



# Ofcom's Submission to the Byron Review

Annex 5: The Evidence Base – The Views of  
Children, Young People and Parents

Submission date:  
30 November 2007





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# 1. Introduction

This annex sets out the findings from a range of consumer research studies, looking in detail at:

- children's use of the internet, with a particular focus on social networking sites and user-generated content;
- rules and restrictions around use of the internet and ways in which parents are currently trying to make the internet a safe experience for their children;
- attitudes to the internet – the benefits it provides and some of the issues it raises, including concerns about the type of content/material available on the internet and mobile phones; and
- the current level of exposure to inappropriate material online and the actions taken by internet users when exposed to such content.

Wherever possible, the research looks at the viewpoints and experiences both of parents and of children, in order to understand gaps and differences in knowledge, perceptions and attitudes.

## Methodology

We draw on a range of existing data including Ofcom's own tracking studies as well as research published by academia. These include:

- Ofcom's Young People & Media tracking survey – a regular study looking at ownership and use of media. This report refers to average figures for data collected over three waves of research conducted between April and September 2007.
- The results of the 2005 Media Literacy Audit conducted by Ofcom – a study looking in detail at ownership, use and understanding of media, among adults and children<sup>1</sup>
- The findings of the 2004 UK Children Go Online study published by Professor Sonia Livingstone and Magdalena Bober<sup>2</sup>.
- The Internet in Britain 2007 OxIS survey<sup>3</sup>.
- Audience measurement data sourced from Nielsen Online.

In response to the specific questions posed by the Byron Review, and in order to provide evidence-based recommendations, Ofcom also commissioned a piece of bespoke research

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<sup>1</sup> Ofcom (2005), *Media Literacy Audit*, [http://www.ofcom.org.uk/advice/media\\_literacy/medlitpub/medlitpubrssi/medialit\\_audit/](http://www.ofcom.org.uk/advice/media_literacy/medlitpub/medlitpubrssi/medialit_audit/)

<sup>2</sup> S. Livingstone & M.Bober (July 2004) *UK Children Go Online - Surveying the experiences of young people and their parents*. <http://personal.lse.ac.uk/bober/UKCGOsurveyreport.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> W. H. Dutton & E. Helsper (2007), *The Internet in Britain 2007*, <http://www.oii.ox.ac.uk/microsites/oxis/>

to understand the level of current exposure to harmful or inappropriate content<sup>4</sup> and differences in behaviour between parents and children. An independent research agency, TNS Media<sup>5</sup>, was commissioned by Ofcom to conduct the study on its behalf.

A quantitative survey using CAPI (Computer Aided Personal Interviewing) technology was conducted face-to-face in respondents' homes between 25 October and 7 November 2007. Interviews were conducted across the UK with 653 parents, 653 children aged between 5-17 from the same households, and 279 non-parents (those without children aged 17 or under)<sup>6</sup>.

This research is referred to as the *Children, Young People & Online Content* study throughout this report.

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<sup>4</sup> The survey asked respondents if they had come across harmful or inappropriate material in the past six months and if they had, they were asked the open-ended question 'What type of content was it?' Thus these findings relate to self-reported harmful or inappropriate material.

<sup>5</sup> TNS Media is the UK specialist ad-hoc media division of TNS

<sup>6</sup> See Appendix 1 for full methodology. We use the phrase 'young people' to refer specifically to 16-17 year olds. When we refer to the full sample of children aged 5-17, we use the phrases 'children' or 'children and young people interchangeably'.

## 2. Media Consumption

### Key findings

- Ownership of media-related technologies tends to be higher in households with children than in households without children - and penetration levels tend to be higher still in households with older children.
- 80% of parents say they have internet access at home, compared with 57% of non-parents - access is skewed towards ABC1 households.
- Ownership of the more widely available technologies such as DVD players, CD players and radios is similar across socio-economic group. However, ABC1 households with children are more likely than C2DE households with children to own devices such as computers, digital cameras and webcams.
- Children's bedrooms are increasingly becoming multi-media centres. While the television is the most commonly available device in children's bedrooms there is a wide variety of other media also present, including games consoles and webcams - and penetration of technologies in bedrooms increases with the age of the child. The October 2007 *Children, Young People & Online Content* study shows that 16% of children aged 5-17 have a PC with internet access in their bedrooms.
- Overall, 99% of children aged 8-17 say they access the internet; 81% access it at home and 86% at school. 18% of 8-17 year olds have access to the internet only outside the home – this is skewed towards younger children, those in DE households and those who rate their own internet skills level as 'beginner'.
- The home and school are the two most popular places for children to access the internet but they are also online at the library, at the homes of friends or relatives and on mobile phones. Children in the socio-economic grades ABC1C2 are more likely to have access at home than those in DE households.
- Comparison of where parents think their children access the internet and where children actually do is fairly consistent across most locations. The main difference is with regard to internet access at the homes of children's friends, and this is particularly the case among 8-17 year olds; 10% of parents of 8-17 year olds think their children access the internet this way compared with 23% of 8-17 year olds who say they go online at a friend's house.
- Ofcom's tracking study, *Young People & Media*, finds that the majority of 5-7 year olds who use the internet at home (69%) are supervised by an adult when online at home; this falls to 28% of 12-15 year olds, who are more likely to access the internet on their own (63%). This finding may be linked to the trends in the presence of computers with internet access in children's bedrooms – personal ownership increases with age, as does unaccompanied use of the internet.
- When comparing the time children spend watching television, watching DVDs and videos, listening to the radio and online, television remains the dominant medium. The next most popular activity for children aged 5-15 years is the internet, and this is driven by 12-15 year olds.

