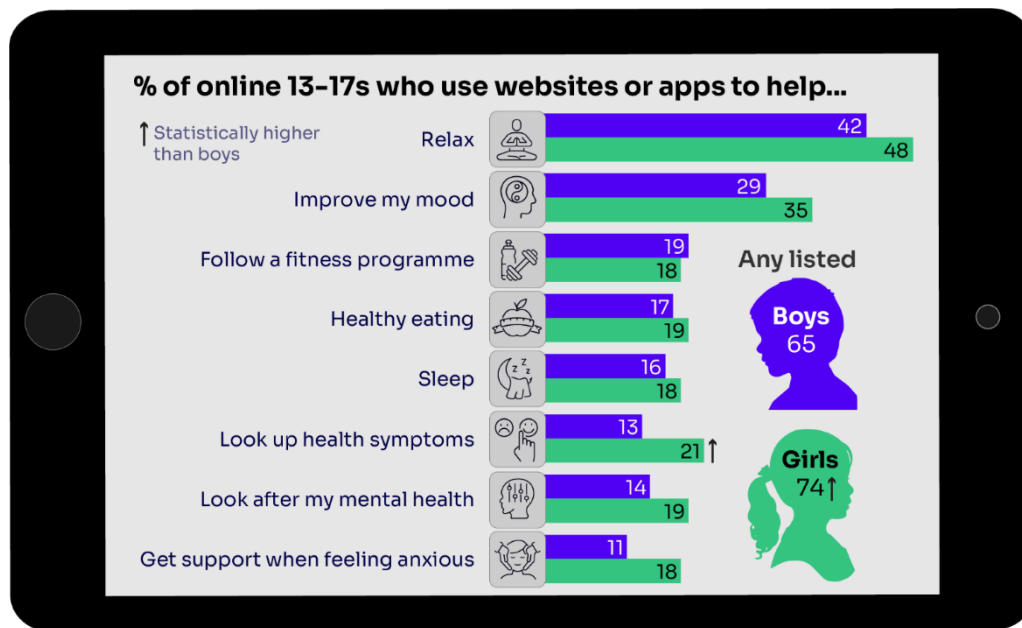
Parental concerns about their children's online activities

As illustrated throughout this chapter, being online delivers both positive and negative experiences for children. And while 96% of parents of online 3-17s acknowledge at least one of the potential benefits to their child being online that we asked about, there are some online areas and activities which they are more likely to see as beneficial, and some as riskier.

Being online helps my child... % of parents with children aged 3-17 | 3-12 | 13-17

	3-17	3-12	13-17
with schoolwork / homework	72	68	79
to develop creative skills	56	59	51
to develop skills with reading/numbers	55	64	38
to learn a new skill	51	52	51
to build or maintain friendships	43	31	65
to find useful info about personal issues	35	21	49
to find out about the news	31	26	50
to understand what other people think/feel	23	18	33
to find out more about, or support causes	13	9	21

The majority of parents do not think the benefits outweigh the risks of their children being on social media, messaging and video-sharing apps

Overall, only three in ten (29%) parents of children aged 3-17 believe that the benefits of their child using social media, messaging, and video-sharing apps outweigh the risks. In our Adults Media Literacy tracker, more than double (64%) the proportion of parents believe that the benefits for *themselves* of using these types of apps or sites outweigh the risks. Turning back to our Children's Media Literacy data, parental perceptions improve as children grow older: four in ten (39%) parents of 13-17s see the benefits to their child of using social media outweighing the risks, compared to just over two in ten (23%) among parents of 3-12s.

The proportion of parents who agree that the benefits outweigh the risks rises to nearly six in ten (57%) when they are thinking about their child using the internet to gather information. This again is more likely as the child ages; 64% of parents of 13-17s agree that the benefits outweigh the risks compared to 54% of parents of 3-12s who believe this. This suggests that as children grow into their late teens, parents are more likely to perceive the benefits of being online for their child, while when children are younger, parents tend to think more about the potential risks of the environment for them.

Over seven in ten parents are concerned about their child being exposed to age-inappropriate content and being unable to distinguish between the real and the fake online

The primary worry of all parents of online 3-17s continues to be potential exposure to age-inappropriate content. When asked, three-quarters of parents said they were either fairly or very concerned about their child seeing content which is not appropriate for their age (76%) and the same proportion were concerned about them seeing 'adult' or sexual content (74%).
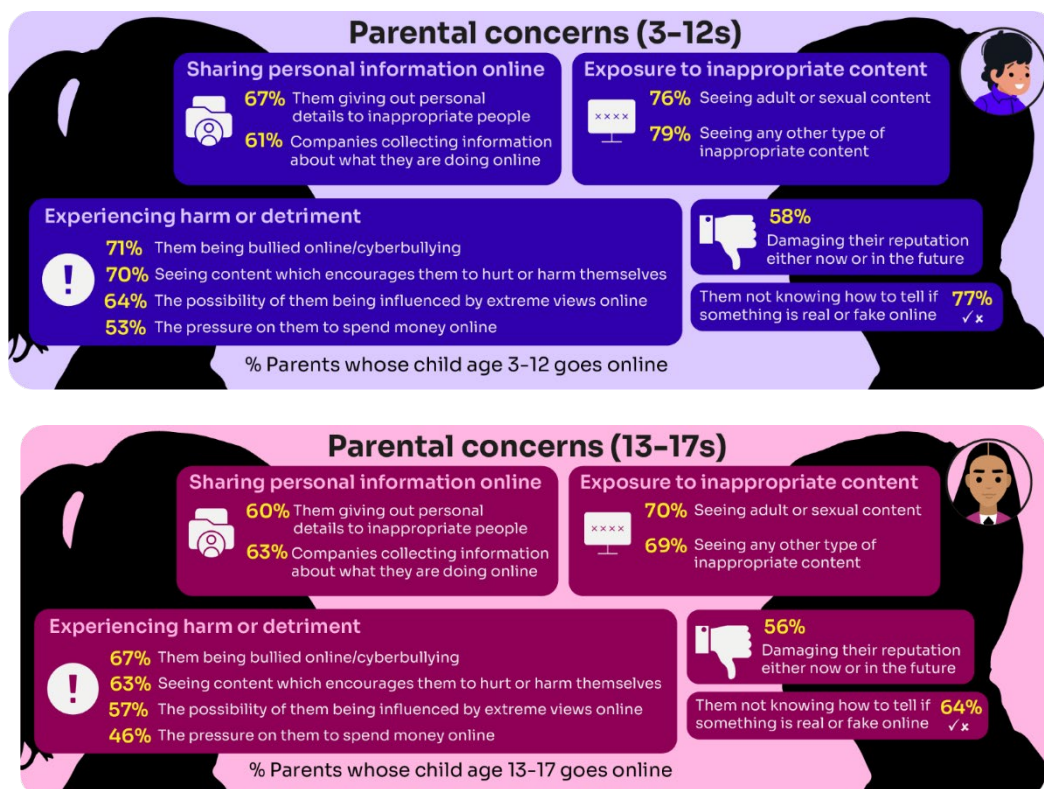
This year we added a new item to the list of types of online content about which parents might be concerned: the child not knowing how to tell if something is real or fake online. Over seven in ten parents (72%) – almost the same proportion as those who are concerned about their child seeing age-inappropriate or specifically adult or sexual content online – said they were concerned by this possibility.

Another significant area of concern for parents is the potential for their child to experience harm or negative experiences online. For example, seven in ten (69%) parents fear their child might be bullied online, and a similar proportion (68%) are worried about them seeing content that encourages them to hurt themselves. Additionally, 61% of parents are concerned about their child being influenced by extreme views, and 51% worry about the pressure to spend money online.

More than six in ten parents are anxious about their children sharing personal data. Sixty-five per cent are concerned about their child giving out personal details to inappropriate people, and 62% worry about companies collecting information about their child's online activities. Lastly, over half of the parents (57%) are concerned that their child's online use might damage their reputation, either now or in the future. None of these proportions have changed in the last two years.

Unsurprisingly, there are many concerns which are more prominent among parents of younger (3-12-year-old) children who go online. For example, a higher proportion of these parents compared to their counterparts (parents of teenagers) are concerned about their child being exposed to age-inappropriate content (79% vs 69%), their child not being able to tell what is real or fake online (77% vs 64%), their child seeing content which encourages them to harm themselves (70% vs 63%), the

child giving out personal details to inappropriate people (67% vs 60%) and the possibility of their child being influenced by extreme views online (64% vs 57%).

Parental concerns (3-12s)

Sharing personal information online
67% Them giving out personal details to inappropriate people
61% Companies collecting information about what they are doing online

Exposure to inappropriate content
76% Seeing adult or sexual content
79% Seeing any other type of inappropriate content

Experiencing harm or detriment
71% Them being bullied online/cyberbullying
70% Seeing content which encourages them to hurt or harm themselves
64% The possibility of them being influenced by extreme views online
53% The pressure on them to spend money online

58% Damaging their reputation either now or in the future

Them not knowing how to tell if something is real or fake online 77%

% Parents whose child age 3-12 goes online

Parental concerns (13-17s)

Sharing personal information online
60% Them giving out personal details to inappropriate people
63% Companies collecting information about what they are doing online

Exposure to inappropriate content
70% Seeing adult or sexual content
69% Seeing any other type of inappropriate content

Experiencing harm or detriment
67% Them being bullied online/cyberbullying
63% Seeing content which encourages them to hurt or harm themselves
57% The possibility of them being influenced by extreme views online
46% The pressure on them to spend money online

56% Damaging their reputation either now or in the future

Them not knowing how to tell if something is real or fake online 64%
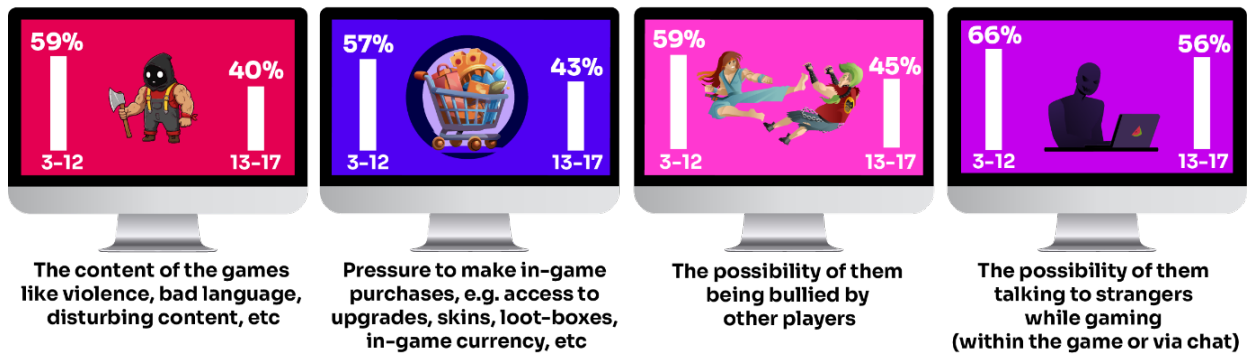
% Parents whose child age 13-17 goes online

As noted above, at an overall level the proportions of parents who are concerned about specific types of online content or experience have remained unchanged over the past two years. However, this year we have seen an increase in the proportion of parents of online children aged 8-9 who are concerned about their child: seeing content which encourages them to hurt or harm themselves (78%, up from 65% in 2023); the possibility of them being influenced by extreme views online (74% vs 60% in 2023); and damaging their reputation, either now or in the future (66% vs 50%).

