



Media Lives: Wave 10 (2014)
and Ten Year retrospective
Summary Report

Research Document

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About this document

This document provides analysis of the findings from our Adults Media Lives study, which was set up in 2005 to provide a small-scale, rich and detailed qualitative component to Ofcom's quantitative surveys of media literacy. The project follows the same 18 or so people over time, and interviews them on camera each year about their media habits and attitudes. The interviews provide evidence about the motivations and the context of media use, and how media is part of daily life and domestic circumstances.

The project also provides us with rich detail of how media habits and attitudes change over time, in particular linked to lifestage.

The Communications Act 2003 placed a responsibility on Ofcom to promote, and to carry out research into media literacy. This report contributes to Ofcom's work in this area.

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Section 1

Introduction to the study

The Media Lives study was originally set up in early 2005 to provide a small-scale, rich and detailed qualitative complement to Ofcom's quantitative surveys of media literacy. Whereas the surveys seek to quantify in a statistically robust way how many and what kind of people have different levels of media access, awareness, skills and understanding, Media Lives aims to provide a human face to the data.

This ten-year ethnographic video study has tracked the evolution of individuals' relationship with digital media – how it fits into their lives, what motivates them to adopt new technology and learn new skills, their usage habits, levels of understanding, issues and concerns about media.

Each participant is interviewed in-home and at length (each interview lasts around 90 minutes). This allows both for a full exploration of the relevant issues and for demonstration/observation of media usage *in situ*. Ten waves of research have now been conducted; the first was in February 2005, with subsequent waves in October 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013. The most recent interviews took place between 7 and 29 October 2014, and were conducted by Mark Ellis, Tony Harbron and Tony Palmer of The Knowledge Agency.

The number of participants in the study is relatively small, but these people have been chosen carefully to reflect a broad cross-section of the UK population in terms of age, location, ethnicity and social circumstances. The unique methodology has allowed us to have extended discussions with these individuals, and to track their progress over time. Five of the 19 participants in the latest round of interviews have been part of the study since the start, and seven more joined the study in 2006. As the profile of the sample becomes, by definition, progressively older, we have regularly recruited new participants at the bottom end of the age range – including, this year, a 15-year-old school student from Warwick and an 18-year-old first-year university student from Oxford.

Certain topics have been tracked consistently each year; many of these have been subject to great change over the ten years of the study; for example:

- Acquisition of new media hardware (DVRs, DAB radio, tablets etc.) and services (e.g. superfast broadband, Netflix)
- Development of media skills, confidence in use of digital media, and adoption of new online activities (e.g. social networking)
- Use of mobile devices to consume content
- Sources of knowledge and information about media, and methods of learning new skills
- Trust in media providers across different media platforms
- Concerns about privacy, security and safety

However, the research model is flexible enough to explore specific topical and/or emerging issues each year; for example (in 2014), use of user-generated content, changing attitudes to PSB channels and security concerns related to cloud-based storage.

All interviews are filmed, and the video is the main vehicle for the presentation of findings from the research. The key insights from each individual interview have been clipped and catalogued by theme, platform and participant, for every year of the study. The cumulative databank of over 3,300 video clips now represents a uniquely rich and detailed resource for exploring and communicating the evolution of people's attitudes to digital media and media literacy issues in the UK, and is used widely across Ofcom, and in presentations to a range of stakeholders.

Because 2014 was the tenth year of fieldwork, participants were invited to reflect on their own perceptions of change over the time they had spent within the study, and the research team conducted longitudinal analysis of participants' interviews from multiple years to identify key changes over time. The results from both these exercises have been incorporated into this document.

Section 2

Overview

Media Lives is a qualitative survey designed to complement Ofcom's large-scale quantitative audit of media literacy in the UK. The number of participants in the study is small – between 12 and 19 each year – and so is not *statistically* representative of the population as a whole. However, these participants have been chosen carefully to reflect a broad cross-section of the UK population in terms of age, location, ethnicity and social circumstances.

This is the tenth wave of the Media Lives study, and over the ten-year period we have seen major changes both in terms of participants' use of media, and in their attitudes to platforms, services and providers.

For example, participants' relationship with television has changed radically since 2005 and continues to evolve. The impact of new devices and services is evident in the way in which participants describe their viewing behaviour. We have witnessed a claimed shift from linear to on-demand viewing, fuelled by the accessibility of content across a range of services, including catch-up channels, broadcasters' own streaming services, and new platforms such as Netflix, Now TV and Amazon Prime.

The claimed consumption of news has also changed radically across the ten years of Media Lives. Participants report greatly reduced viewing of TV news bulletins, instead describing their news consumption as being increasingly personalised and/or on-demand via a much more eclectic range of sources. Simultaneously, their relationship with news providers has changed; there has been a marked decline in the level of trust in news media, expressed by many within our sample since 2005, and a decline in perceived brand differentiation between the major broadcast news providers.

One interesting development in 2014 was a significant increase in the number of participants who claim to be consciously avoiding the news. This was most commonly attributed to a lack of engagement with a news agenda which they perceived to be of little interest or relevance to them and/or an attempt to protect themselves from what they considered to be a constant stream of bad news stories.

The sample have demonstrated increasingly sophisticated critical thinking over time in numerous areas. For example, they claim to make more informed choices to protect themselves and their families in relation to online security. Positive experience also breeds increased confidence. As new services such as online shopping, online banking and mobile transactions have become more popular, most of our participants have grown to trust each of these services.

Participants' attitudes to privacy and the sharing of their personal data are complex. As the internet has begun to play a bigger part in most of their lives, the requirement to share personal data grows ever greater, as do the potential benefits of doing so. However, in response to abuse of this personal data (e.g. when it is used for unsolicited marketing purposes) most participants have become more cautious about sharing their data.

Attitudes towards regulation also have changed markedly. There has been a shift from (in 2005) demands for online content to be regulated at source to a belief that – for the internet at least – the end-user has to take responsibility for filtering and judging content. Given the sheer breadth of content and sources accessible online (much of it from overseas, and now much of it user-generated) most participants believe that internet-based content is difficult, if not impossible, to regulate.

Over recent waves of Media Lives, we have witnessed very significant growth in the uptake of new devices and services in the sample, particularly smartphones, tablets and mobile internet. In 2014, there was significantly *less* reported acquisition of new hardware and services than in previous years, although there were many interesting insights into how media technology and services are now being *used*.

For example, there appears to be little evidence of the novelty of streaming video services such as Netflix wearing off; on the contrary, those participants who use it (mainly for watching TV series rather than films) are becoming increasingly vociferous advocates, and claim to have changed the way they watch TV as a result.

