# 5 YEARS AT A GLANCE (5-15s)

2015 | 2019

DEVICE USE AND OWNERSHIP

Compared to 2015, children aged 5-15 are more likely to go online on a tablet, mobile, games console and Smart TV

Devices ever used by children aged 5-15 to go online at home or elsewhere

In 2019, 9 in 10 5-15s use any device to go online

68% tablet ↑
55% laptop ↓
55% mobile phone ↑
27% games console ↑
18% Smart TV ↑
18% desktop computer ↓

↑↓ Statistically significant increase or decrease from 2015 - 2019

Smartphone ownership among 5-15s

2019 **45%**

2015 **35%**
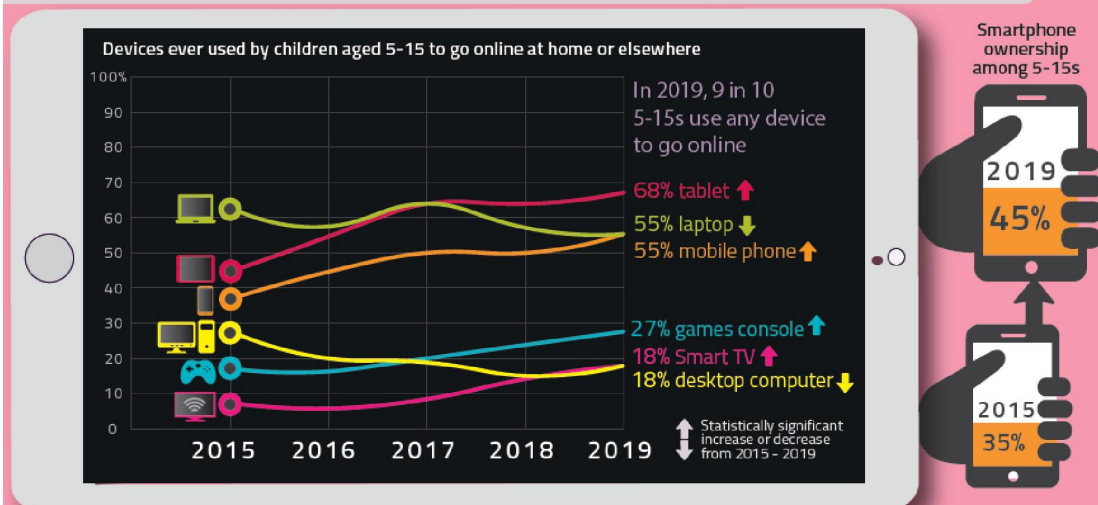
CONTENT CONSUMPTION

Compared to 2015, 5-15s are more likely to watch TV programmes on mobile devices

TV set
96% — 2015
91% — 2019

Tablet
27% — 2015
43% — 2019
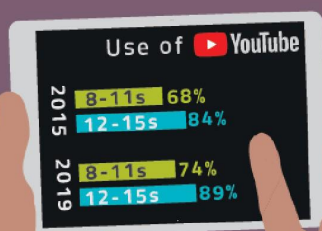
Mobile
15% — 2015
26% — 2019
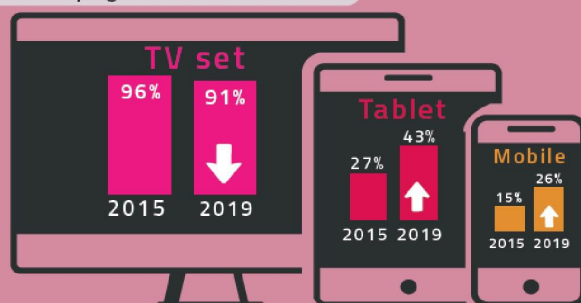
Devices ever used by children aged 5-15 to watch TV programmes

The proportion of 5-15s who watch video-on-demand nearly doubled between 2015 and 2019*

2015 **44%**
2019 **80%**

There has been little change in the proportion of 8-15s who use YouTube between 2015 and 2019

Use of ▶ YouTube

2015:
8-11s 68%
12-15s 84%

2019:
8-11s 74%
12-15s 89%

...but in 2019, both 8-11s and 12-15s would prefer to watch YouTube over both SVoD and TV content

YouTube
SVOD: Netflix, NowTV, Amazon Prime Video
TV channels like BBC, ITV, Channel 4/5 or Sky
Don't know

Aged 8-11
49%
26%
19%

Aged 12-15
42%
38%
16%
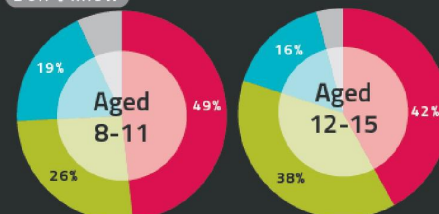
* We believe this to be a genuine increase due to the magnitude of the change, but please note that the question wording changed between 2015 and 2019.