When it comes to their child gaming, parents are most concerned about them talking to strangers

Parents also have concerns around their children's online gaming. In fact, a quarter (25%) of all parents do not think the benefits outweigh the risks of their children doing this, and more than a third (35%) are uncertain, leaving a minority (41%) who agree that the benefits of their child gaming do outweigh the risks. There is no difference in the proportion of parents who agree with this statement by the age of the child.
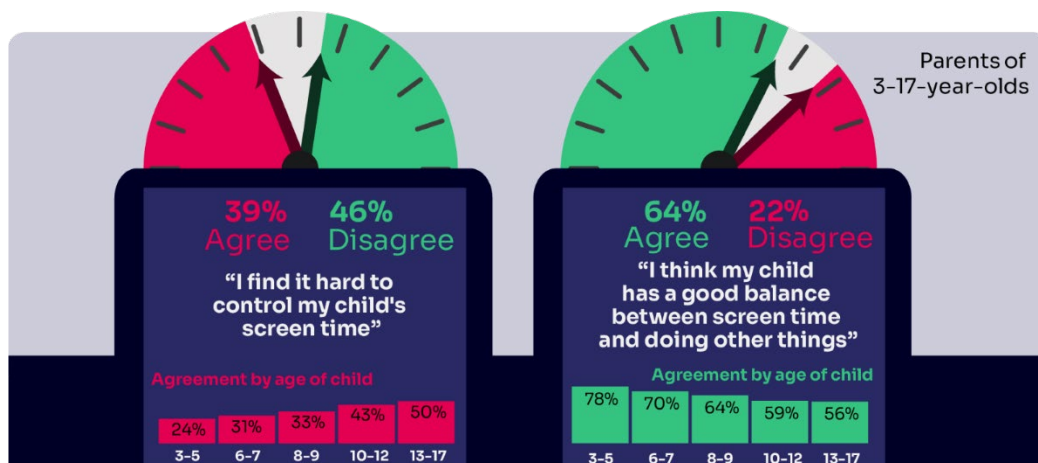
When presented with four potential concerns related to their child's gaming, the most commonly cited concern among parents of 3-17s whose child games was the possibility of their child talking to strangers while gaming, either within the game or via the chat function (62%). This was followed by the possibility of their child being bullied by other players (54%), the content of the games the child plays – i.e. violence, bad language, disturbing content etc. (52%), and the pressure on the child to make in-game purchases e.g. for things like access to upgrades, skins, loot-boxes, in-game currency or other rewards (52%). Overall, parents of younger children are more likely than parents of teenage children (13-17s) to be concerned about these possibilities, as outlined in the infographic below. Further findings about children's gaming experiences can be found in the earlier 'Gaming' section within this chapter.

Parental concerns about gaming (% of parents of children who game)

59% 3-12	40% 13-17
57% 3-12	43% 13-17
59% 3-12	45% 13-17
66% 3-12	56% 13-17

The content of the games like violence, bad language, disturbing content, etc

Pressure to make in-game purchases, e.g. access to upgrades, skins, loot-boxes, in-game currency, etc

The possibility of them being bullied by other players

The possibility of them talking to strangers while gaming (within the game or via chat)

Half of parents of teenagers say they find it hard to control their child's screentime

Last year, we introduced questions around parents' attitudes toward their children's screentime. Parents' perceptions have remained broadly the same this year, with about four in ten (39%) agreeing that they find it hard to control their child's screentime, increasing as the child gets to teenage years, with 33% of parents of 3-12s compared to half (50%) of parents of 13-17s agreeing with this statement. A similar sentiment is seen when we ask parents whether they think their child has a good balance between screentime and doing other things. Overall, just under two-thirds (64%) of all parents agree that they do, but the proportion is lower among parents of teenagers; 56% of parents of 13-17s agree that their child has a good balance, compared to 68% of parents of 3-12s.

Parents of 3-17-year-olds

39% Agree   46% Disagree
"I find it hard to control my child's screen time"

Agreement by age of child

| 3-5 | 6-7 | 8-9 | 10-12 | 13-17 |
| 24% | 31% | 33% | 43% | 50% |

64% Agree   22% Disagree
"I think my child has a good balance between screen time and doing other things"

Agreement by age of child

| 3-5 | 6-7 | 8-9 | 10-12 | 13-17 |
| 78% | 70% | 64% | 59% | 56% |

Additionally, we asked parents to think about their own screentime. Two-thirds (67%) think they have a good balance between screentime and doing other things, with no variation by the age of their child. Less than half (45%) say they find it hard to control their own screentime, a higher proportion than those who find it hard to control their child's (39%).

We also explored children's perceptions of their own screentime and their parents' screentime. We found that a third (33%) of online 8-17s think that their screentime is too high, increasing with age from three in ten 8-12s (29%) to nearly four in ten (38%) 13-17s. Boys are more likely than girls to disagree that their screentime is too high (29% vs 24%). Of the third of online 8-17s who think their screentime is too high, just over half (52%) also think their parents' screentime is too high, compared with the 15% who do not think their parents screentime is too high, and a quarter (26%) who are not sure.

This year, a few of our [Children's Media Lives](#) participants reflected on the negative feelings they experienced when they had spent a long time on their device(s):

"What I've been told is that when I get off my screen, I'm less fun to be around. Like I can just be not interested. And I guess I can kind of tell because when I've been on my screen for five hours, and I get up I'm like oh my gosh, the world is spinning. I want to go back to my iPad and I want to stay there forever. And like I can also feel angrier for like no reason." Willow, 11

"I find it really hard to watch movies. […] So normally if I'm watching something on Netflix I get really bored of it and I just go on my phone and I don't even realise it, I'm just scrolling on TikTok then I look at the time and I'm like, 'what the hell, I need to go to bed'. My head of year said something about it the other day. He said it's because we all watch TikTok. Like our brains aren't used to watching really long things. That our brains aren't stimulated enough by it or something. I actually think that's true, because I can watch TikTok for hours and hours and hours and not get bored. But as soon as I put on a movie I get bored, and then just go back on my phone." Suzy, 13

Technology and trust

Introduction

The ways in which children understand and assess the information they are exposed to online and across other media is central to their media literacy. The ability to apply critical understanding to the information presented to them allows children to fully realise the benefits of being online while also lessening any potential risks.

In this section we examine children's knowledge about, and attitudes towards, the information they see, and in the following section we explore their confidence in judging online content. Here, we consider the extent to which older children are aware of and recognise the use of technology to determine or create the information they see. Having added questions that gave us a picture of children's knowledge and use of algorithms and AI in 2023, this year we have added a new question looking at the extent to which older children who use it would trust an AI-generated news story. We also consider how children consume news and the trust they place in sources of information online.

Awareness of algorithms

Awareness of algorithms has increased since 2023, and remains higher among older children and those in more affluent families

In 2023 we started asking children if they were aware that some apps or sites use technical tools (algorithms) to deliver content that they believe will appeal to the user, based on information they already hold about them, such as what they have looked at before and their user age.

This year we found that awareness among 8-17s of the use of algorithms to direct specific content to users had increased from 59% to 63%. As was the case last year, the proportion who are aware rises with the age of the child, from 44% of 8-9s to 81% of 16-17s in 2024, and is higher among children from more affluent families. Three-quarters of children in AB households are aware of the use of algorithms compared to about six in ten children in C1, C2 or DE households.

Over four in ten 8-17s (44%) who know about the use of algorithms agree that they *"[are] happy for apps to use information they have collected about me to decide what to show me"*, unchanged since last year. However, older children continue to be less likely to agree with this statement (four in ten 13-17s vs half of 8-12s).

As in 2023, over a third of children who know about algorithms are unsure/neutral about how they feel about their information being used for this purpose: 35% of 8-17s who knew about algorithms said they neither agreed nor disagreed with the above statement, and again, older children were more likely to be in this group (four in ten 13-17s vs three in ten 8-12s).

Awareness of online algorithms

% who agree **44%** **60%** **46%** **39%** **39%** **45%** **43%**

"I'm happy for apps to use information they have collected about me to decide what to show me"
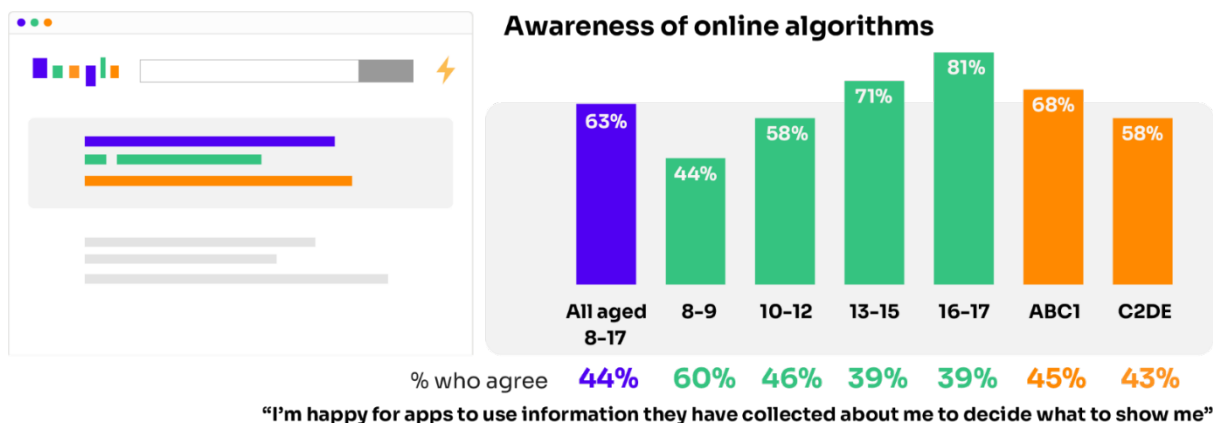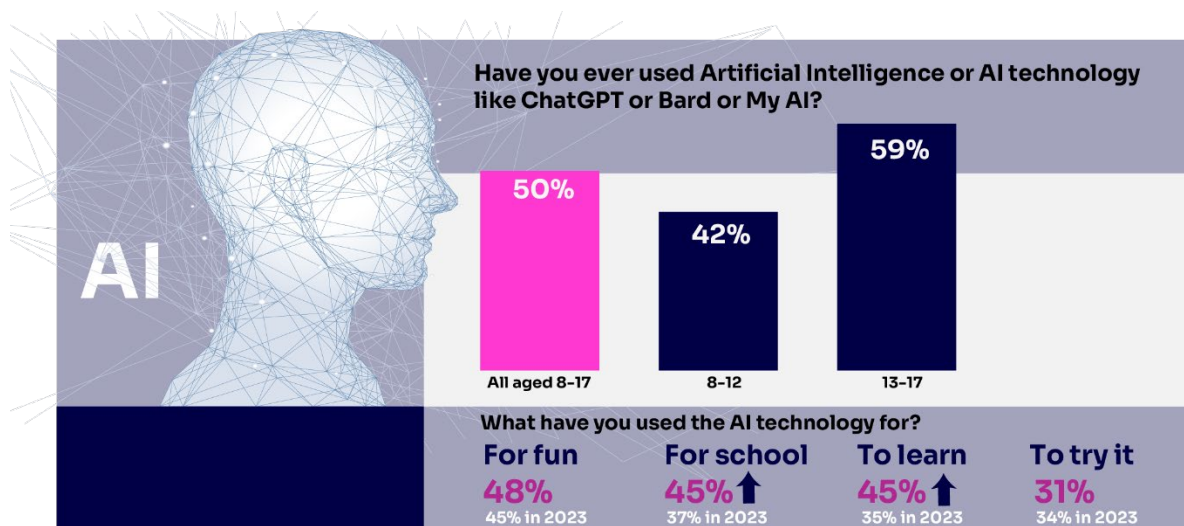
Use of and trust in artificial intelligence

Half of 8–17s use artificial intelligence (AI) tools, an increase since last year

Last year, 46% of children aged 8-17 said they had used AI; this year, the level has increased to 50%. This increase has been primarily driven by 13-15s, among whom three in five say that they have used AI, compared to just over half in 2023. And again, older children are more likely to have used AI tools (59% of 13-17s vs 42% of 3-12s).