As their viewing behaviour has evolved, many of our participants perceive that the PSB television channels are less important than they once were; nevertheless, when prompted about their attitudes towards the BBC, ITV, Channel Four and Channel 5, most insisted that at least some of these PSB channels are still important, particularly for news and documentaries, sport, high-profile drama and entertainment programming. There were many positive comments about the quality of specific programmes in these genres.

In 2014, participants described the internet as more than an information, social or entertainment tool – it has become a kind of ‘connective tissue’ through their lives, playing a daily role in communicating with their immediate family and managing family life. The internet is also seen as an essential connection between home and school/college, both for parents and for the students themselves. One by-product of the need to transfer work between home and school/college has been a resurgence in the use of email by the young people in our sample.

User-generated content is starting to emerge as a serious alternative to mainstream media among some younger participants in particular. However, as they start to access an increasing amount of factual content online from a wide range of sources, participants say they are finding it more difficult to know what they can trust (although issues of trust are more critical on some platforms, and for some content areas, than others). They use a mix of reference points to help them decide what to trust, including brand provenance, personal familiarity, peer advice, social proof, and the look and feel of a website.

Most (younger) participants now use a portfolio of social media services, based in part on their functionality but equally on their respective reach among personal social circles. Social media status is very important to some of our younger participants and, as use of more ‘public’ platforms such as Twitter, Instagram and Tumblr becomes more widespread, some participants now consciously ‘curate’ their personal identity through social media platforms.

Social drama, cyber-bullying and ‘trolling’ continue to be real issues for some. All three of our youngest participants have direct experience of problems caused by inappropriate communications via social media. A lack of understanding of ‘proper’ online communications etiquette continues to be an underlying factor here; some of the younger participants admitted to having little real understanding of what is and isn’t acceptable to post online.

Lastly, parental attitudes to children’s media use continue to evolve. There has been an almost complete shift in the focus of parental concern among our sample, from television to the internet, in recent years, as well as a partial shift away from the potential harmful effects of content to the nature of the interactions children have with other people, the amount of time they spend online, and the potential impact this has on their ability to socialise ‘normally’.

Section 3

Television

3.1 On-demand and streaming services are playing an increasingly prominent role in participants' viewing behaviour

Across the sample, when describing their viewing behaviour, participants in 2014 made extensive reference to their use of streaming services including iPlayer (and similar), and Sky and Virgin on-demand services. These have established a place alongside recording devices and catch-up channels as part of a mixed ecology of viewing, within which traditional linear viewing seems to be in decline.

“I'm just quite busy with work and stuff, so I can't always be watching television at a certain time, so anything I do desperately want to watch I'll catch up with on iPlayer at a time that suits me.”

Female, 26, doctor, Portsmouth

Within this, some participants' reported use of Netflix was particularly noteworthy. There appears to be little evidence that the novelty of Netflix is wearing off; on the contrary, those participants who use it (mainly for watching TV series, rather than films) are becoming increasingly vociferous advocates.

These participants articulated what they perceived to be the compelling benefits of this type of service:

- the convenience of watching when and where they want;
- the flexibility to watch as much or as little as they want; and
- a reliable connection to a broad choice of content (fewer reported buffering problems than with other streaming services such as iPlayer).

“It gives you more ownership over the TV that you watch and it allows you to use the time you spend watching TV more constructively. I know if I get home from work at a certain time, then eaten and got my stuff together for the next day, I have forged myself a one-hour window which can be used for whatever it is that I'm watching. That certainly isn't the case with TV.”

Male, 31, banker, London

The acquisition of tablets in many of our participating households seems to have been a catalyst for this change in behaviour. Participants described themselves using their iPads as a kind of second or third household TV set, allowing them to watch TV in their bedroom, a back room or even (using headphones) alongside another family member watching on another device. And participants said they watched on-demand content and/or streaming services like Netflix on these devices much more often than the linear channels they would have watched on an alternative TV set.

“Because there’s such a wide range of films and box sets, there’s always something to watch... and when you’ve finished watching something it comes up with suggestions...I think ‘I’ll just try this, and then that, and then that.’”

Female, 22, student, Edinburgh

This new behaviour has made an impact on the claimed consumption both of live/linear television and of physical media such as DVDs. Why bother buying the box set of a series when you can have a ‘box set binge’ via Netflix?

“I don’t listen to CDs and I don’t buy CDs any more – I subscribe to an online music streaming service. The same thing is true with films and TV, I subscribe to them. So everything I need in terms of media consumption is on the cloud.”

Male, 35, web officer, Cardiff

As well as representing a fundamental change in how participants view TV-style content, there is some evidence that the availability of on-demand and streaming services is starting to influence the type of content people choose to watch. Some of the younger participants, in particular, said that they were watching more (particularly US) drama, at the expense of other genres.

“I find with drama series that because they put a cliff-hanger at the end of every episode you often find yourself watching more than one a day.”

Male, 18, student, Oxford

Several of the younger participants (all aged under 25) even described themselves as having lost the patience to wait a week for the next episode of a scheduled TV programme; as a result they claimed to have stopped watching traditional serial drama via linear TV.

“When Prison Break was on TV there was one on every week. I think if it was like that I wouldn’t watch it because I would get bored, or forget that it was on, or find other things to watch. Because I know for a fact that it’s finished and I can watch them all at once [on Netflix], then I will.”

Male, 16, student, rural Yorkshire

3.2 PSB channels¹ are perceived by many participants to be less important than they once were, but are still regarded as providing high quality programming

When asked to explain their television viewing routine, some participants described a pattern of behaviour almost wholly disconnected from the PSB channels that still command the largest share of overall TV viewing behaviour, as measured by BARB.

¹ By ‘PSB channels’ we are referring to the television channels provided by the public service broadcasters: the BBC, ITV, Channel Four and Channel 5

"I grew up with channels 1 to 4, then 1 to 4 became 1 to 5, then 1 to 5 turned into Freeview. And now Virgin for me personally has been the biggest change – there is such a wide range of categories of things I can watch... it's unreal!"

Male, 25, warehouse worker, East Barnet

"I still watch my football and golf. There's quite a few more car programmes on Discovery – I watch quite a lot of them. I don't watch much normal TV on normal telly, it's mostly on Sky."

Male, 40, engineer, rural Derbyshire

There is almost certainly some degree of over-claim in this respect, but it is nevertheless interesting that the large volume of viewing of traditional linear PSB channels seems to go almost unnoticed in terms of spontaneous recall.

