

Press release

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Mobile phone is now children's go-to device for almost all media activities, reveals new report

A CHILDWISE survey of children aged 5-16 has revealed that the mobile phone is now children's top device to use for accessing media, including listening to music, watching video content in their room, accessing the internet and watching YouTube.

Children spend an average of three hours a day on their mobile phones, says the new CHILDWISE Monitor 2018 which compiles data about children's usage and ownership of handsets.

"The mobile phone is now the go-to device for children's media activity, whether it is listening to music, checking social media or catching up on the latest Netflix series in their bedroom," says Simon Leggett, research director of CHILDWISE.

"Standard mobile phone features continue to serve children well, although the growing popularity of supplementary features highlights the importance of phones as diverse multimedia devices," he adds.

The report shows that the mobile phone is the top device for accessing the internet, with three in five children using one in this way. It is also the top device for watching video content, viewing on-demand, listening to music and accessing YouTube, with more than half of phone owners using for these activities.

Making and receiving calls is the top mobile phone activity for children – returning to the top spot this year having dropped back to third place last year following the rapid ascent of accessing the internet.

"Variations in usage are more marked across the age range this year. The youngest phone owners, age 5-6, have cut down on the amount of time they spend using non-call related features, while older children (15-16) continue to use their handsets for more than 3.5 hours," said Simon.

"This has resulted in a steeper pattern of usage by age, particularly among girls. Girls out-use the boys at age 9-10 before being overtaken at age 11-13, and then surging ahead from the age of 13. However, boys are the heavier users between the ages of 5-8," he adds.

The number of children with their own mobile phone remains largely unchanged this year, having stayed relatively static since 2013. Two out of three children now have their own handset.

Mobile phone ownership among children reached peak levels in 2008 (then 73%), but has faced strong competition from tablet computers in recent years.

Last year, however, there was a glimmer of recovery with boys age 5-10 representing the biggest area of growth for some time. Now more than two in five boys this age (42%) own a mobile phone, unchanged from last year and up from 34% in 2015.

Girls age 11-16 are most fearful of being without their handset – more than seven in ten regard it as an essential addition to their lives compared with just four in ten boys.

The 2018 CHILDWISE Monitor is a comprehensive annual report looking at 5 to 16-year-olds media consumption, purchasing and social habits as well as key behaviour. More than 2000 children in schools across the United Kingdom completed in-depth online surveys for the report.

Findings of the report also include...

- Children age 5-16 spend just over two and a half hours a day watching programmes, video and short clips (2.6 hours, 2.5 hours last year).
- Most children now use devices other than a traditional television set to watch video content.
- YouTube remains the top way of watching on-demand content.
- Children age 9-16 spend an average of 2.7 hours online a day. This has dropped over the last three years and is down from 2.9 hours last year. However, this fall could be a consequence of children being less able to determine which of their routine activities are carried out online or offline.
- Children are taking to virtual reality with 25% having mobile VR equipment at home, 11% with Playstation VR, 10% have Oculus Rift and 6% have HTC Vive
- Binge watching content is a growing habit.

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

The Monitor Report 2018 covers... children and their media; TV viewing; music; reading ; cinema; children's equipment; money; purchasing; sports & activities; health & wellbeing and social awareness.

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