In a change from 2023, boys are no longer more likely than girls to say they have used AI. However, there does appear to be an 'AI usage gap'. Children in ABC1 households continue to be more likely to have used AI than those in C2DE households (55% vs 45% in 2024), and this year children in urban areas are more likely than those living in rural areas to say they have used it (52% vs 42%).

The proportion of children who use AI for either learning or school has increased, a change driven by older teens

This year we again showed 8-17s who had ever used AI a list of four potential reasons for using it and asked them to tick any which applied to them. In 2023 the most commonly chosen response was 'for fun' and it remains the most popular reason for use this year, with 48% of these children selecting it, unchanged since last year. However, the proportions selecting either 'to learn' and/or 'for school' have risen, bringing these options to a similar level (45% of 8-17 year old AI users selected each of these options in 2024, up from 35% and 37% respectively the year before). This increase in the use of AI for educational purposes appears to have been driven by older teens. Among AI users, children in ABC1 households are also more likely than those in C2DE households to say they have used AI either 'to learn' (52% vs 34%) or 'for school' (51% vs 36%).

Have you ever used Artificial Intelligence or AI technology like ChatGPT or Bard or My AI?

All aged 8-17	8-12	13-17
50%	42%	59%

What have you used the AI technology for?

For fun	For school	To learn	To try it
48%	45% ↑	45% ↑	31%
45% in 2023	37% in 2023	35% in 2023	34% in 2023

While it is evident from our quantitative findings that generative AI is being used for positive purposes by some children, our Children's Media Lives study this year has flagged that some of the extended range of AI uses could be hazardous for children. The report specifically mentions AI chatbot apps, where anyone, including children, can choose from a range of characters to chat to. Amber, who is 12, had been using Character.ai after hearing about it on TikTok and via her friend who had downloaded it.

"There are loads of like random characters, and you can like make your own and just talk to them. Because if you're like bored, you can just message someone who is like, gonna message you back because, like, it's AI. I liked one [of the characters] called 'best friend'. We were in school and like [we messaged]…and stuff like that. He was like my friend so I'd just like talk to him and get along with him if you know what I mean" Amber, 12
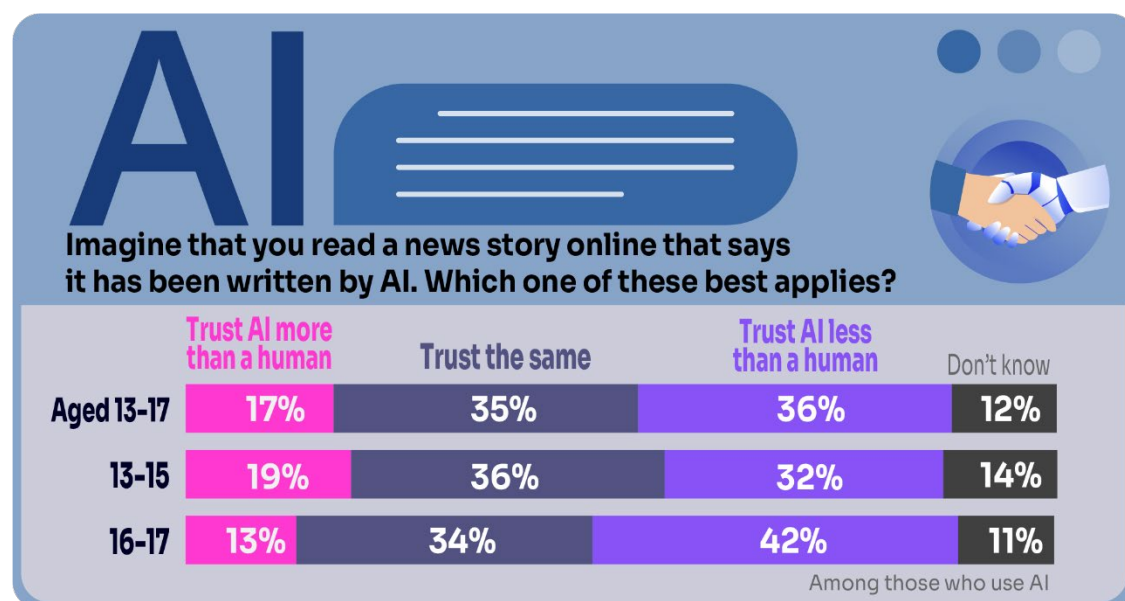
From further research carried out by the Children's Meda Lives researcher, it became apparent that these chatbots could also be used to roleplay mature, sexual content. However, it is important to note that we saw no evidence that any of our participants had done this.

Over half of teenage AI users would trust an AI-generated article either more than, or to the same extent as one written by a human

We wanted to establish how much teenagers (13 to 17s) who use AI would trust AI-generated content, so this year we added a new question asking them to imagine they had read a news story online which stated that it had been generated or written by AI, and tell us whether they would trust that article more, less, or to the same extent as one written by a person.

Over a third of teenage AI users said they would trust an AI-generated news story to the same extent as one written by a human (35%), broadly the same as the proportion who said they would trust the AI article less than the human version (36%). Seventeen per cent of teenage AI users said they would trust an AI-generated article more than one written by a human; and this was more likely among younger than older teens (19% of 13-15-year-old AI users compared to 13% of 16-17s). It was also more likely among teenage AI users who live with at least one impacting condition (23% vs 14% of those without such a condition). Overall, 52% of teenage AI users said they would trust an AI-generated article either more, or to the same extent, as one written by a human.

Teenage girls who use AI are more likely than their male counterparts to say they would trust an AI-generated news story *less than* one authored by a human (40% vs 32%).

Imagine that you read a news story online that says it has been written by AI. Which one of these best applies?

	Trust AI more than a human	Trust the same	Trust AI less than a human	Don't know
Aged 13-17	17%	35%	36%	12%
13-15	19%	36%	32%	14%
16-17	13%	34%	42%	11%

Among those who use AI

Learning about the world and assessing online information

Over four in ten teenagers continue to recognise that being online helps them find out about the news

As set out in more detail in the 'Reaping the benefits' section above we asked children aged 13-17 about a range of potential benefits to them from being online and found that they do see many advantages. One of the specific benefits was to help them 'find out about the news', with more than four in ten (45%) 13-17s saying that being online helped them with this, unchanged since last year. Older teens are more likely than younger teens to identify this as a benefit of being online (53% of 16-17-year-olds vs 41% of 13-15s) as are those not living with an impacting condition (48% vs 36% of teens living with at least one impacting condition).

TikTok is still the most-used single source for news among 12–15-year-old news consumers,

We have observed for some time that teenagers' consumption of, and attitudes towards, news are quite distinct from those of adults. From the sources they use to the genres of stories they tend to favour, this next section is a reminder of how diverse teenagers' media habits around news can be. Ofcom's News Consumption Survey includes an assessment of how younger teens (12-15s) access and assess news. In 2024 just under half (47%) of 12-15s claimed not to be interested in news, and while this is unchanged since last year, the proportion of 12-15s who feel this way has increased over the longer term (up from 42% in 2021). Among those 12-15s who did access news, social media was one of their most commonly-used news sources. Talking with family remained the most usual way for this age group to find out about news (60% of all 12-15s said they had ever done this – although it was down from 68% in 2023). This was followed by social media, with over half (55%) of

12-15s saying they had sourced news this way. TV (53%) and talking with friends (50%, down from 56% in 2023) were other commonly-cited sources of news.[19]

When we looked at the use of individually named sources for news (i.e. specific channels, sites or media publications)[20] among news consumers aged 12-15, TikTok (30%), YouTube (27%) and Facebook/Instagram (both 21%) in joint third took the top three spots.

Younger teens who consume news via social media were more likely to use these sites for lighter news topics rather than what might be described as 'hard news'; news about 'celebrities' and 'music' were popular among the types of stories accessed by 12-15s who used TikTok, Instagram, Facebook or Snapchat for news.

Our Children's Media Lives findings tend to match those from the News Consumption Survey above, in that we have again found that most of the children in our qualitative study showed little interest in keeping up with news, and those who did see the news said it tended to come to them via their social media feeds. Nonetheless, this year we saw that a small number of children in the study were more proactive in following the news. This generally stemmed from either an interest in a specific topic or a sense of wanting to ensure they were up to date with what was happening in the world.

"Obviously I like to be involved in the news anyway. I like to know what is going on. If I don't know what's going on, I feel like a bit of a nincompoop. But doing politics has definitely kicked me into it every morning." Taylor, 16

A couple of participants also spoke to the researchers about how they were critically evaluating the news they saw:

I follow BBC News. I look at the things they post…so I'm caught up basically. Like, they don't post everything, but they post a few interesting things, so I think I'm caught up. […] I don't look up information around it to be honest. I just take what I see. […] But sometimes I take it with a pinch of salt. Because sometimes, even though it's a neutral point of view, because we're allies with a country, it could be a bit biased. But I don't tend to think it's wrong, as such, just maybe a little bit distorted at times. Rarely, though." Arjun, 13

"I would say, because I'm a Muslim, if there was a Muslim person speaking, like a scholar, I would definitely take his opinion on a lot more, because they would make it into like an Islamic point of view…But if it was news-wise, I'd probably listen to Al Jazeera more because, I saw it with my own eyes when I was there [in Israel], Al Jazeera was reporting more. More than the BBC." Majid, 16

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[19] NCS Teens Survey, QC1 and QC2

[20] The combined reach for news among younger teens (12-15s) of all BBC sources (36% in 2024) remains higher than that for any single named source including TikTok.

Children's trust in the information they see online

Young teens who consume news still regard their family as the most trustworthy source for news stories

Twelve-to-fifteen-year-olds who responded to the News Consumption survey again indicated that they placed different levels of trust in the news they consumed depending on its source. Among 12-15s who ever consumed news via the following types of media, just over a third (36%) said that news on social media sites or apps was always, or mostly, reported truthfully. This compares to at least seven in ten who said the same about news they saw or read on TV, radio or in newspapers (69%, 73% and 75%, respectively). The only news source that outstripped these more traditional news sources in terms of trustworthiness for young teens was news stories from their family; 78% of 12-15s who had ever heard news stories from this source said that they were always or mostly accurate.[21]

As before, 8–17s are less likely to trust information they see on social media than that which they see on other types of site

As in previous years, the Children's Media Literacy research mirrors the News Consumption Survey findings above, in that children (aged 8-17) remain more sceptical about the information they see on social media sites or apps than that which they see on either news or educational sites or apps. A third (35%) say that either all or most of the information they see on social media is true, compared to almost two-thirds (63%) who say this about the information found on news sites, and three-quarters (74%) who feel this way about information they see on sites or apps used for schoolwork. At an overall level these proportions have remained unchanged since 2021. However, this year we have seen a decrease in the proportion of 13-15 year-olds who say they believe that all or most of the information they see on news sites or apps is true (61% vs 69% in 2023).

Eight-to-seventeen-year-olds in ABC1 households are more likely than those in C2DE households to consider that most of the information they see on social media is true (27% vs 22%). However, there is virtually no differentiation by age in the levels of trust that children aged 8 and above place in the information they see on social media sites.