Nevertheless, when prompted about their attitudes towards the BBC, ITV, Channel Four and Channel 5, most participants insisted that at least some of these PSB channels are still important, particularly for certain types of programme:

- Sport
- News and documentaries (the BBC is still widely seen as setting the standard)
- High-profile drama and entertainment 'events' (e.g. *Downton Abbey*, *Strictly Come Dancing*, *The Great British Bake-off*)

"I'll record Match of the Day on a Sunday morning, so I can catch up. And also Match of the Day 2, sometimes. So there are still important things on there."

Male, 53, unemployed, Lisburn, NI

"There probably is a ranking in my mind in terms of the quality of reporting I get from different broadcasters... BBC is still up there... I think Channel Four News is also quite good."

Male, 31, banker, London

"Every now and again there will be a programme on BBC or ITV that I really want to watch. Quite often I'll use the iPlayer to catch up on something like Masterchef... The Great British Bake-Off occasionally."

Male, 18, student, Oxford

There were many positive comments about the quality of specific programmes in these genres on PSB channels – particularly, but not exclusively, from older participants.

"I must admit there have been some really good dramas on, particularly over the summer months. I loved Happy Valley, I thought that was brilliant."

Female, 48, housing officer, Coventry

Section 4

Online

4.1 Family life is increasingly connected

All of the participants in Media Lives are now active users of the internet, although the oldest participant in the sample (aged 81) went online at home for the first time in 2013, and another participant (aged 70) in 2012.

Over time we have witnessed a steady growth in the role and perceived importance of the internet to our sample.

In the first few years of the study, using the internet was described as an activity in its own right. “Going online” was something that you did, in the same way as “watching TV” or “listening to the radio”.

In more recent years participants have described the internet more as a facilitator or a utility – a different and usually more convenient way to conduct tasks that were previously done in another way.

By 2013 it was clear that, for many participants, the internet was offering more than convenience. It was providing benefits and creating opportunities that were not previously available to them; for example, allowing families to research places to live and potential schools in much greater depth than would have previously been the case, and creating opportunities to pursue different or secondary careers.

Again, in 2014, participants began to describe the internet as more than a tool for information, social contact or entertainment – it had become a kind of ‘connective tissue’ in their lives.

Although the use of online platforms and services (e.g. social media) as a means of keeping in touch with friends and extended family is certainly nothing new, many participants in our sample (across all ages) now describe the internet as playing a daily role in helping them communicate with their immediate family, and manage family life.

For example, video-conferencing services such as Skype and FaceTime are being widely used to create opportunities for virtual quality time together, when families live apart, or when a family member is travelling abroad.

“I used to be a great user of Skype. Now Skype still has its place but I’ve mostly moved on to FaceTime. Sometimes if I’m upstairs in bed I’ll FaceTime my wife in the kitchen asking her for a cup of tea!”

Male, 60, semi-retired, Pinner

Photos and videos of family memories are being captured electronically, shared online and saved to the cloud.

“When we were on a weekend away we shot a video and posted it onto Facebook... my daughter will send it on an email to her Nana if it’s not too big. She did a mini-ballet recital... I think we shared that one on iCloud, or was it Dropbox?”

Female, 37, fundraising manager, Cardiff

Shared family accounts, used autonomously by different family members, are providing communal access to streaming services such as Netflix.

“Just as I was about to create my own [Netflix] account, my Mum’s boyfriend said ‘I’ve got one’. He can have four different [devices] on it, and there was one left, so he said I could have it. Luckily I didn’t have to pay!”

Male, 16, student, rural Yorkshire

4.2 The internet is an essential connection between home and school/college

Both parents and students in our sample described the importance of online communication between home and the place of study.

As more coursework is done electronically, content management systems have become a common means of accessing course materials.

“At university we have an intranet, it’s called Moodle I think, that’s where all the tutorial information goes.”

Female, 22, student, Edinburgh

Paradoxically, one by-product of the need to transfer work between home and school/college has been a resurgence in the use of email by young people. All our younger participants now use email extensively to communicate with their teachers and/or to send schoolwork home to themselves. In some cases this has led to them re-accessing previously abandoned email accounts, and using email more broadly as a means of keeping in touch with friends.

“Sometimes I will type my homework and email it to my teacher as opposed to writing it out and handing it in.”

Female, 15, student, Warwick

“I went to my old email account, then I found this person and that person, literally from a year ago, so I’d email them and I’ve had a few emails back... a few of my old friends, a lad I met on holiday.”

Male, 16, student, rural Yorkshire

Parents in our sample also described the relationship between themselves and their children’s schools being predominantly managed online these days – everything from paying for school meals online, to checking diary dates, to tracking their children’s progress in class.

“When he goes to buy his lunch it’s all fingerprint monitoring. The kids don’t take any money to school – it’s another way of cutting out the bullying. So we have to put money onto his account. We can check what he eats, so he can’t say ‘I had roast dinner today’ when he’s just had pizza!”

Male, 40, engineer, rural Derbyshire

4.3 User-generated content emerging as a serious alternative to mainstream media for some younger participants

One new area of focus in this year's discussion guide was the consumption of user-generated content. Participants described interacting with such content on a number of different levels, for example:

- Comic videos, vines (six-second user-generated videos shared through social media), and other curiosity content is being consumed broadly across the sample (and shared on social media by some participants).
- Some participants are also viewing specialist professional and educational content (e.g. TED talks).

However, some participants described themselves turning to user-generated content as an alternative source of more mainstream news, information and comment:

- Real-life experiences (such as video diaries chronicling patients' experiences of cosmetic surgery)
- Blogger podcasts (e.g. club-specific football discussion and analysis)
- YouTube documentary channels such as VICE

"Some people like to post cosmetic surgery diaries, from the moment before they went there to the operation, and they show their scars afterwards, how long it took them to recover and how they are now. I look at those on YouTube."

Female, 53, catering worker, London

"Recently I discovered an organisation called VICE. They do documentaries. Some of them are quite questionable but others are very informative. With mainstream media like the BBC you can feel the agenda. But VICE managed to get some of their reporters in on the ground and embedded within Isis. You can see what these guys are doing and how they're operating, which I don't think any other news agency has been able to do."

Male, 28, planning assistant, Stevenage

4.4 Proliferation of sources and platforms raises questions of trust

As they start to access an increasing amount of factual content online, from a wide range of sources, participants described themselves finding it more difficult to know what they can trust.

They use a mix of different reference points for help in deciding to what extent they should trust information they find online, including:

- brand provenance (for example, a known brand like the BBC is largely trusted, but might also be seen, less positively, as representing an 'establishment view');
- personal familiarity with the source;

- advice/recommendations from teachers, peer groups, family etc.;
- the look and feel of a site, how professionally it is presented, correct spelling, grammar, etc.; and
- social proof: judging the relevance and reliability of content on the basis of the volume of other users who have consumed or 'liked' it.

