Ofcom's Children's and Parents' Media Literacy research 2021 Technical Report

To accompany the Children's and Parents' Media Literacy data tables

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Preface

The Children's and Parents' Media Literacy Research 2021 is run by Critical Research on behalf of Ofcom. The objective of the survey is to provide robust research into the different elements of children's media literacy across the internet, television, video-on-demand, games and mobile phone. The survey provides data regarding children aged 3 to 17 about children's media use, attitudes and understanding, parents' views about their children's media use, and the ways that parents seek to – or decide not to – monitor or limit use of different types of media.

In 2021, Ofcom's media literacy research programme was refreshed to ensure that the study continued to provide rich and robust data in a constantly evolving digital media landscape.

For the Children's and Parents' study the intention of this refreshed programme included complementing the traditional 'core' in-home, face-to-face study with a series of online-only studies looking at children's online behaviour and attitudes and their knowledge and understanding of the digital media they engage with. Because of Covid-19, a mixed method approach was adopted in place of the in-home face-to-face study.

Further information about each of these studies is summarised in the next section, followed by a more detailed overview for each of the three studies.

Summary of approach

- The **Parents' Media Literacy study**: This survey is conducted with parents of 3 to 17 year olds and addresses children's use of media devices and gaming (as reported by parents), parental mediation and supervision of their child's online behaviour, rules for going online and parents' attitudes towards their children's online activities and behaviour. In 2021, as in 2020, it was not possible to conduct the research face-to-face as had been intended, so an alternative approach was adopted. A postal approach was used which invited parents of 3 to 17 year olds to complete the survey online. Additional online interviews were conducted with parents of 3 to 17 year olds through a research panel. A total of 2,444 interviews were conducted (1,448 postal survey respondents completing online and 996 online panel interviews). All fieldwork was conducted between 21st October and the 7th December 2021.[1]
- The **Children's and Parents' online behaviours and attitudes study (COBA)**: This survey addresses media use and attitudes among children and young people aged 3-17 and covers children's use of watching/ uploading videos, watching/ sharing live stream videos, sending messages or making video/ voice calls or social media use. All interviewing was conducted through an online panel; interviewing parents of 3 to 17 year olds and also their child if aged 8 to 17 years old. It was conducted over two waves of research in July and August 2021 (3,307 interviews, during school, holidays) and in September and October 2021 (3,355 interviews, during term time). Three sets of data tables are published, one for Wave 1, one for Wave 2 and a combined set for Waves 1 and 2.
- The **Children's online knowledge and understanding study (COKU):** This survey addresses children's knowledge and understanding of social media and the online market place, trust and misinformation when going online and personal safety, personal data, privacy and security. This particular survey also incorporates scenario testing to provide measures of critical understanding regarding misinformation within social media posts, fake social media profiles, advertising within search engine results, and product endorsement by influencers. All interviewing was conducted through an online panel; interviewing children aged from 8 to 17 via their parent. It was conducted in November and December 2021 (3,095 interviews).

[1] Additional interviewing was conducted through a CATI omnibus survey with a small subset of questions for parents regarding primary and secondary school children's access to appropriate devices at home for their schooling needs. Fieldwork was conducted from 12th November to 5th December 2021, with 3,143 interviews with UK adults in total, across 3 waves. This data is published separately with its own Technical report.

Significance testing

Due to the mixed method approach adopted for the **Parents' Media Literacy study**, significance testing for these data tables is applied at the 99% level. For **COBA** and **COKU** (as single methodology studies), testing is applied at the 95% level.

Financial vulnerability

We have included in each set of data tables a measure for household financial vulnerability, ranging from most to least vulnerable This analysis is based on household income and household composition (i.e. size and number of children) and can only be run on the data where respondents have given a response at each of these questions. The following breakdown shows the detailed definitions for each group.

