Ofcom's Children's and Parents' Media Literacy research 2023 Technical Report

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

Report

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Preface

The Children's and Parents' Media Literacy Research 2023 tracking studies are run by Critical Research on behalf of Ofcom. The key objective of the surveys is to provide robust research into the different elements of children's media literacy. More specifically, the surveys provide data 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. The surveys cover children aged 3 to 17, although not all questions are asked of all age groups.

Following an enforced change in data collection method in 2020 due to the impact of Covid-19 on face-to-face data collection, the surveys were moved online. We have chosen to remain using this data collection method.

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

Parents' Media Literacy study	
Respondent	Parents of 3 to 17 year old children
Content	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
Method	In 2021, as in 2020, it had not been possible to conduct the research face-to-face as had been intended, so an alternative approach was adopted. In 2022 and 2023 it was decided to continue with this alternative approach in order to maintain comparability with the survey findings since 2021. 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.
Interviews	A total of 2,480 interviews were conducted (1,291 postal survey respondents completing online and 1,189 online panel interviews)
Fieldwork dates	All fieldwork was conducted between 9th October and 3rd December 2023

Children's and Parents' online behaviours and attitudes study (COBA)	
Respondent	Parents of 3 to 17 year old children and also their child if aged 8 to 17
Content	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, use of AI technology
Method	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.
Interviews	A total of 3,383 interveiws were conducted
Fieldwork dates	Fieldwork was conducted in one wave from 30th October to 27th November 2023. (Two waves of fieldwork had been conducted in 2022 and in 2021).

Children's online knowledge and understanding study (COKU)	
Respondent	Children aged 8 to 17 years old
Content	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, awareness of algorithms/ recommender tools. 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.
Method	All interviewing was conducted through an online panel; interviewing children aged 8 to 17 years old via their parents
Interviews	2,080 interviews
Fieldwork dates	From 11th October to 14th November 2023

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[1]. For **COBA** and **COKU** (as single methodology studies), testing is applied at the 95% level.

Trend reporting

The methodological approach for each of the three studies (**Parents' Media Literacy study**, **COBA** and **COKU**) was identical between 2021, 2022 and 2023 and it is therefore possible to draw comparisons over time where questions have been kept consistent.

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. We are able to show the financial vulnerability measure for 85% of respondents on the Parents' Media Literacy Survey, 91% for COBA and 91% for COKU. 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.

Interviewing children and obtaining consent

Interviewing on the COBA and COKU surveys is conducted online with children aged from 8 to 17. These children are contacted via their parent through online panel providers. The parent is given clear information about the project and asked for their consent to interview the child participant aged 8 to 17. The child participant aged 8 to 17 is also be provided with an overview of the study, and provided with appropriate assurances and the ability to opt-out if they do not wish to take part. The child is explicitly asked if they give consent to take part in the survey.

The Parents' Media Literacy study

Critical Research interviewed a sample of 2,480 parents of 3 to 17 year olds. Interviews were carried out across the UK and all interviews were conducted between 9th October and 4th December 2023.

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, it had not been possible to conduct the research in this way, due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The alternative approach that was used for the study in 2021 was repeated for both the 2022 and 2023 studies, in order to maintain comparability of the research findings since 2021. An online-only approach is appropriate for this survey as virtually all parents of 3- to 17-year-olds are online.

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 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 the child's 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 at the start of the fieldwork period. 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. The purpose of this online panel interviewing is to meet all remaining minimum samples specified for this study in a cost effective manner.

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 based on the available Census 2021 data. 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%	6%
Girls aged 16-17	8%	6%
SEG – AB	35%	28%
SEG – C1	25%	28%
SEG – C2	18%	19%
SEG – DE	20%	24%

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 2023 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	2,480	1,259
Age: 3-4	508	260
Age: 5-7	508	271
Age: 8-11	506	264
Age: 12-15	519	274
Age: 16-17	439	393
Boys aged 3-4	255	126

	Actual	ESS
Girls aged 3-4	252	133
Boys aged 5-7	255	135
Girls aged 5-7	252	134
Boys aged 8-11	251	131
Girls aged 8-11	251	130
Boys aged 12-15	257	135
Girls aged 12-15	253	134
Boys aged 16-17	216	195
Girls aged 16-17	222	198
SEG – AB (aged 3-17)	877	476
SEG - C1 (aged 3-17)	630	309
SEG - C2 (aged 3-17)	445	221
SEG – DE (aged 3-17)	506	282

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% ±
1,259 (Total aged 3-17)	2.2%	2.9%	3.3%	3.5%	3.6%
131 (Boys aged 8-11)	6.7%	9.0%	10.3%	11.0%	11.2%
282 (SEG DE aged 3-17)	4.6%	6.1%	7.0%	7.5%	7.7%

For example, if 30% or 70% of a sample of 1,259 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% ±
476 vs. 282 (AB vs. DE aged 3-17)	5.8%	7.7%	8.9%	9.5%	9.7%

Sample sizes being compared	10% or 90% ±	20% or 80% ±	30% or 70% ±	40% or 60% ±	50% ±
131 vs. 130 (Boys vs. Girls aged 8-11)	9.6%	12.8%	14.6%	15.6%	15.9%

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

Critical Research collected data from 3,383 parents of 3 to 17 year olds, answering all questions for children aged 3-7 and standard demographic questions only for 8-17 year olds who answered the main survey questions themselves. Interviewing was conducted from 30th October to 27th November 2023. In 2021 and 2022 the interviewing had been conducted across two waves.