"If it's a website that I use regularly then I'll just take it as law. But if there are tell-tale signs that it's unofficial, like spelling mistakes or poor grammar, that immediately detracts from your trust in the website."

Male, 18, student, Oxford

"With one subject that I'm doing – Business Studies – we're actually banned from using Wikipedia. We're not allowed to use it because, according to my teacher, the information is old, and people can put what they want, so I try to avoid that. For a lot of the subjects they [teachers] recommend different websites. So I use those."

Male, 16, student, rural Yorkshire

Participants also described issues of trust as being more critical on some platforms, and in some content areas, than others. For example, celebrity gossip on Facebook would be considered of low importance – and happily taken with a pinch of salt – whereas health information was (naturally) considered highly important, so its provenance would be closely scrutinised.

"On Facebook, people often share stories about celebrities dying. That's caused quite a lot of uproar amongst my friends, quite a lot people talk about that. Justin Bieber died a few weeks ago, apparently!"

Female, 15, student, Warwick

"I tend to scrutinise the source a bit more with health information. So if it's an NHS domain, or a well-known media outlet like the BBC or something like that, I'll probably trust it a bit more."

Male, 35, web officer, Cardiff

Section 5

Social media

5.1 Most (younger) participants now use a portfolio of social media services

Whereas in the early years of Media Lives we noticed that young users migrated from one social media platform to another (e.g. from MySpace/Bebo to Facebook and then to Twitter/Instagram), most of the younger participants in the study (i.e. those aged under 40) now describe themselves using a relatively sophisticated repertoire of social media tools.

“I’m always on the internet. I use Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter and Tumblr; I think they’re the only five I have.”

Female, 15, student, Warwick

Whereas the over-40s using social media are most likely to use a single platform (usually Facebook) as a means of keeping in touch with friends and family, younger participants describe diverse portfolio roles for different social media platforms, based in part on their functionality, but equally on their respective reach among their personal social circles.

Because there is a large degree of overlap between the functionality of different platforms, users can use a range of different platforms to accomplish the same task. Conversely, a single platform can fulfil different roles for different users. So, for example, Facebook was used as a traditional social network by some participants, as a group messaging tool by others, and primarily as a video-sharing platform by another.

“I think originally with Facebook it was more about photos and statuses, but now the only reason I would use Facebook is for the messaging service. That’s really useful in that you can have large groups... it’s always useful to be able to message people and find out who’s going where, when.”

Male, 18, student, Oxford

5.2 Social media profiles form an integral part of some participants’ sense of identity

Some of our younger participants, in particular, claimed that social media status is very important to them. This manifests itself, for example, in terms of seeking high numbers of followers, and high numbers of shares/likes for specific posts.

“It’s just quite nice to have a large number of followers, it’s like an ego boost. Especially on Facebook, say you’ve passed your driving test and you post your ‘just passed your driving test’ photo, you get quite a lot of stick for being a beg for likes. It’s quite nice if you get over 100.”

Male, 18, student, Oxford

As the social media platforms used become more open/public, concern about online ‘image’ seems to be becoming more important for some participants. In particular, our youngest

participant described herself consciously curating her identity through social media platforms:

- being highly selective in terms of the photos she posts on Instagram so as to present her best image to the outside world;
- posting meaningful quotations on Tumblr as a means of self-expression; and
- creating an alternative persona on certain platforms, using a profile she does not share with her 'real' friends and family.

"On Instagram I have it so that anyone can see my page, so I like to have my appearance looking good on there because people I don't know will be looking at it...I don't share my Tumblr with my friends, I keep it quite secretive. You're making statements, showing who you are through quotes and stuff rather than your actual identity. I do write things on there that I wouldn't write anywhere else."

Female, 15, student, Warwick

5.3 Social drama, cyber-bullying and 'trolling' continue to be real issues for some of our participants

All three of our youngest participants have had direct experience – at various levels – of problems caused by inappropriate communications via social media, including:

- fights at school caused by offensive comments among groups of friends on Facebook/Twitter;
- inappropriate comments about teachers, leading to disciplinary action at school;
- highly abusive and aggressive comments from rival fans in response to a series of football-related Twitter posts; and
- being targeted with threatening behaviour by a Facebook 'stalker'.

"This guy messaged me on Facebook and started threatening me... trying to scare me. Then he got my phone number and started phoning me and saying weird things. It did get to the point where I had to say 'If you don't stop I'm going to have to call the police.'"

Male, 16, student, rural Yorkshire

"I think if I had children it would worry me. It's a lot easier for children these days to get bullied and to be really vile to each other. Whereas they're bad enough in person, if they can sit at home and do in a more cowardly way, it's worse."

Female, 26, doctor, Portsmouth

5.4 Lack of understanding of 'proper' online communications etiquette continues to be a problem

Most participants acknowledged that, even among people who know each other, it is easy to say something online that they wouldn't say face-to-face.

Although the more mature individuals suggested that common sense should be able to guide people in their conduct on social media, some of the younger participants admitted to having little real understanding of what is and isn't acceptable to post online.

"When I send out a tweet I don't really think about who is going to read it. It almost feels like you're talking to this big anonymous collective who would agree with what you're saying."

Male, 18, student, Oxford

"It's a lot easier to say things on Facebook than it is outside. You've got a lot more confidence when you're talking to people on there than you have to when you're talking to someone face-to-face."

Female, 15, student, Warwick

One pointed to a gap in her education in this area: although students at her school were taught about recognising, and protecting themselves from, the dangers of cyber-bullying, no such guidance was given as to how to avoid being a bully.

At the time of the 2014 fieldwork, celebrities becoming targets of abuse on social media was a topical issue, as it had also been in 2013. There were, again, mixed views on how much abuse a celebrity should have to put up with if they 'promote themselves' on social media. However, there was broad consensus that any kind of threatening comments are wholly unacceptable.

Participants insisted that any victim of such abuse deserved protection and redress. However, those participants who had themselves been victims of online abuse felt powerless to do much more than, at best, block the perpetrator.

"They [celebrities] are more protected than us, 100%. For example Stan Collymore, he's quite controversial. He gets quite a lot of abuse, racist abuse, on Twitter. He retweets it all and gets the police involved, whereas if I got abused and I retweeted it I can guarantee no-one would care. I wouldn't know what to do. I guess I would just block them and ignore it, that's all I can do."