- The increasingly important role of the internet, particularly for older children, is further demonstrated when we ask children about the media activity they would miss most. The importance of television declines with age as the internet and mobile phones become more valued.
- Many of the differences in levels of access to the internet among children of different ages are driven by the needs of the child and their skill levels; 8-11 year olds are more likely to say they are going online for gaming purposes, 12-15 year olds are using it as an educational tool as well as for downloading music/movies/videos and watching video clips, and the oldest age group (16-17 year olds) are most likely to be sending email, visiting social networking sites, uploading photos/videos and either maintaining their own or contributing to other people's blogs/sites.
- Looking at the differences between what parents think their children are doing online at home, and what the children themselves report doing on the internet, suggests that parents are fairly well informed about many of the activities their children are taking part in when online. However, some differences between parent's perceptions and children's behaviour exist with regard to playing games online, watching television, listening to the radio, watching video clips on sites such as YouTube, visiting social networking sites and contributing to someone else's website.
- Parents tend to rate their children's skills more highly than their own – and the older the child, the more likely the parents are to say that he/she is more skilled than they are. In contrast, children aged 8-17 are more likely to say their parents are beginners than to rate themselves at this level, and older children rate themselves more highly than younger children.
- Trend figures suggest that although the skills of the parents may be improving, children are still seen as more skilled (by both parents and children) - suggesting that the knowledge gap between the two groups continues to exist.

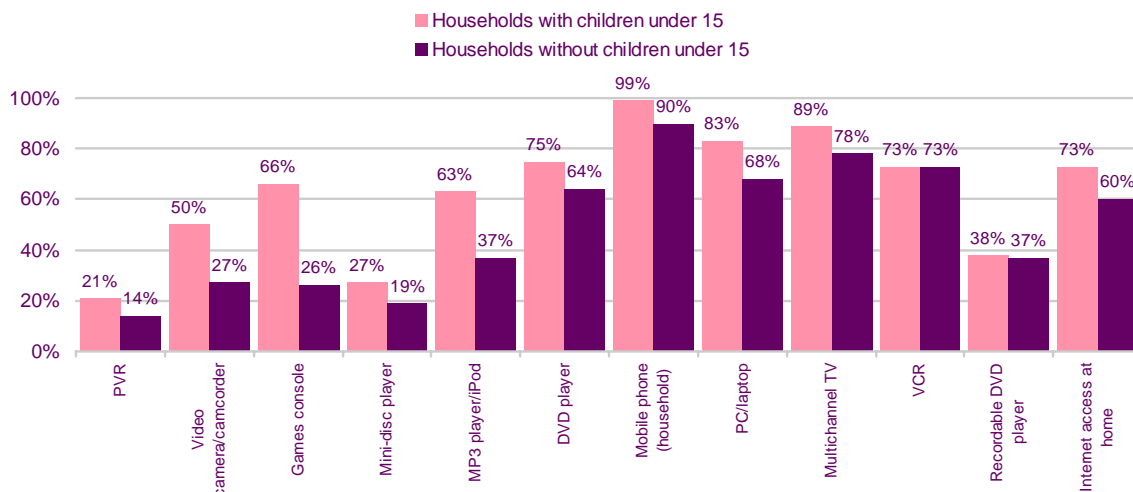
### **Technology ownership & access**

Ownership of media-related technologies tends to be higher in households with children than in households without children. This suggests that even if children are not personally using these technologies they are being exposed to them in the home environment and will grow up knowing what they are and how to use them. In addition, children experience these media to some degree at school or in the homes of friends and family.

As Figure 1 shows, there are notable differences between the ownership of most technologies in households with children and those where children are not present. For example, 66% of households with children under 15 have a games console compared with only 26% of households without children; 89% of households with children have multichannel television compared with 78% of households without children, and 83% of households with children have a PC/laptop, compared with 68% of households with no children under 15.



**Figure 1 Household technology ownership**



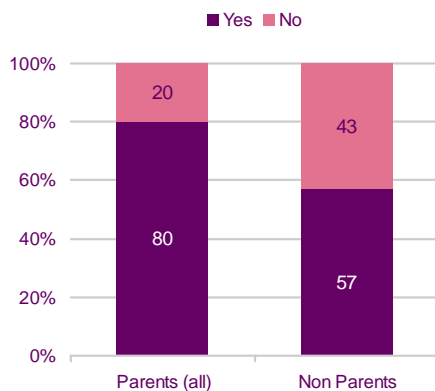
Q: various

Base: Those with children under 15 (703), those without children under 15 years (1,532)

Source: Ofcom research, Q3 2007

The latest (October 2007) figures on internet penetration at home (in the *Children, Young People & Online Content* study) show that 80% of parents say they have internet access at home compared with 57% of non-parents (figure 2). Access is skewed towards AB (94%) and C1 (89%) households; in comparison 66% of DE households say they have access at home.