When prompted, most teenagers say that they think about the accuracy of the information they look for online

We also asked children aged 13 and over if, when they looked for information online, they thought about whether they could trust the information they found to be true and accurate. Nine in ten said they 'ever' thought about this, unchanged since last year.

About half of teenagers say they think about the familiarity of the source of online information to verify its accuracy

We then showed these children a list of checks they might carry out to verify the accuracy of the information they see online, and like last year, we found that much lower proportions indicate that they ever undertake any of these checks. About half said that they considered whether a company mentioned on a site or app was familiar to them or asked someone else if they had used the website
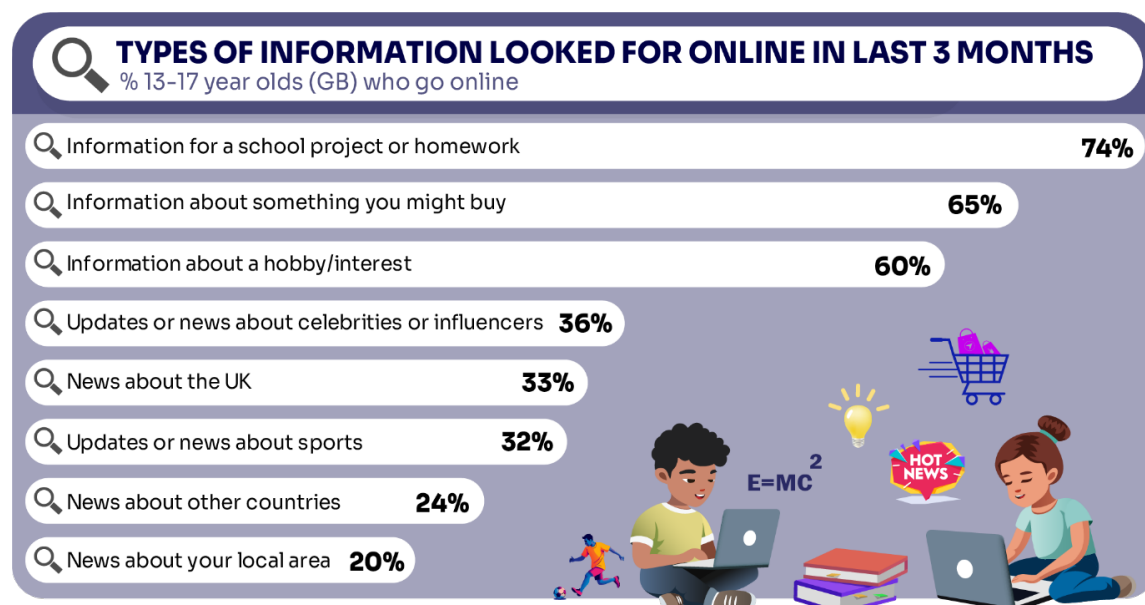
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[21] Ofcom's News Consumption Survey, Questions put to 12-15s, QC4, QC5 and QC6

or app in question (50% and 48% respectively).   More involved or time-consuming forms of verification were less popular. Just over four in ten (42%) of these children said they ever checked the information they found online across a number of websites, and only a quarter (25%) claimed to ever use fact-checking websites or apps. While none of these proportions have changed since last year at an overall level, 16-17-year-olds were more likely than last year to say that they ever checked information across different websites to ensure that it was correct (49% vs 36% in 2023).

Looking up information for a school project or homework is the most common reason for teens to search online

We wanted to explore in more detail how teens search online, so we carried out an additional survey via an online panel.[22] Three-quarters of online 13-17-year-olds (74%) said they had searched online in the previous three months for information for a school project or homework, and 65% had searched for information about something they might buy. Children in ABC1 households were more likely than children in C2DE households to have searched each of these topics online (76% vs 69% for school projects/ homework and 68% vs 57% for something they might buy). Six in ten teenagers said they had looked for information online about a hobby or interest over the same period.

Mirroring our earlier findings about teenagers' generally passive rather than active engagement with news, our research shows that comparatively low proportions of 13-17s had searched online for news in the previous three months: 33% say they had looked online for news about the UK, 24% for news about other countries and 20% for local news. The corresponding proportions of adults who had searched these topics online over the same period were 70%, 55% and 56%.[23]

TYPES OF INFORMATION LOOKED FOR ONLINE IN LAST 3 MONTHS
% 13-17 year olds (GB) who go online

Information for a school project or homework	74%
Information about something you might buy	65%
Information about a hobby/interest	60%
Updates or news about celebrities or influencers	36%
News about the UK	33%
Updates or news about sports	32%
News about other countries	24%
News about your local area	20%

$E=MC^2$

HOT NEWS

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[22] The children's survey was carried out via an online panel among 1097 children aged 13 to 17 between 14 and 23 March 2025. The figures have been weighted so they are representative of all online Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales but not Northern Ireland) children aged 13-17.

[23] The adults' survey was conducted via an online panel among 2118 adults aged 18+ between 13 and 14 March 2025. The figures have been weighted so they are representative of all online UK adults aged 18+.

About two-thirds of teenagers use search engines to look for information at least once a day

Turning to preferred sources for online search information, this study indicates that most 13-17s (94%) say that they search online using a search engine such as Google or Bing at least weekly, with about two-thirds saying they use search engines at least once a day. This pattern is similar to our findings for adults, although a higher proportion of adults say they use search engines at least daily (75% vs 65%).

Adults and teens differ in their use of other media or tools for online search. For example, teenagers are more likely than adults to say they search online at least daily using VSPs such as YouTube or TikTok (55% of 13-17s compared to 34% of adults); conversely, adults are almost twice as likely as teens to say they search online at least daily using news websites (41% compared to 21% for 13-17s).

The pattern is broadly similar between online teens and adults when we look at searching online using social media sites or apps such X, Reddit or Instagram; 48% of 13-17s say they do this at least daily compared to 43% of adults. The proportions using Wikipedia for this purpose are similar (14% of teenagers say they do this at least daily compared to 12% of adults).

However, it appears that teenagers are more open to using AI tools like ChatGPT or Co-pilot for online search than their adult counterparts, with 23% saying they do this at least daily compared to 11% of adults. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given their stage in life, teenagers are also more likely than adults to say that they regularly search online using educational websites (16% of 13-17s say they do this at least daily compared to 4% of adults).

Teens who search online are more likely to trust educational websites to provide true or accurate information than any other source for online search

We also asked online teenagers who had used apps, sites or tools to search online to what extent they trusted the information they found there. Educational websites, such as BBC Bitesize, came out top: 83% of 13-17-year-olds who had searched for information on these types of sites or apps in the previous three months said they either *always* or *mostly* trusted the information they saw on them to be true or accurate, followed by search engines (73%) and news websites (67%).

A third of teenagers who had used social media to search for information online in the preceding three months said that they trusted this information to be always or mostly true or accurate; this was the lowest proportion out of all the sources we asked about. And when teenagers were asked which sources they either *rarely* or *never* trusted to provide true or accurate search information, social media was the most commonly selected option. Fourteen per cent of teenagers said they felt this way about it, compared to just 2% for information provided on educational websites.

Trust always/mostly

% children aged 13–17 (GB)
who use type of app/site

Educational website (e.g. BBC Bitesize) **83%** ▶

Search engine (e.g. Google, Bing) **73%** ▶
News website (e.g. BBC News, Sky News) **67%** ▶
Wikipedia 64% ▶
Smart-speakers/voice search (e.g. Alexa, Siri) **61%** ▶

AI (e.g. ChatGPT, Microsoft Co-pilot) **61%** ▶

'Q&A' app (e.g. Quora) **42%** ▶
Video sharing app (e.g. YouTube, TikTok) **41%** ▶

Social media app other than YouTube or TikTok 33% ▶
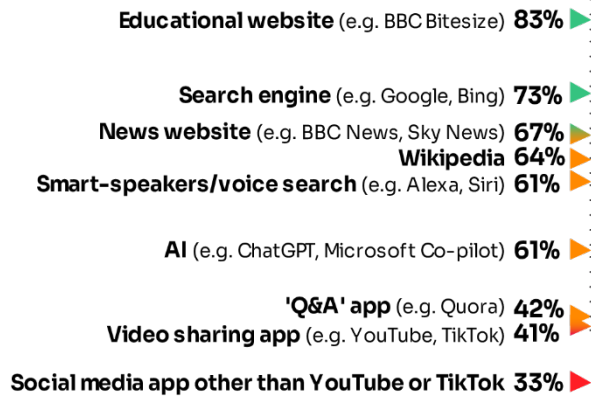
Critical evaluation of online information

Introduction

'Critical understanding' is a core element of media literacy. It allows users to understand, question and manage their media environment. This is important if they are to explore the benefits that the internet and other media can offer, while avoiding potential harms or risks.

Here we explore children's confidence in and ability to critically evaluate information online. Perhaps now more than ever, with the increased use of AI (as demonstrated in the Technology and Trust chapter), it is important to understand how children are evaluating online information.

This year, we continue to see relatively high levels of ability to critically evaluate among teenagers when they are deciding whether or not social media accounts and profiles are fake, and when they are presented with an influencer's sponsorship post. However, for the second year in a row we have seen a decline in their ability to identify advertising within search engine results.

Identifying what is fake and what is real on social media

Older teenagers' confidence in distinguishing between the real and the fake online, which decreased last year, has remained lower this year

As in previous years, we asked teenagers (13-17-year-olds) if they were confident in judging whether what they see online is real or fake. Although there have been no overall changes in this measure over the past few years, for the older teens (16-17s) the dip in confidence that we saw last year has been sustained, with about three-quarters of 16-17s (73%) continuing to say they are confident, compared with 82% two years ago. Last year, we also saw that girls were less confident than boys in their ability to judge what is real or fake online. At an overall level, this is no longer the case this year. But when we look at younger teenagers, girls aged 13-15 are less likely than boys of the same age to be confident in their ability (69% vs 79%).

Several other cohorts are also less likely than their counterparts to be confident in their ability to judge whether what they see online is real or fake. This includes teenagers living with at least one impacting or limiting conditions (66% vs 76% of those without these conditions); children in a C2DE household (70% vs 77% of those in ABC1 households) and those in rural areas (63% vs 75% of those in urban areas). These are new differences which we did not see last year.

It is important to note that a decline in confidence in the ability to identify what is real or fake online may or may not indicate a decrease in media literacy, depending on the circumstances. On the one hand, it perhaps indicates a lack of education or knowledge in this area, but on the other it could indicate growing awareness of the multiplicity of sources of information available, including information which is artificially generated, and a consequent and appropriate acknowledgement that it is growing harder to discern and check what is real from what is fake online.

The majority of children continue to be able to identify real and fake profiles and posts on social media

This year, we again provided children aged 13-17 with various scenarios to evaluate their ability to critically assess online content. The first scenario involved an authentic NHS Instagram post which provided tips on how to ease hay fever symptoms. Nine in ten of these children recognised that this was a genuine post (91%), with only 4% indicating that it was not genuine.