Male, 16, student, rural Yorkshire

Section 6

Mobile devices

6.1 The smartphone continues to be seen as an essential life device

In the 2013 wave of fieldwork we asked participants which piece of media technology they would least like to live without. The majority chose their smartphone. These sentiments were reiterated in 2014.

“I run my life through my phone. I've got everything on that. I've got my bank, shopping, PayPal, eBay, Amazon. It's so easy just to buy things using an app; it feels like you're not even spending money.”

Female, 22, student, Edinburgh

Our oldest participant (now 81), who has hitherto steadfastly refused to get a mobile phone, now feels that she has to get one to participate properly in family life.

And the ever-growing functionality of smartphones has made other (ven relatively recent) technology (e.g. iPods, digital cameras) redundant for some participants.

6.2 Continued growth in ownership and importance of tablets

Thirteen of the 19 participants in our study now own a tablet, including some who had previously rejected the idea of this new technology. Most have now had their device for over a year, and the way they use it has evolved.

Participants describe their tablet as being – in many circumstances – a replacement for a laptop. (Nevertheless, many participants still prefer to (or have to) use a traditional computer for typing and/or printing.)

In practice, tablets appear to have developed quite a distinct role in participants' lives as (primarily) an interface with the internet for web and media browsing, shopping, using social media, etc., and for some, as a games console.

“I use it almost like a tool to browse the internet, for holidays, shopping, research. I use it if I want to download any tracks onto our iTunes library, I use it as a Kindle as well.”

Female, 37, fundraising manager, Cardiff

“The television can be quite disappointing, so my wife and I sit here on the sofa with our iPads playing Words, while the TV is on in the background.”

Male, 60, semi-retired, Pinner

“Mum and Dad came back from holiday and he came round with his iPad to show us the pictures. He's got it linked to his phone so he could take the pictures on his phone and they would be put straight onto his iPad. It's just so much easier.”

Male, 40, engineer, rural Derbyshire

As referenced earlier, some participants say that their tablet has an important function as a portable TV device in the home. The tablet appears to hit a 'sweet spot' as a viewing device; the screen is much bigger than a smartphone, but the device is still very portable, and more convenient than a laptop.

Section 7

Privacy issues

7.1 Confusion, inconsistencies and conflicting emotions surround the sharing of personal data online

Participants' attitudes towards privacy issues have not changed significantly in the past year. Some participants continue to be deeply suspicious of the motives of websites that collect personal data. Others are more trusting (or perhaps naïve).

"It's a precious thing, and it's too easy for it to be shared nowadays. It's often the case now that you get letters from people who contact you and you have no idea how they got your data. But they did get it, and it's probably that box that you didn't uncheck, or it might be that someone's got hold of your data through other means which are slightly less ethical, and then sold that data to someone else, and now you're getting cold calls."

Male, 31, banker, London

Participants described adopting various strategies to limit the amount of data they share. These include:

- consciously providing the minimum data required;
- making up certain information, such as dates of birth, for non-critical applications (e.g. getting prices for car insurance); and
- avoiding (or moving away from) sites which are too demanding in terms of collecting personal data.

"Well, I will only give what's publicly available: name, address. Date of birth, well I won't necessarily give that correctly... In fact, I very rarely give the correct date of birth."

Male, 60, semi-retired, Pinner

"I'm very cautious. If I'm not sure I call my daughter and explain what they're asking for. Then she will say 'That's all right' or 'Come out of it'."

Female, 70, retired, Edinburgh

7.2 Growing acceptance of contextual marketing

Most participants claim to have come to accept the exploitation of their browsing behaviour as a marketing tool.

Contextual advertising, which some participants found quite shocking when we first explored the concept in 2012, has become familiar and normal. Most participants are happy to live with it; some even find it useful.

“When I’m on Facebook it knows who my friends are and it tells me when someone has liked something, but I wouldn’t say that it concerns me too much... I haven’t really thought about it.”

Female, 15, student, Warwick

The only real complaints we heard this year were focused less on the principle of such advertising, but on how it is sometimes executed (for example, pop-up ads, or how irritating it was to be continually served ads for a product they'd already bought).

“You can’t do what you want to do because of pop-ups. I feel like I’m slaying dragons... You’re writing a message and in the middle of the message you see it coming up, and just as you’re dealing with that one, another one comes in from the side – it’s like a computer game in its own right. Oh my God it drives you nuts!”

Female, 53, catering worker, London

A few participants also voiced mixed feelings about the amount of data Google holds about them. Although they felt uneasy about the amount of information about their lives that Google could extract from their emails, search data, etc., they also felt that they benefited enormously from access to these free services, and were highly dependent on them.

7.3 The hacking of iCloud was a source of concern to some participants

iCloud, the Apple data storage service, is now used extensively among our sample. Some participants are using it deliberately to share music, photos etc. across their various connected devices. Others are more unwitting users; for example, a 40-year-old father who found his iPhone being continually updated with screenshots of his son’s iPad games.

Shortly before the fieldwork period, there had been a highly-publicised case of celebrities’ iCloud accounts being ‘hacked’, with naked photos of (most notably) Jennifer Lawrence, being posted online. Several participants spontaneously raised this as a concern. Although they insisted that they did not have the same kind of compromising material stored in their own iCloud accounts, the idea of (what they saw as) a secure private space being hacked was nevertheless very concerning.

Their biggest fear was that precious personal data (e.g. family photos) might be corrupted or lost.

“Until all that was on the news about celebrities, I just assumed it was secure, perhaps foolishly. It did make me think ‘Oh!’ because I have a lot of family photos and things like that on there. There’s nothing that I need to be worried about from a Jennifer Lawrence point of view, but if that hacking corrupted files, or meant that we couldn’t ever get them back, that would bother me a lot, I have to say.”

Female, 37, fundraising manager, Cardiff

Section 8

Attitudes to news

8.1 Access to news continues to become increasingly fragmented and eclectic across our sample

In line with a trend we have reported over several years, participants in 2014 described themselves using an increasingly eclectic range of devices and sources to access news.

Some of these sources are news-specific (e.g. the BBC News app), but others provide more 'incidental' access to news (e.g. seeing links to news stories on social media).

"On Facebook there are sometimes links to news stories and I do click on them if it's something interesting, but I wouldn't say that I go out of my way to look at news."

Female, 15, student, Warwick

An increasingly broad range of participants now describe themselves engaging with 'traditional' news brands through a more diverse range of platforms. This is no longer the preserve of a digitally literate minority.

"My sister told me that the bank around the corner was broken into on Monday. For something like that I'll go online and see what's happening [on the Edinburgh Evening News site]. I don't get the paper any more."