**Figure 2 Internet access at home<sup>7</sup>**



Q: I'm going to read out a list of different types of electronic equipment that you may or may not have in your home. Could you let me know please if you have ..... PC or laptop with internet access?

Base: Parents of children aged 5-17 (653), non-parents (279)

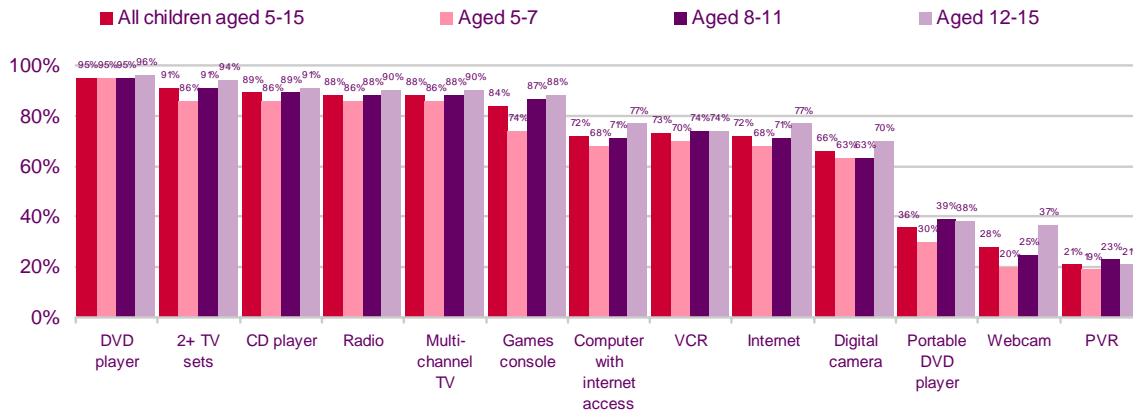
Source: Ofcom – *Children, Young People & Online Content*, October 2007

Over three-quarters of households with children own technologies such as DVD players (95% of households with children aged 5-15 own a DVD player), multichannel television (88% of households with 5-15 year olds have access) and computers (72% of households with children own a computer with internet access). Penetration levels tend to be higher in households with older children (figure 3).

<sup>7</sup> Note: There may be minor variations between data presented in this chart and those in figures 1 and 3 due to different sources being referenced.

Ownership of the more widely available technologies such as DVD players, CD players and radios is similar across socio-economic groups. However, ABC1 households with children are more likely than C2DE households with children to own devices such as computers with internet access (86% of ABC1s versus 61% of C2DEs), digital cameras (78% versus 56%) and webcams (34% vs 23%).

**Figure 3 Household access by age of child**



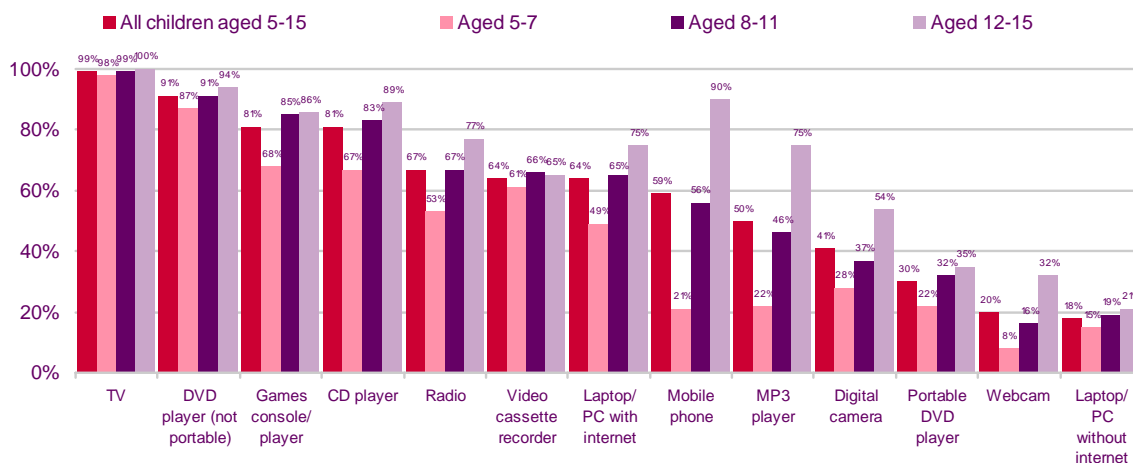
Q: I'm going to read out a list of different types of equipment that you may or may not have in your home, and which your child may or may not use

Base: Parents of children aged 5-15 (3,696), parents of children aged 5-7(1,008), parents of children aged 8-11(1,344), parents of children aged 12-15 (1,344)

Source: Ofcom – Young People & Media, April - September 2007

The role of older children in driving technology take-up in the home is more noticeable when considering the use of these technologies. As figure 4 shows, while television remains the most universally used device (99% of children aged 5-15 watch television) there are significant age differences in the use of devices such as mobile phones (21% of 5-7 year olds use mobile phones compared with 90% of 12-15 year olds) and webcams (8% of 5-7 year olds use a webcam compared with 32% of 12-15 year olds).

