
Ofcom's Children's Media Literacy Tracker

Notification of changes to the 2020 survey

1. Overview

Due to the ongoing situation surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic and current guidelines that are in place, Ofcom has made the decision to suspend all face-to-face fieldwork to protect the safety of everyone involved. Ofcom's Children's Media Literacy tracker is affected by this decision. The 2020 fieldwork was postponed, and this document sets out the alternative methodology to be used, the change in content in the survey, and the impact on trend data.

Background to survey

The Children's Media Literacy Tracker is used to provide detailed evidence on media use, attitudes and understanding among children and young people aged 5-15, as well as about the media access and use of young children aged 3-4. It also helps industry to understand parents' views about their children's media use, and the ways that parents seek – or decide not – to monitor or limit use of different types of media. Fieldwork is normally conducted during April-July of each year.

Alternative methodology to be used

Up until this year, the methodology used for this survey was face-to-face interviews in the home with the parent and child. The lockdown period across the UK this year evidently prevented this methodology from continuing, and due to the ongoing situation and current guidelines in place, Ofcom has decided to suspend all face-to-face fieldwork.

The 2020 survey will therefore be conducted via a post-to-web methodology, which means considerable changes will need to be made to adapt the survey. This Notification document provides full details of the changes.

Impact on trend data

As an official statistic, this survey provides trend data to help us understand children's use and understanding of media over time. However, the unavoidable change in methodology this year means that, for the most part, we may not be able to compare 2020 data to previous years. We will be evaluating the extent of this once all data is delivered.

This is further impacted by the potential changes to survey content, as detailed in Section 2 of this Consultation. These changes are required to enable the methodology to move to online. It is, as yet, unknown if the methodology will remain wholly online in 2021 and subsequent years, however we will seek to reach the offline population in future surveys as soon as it is safe to do so.

Notification of changes – in brief

Taking account of stakeholder feedback to the [consultation](#) on the proposed changes (published on 10 September 2020), we are now confirming the following changes to the Children’s Media Literacy Survey, with full details overleaf:

- Conduct the survey in two parts, both online, in place of the existing face-to-face format.
- The first survey will be post-to-web, whereby a letter will be posted out to the general UK population inviting parents of children aged 3-15 and their child (if aged 8-15) to complete an online survey each. Responses will be topped up via an online panel if needed.
- The second survey will be conducted separately via an online panel, mainly focusing on social media, messaging, live streaming and video-sharing-platforms, plus other aspects of online activities.
- This will mean that those households that are not online will be excluded from the research for this year, however we will seek to reach the offline population in future surveys as soon as it is safe to do so.
- The questionnaire length will be significantly reduced to maintain respondent engagement in online surveys, meaning that some questions will be removed this year.
- For questions that remain, the wording may be amended to be adapted to an online format and to be appropriate for children’s online self-completion. However, for these remaining questions we may not be able to compare data to previous years, due to the change in methodology. This will be evaluated upon delivery of the data.

If you have any queries, please email market.research@ofcom.org.uk.

2. Changes to the 2020 Children's Media Literacy Tracker

Methodology

- 2.1 The existing methodology of face-to-face in-home interviews with the parent and the child will not be conducted in 2020. Instead, the survey will be conducted wholly online and split into two parts:
 - a) An online survey (post-to-web) in which parents of 3-15s and children aged 8-15 (if they go online) will be invited to complete, via a postal letter; with an online panel used to top up responses if needed;
 - b) The social media, messaging, live-streaming and video-sharing-platform questions will be moved to a standalone survey via an online panel including parents of 3-7s and children aged 8-15. Details of these are provided at 2.8.
- 2.2 By moving the survey online, this will mean that those households that are not online will be excluded from the research for this year. This equates to approximately 2% of households with children aged 5-15, rising to 12% of households with pre-school children (aged 3-4). While it is not ideal to exclude this group from our research, we recognise that 2020 is an unprecedented year in which some compromises do need to be made. However, we fully intend to reinstate the inclusion of those not online via alternative methodologies in 2021 if safe and appropriate to do so.
- 2.3 In order to ensure respondent engagement in the online surveys, the current questionnaire length will reduce by 50% in both the parental and children's sections. This in order for both surveys to be no more than 15 minutes for either the parent or the child. This means that several questions will need to modularise for this year. Details of these are provided at 2.7.
- 2.4 For the questions that remain in the survey, some wording may need to be amended to reflect the change in methodology to online surveys. The lack of a physical interviewer with the child will also mean that the question wording will need to be made appropriate for a child's self-completion online.
- 2.5 All of the above means that comparisons to previous years' trend data is unlikely to be possible. The extent of year-on-year comparability (if any) will be evaluated upon delivery of the data.