All interviews were carried out across the UK through an online panel. Parents of children aged 3-17 were invited 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. Where the child concerned was aged 8 to 17, the child would answer the survey-specific questions and the parent would answer questions relating to demographics - which include questions that children will not know the answer to, for example, household income.

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 are weighted within nation to the correct profile of age and gender and urbanity, and overall to the correct SEG profile based on available Census 2021 data.

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	10%	6%
Girls aged 3-4	10%	6%
Boys aged 5-7	11%	10%
Girls aged 5-7	11%	10%
Boys aged 8-11	12%	14%
Girls aged 8-11	12%	14%
Boys aged 12-15	12%	14%
Girls aged 12-15	11%	13%
Boys aged 16-17	6%	7%
Girls aged 16-17	6%	6%
SEG – AB	34%	28%
SEG – C1	23%	29%
SEG – C2	23%	19%

Figures are based on UK children aged 3-17	Interviews achieved Unweighted	Interviews achieved Weighted
SEG – DE	21%	24%

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 2022. 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	3,383	2,529
Age: 3-4	644	398
Age: 5-7	749	555
Age: 8-11	816	654
Age: 12-15	774	600
Age: 16-17	400	366
Boys aged 3-4	323	198
Girls aged 3-4	321	201
Boys aged 5-7	376	279
Girls aged 5-7	373	276
Boys aged 8-11	406	326
Girls aged 8-11	410	327
Boys aged 12-15	388	301
Girls aged 12-15	386	300
Boys aged 16-17	205	186
Girls aged 16-17	195	180
SEG – AB (aged 3-17)	1,145	829
SEG - C1 (aged 3-17)	763	588
SEG - C2 (aged 3-17)	760	613
SEG – DE (aged 3-17)	704	570

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% ±
2,529 (Total aged 3-17)	1.2%	1.6%	1.8%	1.9%	1.9%
326 (Boys aged 8-11)	3.3%	4.3%	5.0%	5.3%	5.4%
570 (SEG DE aged 3-17)	2.5%	3.3%	3.8%	4.0%	4.1%

For example, if 30% or 70% of a sample of 2,529 gives a particular answer, the chances are 95 in 100 that the "true" value will fall within the range of +/- 1.8 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% ±
829 vs. 570 (AB vs. DE aged 3-17)	3.2%	4.3%	4.9%	5.2%	5.3%
326 vs. 327 (Boys vs. Girls aged 8-11)	4.6%	6.1%	7.0%	7.5%	7.7%

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

Critical Research interviewed a sample of 2,080 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 11th October to 14th November 2023.

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 based on available Census 2021 data. The table below shows the initial unweighted sample and the final weighted sample profile for the final sample.

Please note that in the devolved nations the sample of children aged 8 to 15 was boosted to allow for comparisons between nations, while children aged 16-17 were allowed to fall out naturally. This means that when comparing at a devolved nation level, the sample in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland contains a lower proportion of 16–17-year-olds compared to England. Although this is accounted for in the weighting, some caution should be applied when drawing comparisons between nations where differences are small.

Figures are based on UK children aged 8-17	Interviews achieved Unweighted	Interviews achieved Weighted
Boys aged 8-11	21%	21%
Girls aged 8-11	20%	20%
Boys aged 12-15	20%	20%
Girls aged 12-15	19%	20%
Boys aged 16-17	11%	10%
Girls aged 16-17	9%	9%
SEG – AB	33%	28%
SEG – C1	23%	28%
SEG – C2	20%	19%
SEG – DE	24%	24%

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% ±
1,623 (Total aged 8-17)	1.5%	1.9%	2.2%	2.4%	2.4%
336 (Boys aged 8-11)	3.2%	4.3%	4.9%	5.2%	5.3%
401 (SEG DE aged 8-17)	2.9%	3.9%	4.5%	4.8%	4.9%

For example, if 30% or 70% of a sample of 1,623 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. 401 (AB vs. DE aged 8-17)	3.9%	5.2%	5.9%	6.3%	6.5%
336 vs. 322 (Boys vs. Girls aged 8-11)	4.6%	6.1%	7.0%	7.5%	7.6%