We then asked respondents to identify which elements of the post influenced their conclusion (by clicking or tapping the image directly on their screens). Among those who believed the post was genuine, the NHS logo within the post was the most frequently cited factor (59%), followed by the NHS logo in the profile (29%), the NHS username (28%), and the 'verified' tick (27%). Notably, children were most likely to click/tap *first* on the NHS logo within the post when giving reasons for the post being genuine.
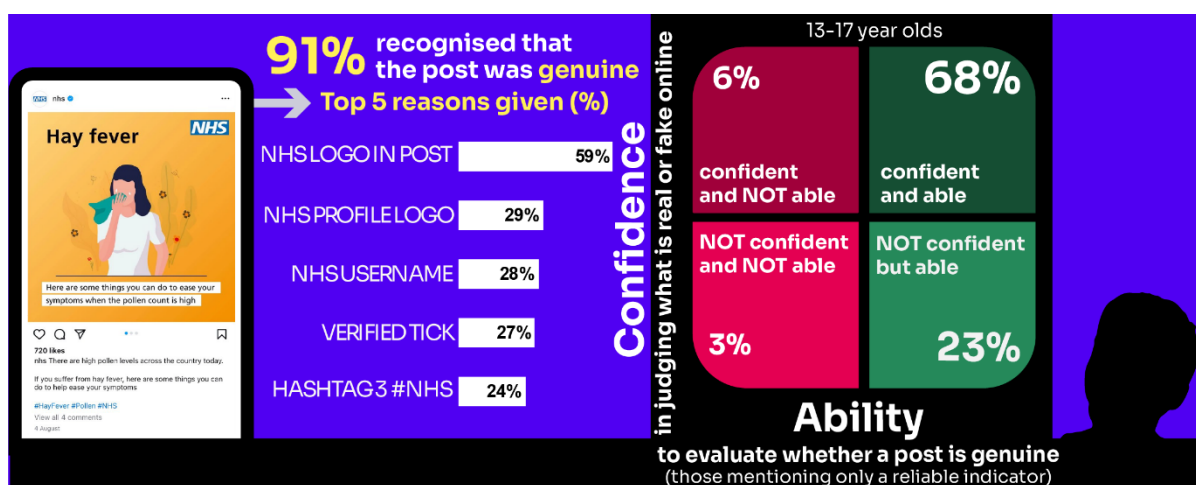
We also presented 13-17-year-olds with a fake social media profile and asked if they thought it was genuine. Seven in ten teenagers (70%) correctly identified it as a fake profile, while the rest were split between those who thought it was genuine (15%) and those who did not know (16%), unchanged since last year. Among those who recognised the profile as fake, seven in ten (70%) cited the 'Made loads of ££££...' in the text description as one of the giveaways. About two in five (42%) mentioned a link in the profile description, and a third or less noted the number of followers (33%), the profile username (28%), or the number of accounts it was following (26%). For those who believed the profile *was* genuine, the most commonly cited factors were the 'Made loads of ££££...' in the text description, the profile picture (26%) and one of the photos in the post (26%).
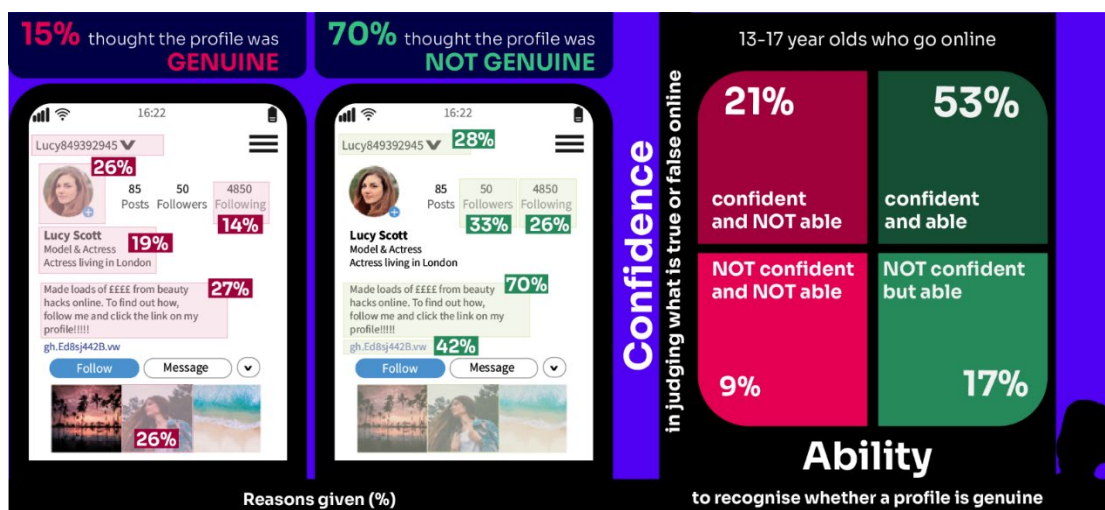
There continues to be a slight disparity between their confidence in judging whether something online is fake or real and their actual ability to do so.[24] These findings are consistent with those from the previous two years, when the same fake profile was shown to respondents. Just over two in ten older children (21% in 2024, 22% in 2023 and 24% in 2022) were confident in their ability but were unable to judge correctly in practice. About half (53% in 2024, 50% in 2023 and 50% in 2022) were both confident and accurate in their judgments. Additionally, almost two in ten (17% in 2024, 19% in 2023 and 16% in 2022) correctly identified the fake post despite initially lacking confidence in their ability to spot fake content online. While overall seven in ten 13-17-year-olds accurately judged the post, the lack of confidence among some teenagers in this group might limit their ability to fully explore and benefit from online opportunities.

This year, we found that girls aged 13-15 are more likely to be both less confident and less able than their male counterparts to judge if what they see online is real or fake (12% vs 6%).

Understanding the commercial environment online

Fewer children compared to last year are able to recognise advertising on search engines

In line with previous years, we found that almost all 8-17-year-olds (95%) have ever used a search engine.

To assess their understanding of online advertising, we showed the children a screenshot of a Google search for trainers (see image below). We then asked them to select from several options to explain why the top four results appeared first in the list. They were allowed to choose all the options they felt were applicable. Half (49%) of the 8-17 search engine users indicated that these results appeared at the top of the page because they were adverts/they had paid to be here, followed by over four in ten (43%) who said that these results were so placed because they were the most popular results, and a third (32%) said that it was because they were the 'best' results.

Only a third of 8-17s (33%) who ever use search engines correctly identified that the only reason those results were placed at the top of a Google search page was because they were paid-for advertising, a decline from previous years (from 40% in 2023, and 41% in 2022). This overall decline was primarily driven by 10-12s (29%, down from 37% last year) and 13-15s (37%, down from 46%).

Those in Wales and Northern Ireland (both 41%) were more likely than search engine users in England (32%) to give only the correct response. So too were children in this group who lived in rural areas compared to urban areas (40% vs 32%).

We also asked children aged 13-17 whether they were confident in recognising advertising online. Ninety-three per cent of children this age said they were confident in doing this, with no difference by age, or when compared to the three previous years on this measure. Again, we compared claimed confidence in spotting online advertising with the ability to do so and found that there has been a decline since last year in those who are both confident and able (36%, down from 43% in 2023), and

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[24] Confidence does not just follow from good media literacy skills but intersects with it in a way which can either strengthen or undermine critical understanding. Someone whose confidence is not matched by ability in practice may be more likely to make mistakes, which could lead to harm. Conversely, someone who has good critical understanding skills but is not confident in them may not trust their own good judgment, which could lead them to feel unsure or unsafe online.

a corresponding increase in those who are confident but not able (57%, up from 49% in 2023).
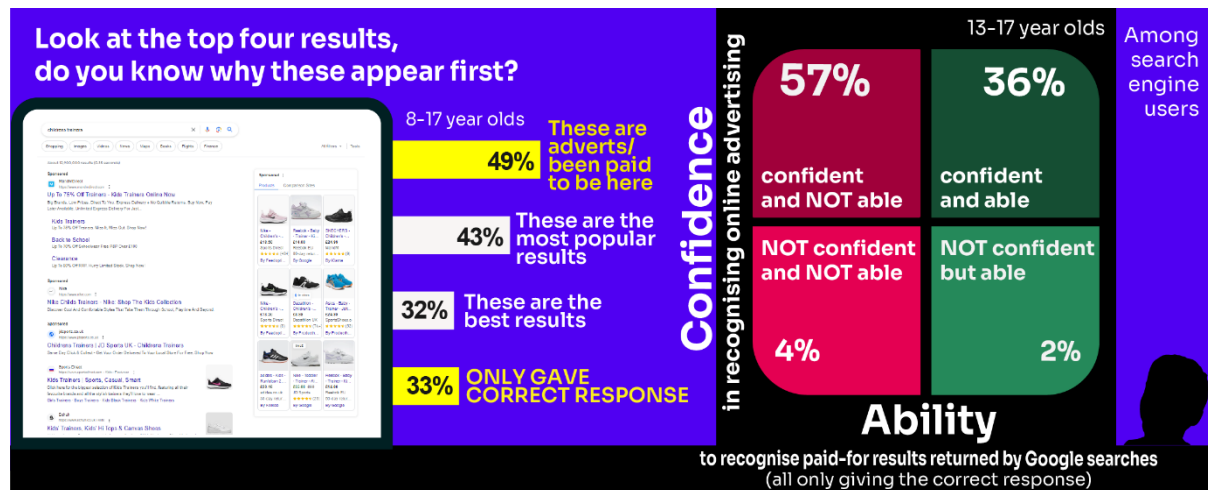
Teenagers continue to be better versed in recognising influencer marketing than advertising on search engines

In addition to search engines, we wanted to gauge how well teenagers (13-17s) recognised advertising via influencers. To do this, we showed them a real Instagram post by American actress Sydney Sweeney, advertising a Samsung Galaxy mobile phone. We then asked them why they thought she might share a post about the product shown. The teenagers were given three options and could select as many as they felt applied.

About three-quarters (73%) of 13-17-year-olds correctly identified that this was a paid endorsement of the Samsung Galaxy mobile phone. However, a third believed that Sweeney shared this post because she wanted to share this information with her followers (33%) and a quarter believed that she shared this product because she considered it to be cool or good to use (24%). Given that celebrities and influencers may have multiple reasons for promoting a product (for example, they may genuinely like it as well as being paid to endorse it), any mention of the post being paid-for is considered to be a 'correct' response, even if the respondent also selected other reasons as well.

Older teens were more likely than younger ones to recognise that Sweeney could be being paid or rewarded to share the post (78% of 16-17s compared to 70% of 13-15s). We cannot provide a direct comparison to our findings in relation to this question in 2023 because this year we used an updated, but similar example of a sponsored post. However, the proportions selecting each of the three main options in response to both this post and the one we used in 2023 barely differed, perhaps suggesting that little has changed in regard to teenagers' critical understanding of sponsored online content.

Which of these are reasons why they might share a post about the product shown?

She is being paid with money or being given gifts by the company or brand to share this — 73%

She wants to share this information with her followers — 33%

She thinks this product or brand is cool / good to use — 24%

Confidence in ability to identify paid-for endorsements vs **Ability** to recognise paid-for endorsement
% of 13-17 year olds who go online

- 25% confident and NOT able
- 68% confident and able
- NOT confident and NOT able — 2%
- NOT confident but able — 5%

As in previous scenarios, we compared claimed confidence in the teenagers' ability to recognise online advertising and found that almost seven in ten (68%) were both confident and able to do so, with 25% being confident but unable to do so. A further 5% were not confident, but able to recognise influencer marketing.

Last year, we reported that children were more likely to recognise influencer marketing than advertising within search engine pages. Given that we have seen a decline in children's ability to recognise the latter this year, the gap between the proportion of teenagers able to recognise advertising from online influencers and those who can recognise advertising in search engine results appears to be widening.

