Ofcom's Children's and Parents' Media Literacy research 2024 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 2024 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 continued to use this data collection method since that point.

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	From 2021 to 2024 the Parents' Media Literacy study has been conducted using a mixed method approach. 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 (1,340 postal survey respondents completing online and 1,140 online panel interviews)
Fieldwork dates	All fieldwork was conducted between 1st October and 25th November 2024

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. This matches the approach used since 2021.
Interviews	A total of 3,406 interviews were conducted
Fieldwork dates	As in 2023, fieldwork was conducted in a single wave; from 7th October to 3rd November 2024. (Two waves of fieldwork were 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 marketplace, 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. This matches the approach used since 2021.
Interviews	2,040 interviews
Fieldwork dates	From 8th October to 15th November 2024

Age groups for children

In order to align with Ofcom's ages and developmental stages for online safety work[1], the age groups used to set quotas for the 2024 research were updated. Targets were set to achieve interviews in six age bands: regarding children aged 3-5, 6-7, 8-9, 10-12, 13-15, and 16-17. The overall number of interviews conducted for each survey was matched to previous years. Analyses from the surveys conducted from 2021 to 2023[2] have been rerun using the six age bands in order to make comparisons with the 2024 findings.

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.

Trend reporting

The methodological approach for each of the three studies (**Parents' Media Literacy study**, **COBA** and **COKU**) was identical between 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024 and it is therefore possible to draw comparisons over time where questions have been kept consistent.

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.

[1] https://www.ofcom.org.uk/siteassets/resources/documents/research-and-data/online-research/keeping-children-safe-online/child-development-stages-review/child-development-and-online-behaviour.pdf?v=319064

[2] In 2021-2023 the targets were set for five age bands: 3-4, 5-7, 8-11, 12-15, 16-17

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 84% of respondents on the Parents' Media Literacy Survey, 92% for COBA and 92% 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		

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 1st October and 25th November 2024.

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

The same approach has been used for the study since 2021: combining post-to-online and online panel approaches. An online-only approach is appropriate for this survey as virtually all parents of 3- to 17-year-olds are online[3].

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. A total of 1,340 interviews were conducted through this post-to-online approach. 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. A total of 1,140 interviews were conducted through online panels.

[3] Prior to 2020, this research was conducted face-to-face. The approach was changed by necessity in 2020 due to restrictions in place because of the COVID-19 pandemic. From 2021 the previous once a year survey moved to a suite of three surveys across the year and conducted via online panels and post-to-web surveys, and the research was expanded to include 16-17 year olds. Due to substantial changes in methodology, direct comparisons of 2021-2024 data with previous years is not possible. Indicative comparisons with 2020 data should be treated with caution as a result of the pandemic, which is likely to have had a substantial impact on children and young people's media habits.

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 and the NRS survey. 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 3-5	8%	10%
Girls aged 3-5	8%	9%
Boys aged 6-7	8%	7%
Girls aged 6-7	8%	6%
Boys aged 8-9	8%	7%
Girls aged 8-9	8%	7%
Boys aged 10-12	8%	10%
Girls aged 10-12	8%	10%
Boys aged 13-15	9%	10%
Girls aged 13-15	8%	10%
Boys aged 16-17	8%	6%
Girls aged 16-17	8%	6%
SEG – AB	35%	28%
SEG – C1	24%	25%
SEG – C2	18%	22%
SEG – DE	21%	23%

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 2024 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	1672
Age: 3-5	408	282
Age: 6-7	411	286
Age: 8-9	411	287
Age: 10-12	416	292
Age: 13-15	424	298
Age: 16-17	410	294
Boys aged 3-5	205	142
Girls aged 3-5	197	137
Boys aged 6-7	203	140
Girls aged 6-7	202	143
Boys aged 8-9	203	143
Girls aged 8-9	203	141
Boys aged 10-12	204	142
Girls aged 10-12	206	146
Boys aged 13-15	214	153
Girls aged 13-15	201	140
Boys aged 16-17	201	141
Girls aged 16-17	200	147
SEG – AB (aged 3-17)	869	573
SEG - C1 (aged 3-17)	603	408
SEG - C2 (aged 3-17)	451	321
SEG – DE (aged 3-17)	531	372

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% ±
1,672 (Total aged 3-17)	1.9%	2.5%	2.8%	3.0%	3.1%
143 (Boys aged 8-9)	6.3%	8.5%	9.7%	10.4%	10.6%
372 (SEG DE aged 3-17)	3.9%	5.2%	6.0%	6.4%	6.6%

For example, if 30% or 70% of a sample of 1,672 gives a particular answer, the chances are 99 in 100 that the “true” value will fall within the range of +/- 2.8 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 "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% ±
573 vs. 372 (AB vs. DE aged 3-17)	5.1%	6.9%	7.9%	8.4%	8.6%
143 vs. 141 (Boys vs. Girls aged 8-9)	9.2%	12.2%	14.0%	15.0%	15.3%

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

Critical Research collected data from 3,406 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 7th October to 3rd November 2024. In 2021 and 2022 the interviewing had been conducted across two waves, while interviewing in 2023 was conducted in a single wave.

