

Press release

Report shows surge in tablet and computer use among pre-schoolers

Computer and tablet use has surged among British pre-schoolers with two out of five regularly using them, a report has revealed. Around a quarterⁱ of young children now own their own device – compared to just 4% in 2012.

The latest figures from the CHILDWISE Monitor Preschool reportⁱⁱ show that a total of 42% of children aged 0-4 use the devices – up from 27% in the last survey in 2012. CHILDWISE is a leading, independent research specialist in children and young people.

“Computer and tablet use and ownership have increased significantly in pre-schoolers since the last survey in 2012. Growth within this age group is predominantly among three to four year olds, both boys and girls,” says CHILDWISE research manager Jenny Ehren.

“Pre-schoolers appear to have rapidly adopted the tablet which has quickly emerged as a most-wanted device for children, even among the very young.

“Parents have encouraged this, considering tablets and the games and apps on them, as a great way to keep small children entertained and provide a learning benefit,” says Jenny Ehren.

“Competition and innovation have made tablets more affordable as well as introducing features that have made them more attractive to this demographic.”

The report also shows that using on demand services to watch TV has become a mainstream activity for pre-school children – with this age group watching more television on average since the last report in 2012.

“The recent rise in TV viewing among pre-school children is consistent with the growth in portable devices and greater access to on-demand services,” says Jenny Ehren.

Pre-schoolers account for around a third of all children under the age of 16 and are an important demographic, both in terms of numbers and because these are their earliest years, when patterns of behaviour and attitudes are first established.

One in five pre-schoolers uses the internet, according to the new data. One in three uses a mobile phone, generally a parent’s. The number using apps has more than doubled since 2012 with one in three now using them.

“Studies have previously shown the older the child, the greater the likelihood that they will own and use computers, smartphones and the internet. However, this new report breaks the traditional correlation previously seen between increasing age and device ownership,” says Jenny Ehren.

She says the rapid take-up and usage by such small children reveals how important truly intuitive technology now is. “New technology is becoming more accessible to very young children because you don’t need a manual. You can operate it easily and instinctively.”

The CHILDWISE research shows that by the age of four most youngsters are “self-sufficient on a tablet or computer and a significant minority are becoming independent players across the spectrum of mobile phones, TV and the internet.

The average time British pre-schoolers spend watching TV has increased with under-fives now watching around two and a half hours a day, the report has also revealed. TV remains an important medium for this age group.

Youngsters are watching about 12 minutes extra television a day now compared to the last survey in 2012 (2.4 hours compared to 2.2 hours recorded in 2012 and 2009).

CBeebies continues to dominate TV viewing in this age group with four out of five pre-schoolers watching this channel. Peppa Pig is the top favourite TV programme, unchanged since 2012. In the Night Garden and Mr Tumble take second and third place.

Girls watch for longer than boys (2.5 hours compared to 2.3 hours). More than half of 0-4 year olds (53%) access their favourite shows through download services such as Sky, BBC iplayer and Youtube. This is up from 35% in 2012.

Editorial notes: For more information or to interview Jenny Ehren please contact Liz Hollis 07880 680302 liz@lizhollis.co.uk

Independent research company CHILDWISE www.childwise.co.uk has a programme of published research, including the pre-school monitor report. In addition, Childwise conducts research for government agencies, charities, broadcasters, publishers and brands.

ⁱ 26% 2014 compared to 4% in 2012 study.

ⁱⁱ The Monitor Pre-School report 2014: Key behaviour patterns among 0-4 year olds, CHILDWISE