Comparing confidence and critical understanding scenarios
Confident and able vs **Confident but not able**
% of 13-17 year olds who go online (*and use search engines)

Influencer endorsement — 68 / 25

Search engine results* — 57 / 36
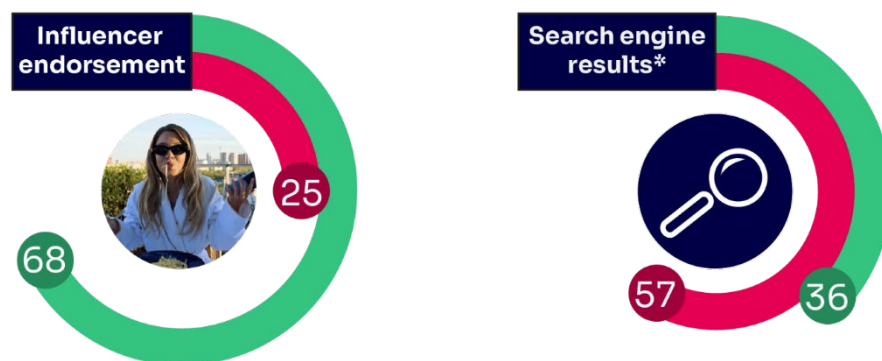
However, there is another aspect to consider. This year, our Children's Media Lives study has found that covert marketing content was sometimes harder for participants to recognise as advertising. This is especially the case when the content is not explicitly labelled. For example, a participant, Keeley, showed researchers one of her favourite YouTube channels called 'Beyond Family' which regularly posts content reviewing or featuring toys and products. Keeley showed researchers a recent video she liked called 'Testing the best and worst Amazon summer products'.

"It's about testing the best and worst Amazon summer products. You get to see how much fun it would be and if you wanted to do it one day, you could. But sometimes you just want to do it for fun." Keeley, 8

When showing the researcher this video, an Amazon advert popped up, interrupting the main video. Keeley got frustrated and said, *"I hate ads!"*, indicating that she recognised the pop-up to be an advert. However, she gave no indication that she understood that the reviews of the featured products might also be a form of marketing.

Online safety and parental control

Introduction

This section focuses on the behaviours of children and their parents in keeping children safe online. We look at how children are taught about online safety, the steps children take to keep themselves safe online, the user ages of children, and the rules and controls that parents are implementing. Last year we added questions about whether children recalled having online safety lessons in school and whether they found them useful, and this year we also asked what topics were most commonly covered in these lessons.

Being taught about online safety

About nine in ten 8–17s say they have been spoken to about how to use the internet safely, unchanged since 2021

As has been the case since 2021, about nine in ten (92%) children aged 8-17 say that they have been talked to at least once about how to use the internet safely. When asked who had spoken to them about this, the two most common responses given were: parents (82%), or a teacher at school (66%). The latter is unchanged since last year, but there has been an increase in the proportion of children aged 8 and over who say their parents have spoken to them about using the internet safely (up from 78% in 2023) and this is driven by parents of 8-9-year-olds (85% compared to 79% in 2023).

Just under half of parents of online 3-17-year-olds (45%) say they talk to their child about how to stay safe online at least every few weeks, with parents of younger children particularly active on this front (48% of parents of 3-12s say they talk to their children about online safety regularly, compared to 39% of parents of 13-17s). About a quarter of parents (24%) say they visit this topic at least every few months, with little variation by age of the child. This means that about seven in ten (69%) parents of 3-17s say they speak to their children about how to how to stay safe online at least every few months.

Children aged 8 and over are more likely than last year to say that their school online safety lessons are very useful to them

Turning to lessons in school specifically, in 2024, we again found that almost all children aged 8-17 (92%) recall having had at least one lesson at school about being online and the possible risks. Most recall having had more than one such lesson (79%), but only three in ten (29%) said they recalled having had regular online safety lessons in school. Both these measures are unchanged since 2023.

Over nine in ten 8-17s (94%) who recalled having had at least one online safety lesson in school said that these lessons were useful to them. There has been an increase in the proportion reporting that they found these lessons to be *very* useful (45% compared to 39% in 2023), driven by the 10-12-year-olds in this group (47% compared to 38%).

There appears to be a correlation between having regular online safety lessons and children finding those lessons useful

As was the case in 2023, there appears to be a positive correlation between the regularity with which children receive lessons about online safety in school and how useful they perceive these lessons to be.

Online safety lessons at school: Perception of usefulness by online 8-17s who recall at least one OS lesson

How useful the lessons have been to the child	Number of lessons child recalls		
	Regular lessons	**More than one lesson**	**One lesson**
Very useful	66%**	38%*	24%
Fairly useful	31%	57%	59%
Not very useful	3%	4%	13%
Not very useful at all	0%	0%	1%
Don't know	1%	1%	4%
NET: Useful	**97%***	**95%***	**82%**
NET: Not useful	**3%**	**4%**	**14%**

*= significant difference compared to recalling just one lesson

**= significant difference compared to recalling just one lesson or more than one lesson

Children are taught about a wide range of online safety topics in school

This year we added a question to help us understand which topics are being taught about being online and the potential risks. In response to a prompted list, children aged 8 and over who recalled having had at least one of these lessons indicated that the three most common topics covered in online safety lessons in schools are: 'Recognising harmful things online e.g. nasty behaviour or language'; 'How to keep information like my name and age safe when I am online'; and 'being kind to and respectful of others online'. Over six in ten children in this group selected these topics in response to our question (63% for the first two topics and 62% for the third) with a slightly lower proportion (56%) saying they were taught about 'where to go for help if I see harmful things online'.

Children in ABC1 households are more likely than those in C2DE households to recall being taught certain topics

As shown in the infographic below, there are differences between the range of topics covered by primary school children compared with secondary school children. There are also differences in recall by socio-economic group. Children living in ABC1 households are more likely than those in C2DE households to recall being taught about how to take care of themselves and feel good while online (48% vs 42%), how to search for accurate and reliable information (42% vs 31%) and how to identify adverts online and on social media (26% vs 21%). And children living in urban areas are more likely than those in rural ones to learn about how to spot fake news (26% vs 15%) and what to do if they do spot it (22% vs 11%).

Topics covered in school lessons (% of 8–17s who go online)

	Primary / Secondary
Recognising harmful things online	58
How to keep personal info safe when online	58
Being kind and respectful of others online	57
Where to go for help if see harmful things	52
How to take care of myself and feel good	42
How to search for accurate and reliable info	34
How to change privacy settings on sites/apps	34
How to spot fake news	23
How to identify adverts	22
What to do if spot fake news	19
Supporting issues care about	15

Taking steps to be safe online

Some children are limiting the extent to which they share or post information

As set out in our Media for interaction and self-expression section above, eight in ten of all children (79%) aged 3-17 have their own profile on at least one VSP, messenger app, or social media site, and 56% of 8-17s in this group said that they had multiple profiles. The most common reasons these children gave for having multiple profiles were that they had one profile just for their parents or family to see (23%) and/ or that they had one just for their closest friends (19%). We also saw in our Media for interaction and self-expression section that a majority of 8-17s who use social media (70%) are choosing not to share, comment on or post content, and that the few participants in our Children's Media Lives study who do post social media content (as opposed to just consuming it) tend to use templates or follow trends rather than creating original content, in order to avoid the risk of social backlash. These findings indicate that at least some children are deliberately determining and/or limiting the extent to which they share information about themselves, or which they have created.

A third of 8–17s have seen something worrying or nasty online in the last 12 months, unchanged since last year

As noted in the Potentially harmful contact or content online section above a third (33%) of 8-17s who go online say they have seen something online in the past 12 months that they found worrying or nasty, unchanged since 2023. But how do children say they would respond to this type of content? Over nine in ten (92%) 8-17s say they would *ever* tell someone and over half (56%) say they would *always* tell someone if they saw this type of content, both unchanged since 2023. As was also the case last year, younger children are more likely than their older counterparts to say they would

report seeing something worrying online. Over six in ten 8-9-year-olds and 10-12-year-olds (65% and 62% respectively) said they would always report seeing this type of content, compared to just over half (53%) of 13-15s and only four in ten 16-17s.

Children are most likely to report worrying or nasty content online to their parents

Parents are far more likely than other people to be told by their child when they have seen worrying/nasty content online. When prompted with a list of people whom they could tell, nearly nine in ten (89%) online 8-17-year-olds who would report it said they would tell a parent. This was more likely among younger than older children: 92% of 8-12s in this group said this compared to 85% of 13-17s. Reporting this type of content to a friend, a sibling, and/or a teacher were the next most commonly selected options, albeit at much lower proportions (31%, 28% and 24% respectively). Only 7% of children in this group said they would report this type of content to the website or app on which they saw it. This was more likely among older children (10% and 16% of 13-15s and 16-17s respectively, compared to 3% for both 8-9s and 10-12s).

In 2024, just under a quarter (23%) of parents of online 3-17s reported that their child had told them about something they had seen online that had scared or upset them in the past 12 months, unchanged since last year. This was more likely among children living with at least one impacting condition than among those not doing so (33% compared to 20%).

Only a third of parents would report content that scared or upset their child to the site or app it appeared on

As was the case last year, almost all the parents in this group (99%) took some type of action in response to being told that their child had seen something of this nature.[25] Over four in five parents in this group (84%) had spoken to their child about what had happened. Over half said they had advised their child to block a specific type of content or person (56%) and/or recommended that their child stop using certain apps or sites (52%). Notably, there has been an increase this year in parents setting up filters or parental controls after an incident of this nature, up from 23% last year to 34% this year.

Only about a third (32%) of parents had reported the content to the site or app on which it appeared. While this is considerably higher than the proportion of 8-17s who said they would report worrying or nasty content that they had seen to the website or app where they saw it, this still indicates a high degree of reluctance among both parents and children to use reporting functions in response to worrying or upsetting content online.

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[25] Caution: base size below 100 for parents of 3-5s, 10-12s and 16-17s whose child had told them they had seen something online which had scared or upset them in the last 12 months (74, 91 and 73, respectively).

1 in 5 parents said their child told them about something they'd seen online that scared or upset them

Action taken (%)

	Talked to my child about what had happened	Advised/ told my child to block certain people/ types of content	Advised/ told my child to stop using certain apps/ sites	Set up filters/ parental controls	Reported the content to the website/ app it appeared on	Sought advice on how to handle the situation
▬ All (aged 3-17)	**84**	**56**	**52**	**34**	**32**	**20**
■ 3-5	78	46	47	45	36	21
■ 6-7	83	43	60	46	26	15
■ 8-9	89	56	60	40	38	20
■ 10-12	91	57	52	33	28	24
■ 13-15	78	65	42	24	35	21
■ 16-17	78	67	58	10	27	14

Teenagers are generally wary about sharing personal data online, but many do so in order to access new sites or apps

We asked children aged 13-17 how they felt about sharing their personal information online in order to gain access to a new app or site. Over half (52%) said that they sometimes decided not to use apps or sites which asked them to share personal information, if they didn't feel comfortable about it. Twenty-two per cent said that they never felt comfortable about sharing personal information online, while worryingly, in contrast, 11% said they were comfortable sharing personal data and therefore always did this to access a new site or app. A similar proportion (12%) say they always shared their personal information in this situation, despite feeling uncomfortable about it; this is more likely among teenagers living with at least one impacting condition compared to those without such a condition (17% vs 10%). There is no difference between older and younger teens on these measures and they have remined largely unchanged since 2021.

These findings indicate that while many teenagers are aware of the potential risks of sharing personal data online, a majority are willing to do so in order to gain access to content they want to see, at least some of the time, despite having qualms about sharing such data.