**Figure 4 Equipment used by children in the home**



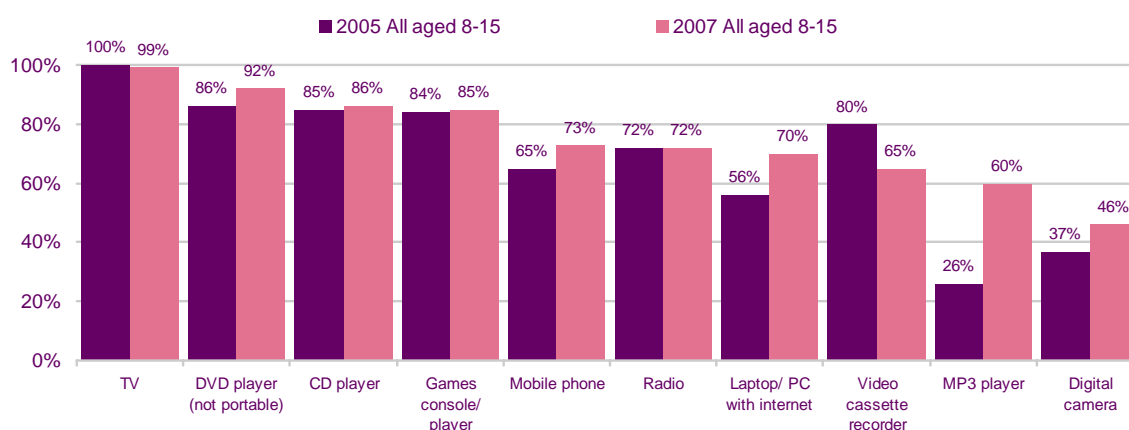
Q: I'm going to read out a list of different types of equipment that you may or may not have in your home, and which your child may or may not use

Base: Parents of children aged 5-15 (3,696), parents of children aged 5-7(1,008), parents of children aged 8-11(1,344), parents of children aged 12-15 (1,344)

Source: Ofcom – Young People & Media, April - September 2007

Comparison of equipment use between 2005<sup>8</sup> and 2007 shows an increase in the use of mobile phones (65% of 8-15 year olds in 2005 versus 73% in 2007), laptops/PCs with internet access (56% in 2005 to 70% in 2007) and MP3 players (26% in 2005 to 60% in 2007) by children aged 8-15 (figure 5). This highlights that increasing numbers of children are experiencing an ever-increasing range of devices.

**Figure 5 Equipment used by children at home – 2005 vs 2007**



Q: I'm going to read out a list of different types of equipment that you may or may not have in your home, and which your child may or may not use

Base: Parents of children aged 8-15 (2005= 1,536/2007= 2,688)

Source: Ofcom – Media Literacy Audit 2005/Young People & Media, April- September 2007

Research shows that children's bedrooms are increasingly becoming multi-media centres. The ITC report, *Television: The Public's View 2000*<sup>9</sup> showed that in 2000, 52% of eldest children in households with children had television sets in their bedrooms (compared with 69% of all 5-15 year olds in 2007). Games consoles were to be found in the bedrooms of 28% of eldest children (versus 60% of all 5-15 year olds in 2007), multichannel television in 3% (versus 17% of all 5-15 year olds in 2007) and internet access in 2% of bedrooms (compared with 11% of all 5-15 year olds in 2007)<sup>10</sup>. Although the findings of the ITC study and the *Young People & Media* research are not directly comparable, this does suggest an increase in the presence of technologies in children's bedrooms.

As figure 6 shows, 48% of children aged 5-17 have analogue television in their bedrooms, 24% have multichannel television, 16% a PC with internet access, 55% a games console, 9% a webcam, while 61% own a mobile phone.

Older children are more likely to own their own devices or have access to technologies in their bedrooms - 38% of 16-17 year olds have multichannel television compared with 13% of 5-7 year olds, and 86% have their own mobile phones versus 16% of 5-7 year olds. However, the level of personal ownership of some devices among 5-7 year olds is considerable (36% have an analogue television in their bedrooms and 42% have a games

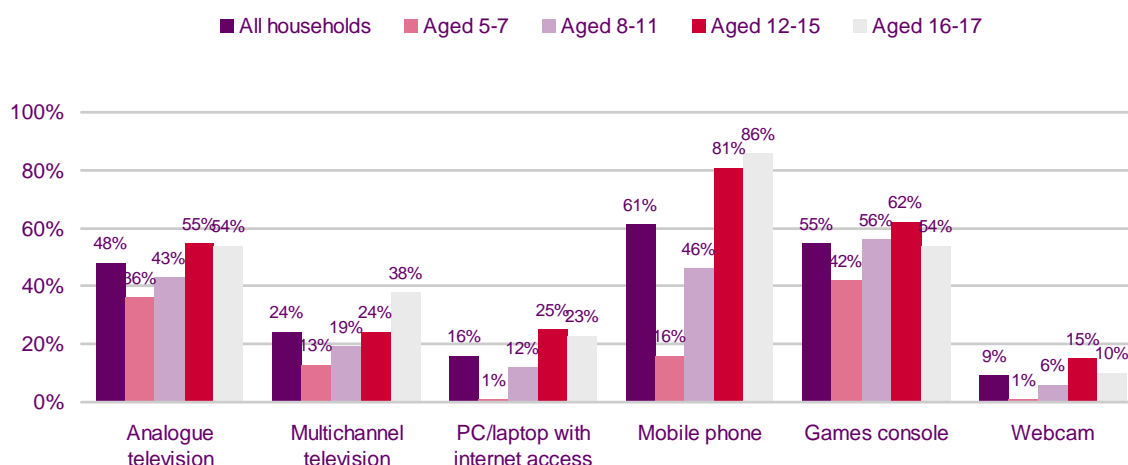
<sup>8</sup> Ofcom (2005), *Media Literacy Audit*, [http://www.ofcom.org.uk/advice/media\\_literacy/medlitpub/medlitpubrssi/medialit\\_audit/](http://www.ofcom.org.uk/advice/media_literacy/medlitpub/medlitpubrssi/medialit_audit/)

