

Children enjoy unprecedented access to the virtual world, but the personal still holds its own

This year's ChildWise Monitor survey asked 2770 UK children aged 5 to 16 years about the technology in their lives.

Mobile phones become ever more central to children's lives

- Children now have the internet in their pockets – this year has seen a surge in internet enabled phones among children, especially those aged 11 and above – **six out of ten children aged 7-16 have a mobile phone that can access the internet** (61%), rising to three in four among 11-16s (77%).
- Mobile phones now top the list as the item of equipment that children can least live without (30%), outstripping computers (23%), games consoles (17%) and TV (15%).
- **Children with their own mobile spend an average of more than an hour and a half a day using their phones** for activities other than voice calls (1.6 hours), more than half use their phones in the morning before they go to school (52% of phone owners, 37% of all 5-16s), almost half use them in bed at night (45% of phone owners, 32% of all 5-16s).
- An increasing number of children now pay for their phones via contract, rather than Pay As You Go, especially among older children. 44% of 11-16s with a phone pay via contract, compared with 39% using PAYG. Parents pay the full costs for 55% of phone owners.

Most children can now access the internet in the privacy of their own room

- **Three in four 5-16 year olds have their own laptop or PC** (74%), **almost six in ten can now access the internet in their own room** (58%). The trend is towards portability – 61% have a laptop and 11% a tablet, just 26% now have a desktop PC.
- Facebook is favourite website again this year (top choice for 25% of children), though it has fallen back compared with previous years. YouTube is top choice for 12%, whilst 5% like Moshi Monsters best.
- **Half of all 5-16s who use the internet visited Facebook in the previous week** (51%). 39% of those visiting Facebook are aged under 13 (the minimum age).
- Personal internet access now almost matches personal TVs. The number of children with their own TV set continues to fall – now just three in five (60%). Time spent watching TV has also fallen slightly again this year, now down to an average of 2.5 hours per day, compared with just over one and a half hours for internet use (an average of 1.6 hours per day across all 5-16s).

Multi-tasking through the day

- **Children's peak media use is after school, with 60% using the internet at this time**, 59% listening to music, 47% using their mobile phone, 47% watching TV most days, and 46% playing on their games console – they average over three separate activities (3.1).
- They are also active before school – listening to music (41%), using their phone (37%), watching TV (35%) – averaging just under two activities (1.9).
- **Reading still tops the list for last thing in bed at night** (39%), but phone use is close (32%), and listening to music (28%) or watching TV (28%) are not far behind.

eReaders – encouraging the reading habit in younger children?

- eReaders are growing in popularity – especially among younger children and boys. **Almost one in ten 5-16s now have an eReader** (9%), highest among younger boys (14% of boys aged 5-10 years).
- Only a minority of children read for pleasure every day (30% read books every day, 15% read magazines), but most read on occasion. 78% of 5-16s read books at all, and more than one in four read books or magazines for an hour a day or more (28%). **Two thirds of 9-16s read online** (69%) – reviews, stories, news, blogs and books.

Skills online and in the real world

- Among 11-16 year olds, more than eight in ten can send a text message (82%) or write an email (80%), whilst three quarters can make a land line phone call (77%), look up a phone number (74%), or write and post a letter (75%). **Just 15% regularly write and post a letter, compared with 73% who regularly send text messages.**
- But, given the choice, **children still prefer to communicate face to face** – this is top communication channel for talking about something serious (53%), for having a private conversation (43%, compared with 13% for phone and 11% for text), and even chatting about last night's TV etc (33%, compared with 21% for social networking sites, 16% for texting).

London 2012

- Despite the growing publicity surrounding the **London 2012 Olympic Games**, children's imagination and enthusiasm for this is yet to fully catch fire. Numbers aware that London is the host city are just marginally up on a year ago (52%), and are still below the high of 56% in 2008, the year of the Beijing Olympics.
- However, 44% say they will watch this on TV, 7% hope to watch events live, although 21% say that they are just not interested in the Olympics.
- 8% have already bought London 2012 Olympic merchandise, and 16% plan to do so, but 53% say they will definitely not buy anything.
- Children spend an average of 2.4 hours a week playing sport at school, unchanged since 2008. Time spent playing sport out of school has fallen this year, to an average of 2.9 hours per week, down from 3.1 hours last year.

RESEARCH DETAIL

2770 children aged 5-16 years were interviewed via 108 schools across the UK, during Autumn 2011. Research was carried out primarily online, with a face to face interview for the youngest children. Full results from the survey are published in our annual **CHILDWISE MONITOR REPORT 2011-12**.

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