

Press release

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New report into UK childhood 2018

More of kids viewing is now on devices instead of traditional television sets – and the amount they watch is up slightly to more than two and a half hours a day, reveals new report.

It used to have pride of place in the living room – bringing the family together in one room to watch shows. But now the traditional television set is falling out of favour.

For the first time ever, the balance has tipped towards most children using their personal devices to watch programmes, videos and short clips, says the latest 2018 CHILDWISE Monitor report.

The data also shows that children age 5-16 spend just over two and a half hours a day watching content – up marginally on last year.¹ Binge watching is also a growing habit with children.

“This year, for the first time, most children² now use devices, such as a mobile phone or a laptop, to watch video content,” said Simon Leggett, research director for CHILDWISE. “TV sets have been the focal point in a lot of homes for many years, but they are falling out of favour amongst children” he added.

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.

“Viewing has changed to become personal and private rather than a group activity gathered round a traditional television set,” Simon Leggett added. “The era of fighting with your siblings over what to watch on TV is over. Children want to watch what they want, when they want it.”

Binge watching is a growing habit, with half watching back to back episodes at least weekly, as children become keen to immerse themselves in a series – and most on-demand services serve up the next episode automatically.

“Children want to watch a whole series in one go to join in the conversation and avoid spoilers at school and on social media. They are also becoming unaccustomed to waiting for content – they want it instantly often following a strong storyline that pulls them through to the end of the series,” says Simon.

¹ 2.6 hours compared to 2.5 hours last year

² More than half (53%) watch mostly on other devices such as tablets, mobiles and laptops compared to 47% a year ago.

Television content is still important, but despite the success of the terrestrial channels in developing popular family format programmes, children are now more likely to watch Netflix on their mobile phone than sit in the living room and watch the family TV set.

Children and teenagers do still value family viewing occasions, but fewer than three in ten say that their viewing is mostly on a traditional TV set.³

The amount of content that children watch increases with age, from around two hours among 5 to 6-year olds, up to more than three hours a day among 13-14 year olds, falling back marginally among 15-16 year olds.

Boys aged 13-14 are the heaviest viewers, clocking up three and a half hours a day on average. One in six boys this age says that they watch more than six hours a day.

Boys remain heavier viewers than girls, watching 2.7 hours of content a day on average compared to 2.5 hours among girls. However, the gender gap has narrowed since last year.

Findings of the report also include...

- Children, especially primary age children, are eagerly embracing voice-controlled devices such as Alexa and Siri – suggesting there will be a surge in the use of such devices in the next five years.
- 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

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

The Monitor Report 2018 covers... Computers and the internet; websites and applications; gaming, YouTube; mobile phones; TV viewing; music; reading; cinema; children's equipment; money; purchasing; sports & activities; health & wellbeing and social awareness.

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³ 27% compared to 30% a year ago.