Older teenagers are more likely to claim to know how to engage in safer behaviours online, but are no more likely to do so

We asked children aged 13-17 about whether they understood how to perform a number of online behaviours or actions (which we then categorised as either potentially promoting or hindering their safety online) and then asked if they had ever taken any of these actions.[26] Over nine in ten (95%)

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[26] Safety measures comprised: Blocking people on social media, blocking people on online games, changing the settings so fewer people can view your social media profile, using a reporting or flagging function to report inappropriate content. Risky measures comprised: Deleting the 'history' records of websites you've visited, choosing to use privacy/incognito mode on a web browser, getting around controls that are there to stop you visiting certain sites/apps, using a proxy server to access particular apps/sites.

said they knew how to perform at least one of the actions that could potentially promote their safety online, and 83% had actually taken at least one of these actions. The two most common such actions taken were blocking people on social media (66%) and blocking people when playing online games (46%). Turning to the 'potentially risky' behaviours,[27] the proportions were lower, but still nearly seven in ten (68%) 13-17-year-olds said they knew how to perform at least one of these types of action, and four in ten (40%) said they had ever taken at least one such action. Choosing the privacy or incognito mode and/or deleting their browsing history were the two most common actions among this group, but only just over two in ten admitted having ever done either of them (24% and 23% respectively).

At an overall level, these figures are unchanged since 2023. However, the older teens in this group (16-17-year-olds) are more likely than in 2023 to say they know how to undertake three of the four 'safety-promoting' online actions: blocking people on social media (89% vs 81% in 2023; changing settings so fewer people can see their social media profile (69% vs 61%), and using a reporting function to report inappropriate content (43% vs 36%). In a similar vein, 13-15-year-olds are less likely to say that they know how to delete their browsing history (39% vs 46%) which, as noted above, we categorised as an action that could potentially hinder a child's safety online. That said, we have seen no corresponding changes in the proportions of these children who say they have ever taken any of these actions.

As we noted last year, the findings above indicate that overall, there is higher awareness of, and engagement with, potentially safer behaviours than with potentially riskier behaviours among teenagers. Moreover, knowledge of the former may be increasing among older teenagers. But we must acknowledge that there may be some under-reporting regarding teenagers' knowledge and use of the 'risky' online behaviours.

The infographic below shows these safer and potentially riskier actions, alongside the levels of knowledge of, and engagement with, these behaviours.

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[27] We classify these behaviours as 'risky' because they enable the child to conceal their online activity, preventing a parent or appropriate adult to ensure they are keeping safe online.

95% know how to do any of the "safety measures"

83% do any of them

66	85	Block people on social media if you don't want to hear from them
46	66	Block people when you play online games
34	58	Change the settings so fewer people can view your social media profile
15	36	Use a reporting or flagging function to report inappropriate content

SAFETY MEASURES

% of children aged 13–17 who go online

68% know how to do any of the "risky measures"

40% do any of them

23	47	Delete the 'history' records of which websites you have visited
24	48	Choose to use privacy / Incognito mode on a web browser
8	20	Get around controls that are there to stop you visiting certain sites or apps
5	11	Use a proxy server to access particular sites or apps

RISKY MEASURES

User ages

Children aged 8–17 are less likely than last year to report giving a fake age online to access a new app/site

Since 2023, there has been a decrease in awareness among all 8-17s of the minimum age requirement for a user to have a profile on most social media sites or apps. Three-quarters (75%) of all children aged 8-17 report being aware of these requirements, down from 78% last year. As in previous years, awareness continues to be higher among older than among younger children (84% of 13-17s aware vs 67% of 3-12s).

Last year, for the first time, we asked children whether they had ever given a fake age to access a new app or site.[28] This year, fewer children aged 8-17 who go online reported having ever given a fake age online. In 2024 a third (33%) said they had done this, compared to 40% in 2023. This decrease is seen across all age groups (between 8 and 17) who go online, with the exception of 13-15-year-olds, where the proportion has remained unchanged since last year. It should be noted that some children may not feel comfortable giving an accurate response to this question, so there could be some under-reporting on this measure.

Among 8-17s who go online, younger children are more likely to report *never* giving a fake age to access new apps or sites. Seven in ten of 8-12s said they had never done this, in comparison to 53% of 13-17s. In 2023, children in ABC1 households were more likely than those in C2DE households to report giving a fake age online in order to access a new site or app. However, this year we saw no such difference between these two sub-groups.

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[28] These two questions were included in distinct surveys to preclude the possibility of one question influencing the response to the other.

These findings are supported by our [Children's Online User Ages 2025 Quantitative Research Study](#), which found that 34% of children aged 8-15 have a profile on at least one online service e.g. social media, with a minimum user age of 16+.[29]

Most parents are aware of minimum age requirements for social media

Over eight in ten (83%) of all parents of children aged 3-17 are aware that there are minimum age requirements for children to set up their own profile on most social media apps and sites, unchanged since 2023. However, only a third (33%) of all parents were able to identify 13 as the correct minimum age on most apps and sites, while three in ten said it was 14 or older. In contrast, 12% of all parents reported the minimum age as 12 or younger, leaving a quarter who either believe there is no minimum age requirement, are unsure if there is one, or don't know what that age requirement might be. Among parents, those with teenagers are more likely to know the correct minimum age requirement (38% of parents of 13-17s compared to 31% of parents of 3-12s).

Nearly four in ten parents would let their child create a profile before reaching the minimum age.

Although most parents of 3-17s are aware of the existence of minimum age requirements, 37% would allow their child to have a profile on social media before they reach this minimum age. This proportion is largely unchanged compared to the two previous years in which we have asked this question. Parents with children close to the minimum age requirement of 13 are the most likely to agree with allowing this, with half (50%) of parents with children aged 10-12 agreeing that they would do so. This suggests that parents with children close to the minimum age of 13 are less likely to adhere to the minimum age requirements on social media. They are more likely to decide for themselves if their child is old enough for social media, compared to parents of younger children.

Parental rules and controls

Over half of children aged 8–17 who use smartphones to go online are not allowed to use them at any time in school.

For the first time this year, we asked children about the times when they might not be allowed to use their phones. Over nine in ten (94%) children aged 8-17 who go online using their phones say they have at least one restriction on when they can use their phones, irrespective of where they are. This is more likely among 8-12s in this group than 13-17s (98% compared to 91%).

More than eight in ten (83%) 8-17s in this group say there is at least one time when they cannot use their phones at home. This is more common among children in ABC1 households than those in C2DE households (85% vs 81%). Looking at specific restrictions when a child in this group is at home, nearly six in ten (58%) of 8-17s who go online via their phone say they are not allowed to use their phones when they are in bed at night, with a similar proportion (57%) reporting that they are not allowed to do so while having meals. Younger children in this group are more likely than older ones to report having each of these restrictions in place: 72% of 8-12s say they are not allowed to use a phone during the night in bed compared to 47% of 13-17s; and 61% of 8-12s are not allowed to use their phone during meals, compared to 55% of 13-17s. Just over four in ten (42%) 8-17s report not

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[29] [Children's Online User Ages 2024 Quantitative Research Study, slide 12.](#)

being allowed to use their phones when doing their homework and about a third report that this is the case when they are spending time with family (34%).

Overall, a similar proportion of 8-17s who go online using their phone (82%) report that there are times during school hours when they can't use their mobile phones. Turning to the specific rules for school time, nearly two-thirds (65%) of 8-17s who use a phone to go online say they are restricted from using them during lessons, and over half (56%) say that they are restricted from using them *all the time* while they are at school. Primary school children aged 8 and above are as likely as secondary school children to have restrictions in place during lessons, but are more likely than secondary school children to have restrictions in place all the time while at school (73% compared to 52%).

98% of primary school mobile users, and **94%** of secondary school mobile users have any restrictions on their phone use at home or at school

Primary   **Secondary**

93% have restrictions at home
- **74%** when in bed at night time
- **65%** when having meals
- **61%** when doing homework
- **39%** when spending time with family

81% have restrictions at home
- **55%** when having meals
- **54%** when in bed at night time
- **36%** when doing homework
- **33%** when spending time with family

87% have restrictions at school
- **73%** all the time at school

82% have restrictions at school
- **52%** all the time at school

Parents continue to set rules for their children about being online, although there have been some decreases among parents of 10–12s

When prompted, most parents of children aged 3-17 (93%) say they have at least one rule in place for their child's online activities, unchanged since 2023. Parents of younger children are more likely than those of older children to have at least one rule in place (96% among parents of 3-12s compared to 87% among parents of 13-17s). The only group in which less than nine in ten parents say they have at least one rule in place is parents of 16-17s (76% say they have at least one rule in place).

Parents of children aged 3-17 who go online often have multiple rules in place about their child's online use. The most commonly cited are rules about the types of videos their children can watch (68%), followed by rules about which websites they can visit (66%) and rules about whom they can contact (64%). Many of the rules that we asked about are enforced by an increasing cohort of parents as their child ages, with a peak in enforcement for most rules when the child is in the 10-12 age band. As illustrated in the infographic below, after this age, the proportion of parents enforcing the various rules tends to decrease.

Top 5 parental rules in place

% 3–12 year olds   % 13–17 year olds

	% 3–12 year olds	Rank	% 13–17 year olds	
Rules about the video content they watch online	76	1	66	Rules about spending money online
Rules about the types of websites or apps they can use	73	2	60	Rules about who they can contact online
Rules about how much time they spend online	68	3	59	Rules about the information they can share online
Rules about who they can contact online	66	4	53	Rules about the types of websites or apps they can use
Rules about spending money online	62	5	52	Rules about the video content they watch online

There have been very few changes in this area since 2023. However, we have seen a decrease in the proportion of parents of online 10-12-year-olds who say they have rules in place about the video content their child watches online (71% compared to 81% in 2023). Similarly, the proportion of parents of online 10-12s who have rules about their child spending money online has decreased from 80% in 2023 to 69% in 2024.

Most parents have rules for their child's gaming and mobile phone use, although this continues to vary by the child's age.

Almost nine in ten (87%) parents of children aged 3-17 who game have at least one set of rules in place about the games their child plays, down from 91% last year. And as we found last year, this is more likely among parents with primary school-aged children (95% compared to 80% of parents with secondary school children who game).

The decline since last year is mainly driven by parents of children aged 16-17 who play games. Six in ten (60%) of these parents had at least one rule about gaming for their children in 2024, compared to 72% in 2023.

We see a similar picture regarding rules about children's use of mobile phones. Again, almost nine in ten (87%) parents of children aged 3-17 with their own mobile phone have at least one set of rules in place about how their child can use it, unchanged since last year. As with gaming, having rules for mobile use is more likely among parents of primary school children than among those with secondary school children (97% vs 84%) and also among parents living in urban areas compared to their rural counterparts (88% vs 80% in rural areas).

Over half of parents whose child has their own mobile have rules about who their child can be in contact with on their phone (53%), and rules about downloading apps (51%). Slightly lower proportions have rules about how much time their child spends on the phone (48%) and/or when they can use their phone (47%).

There has been little change since last year in the proportion of parents who say they have specific sets of rules in place about their child's mobile phone use. However, we have seen an increase in the proportion of parents of 6-7s who say they are setting rules about the apps their child can download

on their phone. This year, about seven in ten (71%) of these parents have rules about downloading apps, up from 49% in 2023.

The likelihood of parents enforcing certain rules on their child's mobile phone use may vary by gender, location or demographic, as well as by the age of the child. For example, rules about whom their child is in contact with via their mobile are more common among parents of girls than boys (57% vs 49%). Sixteen per cent of parents in urban areas have rules about using mobile phone cages,[30] compared to only 6% in rural areas. And parents in ABC1 households are more likely to have rules about when their child can use their phone (53% of ABC1s vs 40% of C2DEs), as well on how much time their child spends on their phone (53% of ABC1s vs 43% of C2DEs).