Most financially vulnerable	Potentially financially vulnerable	Least financially vulnerable
Household income under £10,399	**Earning between £10,400 - £25,599**	**Earning between £26,600 - £36,399**
All respondents	1 adult, 0-1 child	1 adult, 0 children
Earning between £10,400 - £25,599	2 adults, 0-1 child	**Earning between £36,400 - £51,999**
1 adult, 2+ children	3 adults, no children	1 adult, 0-1 child
2 adults, 2+ children	**Earning between £26,000 - £36,399**	2 adults, 0 children
3 adults, 1+ children	1 adult, 1 to 3 children	**Household income over £52,000**
4+ adults, 0+ children	2 adults, 0 to 3 children	All households
Earning between £26,000 - 36,399	3 adults, 0 to 1 child	
1 adult, 4+ children	4 adults, no children	
2 adults, >3 children	**Earning between £36,400 - 51,999**	
3 adults, 2+ children	1 adult, 2-3 children	
4 adults, 1+ children	2 adults, 1-2 children	
5+ adults, 0+ children	3 adults, 0-2 children	
Earning between £36,400 - 51,999	4 adults, 0-1 child	
1 adults, >3 children	5 adults, 0 children	
2 adults, 3+ children		
3 adults, 3+ children		
4 adults, 2+ children		
5 adults, 1+ children		
6+ adults, 0+ children		

Common questions across studies

A small number of questions were asked on more than one of the three surveys, in order to filter respondents to subsequent questions within that particular survey. These common questions have been removed from the data tables for **COBA** and **COKU** and are shown within the **Parents Media Literacy study** reporting and data tables; as this study has the broadest audience through using a mixed methodology combining a postal and online panel approach.

The Parents' Media Literacy study

Critical Research interviewed a sample of 2,444 parents of 3 to 17 year olds. Interviews were carried out across the UK and all interviews were conducted between 21st October and 7th December 2021.

Details of the sample design, research methodology, and weighting procedures for this this study are outlined in the following pages. A note on statistical reliability is also included.

Sample Design

In previous years this research has been conducted face to face, in-home using Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) and this was the intended approach. However, in 2021, as in 2020, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and in common with other Ofcom tracking studies with an element of in-home interviewing, it was not possible to conduct the research in this way.

For this study, a combination of a postal sample with respondents completing the survey online and an online panel were used. The postal sample was drawn across the whole of the UK, stratified by nation, region and urbanity, with fixed quotas by nation to meet interviewing requirements. In order to achieve as many interviews as possible within the initial fixed cost of the mailouts, the postal sample excluded households located in Super Output Areas/ SOAs which had fewer than 15% of households with children, according to the 2011 Census.

Sample for the online panel part of the study was provided via online consumer panels. The sample was de-duplicated to ensure that respondents could not complete the survey more than once.

Overall quotas were set for gender within age, age within nation and socio-economic group for the overall sample. Within England soft quotas were set to ensure a good mix by English region

Fieldwork

The postal sample of households was contacted first. The invitation letter asked parents or guardians of a 3 to 17 year old to complete an online interview using a unique login and password supplied in the letter. The interviewing through online panels started towards the end of the postal approach fieldwork period, meeting all minimums samples specified for this study.

Weighting

The combined panel and postal data are weighted within nation to the correct profile of age and gender and urbanity, and overall to the correct SEG profile. The following table shows the initial unweighted sample and the final weighted sample profile for the final sample.