<sup>9</sup> ITC (2000), *Television: The Public's View 2000*, [http://www.ofcom.org.uk/static/archive/itc/research/tv\\_publics\\_view\\_2000.pdf](http://www.ofcom.org.uk/static/archive/itc/research/tv_publics_view_2000.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> 2007 figures refer to the Young People & Media study, April-September 2007.

console) and while television is the most commonly available device in children's bedrooms across all age groups, there is a wide variety of other media also present.

**Figure 6 Equipment in children's bedrooms**



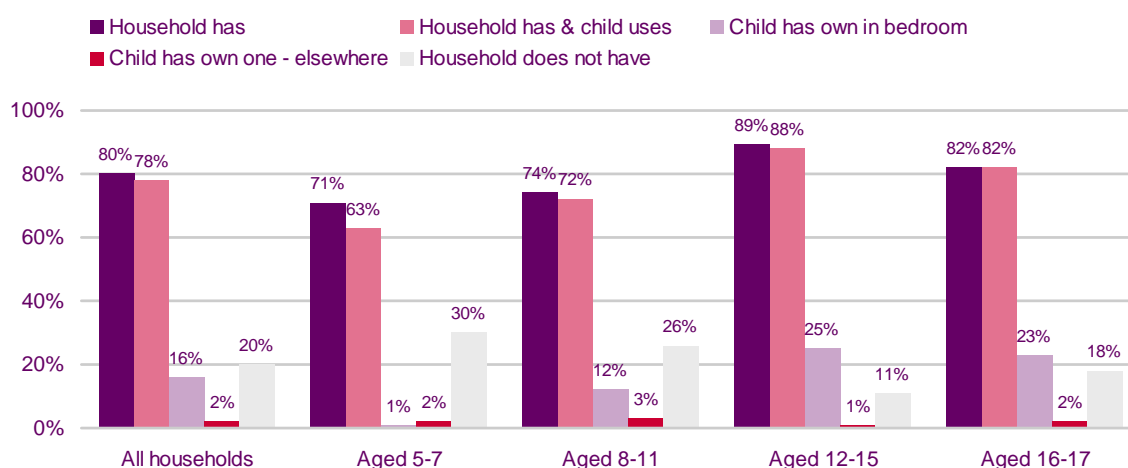
Q: I'm going to read out a list of different types of electronic equipment that you may or may not have in your home. Could you let me know please if you have .....

Base: Parents of children aged 5-17 (653), parents of 5-7 year olds (116), parents of 8-11 year olds (183), parents of 12-15 year olds (208), parents of 16-17 year olds (146)

Source: Ofcom – Children, Young People & Online Content, October 2007

16% of all children have internet access in their own bedrooms. This rises with age from 1% of 5-7 year olds to 25% of 12-15 year olds and 23% of 16-17 year olds (figure 7). The ITC report *The Public's View 2000* found that 2% of eldest children had internet access in their bedrooms, and Ofcom's 2005 study of media literacy reported that 7% of 8-15 year olds had access to the internet in their bedrooms. These figures suggest a steady growth in the number of children gaining internet access in their own private space.

**Figure 7 Internet access in households with children<sup>11</sup>**



Q: I'm going to read out a list of different types of electronic equipment that you may or may not have in your home. Could you let me know please if you have ..... PC or laptop with Internet access?

Base: Parents of children aged 5-17 (653), parents of 5-7 year olds (116), parents of 8-11 year olds (183), parents of 12-15 year olds (208), parents of 16-17 year olds (146)

Source: Ofcom – Children, Young People & Online Content, October 2007

<sup>11</sup> Note: There may be minor variations between data presented in this chart and those in figures 3 and 4 due to different sources being referenced.