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 and the NRS survey.

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 3-5	9%	10%
Girls aged 3-5	8%	9%
Boys aged 6-7	8%	7%
Girls aged 6-7	8%	6%
Boys aged 8-9	8%	7%
Girls aged 8-9	8%	7%
Boys aged 10-12	8%	11%
Girls aged 10-12	8%	10%
Boys aged 13-15	9%	11%
Girls aged 13-15	8%	10%
Boys aged 16-17	8%	7%
Girls aged 16-17	8%	6%

Figures are based on UK children aged 3-17	Interviews achieved Unweighted	Interviews achieved Weighted
SEG – AB	34%	28%
SEG – C1	21%	26%
SEG – C2	22%	22%
SEG – DE	23%	23%

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 2024. 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	3,406	2,645
Age: 3-5	578	460
Age: 6-7	569	453
Age: 8-9	555	451
Age: 10-12	574	468
Age: 13-15	579	463
Age: 16-17	551	447
Boys aged 3-5	290	229
Girls aged 3-5	288	232
Boys aged 6-7	287	226
Girls aged 6-7	282	227
Boys aged 8-9	288	227
Girls aged 8-9	267	224
Boys aged 10-12	289	234
Girls aged 10-12	285	234
Boys aged 13-15	292	234
Girls aged 13-15	287	228
Boys aged 16-17	280	226
Girls aged 16-17	271	222
SEG – AB (aged 3-17)	1160	873
SEG - C1 (aged 3-17)	730	563
SEG - C2 (aged 3-17)	735	612

	Actual	ESS
SEG – DE (aged 3-17)	769	635

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% ±
2,645 (Total aged 3-17)	1.1%	1.5%	1.8%	1.9%	1.9%
227 (Boys aged 8-9)	3.9%	5.2%	6.0%	6.4%	6.5%
635 (SEG DE aged 3-17)	2.3%	3.1%	3.6%	3.8%	3.9%

For example, if 30% or 70% of a sample of 2,645 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% ±
873 vs. 635 (AB vs. DE aged 3-17)	3.1%	4.1%	4.7%	5.0%	5.1%
227 vs. 224 (Boys vs. Girls aged 8-9)	5.5%	7.4%	8.5%	9.0%	9.2%

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

Critical Research interviewed a sample of 2,040 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 8th October to 15th November 2024.

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 and the NRS survey. The table below 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 8-9	13%	10%
Girls aged 8-9	13%	10%
Boys aged 10-12	13%	16%
Girls aged 10-12	13%	15%
Boys aged 13-15	13%	15%
Girls aged 13-15	13%	15%
Boys aged 16-17	13%	10%
Girls aged 16-17	13%	9%
SEG – AB	27%	28%
SEG – C1	21%	26%
SEG – C2	22%	22%
SEG – DE	29%	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 8-17s	2,040	1,481
Age: 8-9	510	396
Age: 10-12	510	377
Age: 13-15	510	393
Age: 16-17	510	398
Boys aged 8-9	255	198
Girls aged 8-9	255	199
Boys aged 10-12	255	191
Girls aged 10-12	255	186
Boys aged 13-15	255	197
Girls aged 13-15	255	196
Boys aged 16-17	255	197
Girls aged 16-17	255	200
SEG – AB (aged 8-17)	542	363
SEG - C1 (aged 8-17)	422	318
SEG - C2 (aged 8-17)	479	382
SEG – DE (aged 8-17)	592	471

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% ±
1,481 (Total aged 8-17)	1.5%	2.0%	2.3%	2.5%	2.5%
198 (Boys aged 8-9)	4.2%	5.6%	6.4%	6.8%	7.0%
471 (SEG DE aged 8-17)	2.7%	3.6%	4.1%	4.4%	4.5%

For example, if 30% or 70% of a sample of 1,481 gives a particular answer, the chances are 95 in 100 that the “true” value will fall within the range of +/- 2.3 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% ±
363 vs. 471 (AB vs. DE aged 8-17)	4.1%	5.5%	6.3%	6.7%	6.8%
198 vs. 199 (Boys vs. Girls aged 8-9)	5.9%	7.9%	9.0%	9.6%	9.8%