Figures are based on UK children aged 3-17	Interviews achieved Unweighted	Interviews achieved Weighted
Boys aged 3-4	10%	7%
Girls aged 3-4	10%	7%
Boys aged 5-7	10%	10%
Girls aged 5-7	10%	10%
Boys aged 8-11	10%	13%
Girls aged 8-11	10%	13%
Boys aged 12-15	10%	13%
Girls aged 12-15	10%	13%
Boys aged 16-17	9%	7%
Girls aged 16-17	9%	7%
SEG – AB	32%	28%
SEG – C1	26%	24%
SEG – C2	19%	21%
SEG – DE	22%	26%

Guide to Statistical Reliability

The variation between the sample results and the "true" values (the findings that would have been obtained if everyone had been interviewed) can be predicted from the sample sizes on which the results are based, and on the number of times that a particular answer is given. The confidence with which we can make this prediction is calculated at the 99% limit for this 2021 data due to the mixed method approach. This means that the chances are 99 in 100 that the "true" values will fall within a specified range. However, as the sample is weighted, we need to use the effective sample size (ESS) rather than actual sample size to judge the accuracy of results.

The following table compares ESS and actual samples for some of the main analysis groups within the main sample.

	Actual	ESS
Total 3-17s	2,444	1,282
Age: 3-4	501	262
Age: 5-7	501	267
Age: 8-11	501	273
Age: 12-15	503	276
Age: 16-17	438	409
Boys aged 3-4	251	130
Girls aged 3-4	250	132
Boys aged 5-7	250	135
Girls aged 5-7	251	132
Boys aged 8-11	252	137
Girls aged 8-11	249	136
Boys aged 12-15	252	138
Girls aged 12-15	251	137
Boys aged 16-17	223	207
Girls aged 16-17	215	202
SEG – AB (aged 3-17)	778	413
SEG - C1 (aged 3-17)	645	336
SEG - C2 (aged 3-17)	465	241
SEG – DE (aged 3-17)	533	298

The table below illustrates the required ranges for different sample sizes and percentage results at the "99% confidence interval".

Approximate sampling tolerances applicable to percentages at or near these levels

Effective sample size	10% or 90% ±	20% or 80% ±	30% or 70% ±	40% or 60% ±	50% ±
1,282 (Total aged 3-17)	1.7%	2.9%	3.3%	3.5%	3.6%
137 (Boys aged 8-11)	6.6%	8.8%	10.1%	10.8%	11.0%
298 (SEG DE aged 3-17)	4.5%	6.0%	6.8%	7.3%	7.5%

For example, if 30% or 70% of a sample of 1,282 gives a particular answer, the chances are 99 in 100 that the "true" value will fall within the range of +/- 3.3 percentage points from the sample results.

When results are compared between separate groups within a sample, different results may be obtained. The difference may be "real", or it may occur by chance (because not everyone has been interviewed). To test if the difference is a real one – i.e. if it is "statistically significant" – we again have to know the size of the samples, the percentages giving a certain answer and the degree of confidence chosen. If we assume "99% confidence interval", the difference between two sample results must be greater than the values given in the table below to be significant:

Differences required for significant at or near these percentages

Sample sizes being compared	10% or 90% ±	20% or 80% ±	30% or 70% ±	40% or 60% ±	50% ±
413 vs. 298 (AB vs. DE aged 3-17)	5.9%	7.8%	9.0%	9.6%	9.8%
137 vs. 136 (Boys vs. Girls aged 8-11)	9.4%	12.5%	14.3%	15.3%	15.6%

The Children's and Parents' online behaviours and attitudes study (COBA)

Critical Research interviewed a sample of 6,662 parents of 3 to 17 year olds, also interviewing the child concerned if they were aged 8 to 17. Interviewing was conducted across two waves:

- Wave 1 fieldwork in July and August 2021 – 3,307 interviews
- Wave 2 fieldwork in September and October 2021– 3,355 interviews

All interviews were carried out across the UK through an online panel. Parents of children aged 3-17 were recruited to take part. Parents whose child is aged 3 to 7 would answer about their child and where the child concerned was aged 8 to 17, both the parent and the child would be invited to take part.

Overall quotas were set for gender within age, age within nation and socio-economic group for the overall sample. Within England soft quotas were set to ensure a good mix by English region

Weighting

The data at each wave are weighted within nation to the correct profile of age and gender and urbanity, and overall to the correct SEG profile. The overall targets for each wave were identical, with the two waves weighted separately. This means the combined tables produced are simply the sum of the two waves. As mentioned earlier, Wave 1 and Wave 2 data tables are published separately, together with a combined set of data tables.

