

Press release

For immediate release

Childhood 2020: new independent report

Mobile phone ownership and usage is up among kids – but it can be tough parenting this more private and personal technology

Most children are now phone owners by the age of seven¹, with a big increase this year in the number of 5-10-year-olds who own their own mobile, according to the new 2020 CHILDSWISE Monitor Report.

More kids of all ages are using their phones to access the internet, increasingly from their own room² or when they are out and about³. More than half admit to ‘always sleeping with their mobile next to the bed’ – and say they wouldn’t know what to do if they lost their device.

‘Mobile phones have won over tablet computers and now dominate children’s lives. This year 47% of 5 to 10-year olds now have a mobile, up from 38% last year.’

‘However, it can be tough to parent your young child’s use of technology when the mobile phone is such a private and personal technology,’ says Simon Leggett, research director at CHILDSWISE.

‘The moment a child owns a mobile phone, it can be a challenge to monitor what your child is accessing online because it’s such a private technology that most keep, literally, close to their chest’.

The 2020 CHILDSWISE Monitor is a comprehensive annual report looking at five to 16-year-olds’ media consumption, purchasing and social habits as well as key behaviour.

The amount of time that children spend online continues to increase overall, with boys remaining heavier internet users than girls. Children now say they spend 3.4 hours a day online, rising slightly from 3.3 last year.

¹ 53%

² Four out of five children 7-16 have internet access in their own room (80% up from 76% last year).

³ 45% of children go online out and about, up from 42% last year. This figure increases with age. Over half of 11-16s increasing to 64% of 15-16 year olds.

The number of 5-16-year-olds with their own mobile phone has increased this year, following several years of little change. More than two out of three children now have their own handset.

‘This year, young children have increasing access to mobile phones and they are using them for longer periods of time. With the majority of children now phone owners by age seven, average daily usage among 7-10 year olds has gone up by almost an hour a day,’ says Simon⁴.

Mobile ownership has faced strong competition from tablet computers over the last few years. However, the tide appears to be turning, with phone ownership back to levels last seen in 2012 and tablet usage taking a downturn.

Children’s increased use of their mobile to go online also has implications for what they choose to watch. ‘It’s a new era for content and TV and a completely new way of doing things. Children are online all the time, checking in on their mobiles while out and about. Content is likely to get shorter and shorter to fit with this way of viewing.’

Findings of the report also include...

- 71% access the internet via mobile phone.
- One in four children spend four to six hours online a day, up to 26% from 24% last year.
- The number of households owning a virtual assistant has increased significantly this year, with more than one in three households now owning one (39% up from 26% last year)
- The website/app TikTok has tripled in popularity this year – with one in ten naming it as their favourite.
- YouTube continues to be children’s favourite website/app despite decreasing slightly since last year. This is followed by Snapchat, Instagram, TikTok, Fortnite, Roblox, Minecraft and Netflix. 61% of kids use YouTube everyday and their favourite YouTubers are PewDiePie followed by DanTDM, LazarBeam and Sidemen.
- Stranger Things is kids’ favourite content on Netflix, followed by Friends.
- Children’s average weekly income (from pocket money and handouts) is £11.50. Children’s total spending power in the UK is £7,790 million per year.
- All kids are doing less sport outside and inside school this year.
- Kids report that their stress levels are up this year, but they are less likely to compare themselves to celebrities.
- More children are ‘very concerned’ about the environment.

⁴ 7-10 year old phone users claim to spend 3.3 hours on their phone a day.

CHILDWISE is an independent market research agency specialising in children and young people. CHILDWISE has a programme of published independent research and also conducts research for government agencies, charities, broadcasters, publishers and brands www.childwise.co.uk

The Monitor Report 2020 covers... Technology, Websites and Apps, YouTube, Gaming, Viewing Habits, Services and Content, Mobile Phones, Music, Reading, Equipment, Money, Purchasing, Sport and Activities, Health and Wellbeing, The Environment.

Editorial notes: For more information please contact Liz Hollis 07889 680302 liz@lizhollis.co.uk See www.childwise.co.uk