Questions proposed for removal in the consultation, but will remain in the 2020 survey

2.6 Below are the questions we had originally proposed to remove for the 2020 wave in order to shorten the questionnaire length. Following stakeholder feedback, and further consideration to the questions, we have been able to reinstate these to the 2020 survey.¹

a) Internet:

- i) **QP51B** asking about parental concerns on how much time the child spends online. Note that there is no space on the survey to also include the associated questions asking this about the other media children use: mobile phones, playing games, watching TV.
- ii) **QC34** asking children who has spoken to them about internet safety. This will be included in the post-to-web survey.
- iii) **QC45A/B** asking children's views of pressures to be popular and people being mean to each other in 'real life'. This will be included in the online panel survey, alongside the same questions in relation to social media.
- iv) **QP54** and **QC14** asking what creative activities the child does online. This will be included in the online panel survey.
- v) **QC56** asking about types of potentially worrying things that have happened to the child online. This will be included in the post-to-web survey.
- vi) **QC58** asking if child has ever undertaken risky or safe measures. This will be included in the post-to-web survey.

b) Critical understanding:

- i) **QC17** asking if, in a normal week, children visit sites/apps they have not used before; and **QC18** asking if children consider whether they can trust these. These questions will be amended to reflect behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic – asking children if they have visited new sites/apps while being at home more this year, and their attitudes towards trust in these and any measures taken to check this. They will be included in the post-to-web survey.
- ii) **QC37** asking about child's understanding of vloggers/endorsements. This will be included in the online panel survey.

¹ Note that question numbers refer to the [2019 questionnaire](#) ('QP..' are questions for parents, and 'QC..' are questions for children).

Questions that will be removed from the 2020 survey

2.7 Below are questions we had proposed to remove, and can confirm will be removed, from the 2020 wave. It is important to note that although these will be removed in order to shorten the questionnaire length, we will endeavour to reinstate key and relevant questions in the 2021 survey where possible.

a) Access and use of devices:

- i) **QP3** will no longer include the following devices in the code list:
DVR, DVD, and Wearable Tech.

b) Television:

- i) **QP8** and **QC2B** asking which on-demand services the child watches *the most* (note **QP7** and **QC2A** asking which they watch will be kept).
- ii) **QP9** asking about parental awareness of UK broadcaster online services offering information on the age suitability of programmes.
- iii) **QP10** asking if parents have set up a PIN code or password on UK broadcaster online services.
- iv) **QP13B/C/D** asking about parental concerns of their child's TV viewing: time spent, amount of TV ads, and content of TV ads seen (note **QP13A** asking about parental concerns of general TV content will be kept).
- v) **QP14** and **QP15** asking about parental concerns of pre-watershed TV viewing for their child will be modularised.
- vi) **QC4A/B/C** asking the child how important it is to them to see programmes that represent them (their age, look like them, from same area as them). (Note **QC3A/B/C** asking the child if there are enough of these programmes will remain).
- vii) **QC8** asking the child's preference to watch either YouTube, on-demand content, or TV channels.

c) Internet:

- i) **QP4B** asking in which way the child goes online at home - via fixed broadband or mobile network (note **QP4A** asking which method of access is *available* in the home will stay).
- ii) **QP24** and **QC12B** asking which device the child uses *the most* to go online at home or elsewhere (note **QP23** and **QC12A** asking which they use will be kept).
- iii) **QP55A** asking if the child ever watches the CBeebies app/site; **QP55B** and **QC39A** asking if the child ever uses the BBC websites/apps for school or homework; and **QP56/57** and **QC39B** asking if they felt these resources were educational/helpful.

d) Technical Controls:

- i) **QP33** asking if parents have stopped using technical tools or controls (note **QP31/32** asking about awareness and use will be kept).
- ii) **QP34/35/36** asking parents if they found the tools/controls useful, blocked the right amount of content, or that their child could get around them, if they found them useful.
- iii) **QP42A** asking parents who are aware of content filters, but do not use them, why this is so.

e) Gaming:

- i) **QP68** asking about parental awareness of games consoles ability to go online or watch TV.
- ii) **QP71** asking if there are parental controls on handheld games players or games consoles - to align with the Technical Controls section.
- iii) **QP74B/C/ F** asking about parental concerns relating to their child's gaming will be removed: time spent, who they are playing with, and amount of ads within games (note **QP74A/D/E** will be kept asking about parental concerns of the content of the games being played, pressure to make in-game purchases, and possibility of being bullied).

f) YouTube:

The questions on YouTube will be expanded to cover a wider range of video-sharing-platforms (VSPs) and included in the online panel survey (see 2.8).

g) Social Media:

The majority of the social media questions have been amended and will now be captured within the online panel survey (see 2.8). However, the ones noted below will be removed.

