



Social Media,
Television And Children

Social Media, Television And Children

— Guidance for Policy Makers





Guidance for Policy Makers



A team of academics from the University of Sheffield, School of Education worked with BBC Children's and Dubit to examine children's (aged 0-16) use of social media and television.

In this booklet, we outline how we carried out the research, share some findings and identify the implications for policy.

A full copy of the study's findings are available from www.stac-study.org.

How we carried out the study



Research Design

3154

Families

We undertook an online survey with 3154 families in the UK who had children aged 0-16.



6

We undertook case studies with six families over a period of three months.

110

Children aged 5-11

One hundred and ten children and young people aged 5-11 took part in telephone interviews.

33

Children aged 12-16

Thirty children and young people aged 12-16 took part in telephone interviews.



Research Questions



Q1

How do children aged 0-16 use television and social media in their daily lives?

Q2

What views and practices do parents have in relation to children's use of television and social media?

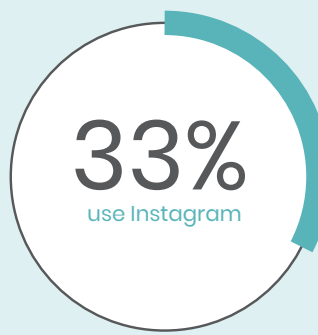
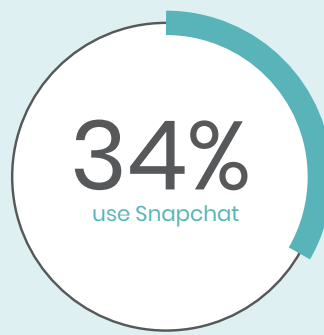
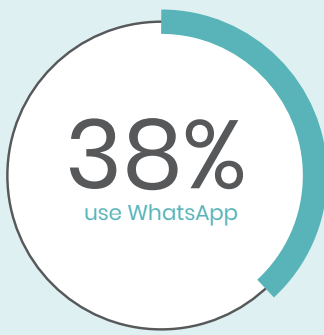
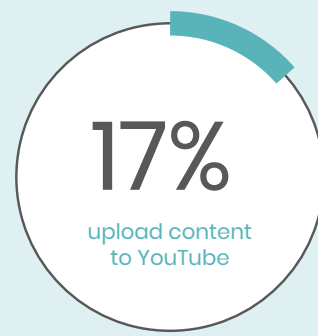
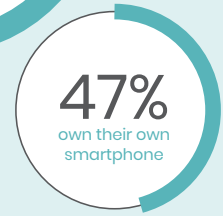
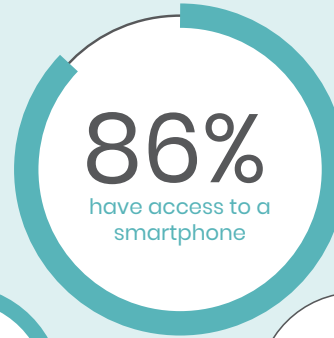
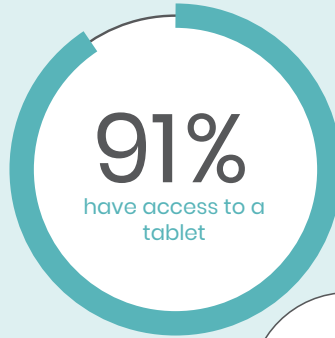
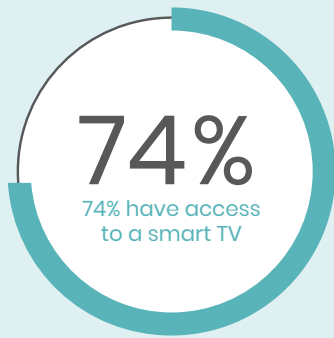


Q3

What are the implications of this analysis for the children's media industry, schools and parents?



How do children aged 0-16 use social media and television?