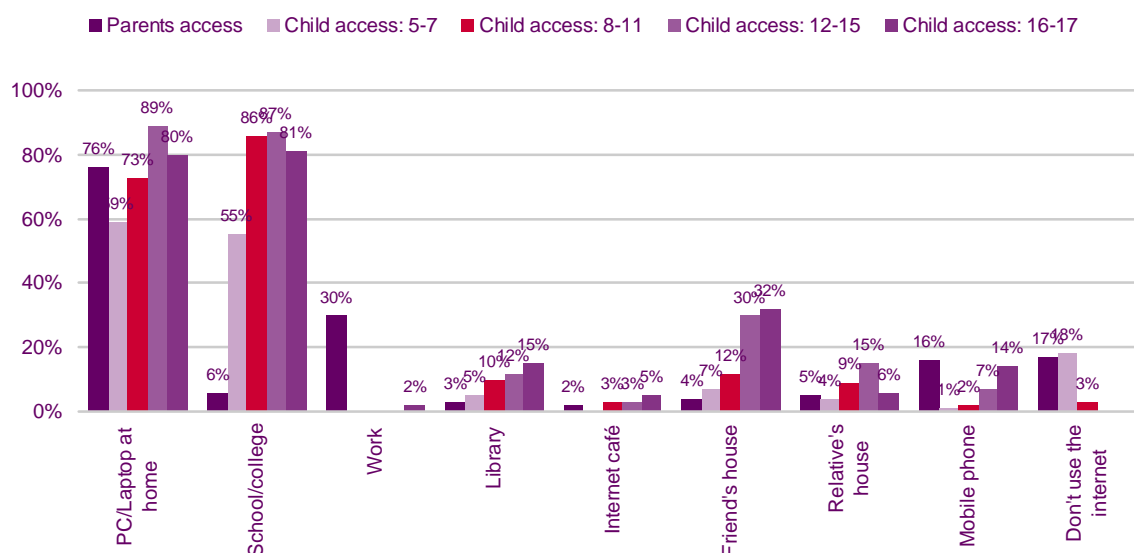
Findings from the *Children, Young People & Online Content* study show that children and their parents are accessing the internet from a range of locations (figure 8). Overall, 99% of children aged 8-17 say they access the internet; 81% access it at home and 86% at school – these are the two most popular places for children to access the internet but they are also online at the library, at the homes of friends or relatives and on mobile phones. Children in the socio-economic grades AB (93%), C1 (91%) and C2 (87%) are more likely to have access at home than those in DE households (65%).

18% of 8-17 year olds have access to the internet only outside the home – this is particularly the case for younger children (24% of 8-11 year olds), those in DE households (32%) and those who rate their own internet skills level as ‘beginner’ (33%).

The home is also the most popular access point for parents (76%). 30% of parents say they access the internet at work – this is skewed towards parents in socio-economic groups AB (58%) and C1 (56%).

17% of all parents (rising to 34% of parents in DE households) and 18% of 5-7 year olds say they do not access the internet, but only 1% of 8-17 year olds say they do not go online.

**Figure 8 Location of internet access: parents & children<sup>12</sup>**



Q: Do you use the internet nowadays? If so, where do you access it?

Does your child use the internet nowadays? If so, where does he/she access it?

Base: Parents of children aged 5-17 (653), Children aged 5-7 (140), 8-11 (198), 12-15 (208), 16-17 (107)

Source: Ofcom – *Children, Young People & Online Content*, October 2007

Table 1 shows that children use the internet most often at home (65% of 8-17 year olds) followed by at school/college, with 26% of 8-17 year olds saying this is the case. Children who have access only outside the home say that school is the place where they are most likely to have access (77%)

Comparison of where parents think their children access the internet and where children actually do is fairly consistent across most locations (figure 9). The main difference between parent’s perceptions and what children say they are doing is with regard to internet access at

<sup>12</sup> Note: There may be minor variations between data presented in this chart and those in figures 3 and 4 due to different sources being referenced.

the homes of children's friends. This is particularly the case among 8-17 year olds; 10% of parents of 8-17 year olds think their child accesses the internet this way, compared with 23% of 8-17 year olds saying they go online at a friend's house.

**Table 1 Children's access to the internet - summary**

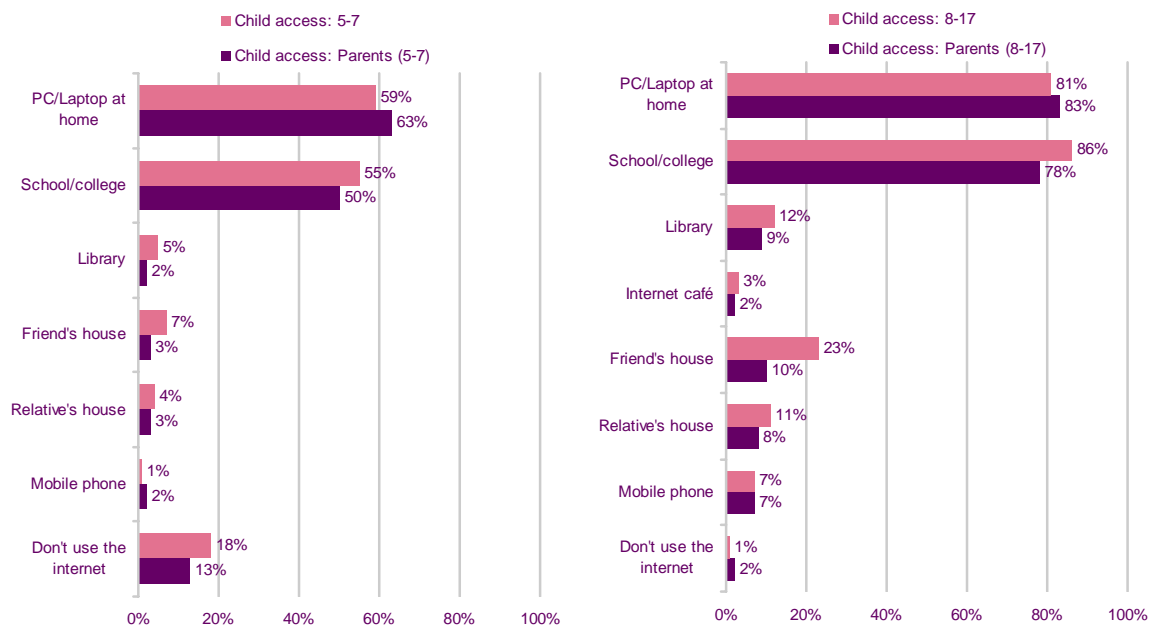
	Any access : 8-17 year olds	Most often access: 8-17 year olds
PC/laptop at home	81%	65%
School/college	86%	26%
Library	12%	1%
Internet cafe	3%	
Friend's house	23%	2%
Relative's house	11%	2%
Mobile phone	7%	1%
Any internet use	99%	
Don't use the internet	1%	
Use internet but not at home	18%	