Female, 70, retired, Edinburgh

Participants who were more engaged with news described themselves using a combination of platforms to follow a story over the course of the day, sometimes (but not exclusively) staying with the same trusted provider throughout.

"The shooting in Ottawa... I found out about that on Twitter. From Twitter I picked up a link to BBC News, then to another article. Now I'd be quite keen to watch the news to find out what developments have happened since reading those articles."

Male, 35, web officer, Cardiff

8.2 An increasing number of participants claim to be consciously avoiding the news

A significant minority of participants (five out of 19) described themselves as now deliberately avoiding news bulletins. Although one or two participants had always expressed such ambivalence, there was a significant increase in this type of comment in 2014, from participants with varying demographic profiles.

The reasons given for this included:

- a claimed lack of engagement with a news agenda that they perceived to be dominated by international news of little interest or relevance to them;
- an attempt to protect themselves or others (especially children) from what they described as a 'depressing' stream of bad news stories (particularly if they were experiencing problems in their own lives); and
- being focused on their own world (e.g. university life) to the exclusion of what's going on outside.

"I don't even watch the news any more. I used to always watch the news but I don't have the same enjoyment in it, because everything is bad news. I almost can't bear to watch the news."

Female, 53, catering worker, London

"I don't like her [daughter] to watch the news because there's so much horrible stuff. I want to protect her from that for as long as I can."

Female, 37, fundraising manager, Cardiff

"I don't find watching the news fun. What's happening in the world is so sad, I don't want to hear it because it makes me think about it, and the more I think about it the more I can't sleep."

Male, 25, warehouse worker, East Barnet

Section 9

Attitudes to children's media use

9.1 The emergence of the 'iBabysitter'

Many of the parents and grandparents within our sample remarked on the fascination that smartphones and tablets hold for their children, and on the uncanny ability of very young children (as young as 2 or 3) to develop sophisticated skills in using these devices.

Such devices can be very helpful for parents as a means of keeping children occupied. They are portable and convenient, and apps can be used to direct children towards safe and/or educational content. In some households, allowing children to 'play' on a smartphone or tablet has subsumed the role of children's TV – the iBabysitter has replaced the 'baby-sitter in the corner'.

"He can navigate my wife's iPad really well. We've got an array of kids' apps, and he goes on those."

Male, 35, web officer, Cardiff

While parents expressed concerns about the amount of time children spend on connected devices of this type (see also section 9.2, below), they were also conscious that tablets are becoming more commonplace within the school environment; the ability to use a tablet is fast becoming an important life skill.

"I'm concerned on two levels. I'm concerned that if I stop her too much she might get behind with the ability to use these things; the secondary school she could potentially go to has just had an iPad suite sponsored, so they're looking at giving them iPads to do homework on. But I don't want her on it too much because, at the end of the day, she's 5 [years old]. She should be outside running, she should be getting paint and glitter and glue everywhere. She can use it, she does use it but it's limited."

Female, 37, fundraising manager, Cardiff

9.2 Concerns about children's media use continue to evolve

Whereas in earlier waves of Media Lives, parents and grandparents expressed concerns about the impact of broadcast content on their children (and particularly concerns about unsuitable content being shown before the watershed), such concerns were hardly voiced at all in 2014.

There has been an almost complete shift in the focus of parental concern among our sample, from television to the internet, in recent years, as well as a partial shift in focus away from the potential harmful effects of content, to the nature of the interactions children have with other people online, the amount of time they spend online, and the potential impact this has on their ability to socialise 'normally'.

“It does annoy me when my grandchildren come here and have got their noses buried in their mobile phones. I get angry because they're not communicating. And when they do communicate, they're sniping at one another until they get back on their computer [sic].”

Female, 70, retired, Edinburgh

The increased incidence of portable devices within families, and easy access to WiFi in and out of the home, makes this kind of use increasingly difficult for parents to police.

9.3 Concerns about ‘Trojan horse’ access to unsuitable content, especially via YouTube

Most of the parents in our sample expressed concern about the risks of their children unwittingly using YouTube as a gateway to unsuitable content.

Some of these concerns had been fuelled by negative experiences of their children being exposed to such content in practice, despite only accessing apparently ‘safe’ child-friendly content.

One example of this was via the recommended video links that appear at the end of each YouTube clip. Entirely innocent content sometimes leads to less-innocent ‘related’ content.

Another parent had been shocked to hear bad language buried deep within an apparently harmless piece of long-form user-generated video his four-year-old son was watching:

“He likes to watch YouTube videos about Minecraft. There have been occasions where I've come across videos which have been slightly inappropriate. It's very difficult to prevent this from slipping through the net. You cast quite a tight net but you wouldn't think you'd have someone posting a video about a children's computer game and using profanities, but that does happen... It's very difficult to create something inappropriate on Minecraft, but the commentary that surrounds it is inappropriate.”

Male, 28, planning assistant, Stevenage

This kind of unforeseen exposure to unmediated content within an apparently child-friendly environment is not limited to YouTube. One of our school students described being subjected to abusive and aggressive language on a number of occasions via the in-game chat channel of the FIFA console football game (PEGI rated for age 3 and up).

Section 10

Key trends 2005-2014

By reviewing footage from each year's interviews over the ten years of the study, we can highlight some particularly interesting areas of change over the period 2005-2014.

This is not an exhaustive list of all the major changes (so, for example, social media does not feature), and it does not focus on emerging technology (e.g. growth in use of tablets, mobile data access, etc.), but rather on participants' attitudes, and their evolving relationship with platforms and content, as described in their interviews.

10.1 The changing role of television

Participants' relationship with television has changed radically since 2005, and continues to evolve. The impact of new devices and services is evident in the way in which participants describe their viewing behaviour.

We have seen a claimed shift from linear to on-demand viewing, fuelled by the accessibility of content across a range of services, including catch-up channels, broadcasters' own streaming services, and new platforms such as Netflix, Now TV and Amazon Prime.

Within their linear TV viewing, participants describe themselves as adopting different viewing modes (for example, using thematic channels as 'easy viewing', with relatively low levels of engagement, compared to 'must-see TV' – programming highlights on the major networks).

We have seen growth in the claimed consumption of mobile TV on smartphones, and in particular, on tablets. Despite being watched on mobile devices, most of this reported consumption actually takes place in the home.

Participants also say that more and more of their viewing is taking place within a context of media multi-tasking (i.e. using more than one platform at the same time), again facilitated by the preponderance of smartphones and tablets in our sample.

"TV has changed so much. It has gone from when there was a programme on a Sunday night you had to be there, you had no option but to watch it Sunday night because if you didn't then you've missed it forever. Whereas now, if we sit down on a Sunday night, we're generally watching something we've recorded, or Netflix."