WhatsApp used most often to communicate with family

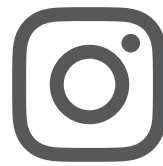
NETFLIX



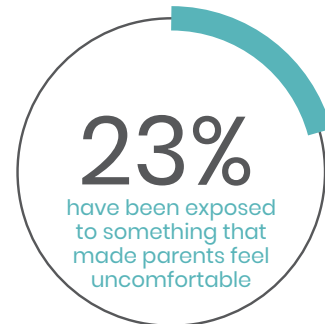
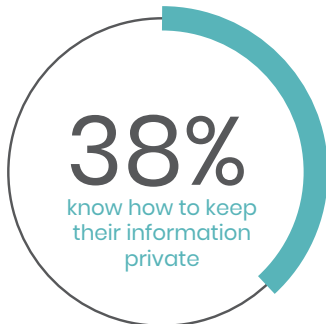
Most frequently viewed content: YouTube and Netflix



Snapchat used most often to communicate with family



Instagram used most often to post photographs





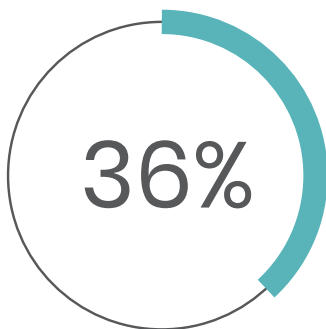
C2DE < ABC1

Parents in social groups C2DE are less likely to report that they are confident in using technology than parents in social groups ABC1 (68% v 75%)

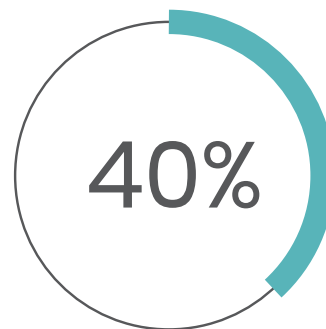


C2DE < ABC1

Parents in social groups C2DE are less likely to report that they are confident in helping their child to use technology than parents in social groups ABC1 (66% v 74%)



of parents do not use any safety features of social media sites



of parents are not sure, or do not know where to find help and guidance on supporting their children's use of social media



Implications for policy

There are a number of implications of the study for policy makers, as follows:

1

It is clear that age policies are not currently effective in terms of ensuring that younger children are restricted from registering for accounts on social media sites. Even if children do not have their own account, many primary school children are accessing social media sites and there needs to be further investigation of the ways in which they are finding and using the sites. A government review of this area would be welcome, in order to identify the extent of the issue, the implications of this, and any actions that might be taken by the industry, parents and schools.

2

The annual Ofcom survey of children and parents' use of media offers valuable information, much of which correlates with the findings of this study. However, it does not include questions about how those children aged under eight who have access to social media sites get access to them, and use them. It would be valuable to track this information, given the evidence outlined in this study about children of this age using these sites, even if they do not have their own accounts.

3

Further research needs to be undertaken on the ways in which parents and carers in low socio-economic communities can be supported in the development of their digital skills and confidence, given the evidence which indicates that they are less confident about supporting their children in this area. Given that early years settings and schools offer a consistent point of contact with professionals, it may be the case that further work can be done to link up schools with relevant organisations that develop adults' digital literacy skills, to develop provision in this area.

4

It is the case across all socio-economic groups that parents' beliefs with regard to the management children's uses of screens and devices do not always align with their practices. Family digital literacy programmes could encourage parents to reflect about their own use, and their children's use, of social media.

5

Guidance for parents often focuses on the risks of children's screen use, including the use of social media, but information could be provided which enables parents to focus on the more positive elements of this use, in addition to guidance on supporting their children's developing critical media literacy skills.

6

Consideration should be given to the provision of guidance and advice to new parents on managing their children's entry into the digital world. Health professionals who engage with parents in both pre- and post-natal contexts should be offered training on how to support and guide parents in this area.

7

The study demonstrates the importance of ensuring children continue to have free access to high quality children's television/ film content. [Recent initiatives](#)¹ by the government to support high quality content, with public service broadcast values, are welcome. The Children's Media Foundation propose that methods of funding for this approach should be explored which do not rely on top-slicing the Licence Fee, if the three-year pilot of the Young Audiences Content Fund is successful.

8

It would be valuable to develop guidance for primary teachers on the development of digital citizenship and critical media literacy skills, given the kinds of challenges children face, as outlined in this study, when navigating online sites. There are many organisations that offer guidance, as outlined in the booklet for educators produced as an outcome of this study, but these approaches need to be embedded in the curriculum in order for them to be successful. In addition, pre-service education for teachers could do more to ensure these issues are addressed.

The 'Social Media, Television and Children' study has offered a range of evidence which supports action in these areas, particularly in relation to the use of social media. Given the rapid pace of technological change, and the rate at which children and young people adopt new technologies, there is a need to act with some urgency if the youngest people in society are to meet the challenges, and grasp the opportunities, offered by the use of social media in the years ahead.

¹<https://www.bfi.org.uk/supporting-uk-film/production-development-funding/bfi-young-audiences-content-fund>



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