

Educators from schools and early years settings may find the research helpful to stimulate discussions with children and young people but also with staff and parents/carers.

A selection of key findings are:

- Children's internet use has hit an all-time high
- Pre-schoolers are spending over an hour-a-day online
- Digital devices dominate, but the traditional story still wins at bedtime!

## Time spent online

- Young people aged 5-15 are spending around 15 hours each week online – overtaking time spent watching a TV set for the first time
  - **Children aged 5-15 have increased their weekly online time by an hour and 18 minutes in the last year to 15 hours**
- Pre-schoolers, aged 3-4, are spending eight hours and 18 minutes a week online, up an hour and a half from six hours 48 minutes in the last year. (This works out to be over an hour a day)

## Internet use vs TV

- Children are spending less time watching a TV set, with their weekly viewing dropping from 14 hours 48 minutes in 2015 to 13 hours 36 minutes in the last year.
- **YouTube is one of the most popular online destinations for children to watch content, with around three quarters (73%) of those aged 5-15 using the video site.**
  - It is also a hit with pre-schoolers with 37% regularly watching YouTube videos, who typically pick 'TV content' such as cartoons and mini-movies.
  - Older children are beginning to show a preference for YouTube with four in ten 8-11s and 12-15s saying they prefer watching YouTube than the TV set.
- TV still plays an important role in children's lives with nine in 10 still watching, generally every day, and the largest number of children watching at peak family viewing time, 6 – 9pm.

## Digital childhood

Digital devices are more widespread among children than ever, including the very young.

- Tablets and mobile phones are now the most popular devices for going online for children - knocking laptops back into third place. **It's therefore essential that educational messages do not just focus on laptops and computers.**

- **A third (34%) of pre-schoolers (aged 3-4) own their own media device – such as a tablet or games console.**
  - Pre-schoolers typically enjoy digital entertainment on a tablet, with more than half (55%) using one, and 16% owning their own tablet – up from just 3% in 2013.
- As children reach pre-to-early teenage years, they prefer smartphones to tablets – with the proportion of children owning one up from 35% to 41% in the last year.
  - This means one in three tweens (8-11s), and eight in 10 older children (12-15s) now have their own smartphone.
- Many children need help to identify advertising on search engine Google with only a minority of 8-11s (24%) and 12-15s (38%) correctly recognising sponsored links.
- As children spend more of their time online, their awareness of advertising and ‘vlogger’ endorsements has also increased with more than half of internet users aged 12-15 (55%) now aware that online advertising can be personalised - up 10 percentage points in the last year.
  - 12-15s awareness of product endorsement from vloggers has also increased by 10 percentage points to 57% in 2016.
- Reading was the third most popular activity with primary school aged children (62%) beating newer activities such as watching online video clips (47%), instant messaging (10%) and watching music videos (11%).
- Many families still enjoy a traditional bedtime routine, with one in five (21%) children aged 6-11 reading at 7.45pm – the highest peak for reading during the day.

## Social Media

- Social media is central for both tweens and teens.
  - **23% of 8-11s and 72% of 12-15s have a profile**, with the number of profiles doubling between the age of 10 and 11 (21% to 43%) and increasing sharply again between 12 and 13 (50% to 74%).
  - Children are messaging, sharing and liking throughout the day, including during school hours and late into the evening, with 9% of 11-15s communicating via social media at 10pm, and 2% messaging at midnight.
    - **One in ten 11-15s are still communicating via social media at 10pm**
- Children’s use of social media is constantly evolving, and that brings both new opportunities and risks. For example, the latest trend identified in research is an **increased use of group messaging services such as WhatsApp, Instagram and Facebook Messenger.**

- Many of these group chats are used for positive activities, like homework groups, but they were also being used in less positive ways, with a fine line between banter and bullying.
- **Although Facebook remains most likely to be children's main site, use of other social media services is growing.**
  - Both 8-11s (43%) and 12-15s (52%) are most likely to consider Facebook their main social media profile. This is unchanged since 2015 but has fallen considerably since 2013, when 87% of 12-15s considered Facebook their main site.
  - The numbers of 12-15s using SnapChat have continued to grow (51%, up from 43% in 2015), while fewer say they use Twitter (20%, down from 27%).
- The qualitative research found that 'likes' on social media were important 'social currency', with children saying they would remove posts if they didn't quickly receive what they considered to be an acceptable number.
  - Some had developed this further, timing their posts for 8-10pm, what they called Instagram 'prime time', in order to maximise the number of likes they received.
  - 8.15pm is the peak time for social media use among 11-15s, with 38% using a social media site at this point.
- Five per cent of 8-11s and 14% of 12-15s use chat features in online gaming to talk to people they only know through the game
  - Children are most likely to play games by themselves or with people they already know.
  - However, one in ten 8-11s (10%) and twice as many 12-15s (21%) say they play games online with people they have never met and 5% of 8-11s and 14% of 12-15s say that they use the games' chat features to chat to people they only know through the game.

## **Creative activities and civic participation**

- Nearly a third of online 12-15s have got involved in civic activity online
  - Six percent of 8-11s and thirty percent of 12-15s who go online say they have signed petitions, shared news stories on social media, written comments or talked online about the news.
- Photos, videos and avatars are the most popular online creative activities
  - **Nearly four in ten (37%) of online 3-4s and two thirds of online 5-15s (67%)** have used their digital devices for creative activities, with making pictures, editing photos, making videos and creating avatars the most popular.
  - One in five 12-15s have made their own digital music and one in six have made their own animation

## Staying safe online

- Children are more likely than in 2015 to say they dislike seeing content that makes them feel sad, frightened or embarrassed, and to say they are worried about people being nasty, mean or unkind to them.
- **Around one in ten online 8-11s (10%) and one in five online 12-15s (19%)** say they have seen something online in the past year that was worrying or nasty,
  - Around one in twelve of all 12-15s (8%) say they have been contacted online by someone they don't know
  - 4% say they have seen something of a sexual nature in the past year, either online or on their mobile phone, all unchanged since 2015.
  - **A third of 12-15s say they have seen hate speech in the past year (34%).**
    - Fewer than one in ten (7%) say they 'often' see this, with the remaining 27% saying they 'sometimes' see this.
  - 12-15s are as likely to be bullied via social media or group chat or text message services as they are face to face
    - For 8-11s face to face bullying is more likely
- **More than nine in ten children aged 8-15 have had conversations with parents or teachers about being safe online, and would tell someone if they saw something they found worrying or nasty.**
  - Parents of older children are most likely to be having these types of conversations with their children
    - 92% of parents of 12-15s saying they have spoken to their child about online safety, an increase of six percentage points since 2015.
- **Nearly all parents (96%) of 5-15s manage their children's internet use in some way** – through technical tools, talking to or supervising their child, or setting rules about access to the internet and online behaviour.
  - Two in five parents use all four approaches.
  - Parents of children aged 5-15s are more likely to use network level filters in 2016 - up five percentage points to 31%.
- On the most part, families are in agreement that their child has a good balance between screen time and doing other activities.
  - Most children aged 12-15 (64%), and parents of children of the same age (65%), believe this balance is about right.

Additional figures and information can be found from the [full research](#)