# [GB] Ofcom publishes its report entitled Children and parents: Media use and attitudes report 2018

**IRIS 2019-3:1/18**

*Julian Wilkins*
*Wordley Partnership*

Ofcom has published its Children and parents: Media use and attitudes report 2018 ("the Report"). Ofcom's definition of media literacy is the ability to use, understand and create media and communications in a variety of contexts.

The Report is a consequence of Ofcom's responsibility under The Communications Act 2003 to promote and to carry out research into media literacy. In fulfilment of this responsibility, the Report focuses on children and parents.

Ofcom used its quantitative Children and Parents' Media Literacy Tracker to gather detailed evidence regarding media use, attitudes and understanding among children and young people aged 5-15. Moreover, Ofcom acquired detailed information about media access and use by young children aged 3-4, as well as findings submitted by parents regarding their children's media use and the ways that those parents seek to (or decide not to) monitor or limit the use of different types of media.

The Report also relies on several other research sources to provide an overview of children's media experience in 2018. The findings include that television sets and tablets dominate device use, but that time spent watching TV on a television set (whether in the form of broadcast or on-demand services) is decreasing, with half of 5-15-year-olds watching OTT ("Over The Top") television services such as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video and Now TV. The research determined that generally consuming content is becoming a more solitary activity, with many children watching on their mobiles.

YouTube is becoming the viewing platform of choice, with rising popularity, particularly among 8-11-year-olds, with vloggers as an increasingly important source of content and creativity - for instance, "Dan TDM" was a popular source of Fortnite and Minecraft tutorials. Social media brought a combination of social pressures and positive influences, with those pressures being particularly felt among girls. Girls aged 12-15 with a social media or messaging profile are more likely than boys to feel pressure to look popular on these sites "all of the time". 2018 saw girls choosing more glamourised or aesthetic Snapchat filters. The negative pressures are balanced by the positive side of social media - nine in ten social media users aged 12-15 state that social media has made them feel happy

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026

or helped them feel closer to their friends.

Television and social media are important sources of news, but many children have concerns over the accuracy and trustworthiness of news on social media. The most popular specific news source used to read, watch, listen to or follow news stories was BBC One/BBC Two (used by 45%), followed by Facebook (34%). Although the BBC was the most popular and most important news source among 12-15-year-olds, social media sources dominated the list of the top ten news sources.

Despite social media sites being a very popular source of news for young teens, this group ranks them as the least trustworthy and accurate source (conversely, television news ranks most highly in respect of these attributes). Eight out of ten had heard of the concept of “fake news.” Six in ten of those who were aware of fake news said they would undertake some action if they saw a fake news story online, with a third saying they would tell their parents or other family members.

A majority of online users aged 12-15-year-olds think critically about websites that they visit, but only a third correctly understood search engine advertising. About 65% of those aged 12-15 are aware that some vloggers are paid to endorse a product. Children are still being exposed to unwanted experiences online, but almost all recall being taught how to use the Internet safely.

There has been an increase in parents of 12-15-year-olds (and in 12-15-year-old children themselves) who say that controlling screen time has become harder; however most 12-15-year-olds consider they have a struck a good balance between this and doing other things.

Parental concerns about the Internet are rising, with a steady decline over the past few years in the proportion of parents of online 5-15-year-olds who agree that “the benefits of the Internet for my child outweigh any risks” - just over half (54%) agree with this now, compared to two-thirds in 2011.

Some parents are becoming less likely to moderate their child’s activities through technical overrides preferring to use other mediation strategies (like supervision, having rules or talking to their child) or because they trust their child to be sensible (48%). Online gaming is increasingly popular, with three-quarters of 5-15-year-olds playing such games.

### *Ofcom’s Children and parents: Media use and attitudes report 2018*

https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0024/134907/Children-and-Parents-Media-Use-and-Attitudes-2018.pdf

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026