Q: Do you use the internet nowadays? If so, where do you access it? Where do you access it most often?

Base: All children aged 8-17 (513)

Source: Ofcom – Children, Young People & Online Content, October 2007

**Figure 9 Child's access to the internet: parents vs children**



Q: Do you use the internet nowadays? If so, where do you access it?

Does your child use the internet nowadays? If so, where does he/she access it?

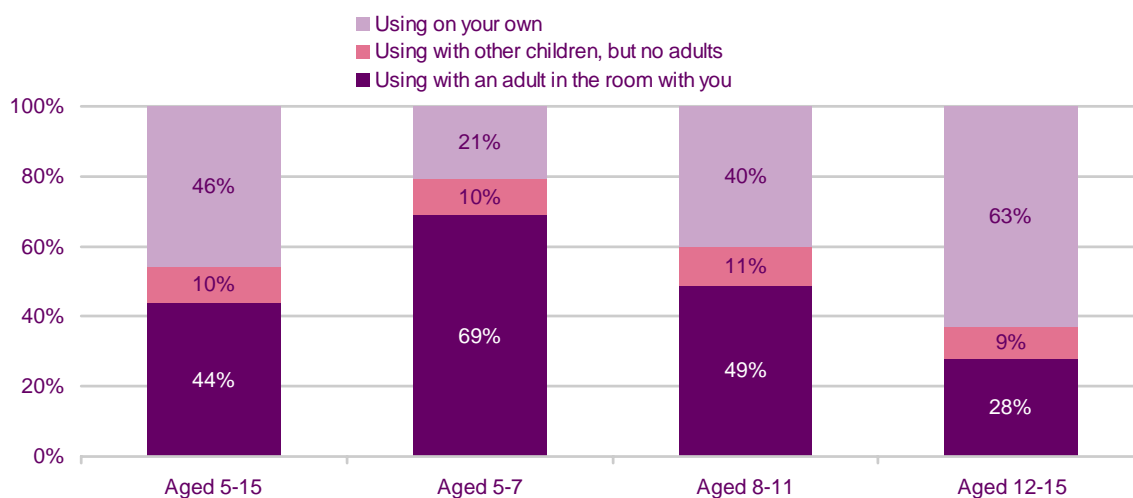
Base: Parents of children aged 5-7 (116), children aged 5-7 (140), parents of children aged 8-17 (537), children aged 8-17(513)

Source: Ofcom – Children, Young People & Online Content, October 2007

Ofcom's tracking study, *Young People & Media*, shows that the majority of 5-7 year olds (69%) are supervised by an adult when using the internet at home (figure 10); this falls to 28% of 12-15 year olds, who are more likely to be accessing the internet on their own (63%). This finding may be linked to trends in the penetration of computers with internet access in children's bedrooms – personal ownership increases with age as does unaccompanied use of the internet.

Children aged 5-15 in DE households are more likely to say they use the internet with an adult in the room (53%) and those in AB households are most likely to access the internet on their own.