The table on the following page the initial unweighted sample and the final weighted sample profile for the final sample.

Figures are based on UK children aged 3-17	Interviews achieved Unweighted	Interviews achieved Weighted
Boys aged 3-4	9%	7%
Girls aged 3-4	9%	7%
Boys aged 5-7	11%	10%
Girls aged 5-7	11%	10%
Boys aged 8-11	12%	13%
Girls aged 8-11	12%	13%
Boys aged 12-15	12%	13%
Girls aged 12-15	12%	13%
Boys aged 16-17	6%	7%
Girls aged 16-17	6%	7%
SEG – AB	28%	28%
SEG – C1	26%	25%
SEG – C2	20%	21%
SEG – DE	25%	26%

Guide to Statistical Reliability

The variation between the sample results and the "true" values (the findings that would have been obtained if everyone had been interviewed) can be predicted from the sample sizes on which the results are based, and on the number of times that a particular answer is given. The confidence with which we can make this prediction is calculated at the 95% limit for this online panel-only study in 2021. This means that the chances are 95 in 100 that the "true" values will fall within a specified range. However, as the sample is weighted, we need to use the effective sample size (ESS) rather than actual sample size to judge the accuracy of results.

The following table compares ESS and actual samples for some of the main analysis groups within the main sample.

	Actual	ESS
Total 3-17s	6,662	5,037
Age: 3-4	1,184	717
Age: 5-7	1,480	1,093
Age: 8-11	1,628	1,300
Age: 12-15	1,569	1,235
Age: 16-17	799	716
Boys aged 3-4	599	348
Girls aged 3-4	585	369
Boys aged 5-7	721	526
Girls aged 5-7	759	569
Boys aged 8-11	817	649
Girls aged 8-11	811	650
Boys aged 12-15	791	616
Girls aged 12-15	778	620
Boys aged 16-17	394	354
Girls aged 16-17	405	362
SEG – AB (aged 3-17)	1,887	1,437
SEG - C1 (aged 3-17)	1,757	1,312
SEG - C2 (aged 3-17)	1,352	1,026
SEG – DE (aged 3-17)	1,637	1,251

The table below illustrates the required ranges for different sample sizes and percentage results at the "95% confidence interval".

Approximate sampling tolerances applicable to percentages at or near these levels

Effective sample size	10% or 90% ±	20% or 80% ±	30% or 70% ±	40% or 60% ±	50% ±
5,037 (Total aged 3-17)	0.9%	1.1%	1.3%	1.4%	1.4%
649 (Boys aged 8-11)	2.4%	3.1%	3.6%	3.8%	3.9%
1,251 (SEG DE aged 3-17)	1.7%	2.3%	2.6%	2.8%	2.8%

For example, if 30% or 70% of a sample of 5,037 gives a particular answer, the chances are 95 in 100 that the "true" value will fall within the range of +/- 1.3 percentage points from the sample results.

When results are compared between separate groups within a sample, different results may be obtained. The difference may be "real", or it may occur by chance (because not everyone has been interviewed). To test if the difference is a real one – i.e. if it is "statistically significant" – we again have to know the size of the samples, the percentages giving a certain answer and the degree of confidence chosen. If we assume "95% confidence interval", the difference between two sample results must be greater than the values given in the table below to be significant:

Differences required for significant at or near these percentages

Sample sizes being compared	10% or 90% ±	20% or 80% ±	30% or 70% ±	40% or 60% ±	50% ±
1,437 vs. 1,251 (AB vs. DE aged 3-17)	2.3%	3.0%	3.5%	3.7%	3.8%
649 vs. 650 (Boys vs. Girls aged 8-11)	3.3%	4.4%	5.0%	5.3%	5.4%

The Children's online knowledge and understanding study (COKU)

Critical Research interviewed a sample of 2,133 children aged from 8 to 17 years old. All interviews were carried out across the UK through an online panel. In all instances the child aged 8 to 17 was recruited through their parent who had opted in to receive survey invitations from the research panel. Fieldwork was conducted from 15th November to 15th December 2021.