- i) **QP43** and **QC19** asking if the child has a profile or account on any social media sites. We will no longer ask about profiles/accounts as children are able to use many apps/sites without creating a profile/account – instead, the Social Media survey will ask about use.
- ii) **QP45** and **QC21** asking which is the child's main social media app/site.
- iii) **QP46A/B/C/D** asking about parental awareness of minimum age requirements on Facebook/Facebook Messenger, Instagram, Snapchat and WhatsApp. These will be replaced with one question asking about awareness of age requirements on social media apps/sites in general.

h) Live Streaming:

As with the above, the questions on live streaming will now be captured within the online panel survey (see 2.8).

i) Mobile Phone:

As so much of children's mobile phone use is now to go online, we are proposing to reduce the mobile phone section and keep any relevant questions within the internet sections. In particular, we are removing:

- i) **QP30A/B** asking if the child is allowed to keep their mobile phone or tablet with them when they go to bed.
- ii) **QP60A/B/D** relating to parental concerns of their child's mobile phone use: time spent, who they are in contact with, and the possibility of being bullied via their mobile.
- iii) **QP61/2** asking about parental awareness, and use, of the bar on adult content on their child's mobile.

j) Critical understanding:

- i) **QC5, QC11** and **QC27** asking about child's understanding of BBC, YouTube and Google funding.
- ii) **QC6/7** and **QC35/36** asking how often the child sees adverts on TV/online, and how much they feel they tell the truth.
- iii) **QC38A/B** asking about children's attitudes towards free speech online.
- iv) **QC51A/52A/52B** asking which sources children would use for accurate and true information online about: serious things in the world/fun things like hobbies/how to build or create things.

k) Time spent on activities:

- i) **QP76A/B, QP77A/B, QP78A/B, QP79A/B, QC47A/B, QC48A/B, QC49A/B, QC50A/B** – all questions asking parents and children to self-report how much time they spend watching YouTube, watching TV/films, using social media, or playing games.

Questions that will be moved to the online panel survey

- 2.8 This survey, conducted via an online panel, will include questions from the 2019 survey mainly relating to social media, messaging, live streaming and VSPs, as well as other internet activities.
- For information – in addition to the below we will also include questions asking about the child’s use of anonymous Q&A apps/sites.
- a) **QP44** and **QC20** asking which social media or messaging apps/sites the child uses – to be split into two separate questions.
 - b) **QP22C** and **QC10** asking what type of content the child watches on YouTube – to be expanded to ask of any VSP, and to ask about posting content also.
 - c) **QC24A** and **QC24B** asking about child’s awareness and use of live streaming – to be amended to ask which live streaming apps/sites they use.
 - d) **QP46** and **QP47** asking about parental awareness, and views on permission, of minimum age requirements on social media apps/sites.
 - e) **QC22A/B/C/D** asking about children’s attitudes towards social media and messaging apps/sites (pressures to feel popular, people are mean to each other, the apps/sites make them happy, or feel closer to their friends).
 - f) **QC23** asking what activities children do on social media apps/sites.
 - g) **QC38C** asking about children’s views on images on VSPs.
- 2.9 To be able to accommodate as many questions as feasible on the main post-to-web survey, the below has been moved from the post-to web survey, to the online panel survey.
- a) **QC15A/B/C** asking children how much they believe is true on social media sites/apps, school and homework sites/apps, and news sites/apps.
- 2.10 As previously mentioned at 2.6, the below will now be included in the online panel survey.
- a) **QC37** asking about child’s understanding of vloggers/endorsements.
This will be included in the online panel survey.
 - b) **QC45A/B** asking children’s views of pressures to be popular and people being mean to each other in ‘real life’.
This will be included in the online panel survey, alongside the same questions in relation to social media.
 - c) **QP54** and **QC14** asking what creative activities the child does online.
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