Female, 22, student, Edinburgh [2014]

10.2 Participants' changing relationship with news

There have been radical changes in participants' reported patterns of news consumption, over the ten years of Media Lives. Specifically, participants are now reporting greatly reduced viewing of TV news bulletins.

Instead, they describe their news consumption as being increasingly:

- on demand (either from websites and/or 24-hour news television channels);
- incidental/environmental (for example, seeing headlines when they log in to check their emails, or on big screens at work); and
- personalised (via a much more eclectic range of specialist sources).

"I'm not motivated to make an effort to watch the 10 o'clock news, or the 7 o'clock news on Channel 4 any more, because it's just a repeat of what has already been published on the internet."

Male, 28, planning assistant, Stevenage [2011]

"You just need to push a button now [on your smartphone] and you can see it. Push one button and you've got UK news, push another button and it's worldwide news... It's just so easy."

Female, 41, stay-at-home mum, rural Essex [2011]

There has been a marked decline in the level of trust in news media, expressed by many within our sample since 2005, fuelled partly by cynicism about coverage of specific events (such as the Iraq War and, more recently, the crisis in Syria).

This relationship of trust has also been damaged by tangential events such as the phone hacking scandal (where the newspapers, rather than the broadcast news brands, were implicated) and revelations about the behaviour of Jimmy Savile and others at the BBC.

"Definitely I'm more cynical, I'm more savvy. That subjective quality to reporting is going to be used to manipulate people, absolutely, because at the end of the day the people who are in charge of reporting these things are also people with other interests."

Male, 31, banker, London [2006]

Whereas in 2005 participants clearly articulated a distinction between regulated broadcast news providers (such as the BBC, Sky and Channel Four) and the press, this distinction seems to be much less clear now that much news consumption is online, where brands like the Daily Mail and the Sun sit alongside the BBC. As a by-product of this, there has been a decline in perceived brand differentiation between the major broadcast news providers.

"It's not a case of having a strong preference for watching news from a particular provider... I think the margin by which [BBC] reporting is better has lessened."

Male, 31, banker, London [2014]

“No matter what news channel you put on, you’re getting the same footage, whether it’s STV or BBC... the cameramen must be standing side by side. Especially with Afghanistan and all these soldiers coming home at the moment, no matter what news you’re watching it’s the same people and the same footage. I don’t think it matters what news you’re watching.”

Female, 70, retired, Edinburgh

10.3 Shift from demand for content regulation at source to end-user regulation

In the first waves of Media Lives interviews, in 2005 and 2006, several participants who were concerned about some of the online content their families were being exposed to expressed a strong desire for a regulator to take control of online content, in the same way that regulation has worked within the traditional broadcasting model.

“I think they’re going to have to regulate the internet in a similar fashion to the way your internet is regulated at work. You have certain sites that are restricted, you’re not able to access them because they’ve been identified as sites which aren’t suitable for the work environment. I think that’s the way that Ofcom are going to have to go about doing it.”

Male, 31, banker, London [2006]

Over time (and in the case of this particular participant, within a year) there has been growing belief across our sample that internet-based content is difficult, if not impossible, to regulate, largely because of the sheer breadth of content and sources accessible on the internet (much of it from overseas).

“What one person thinks should be all right for a ten-year-old is not what someone else thinks. That’s up to the parent as an individual, and generally speaking if you want to affect something it’s at the point of consumption that you can affect it rather than the point of creation. It isn’t because it’s their responsibility... it’s the most feasible point at which you can filter it.”

Male, 31, banker, London [2007]

The emergence of individual content creators on social media has increased the scale of the perceived challenge.

“You can set down standards but... for example, the Norwich City manager Chris Hughton was getting racist abuse on Twitter because Norwich lost a football match... you can’t regulate that... you can’t put anything in place to stop people doing this.”

Male, 25, warehouse worker, East Barnet [2013]

Our participants have, therefore, adopted other forms of regulation. Some of these have been technical (e.g. the use of parental filters to restrict children’s access to specific content on TV or online), but much of it is based on personal qualitative interventions (watching children using the internet and making rules about what they can and can’t access).

“He [son] will never use any of the computers, or the internet, without supervision. He’s never left on his own to get on with it... Even with the controls you’re never 100% sure... There are ways around them and there are things that can slip through the net. So I think it’s best to actually be there and supervise what they’re doing.”

Male, 28, planning assistant, Stevenage [2011]

Parental choices are informed by the degree of trust that parents have in certain brands, as well as peer-group recommendations:

“She [daughter] has a lot of Disney read-along stories which we’ve downloaded onto there [iPad]... we’re totally comfortable with her on that because it’s educational... We’ve downloaded the CBeebies app... So we’ve got apps on there that are very much geared to her age.”

Female, 37, fundraising manager, Cardiff

10.4 Evolving attitudes to online security

Participants are increasingly employing more sophisticated critical thinking, to make informed choices to protect themselves and their families. This is evident in their attitudes to online security.

Participants describe themselves making judgements about the trustworthiness of a website based on its brand provenance. Most participants, for example, built their initial confidence in shopping online by buying from high-street stores. They also make judgements based on the payment gateways offered (the use of known entities such as PayPal is generally viewed as positive) and other reassuring signs (e.g. the ‘secure site’ logo).

Over time there has been a general trend among the sample towards increased confidence in their online security; positive experiences have led to increased confidence.

Despite this, we can see that a similar cycle of mistrust is being repeated in the context of emerging new services. The concerns that in the early years were expressed about online shopping, and subsequently about online banking, are now being voiced about mobile transactions. However, most participants have grown to trust each of these services over time.

“So, if you start with a rough rule of thumb has any data on the internet is not secure, you can’t go far wrong. Having said that, if you always took that point of view you would never get anything done.”

Male, 60, semi-retired, Pinner [2014]

Participants are rarely oblivious to the potential risks, but make a conscious trade-off between these risks and the benefits offered. When the benefits are seen as outweighing the risks, participants will take a leap of faith.

“So many people I speak to say ‘I would never bank online’, and that makes you think, but because I don’t live near a branch – and I don’t have very much money in there – it’s not such a worry. It really is a godsend for me.”

Female, 78, retired, Bucks [2014]

10.5 Evolving attitudes to privacy and data issues

Participants' attitudes to privacy, and sharing their personal data, are complex.

On the one hand, as the internet has begun to play a bigger part in most participants' personal, business and social lives, the requirement to share personal data – and the benefits of doing so – grow ever more compelling.