A high proportion of parents are aware of online protection tools or controls, but many do not use them

As we have reported in previous years, most parents (93%) of all 3-17s are aware of at least one device-specific or network-based technical tool or control to protect their children when they go online,[31] unchanged since 2021. Levels of awareness of individual types of technical tool are also largely unchanged since last year. However, there has been an increase in parental awareness of apps that can be installed on children's phones to monitor the child's app use (rising from 34% in 2023 to 41% in 2024). This increase has been driven by parents of 3-5s (41% vs 30% in 2023) and 8-9s (45% aware in 2024 vs 26% in 2023).

Fewer parents actually use these tools and controls: three-quarters (76%) of parents of all 3-17s say they use at least one of them. Parents of younger children are more likely than those with older children to use at least one type of technical tool or control to manage their child's access to online content, with 83% of parents of 3-12s using at least one of these tools compared to 62% of parents of 13-17s. Among all parents, the most frequently-used technical tool or control, out of the options presented to them, continues to be parental controls built into the device by manufacturers (such as Windows, Apple, Xbox, PlayStation etc.). These built-in parental controls are used by 37% of all parents, up from 32% in 2023. Parents of 6-7s in particular are more likely to use this type of control, with 50% of these parents saying they use these in 2024, compared to 36% in 2023. Parents of 8-9-year-olds are more likely than last year to use apps installed on their child's phone to monitor app usage. This year, 22% of these parents used such apps, up from 10% in 2023.

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[30] A box-type device that can lock a mobile phone away for a certain period of time.

[31] Technical tools asked about are: content filters provided by broadband internet service provider (also known as home network filtering); parental control software set up on a particular device used to go online (e.g. Net Nanny, McAfee Family Protection, Open DNS FamilyShield); parental controls built into the device by the manufacturer – e.g. Windows, Apple, Xbox, PlayStation etc; restricting access to inappropriate online content through services like Google SafeSearch, YouTube Restricted mode or TikTok Restricted mode; apps that can be installed on a child's phone to monitor which apps they use and for how long; changing settings on a child's phone or tablet to stop apps being downloaded or stop in-app purchases; parental control software, settings or apps that can be used on a child's phone or tablet to restrict access to content or manage their use of the device.

Parents of children aged 3-12

95% Aware of   **83%** Use

ANY PARENTAL CONTROLS

Parents of children aged 13-17

62% Use   **89%** Aware of

Control type	3-12 Aware	3-12 Use	13-17 Use	13-17 Aware
Parental control software set up on particular device used to go online	68%	35%	26%	64%
Parental controls built into the device by the manufacturer	65%	43%	25%	56%
Content filters provided by your broadband ISP	59%	31%	31%	57%
Restrict access to inappropriate online content	59%	38%	19%	47%
Change the settings to stop downloads/purchases	53%	34%	16%	41%
Parental control software, settings or apps	50%	33%	17%	41%
Monitoring apps	43%	19%	11%	36%

Many parents who are aware of content filters prefer to rely on their child's ability to navigate online content

We asked the 59% of parents of 3-17s who said they were aware of content filters offered by their broadband providers about their attitudes towards these filters, and how they use them in their households. Just over four in ten (43%) of these parents say they 'trust their child to be sensible' and the same proportion say they 'prefer to supervise their child's online use by talking to them and setting rules'. Parents in this group with older children and those with daughters are more likely than their counterparts to say they 'trust their child to be sensible' (60% of parents of 13-17s vs 35% of those of 3-12s, and 48% of girls' parents compared to 38% of boys' parents). The overall proportions are unchanged since last year and again appear to indicate that parents are more willing to rely on their child's ability to navigate online content, than to rely on technical tools and filters.

Parents of younger children tend to rely on more direct methods of supervision to keep their children safe online

In terms of online supervision more generally, there have been no significant changes since last year; we continue to see a similar picture in which, as their child gets older, parents decreasingly monitor their child's online life. When prompted, 90% of parents of 3-17s who go online say they use at least one of the types of supervision method about which we asked. Having some type of supervision is almost universal among parents of younger children but less likely among parents of teenagers (97% for parents of 3-12s vs 75% for parents of 13-17s).

This decrease in parental supervision of any type as the child grows up is mirrored in the level of direct parental supervision. Parents of 3-5s are more likely than those of any other age group to say that they sit beside their child to watch or help them while they are online (59%, falling to 17% among parents of 10-12s and less than 10% of parents of 13-17s (9% and 6%, respectively). Being nearby, and regularly checking what their child does, peaks among parents of 6-7s and 8-9s, with three-quarters of parents with children in these two age groups (75% and 76% respectively) saying they do this, compared to 35% of parents of 13-15s and only 17% of parents of 16-17s.

While supervision of each type is generally lowest among parents of 16-17s, nearly half of parents

with children this age (48%) said that they supervised their child's online safety by asking them about their online activities – making this by far the most commonly selected type of supervision among this group; it was nearly three times more likely to be chosen by these parents than the next most commonly selected option, checking their child's browser history (17%). This indicates that parents of older teens recognise and respond to their child's increasing independence and autonomy.

Most parents of 3-17s who go online (90%) report having at least 'some' knowledge of what their child does online, unchanged since 2023. Over half (54%) say that they know 'a lot' about their child's online activities. This is more likely among parents of younger children, with 64% of parents of 3-12-year-olds saying this compared to 34% of parents of 13-17-year-olds. There is a corresponding difference in the proportions of parents of older and younger children who say they know 'some' of what their child does online, with 50% of parents of 13-17s putting themselves in this category, compared to 28% of parents of 3-12s.

Main online supervision method used (% of parents who's children go online)

Being nearby and regularly checking what they do

3-5s	66%
6-7s	75%
8-9s	76%

Asking about what they are doing or have been doing online

10-12s	70%
13-15s	64%
16-17s	48%
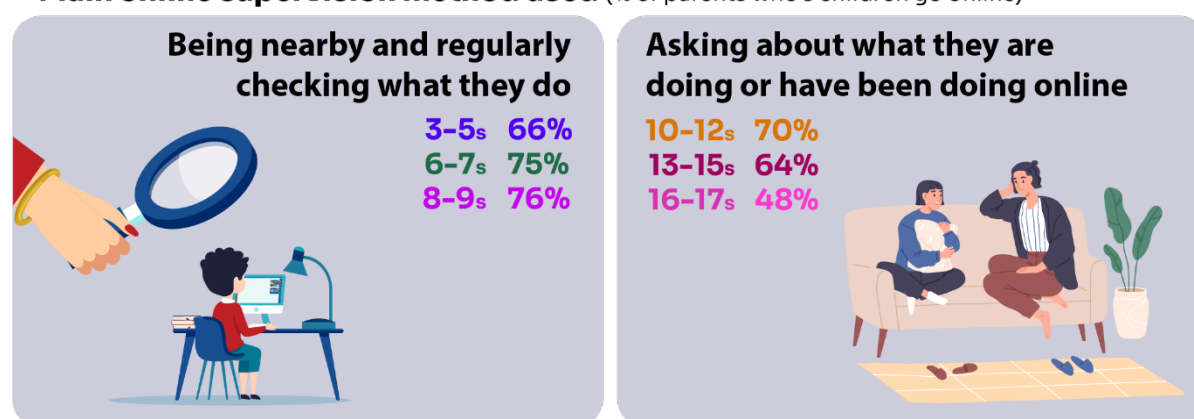
While parents of teenagers are less likely to say that they know 'a lot' about their children's online activities as the children grow older, over three-quarters (77%) of parents with children aged 3-17 who go online believe that they 'know enough' to keep their children safe online (unchanged since 2021), and this is consistent across parents of all age groups.

Most parents of children who go online (87%) have talked with their child about how to stay safe online, unchanged since last year. This is more likely among parents of older children; 95% of parents of 13-17s have spoken to their children about staying safe online at least once, compared to 83% of 3-12s.

As we noted in our section above on Being taught about online safety, 45% of parents of online 3-17 year-olds say they talk to their child about staying safe online at least every few weeks, and this is more likely among parents of older than younger children (48% of parents of 3-12s compared to 39% of parents of 13-17s). The likelihood of having these conversations also varies by socio-economic background. Half (49%) of parents in C2DE households talk to their child about staying safe online every few weeks, compared to 42% of parents in ABC1 households.

Media use, by nation

Media use among 3–17 year olds in 2024, by nation

England

63% have their own mobile phone

To go online: **69%** use a mobile phone, **62%** use a tablet and **41%** use a laptop

81% use messaging sites/apps
96% use video sharing platforms
67% use apps/sites to watch live streams
69% use social media &
79% have their own social media profile

51% have used AI technology like Chat GPT

61% play games online

79% watch TV or films on any type of device other than a TV set (**83%** watch on a TV set)
38% watch live TV | **76%** watch SVoD »

33% have seen something worrying or nasty online

92% recall having had at least one or more lessons about online safety at school; and of those who had at least one such lesson **94%** say they were useful

32% say they have ever given a fake age online

69% were able to correctly spot a fake profile

32% were able to correctly identify sponsored search results (giving only the correct response)

51% were able to correctly identify sponsored content posted by an influencer (giving only the correct response)

Scotland

64% have their own mobile phone

To go online: **70%** use a mobile phone, **68%** use a tablet and **34%** use a laptop

80% use messaging sites/apps
97% use video sharing platforms
62% use apps/sites to watch live streams
68% use social media &
79% have their own social media profile

48% have used AI technology like Chat GPT

61% play games online

80% watch TV or films on any type of device other than a TV set (**86%** watch on a TV set)
36% watch live TV | **80%** watch SVoD »

32% have seen something worrying or nasty online

92% recall having had at least one or more lessons about online safety at school; and of those who had at least one such lesson **93%** say they were useful

39% say they have ever given a fake age online

73% were able to correctly spot a fake profile

38% were able to correctly identify sponsored search results (giving only the correct response)

63% were able to correctly identify sponsored content posted by an influencer (giving only the correct response)

Wales

65% have their own mobile phone

To go online: **69%** use a mobile phone, **65%** use a tablet and **39%** use a laptop

81% use messaging sites/apps
97% use video sharing platforms
61% use apps/sites to watch live streams
66% use social media &
79% have their own social media profile

49% have used AI technology like Chat GPT

59% play games online

81% watch TV or films on any type of device other than a TV set (**88%** watch on a TV set)
36% watch live TV | **80%** watch SVoD »

27% have seen something worrying or nasty online

90% recall having had at least one or more lessons about online safety at school; and of those who had at least one such lesson **94%** say they were useful

38% say they have ever given a fake age online

70% were able to correctly spot a fake profile

41% were able to correctly identify sponsored search results (giving only the correct response)

62% were able to correctly identify sponsored content posted by an influencer (giving only the correct response)

N Ireland

62% have their own mobile phone

To go online: **66%** use a mobile phone, **65%** use a tablet and **27%** use a laptop

76% use messaging sites/apps
98% use video sharing platforms
63% use apps/sites to watch live streams
66% use social media &
80% have their own social media profile

48% have used AI technology like Chat GPT

54% play games online

79% watch TV or films on any type of device other than a TV set (**82%** watch on a TV set)
29% watch live TV | **78%** watch SVoD »

39% have seen something worrying or nasty online

93% recall having had at least one or more lessons about online safety at school; and of those who had at least one such lesson **94%** say they were useful

38% say they have ever given a fake age online

77% were able to correctly spot a fake profile

41% were able to correctly identify sponsored search results (giving only the correct response)

60% were able to correctly identify sponsored content posted by an influencer (giving only the correct response)

» SVoD refers to subscription video on-demand services such as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video and Disney+
Among children 8-17 who go online   Among children 13-17 who go online