Overall quotas were set for gender within age, age within nation and socio-economic group for the overall sample. Within England soft quotas were set to ensure a good mix by English region

Weighting

The data is weighted within nation to the correct profile of age and gender and urbanity, and overall to the correct SEG profile. The following table shows the initial unweighted sample and the final weighted sample profile for the final sample.

Figures are based on UK children aged 8-17	Interviews achieved Unweighted	Interviews achieved Weighted
Boys aged 8-11	21%	20%
Girls aged 8-11	21%	20%
Boys aged 12-15	20%	20%
Girls aged 12-15	20%	20%
Boys aged 16-17	10%	10%
Girls aged 16-17	10%	10%
SEG – AB	31%	28%
SEG – C1	24%	25%
SEG – C2	19%	21%
SEG – DE	26%	26%

Guide to Statistical Reliability

The variation between the sample results and the "true" values (the findings that would have been obtained if everyone had been interviewed) can be predicted from the sample sizes on which the results are based, and on the number of times that a particular answer is given. The confidence with which we can make this prediction is calculated at the 95% limit for this online panel-only study in 2021. This means that the chances are 95 in 100 that the "true" values will fall within a specified range. However, as the sample is weighted, we need to use the effective sample size (ESS) rather than actual sample size to judge the accuracy of results.

The following table compares ESS and actual samples for some of the main analysis groups within the main sample.

	Actual	ESS
Total 8-17s	2,133	1,741
Age: 8-11	888	701
Age: 12-15	840	660
Age: 16-17	405	385
Boys aged 8-11	446	356
Girls aged 8-11	442	346
Boys aged 12-15	424	331
Girls aged 12-15	416	330
Boys aged 16-17	202	191
Girls aged 16-17	203	195
SEG – AB (aged 8-17)	657	543
SEG - C1 (aged 8-17)	522	418
SEG - C2 (aged 8-17)	405	333
SEG – DE (aged 8-17)	544	452

The table below illustrates the required ranges for different sample sizes and percentage results at the "95% confidence interval".

Approximate sampling tolerances applicable to percentages at or near these levels

Effective sample size	10% or 90% ±	20% or 80% ±	30% or 70% ±	40% or 60% ±	50% ±
1,741 (Total aged 8-17)	1.4%	1.9%	2.2%	2.3%	2.3%
356 (Boys aged 8-11)	3.1%	4.2%	4.8%	5.1%	5.2%
452 (SEG DE aged 8-17)	2.8%	3.7%	4.2%	4.5%	4.6%

For example, if 30% or 70% of a sample of 1,741 gives a particular answer, the chances are 95 in 100 that the "true" value will fall within the range of +/- 2.2 percentage points from the sample results.

When results are compared between separate groups within a sample, different results may be obtained. The difference may be "real", or it may occur by chance (because not everyone has been interviewed). To test if the difference is a real one – i.e. if it is "statistically significant" – we again have to know the size of the samples, the percentages giving a certain answer and the degree of confidence chosen. If we assume "95% confidence interval", the difference between two sample results must be greater than the values given in the table below to be significant:

Differences required for significant at or near these percentages

Sample sizes being compared	10% or 90% ±	20% or 80% ±	30% or 70% ±	40% or 60% ±	50% ±
543 vs. 452 (AB vs. DE aged 8-17)	3.7%	5.0%	5.7%	6.1%	6.2%
356 vs. 346 (Boys vs. Girls aged 8-11)	4.4%	5.9%	6.8%	7.2%	7.4%