Media use by age in 2019: a snapshot

3-4 year olds

- 24% have their own tablet
- 20% use a smartphone to go online, and 49% use a tablet to go online
- 15% of tablet owners are allowed to take it to bed with them
- 11% use a smart speaker in the home
- 95% watch TV on a TV set, while 36% use a tablet, and 14% use a mobile phone to watch TV
- 98% watch TV programmes or films (on any device), for 12hrs 42mins a week
- 75% watch live broadcast TV, and 65% watch video-on-demand content*
- 39% play games, for 4hrs 42mins a week
- 17% play games online
- 51% watch YouTube, for 8hrs 6mins a week
- 3% watch YouTubers or vloggers
- 1% of online users have a social media profile

5-7 year olds

- 5% have their own smartphone
- 37% have their own tablet
- 27% use a smartphone to go online, and 63% use a tablet to go online
- 14% of tablet owners are allowed to take it to bed with them
- 20% use a smart speaker in the home
- 96% watch TV on a TV set, while 40% use a tablet, and 12% use a mobile phone to watch TV
- 98% watch TV programmes or films (on any device), for 11hrs 6mins a week
- 73% watch live broadcast TV, and 73% watch video-on-demand content*
- 62% play games, for 6hrs 18mins a week
- 35% play games online
- 64% watch YouTube, for 8hrs 36mins a week
- 11% watch YouTubers or vloggers
- 4% of online users have a social media profile

8-11 year olds

- 37% have their own smartphone
- 49% have their own tablet
- 49% use a smartphone to go online, and 72% use a tablet to go online
- 45% who own a mobile phone are allowed to take it to bed with them, while 32% of tablet owners are allowed to do this
- 25% use a smart speaker in the home
- 92% watch TV on a TV set, while 42% use a tablet, and 22% use a mobile phone to watch TV
- 99% watch TV programmes or films (on any device), for 10hrs 30mins a week
- 74% watch live broadcast TV, and 78% watch video-on-demand content*
- 79% play games, for 9hrs 30mins a week
- 66% play games online
- 74% watch YouTube, for 10hrs a week
- 27% watch YouTubers or vloggers
- 21% of online users have a social media profile

12-15 year olds

- 83% have their own smartphone
- 59% have their own tablet
- 81% use a smartphone to go online, and 69% use a tablet to go online
- 74% who own a mobile phone are allowed to take it to bed with them, while 61% of tablet owners are allowed to do this
- 36% use a smart speaker in the home
- 88% watch TV on a TV set, while 46% use a tablet, and 41% use a mobile phone to watch TV
- 98% watch TV programmes or films (on any device), for 11hrs 48mins a week
- 75% watch live broadcast TV, and 88% watch video-on-demand content*
- 81% play games, for 11hrs 36mins a week
- 72% play games online
- 89% watch YouTube, for 11hrs a week
- 41% watch YouTubers or vloggers
- 71% of online users have a social media profile

* Video-on-demand content includes subscription services such as Netflix, broadcast catch-up services such as BBC iPlayer, recorded TV, websites like Vimeo and YouTube, blu-rays/DVDs, and renting online such as from Google Play Store

WhatsApp joins Facebook, Snapchat and Instagram in the top social media platforms used by children

The proportion of 12-15s with a social media profile (70%) has not changed over the last five years, however the platforms they are using[14] are becoming more varied.

WhatsApp, in particular, has gained in popularity over the past year and is now used by 62% of 12-15s - up from 43% in 2018. This means that, for the first time, it counts among Facebook (69%), Snapchat (68%) and Instagram (66%) as one of the top social media platforms used by children.

Similarly, no single site or app stands out above the rest when children were asked to name their 'main' site or app in 2019 (i.e. the one they use the most often). Similar proportions of 12-15s cite Snapchat (27%) and Instagram (24%) as they do Facebook (22%) which, in previous years, clearly came out on top. And although fewer children say that WhatsApp is the app they use the most (14%), this is the only platform to see a year-on-year increase (up from 5%).