“Historically I’ve been quite cagey about it, so I don’t want to give my personal details out, especially when I don’t think it’s required... But when I need something from that provider and the information is mandatory, then I’ll say ‘OK’.”

Male, 31, banker, London [2011]

Equally, however, as they have experienced abuse of their personal data (e.g. for unsolicited marketing purposes) most participants have become more aware - and cautious - about sharing their data. More experienced users (typically, but not exclusively younger and/or male) choose to provide limited and, in some cases, false information when it is possible to do so (see also Section 7.1).

“I make it all up [profile information on dating sites]. The only thing that’s real, that I can’t hide, is that I’m black... and my eye colour! But other than that... my name’s not real, my age isn’t real... They encourage you to write personal stuff; why would you write personal stuff to someone that you’ve never even met?”

Female, 53, catering worker, London [2011]

Some less confident participants (typically older and/or female) described themselves as consciously avoiding non-essential sites and services where personal data is collected.

“I do the odd thing. What puts me off is if I go to a supplier I then get bombarded by their advertising. So that puts me off shopping online... I’ve found that once or twice even when I ticked ‘no’ they don’t take any notice of it. I’m forever cancelling all these companies who keep emailing me... VistaPrint, Damart, The Telegraph.”

Female, 78, retired, Bucks [2013]

The emergence of new social media platforms, such as Twitter and Instagram, which encourage users to project a public persona, appears to have revealed a clear generational divide in attitudes across our sample. Those under the age of 20 have embraced these platforms unquestioningly (see Section 5.2), whereas older participants (even those in their twenties who are themselves heavy social media users) are generally much more circumspect and suspicious.

“Kids these days don’t know how dangerous it [social media] is. I see my little cousin, she’s 13. She goes round all day taking photos of herself and her friends and putting them up for anyone of any age to look at. Kids can get exploited easily. If my real friends want to keep in touch they can pick up the phone and ring me.”

Male, 25, warehouse worker [2010]

Section 11

Participants' own reflections on changes over time

11.1 Media technology plays a much more significant role in participants' lives in 2014 than it did in 2005

Many participants described themselves now devoting more time to, and/or focusing more on media technology than they did in the past.

This was largely seen as a reflection of many of the positive aspects of the internet they described, such as better access to information than ever before, more convenient ways of doing things, the ability to get better value for money when buying products and services, and the opportunity to broaden their horizons in terms of skills and knowledge, or socially.

“More people are more into technology. I think it plays a more important role in people's lives than it did back then, which I think is natural.”

Male, 31, banker, London

“My conception of it has changed so much in ten years. I was an engineer on the shop floor. My use of computers was just ordering stock. Then I got a job working in the office. It completely blew my mind, but it also opened my mind.”

Male, 40, engineer, rural Derbyshire

The inevitable downside of this is that participants do sometimes feel that they are under increased time pressure and/or suffering from information overload.

Some also articulated concerns that media and communications technology is now much more difficult to live without, and therefore the potential for exclusion, among those who are less digitally literate, is greater than ever.

“It's a lot harder to exist outside that sphere than it was before. I think you could step outside of that in years gone by and live your own life. Because it's become ingrained in the way we do so much, it makes it very difficult to be opposed to it.”

Male, 31, banker, London

11.2 The best changes are those which offer clear perceived benefits

When asked what they thought had been the best changes over the last ten years, participants gave a broad range of answers. In many cases the technological advances they chose were not radical, but in all cases the rationale for choosing their 'best' change was rooted in the delivery of a compelling benefit.

For example, many participants cited the increased choice of TV channels and content offered by a range of innovations since 2005, ranging from digital switchover and Freeview,

to the availability of online streaming movie services. All have resulted in access to better entertainment.

The emergence of DVRs, and particularly Sky+, was perhaps the single most frequently cited positive innovation, because it makes it easier to record TV, offering more convenience and flexibility.

“It’s fantastic... when you want to record a programme you can just press the ‘select’ button. You don’t have to get down on your hands and knees, put in the day, the date and the time, and then the day, the date and the time it finishes.”

Female, 48, housing officer, Coventry

The emergence of internet-enabled smartphones and tablets – making access to the internet both more mobile and more instant – was also cited by many participants as one of the best developments, as was the emergence of apps on smartphones, making it easier to keep in touch, shop, listen to music, find places, etc.

“The phone that I’ve got now, the iPhone, means I don’t have to have a separate SatNav – I can use GMaps. iTunes means that I don’t have to use my iPod any more. I don’t even know where my iPod is now.”

Female, 37, fundraising manager, Cardiff

Over the course of the study, individual participants have engaged with new technologies in different ways, and in response to different personal needs. Thus it is probably not surprising that this question elicited a diverse range of responses.

In addition to those outlined above, perceived breakthrough benefits for individual participants included:

- the ability to bank online from home in a rural area where the nearest physical branch is some distance away;
- being able to keep in touch online with friends and family abroad via Skype, etc.;
- using social media as a means of staying in touch with close friends after a dramatic change in life stage or circumstances (e.g. after having a baby); and
- access to specialist information and peer advice about niche interests (e.g. a specific brand of classic car) via online communities.

The strong relationship between participants’ life stage and changes in their media habits and media literacy needs has been a recurring theme throughout the Media Lives study.

Although we have witnessed dramatic changes in terms of the media platforms and services – and media-related technology – available to participants, only relatively rarely have participants adopted new platforms or services, or made major changes in their media behaviour, based solely on the *availability* of technology. Most often, the catalyst for these changes has been a change in life stage – for example, leaving home, getting their first job, moving in with a partner, the break-up of a relationship, retirement, etc.

By tracking individuals over time, we have been able to see how needs, habits and attitudes develop as circumstances change.

Annex 1

Summary profile of wave 10 participants

Sex	Age	Job	Location	Years in study
F	15	Student	Warwick	1
M	16	Student	Rural Yorkshire	2
M	18	Student	Oxford	1
F	22	Student	Edinburgh	7
M	25	Warehouse worker	East Barnet	9
F	26	Doctor	Portsmouth	9
M	28	Planning assistant	Stevenage	4
M	31	Banker	London	10
M	35	Web officer	Cardiff	9
F	37	Fundraising manager	Cardiff	9
M	40	Engineer	Rural Derbyshire	10
F	41	Stay-at-home mum	Rural Essex	9
F	48	Housing officer	Coventry	10
M	53	Unemployed	Lisburn, NI	7
F	53	Catering worker	London	9
M	60	Semi-retired	Pinner	9
F	70	Retired	Edinburgh	7
F	78	Retired	Bucks	10
F	81	Retired	Coventry	10