Newer platforms, such as TikTok and Twitch, are gaining popularity

At the time of fieldwork, TikTok[15] was used by 13% of 12-15s – up from 8% in 2018. Twitch[16] was used by 5% of 12-15s, and almost exclusively by boys (9% vs. 0%). A similar proportion of girls and boys used TikTok. Awareness of live streaming platforms, such as Twitch and Facebook Live, has increased among children aged 12-15 who go online, from 78% in 2018 to 83% in 2019.

Some children in our Media Lives study, especially the younger children, enjoyed using TikTok to create content by following its set template. For example, one of the younger girls, demonstrated how to use the app to create 'copy-cat' lip-synced dance videos, and explained that she would then share these with her friends.

> "On TikTok you can do street-dancing to different music - I normally just scroll down it and make a few' "
>
> *Bryony, aged 10*

The 'Greta effect' and online social activism

2019 saw an increase in the proportion of 12-15s who use social media to support causes and organisations by sharing or commenting on posts (18% in 2019 vs. 12% in 2018). In addition, one in ten have signed petitions on social media in the last year.

As in 2018, many children also use social media as a way to offer personal support to their friends; two-thirds of 12-15s have sent positive messages, comments or posts to friends who are having a hard time.

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[14]   The 2019 survey included the following platforms under the banner of 'social media and messaging sites and apps': Facebook/Messenger, Snapchat, Instagram, WhatsApp, YouTube, Twitter, TikTok, Twitch, Pinterest, MySpace, Google Hangouts, and Tumblr

[15] TikTok is a mobile platform enabling users to create and share short-form videos

[16] Twitch is a live streaming platform with a primary focus on video gaming, and was included in the survey for the first time in 2019

Another trend to have emerged over the last five years of our Media Lives research is children's increased interest in watching other gamers online. These gameplay videos were very popular in this year's study, with many of the children watching them on YouTube or via Twitch - the live streaming platform with a focus on gaming. For example, one boy in the study said he enjoyed watching gameplay videos of Destiny 2 on Twitch, as these gave him "help with games".

Nations deep dive:

Parents in Wales are more likely to have concerns about gaming

Parents in Wales are more likely than those in the other nations to be concerned about each of the concerns presented to them: the content of the games, how much time the child spends gaming, who they play games with, the pressures to make in-game purchases, the possibility of their being bullied, and the amount of advertising in games. Parents in Wales were also more likely to have the majority of the rules in place for the child when gaming – such as how much time they spend gaming, only playing games with appropriate content, and who they can play games with.

Only half of parents have some sort of technical controls set up on their child's gaming devices

Younger children are more likely to have technical controls set up by their parents on their gaming devices to control their gaming and online use. Over half of parents of 5-7s and of 8-11s whose child plays games say they have some sort of controls in place: such as time-limiting software, controls to stop the child playing games above a certain age rating, or controls to prevent them from going online. In contrast, four in ten parents of 12-15s (39%) have these controls in place. Each measure is unchanged since 2018.

Parents of younger children are also more likely to have rules or restrictions in place about their gaming (89% 5-7s, 91% 8-11s), than parents of 12-15s (79%) – again, unchanged since 2018. For each age group, the dominant rule is that of only playing games with an age appropriate rating.

Negative online experiences and coping strategies

The experience of seeing hateful content online is increasing

Almost all children who go online recall being told about how to use the internet safely (96%); 8-11s are most likely to say this was from a parent (84%), while 12-15s are most likely to say it was from a teacher (also 84%). In 2019, more 8-15s recall receiving information from teachers at school (82% vs. 74% in 2018), from the police visiting their school (17% vs. 10% in 2018), and from friends (23% vs. 14% 2018).

Despite receiving this advice, children still see content that is inappropriate or makes them feel uncomfortable. In particular, there has been an increase over the last four years in the proportions of children claiming to have seen anything hateful online about particular groups of people (based on, for instance, their gender, religion, disability, sexuality or gender identity). In 2019, half of 12-15s who go online say they had seen something hateful about a particular group of people in the past 12 months – up from 34% in 2016.[18]

Despite the increase in those seeing hateful content, there have been no increases in the proportions choosing to take any form of action over it. Of those that saw hateful content in the past 12 months[19], the majority (58%) chose to ignore it, while the remainder (39%) took some form of action.[20] The most cited action was to block the person who shared or made the comments (16%), or to report it to the website (14%) – each unchanged since 2018. One in ten chose to either share it with friends in order to say it was wrong or to comment on it, thereby inadvertently giving the hateful content greater exposure.

> *Nations deep dive:*
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> **Experience of seeing hateful content online is more likely in Northern Ireland**
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> Children in Northern Ireland who go online are more likely than those in the other UK nations to say they have ever seen hateful content online (62%) - followed by those in England (52%), Scotland (45%) and Wales (37%).
>
> The majority of children in Wales who go online (62%) say they have never seen such content. This may be because parents in Wales are the most likely to have certain rules in place set by parents about their children's online use – in particular, only going online when supervised/ accompanied - thereby safeguarding the content they see.

Despite high awareness of online reporting functions, only half who had seen something worrying or nasty reported it

A third of 12-15s say they have seen something worrying or nasty online, making them almost twice as likely as 8-11s (18%) to see this type of content.

The way that children deal with such content varies by age and gender. Children aged 8-11 who go online are more likely than 12-15s to tell someone (96% vs. 90%), although both age groups are more likely to tell a parent than to tell anyone else (89% vs. 74%). Older children are more likely than younger children to tell someone in authority about the content (such as the police (7% vs. 4%), the websites themselves (5% vs. 2%), or the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre – CEOP (2% vs. 0%). Girls are more likely than boys to tell someone (94% vs. 88%) and more likely to tell a parent

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[18] The question asking if children have seen hateful content was first asked in 2016.

[19] The sample sizes of those that saw any hateful content online are too small in the nations to conduct further analysis.

[20] The remaining 3% said they did not know what action they had taken.

(85% vs. 77%), while boys are more likely than girls to say they don't know if they would tell anyone at all (6% vs. 1%) – increasing to 8% among those aged 12-15.

As in 2018, two-thirds of 12-15s who go online are aware of the reporting function available on many sites, apps and online games; those in Wales are more aware of this than those in the other UK nations (86% vs. 71% Scotland, 64% England, and 60% Northern Ireland). Of all those who are aware of this and who say they have seen something that worried them, half (52%) say they had used the reporting function.[21] Awareness of this function is more likely among heavier users of the internet; 78% of those who spend more than ten hours a week on YouTube, and 82% of those who spend more than ten hours on social media. This suggests that greater online use can make children more aware of how to deal with online risks.

While a minority of 12-15s and 8-11s say they have seen something worrying or nasty online, several children in our Media Lives research could recall seeing upsetting content online – this included violent and other disturbing content. Most of the children saw this content on social media and while some did report seeing a 'sensitive content' label, one girl expressed concerns that this would not be enough to prevent younger children from seeing this type of content.

Children display various strategies to cope with negative online experiences

The older children in our survey (12-15s) were also asked about their own negative experiences, either online or on a mobile phone.[22] Two-fifths said they had ever experienced any of the negative experiences presented to them in the survey, unchanged since 2018. In addition to telling someone, they also used various strategies to cope, which shows a degree of resilience and knowledge in managing online risks.

Of those who opted to answer the question, a quarter said they had ever been contacted online by someone they don't know. Two-thirds say they know how to block messages on social media from unknown people, with half saying they have ever had to do this. Half say they know how to block junk email and spam or to change their settings so that fewer people can view their social media profile. A third say they have ever done either of these.

Fewer older children say they have seen or received something scary or troubling online, like a scary video or comment (16%) – up from 10% in 2018. A similar proportion say they have accidentally spent money online that they didn't mean to (14%) or seen something of a sexual nature that made them feel uncomfortable (12%). Six per cent say they have felt under pressure to send photos or other information about themselves to someone, twice as likely as in 2018 (3%). Girls are twice as likely to have felt this way than boys (8% vs. 4%).

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[21] The sample sizes of those who saw worrying content and were aware of the reporting function are too small in the nations to conduct further analysis.

[22] The face-to-face nature of the survey and the sensitive topic may have resulted in some under-reporting in response to this question. To ensure that the children in the survey felt as comfortable as possible in responding to questions to bullying and online risks, they were allowed to opt in to answer these and given the option of completing them more privately through the interviewer's CAPI unit/tablet. Overall, 87% of 8-11s and 92% of 12-15s opted to complete this section.