**Figure 10 Who do children spend most time with when using internet at home?**



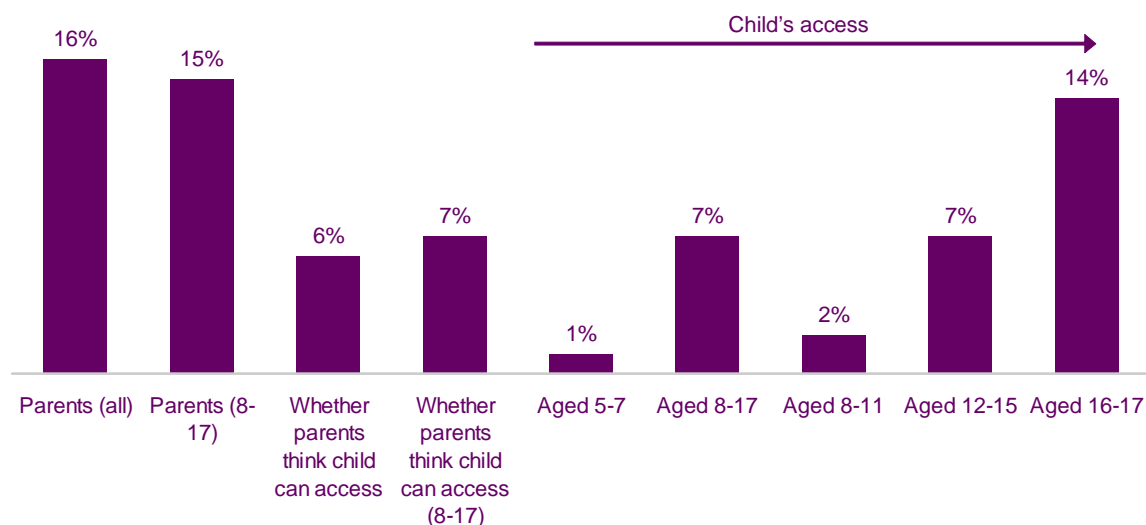
Q: Thinking about when you're using the internet at home, do you spend most of your time...?  
 Base: Those children aged 5-15 who use the internet at home (2,421), aged 5-7 (504), aged 8-11 (877), aged 12-15 (1,040)  
 Source: Ofcom - *Young People & Media*, April-September 2007

### Mobile phones and internet access

As Figure 11 shows, mobile phones are used by 7% of 8-17 year olds to access the internet – this is driven by the older age groups, specifically the 16-17 year olds (14% access the internet via a mobile phone).

6% of all parents say they believe their child accesses the internet via a mobile phone; 2% of parents with children aged 5-7, 4% of parents of 8-11 year olds, 8% of parents with 12-15 year olds and 10% of those with children aged 16-17 say this is the case. These figures suggest that parents are fairly well informed about whether their child is going online using a mobile phone.

**Figure 11 Internet access via mobile phones: parents and children**



Q: Do you personally use the internet via a mobile phone? / Does your child use the internet via a mobile phone?

Base: Parents of children aged (653), parents of children aged 8-17 (537), children aged 5-7 (140), 8-11 (198), 12-15 (208), 16-17 (107)

Source: Ofcom – Children, Young People & Online Content, October 2007

### Media use: internet use in context

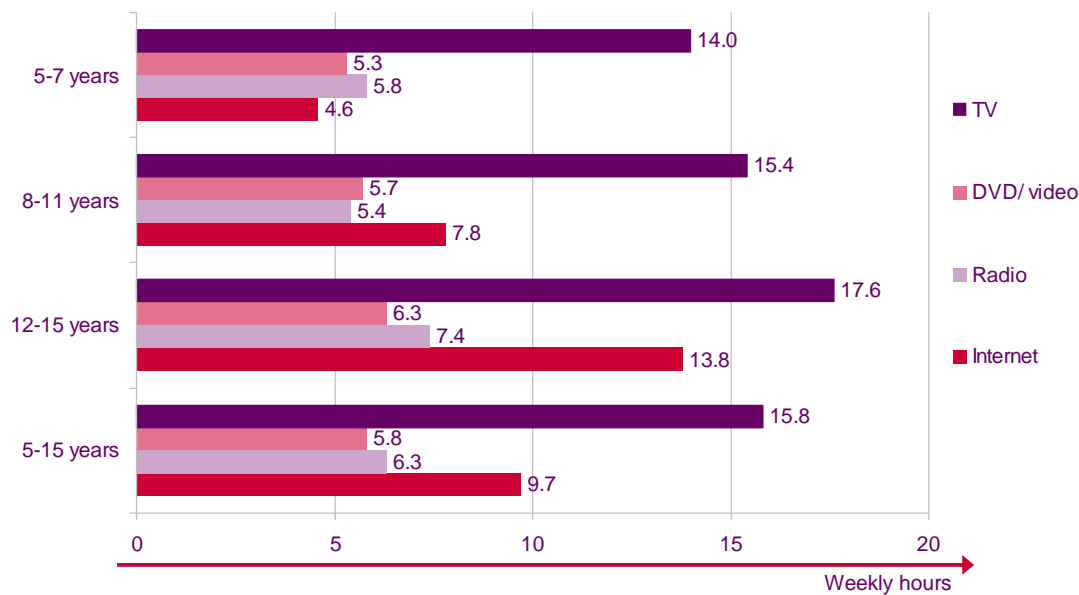
Television remains the dominant medium in terms of children's time spent watching television, watching DVDs and videos, listening to the radio and going online (figure 12). Children aged 5-15 claim they watch 15.8 hours of television each week (ranging from 14.0 hours for 5-7 year olds to 17.8 hours for 12-15 year olds), and the next most popular activity among children aged 5-15 years is the internet (9.7 hours per week) - this is driven by the 12-15 year olds (13.8 hours).

Over 90% of 5-15 year olds say they watch television on a daily basis – in comparison 42% say they use the internet on a daily basis, increasing to 63% of 12-15 year olds. Daily mobile phone use is also significantly higher among older children – 69% of 12-15 year olds say they use their phones every day, compared with the average across all children of 37%.

Comparing children's responses to the question on how long they spend using the internet at home in 2005 (Ofcom's *Media Literacy Audit*) and in 2007 (*Young People & Media*) shows that claimed hours of use have increased greatly over the past 2 years (figure 13).

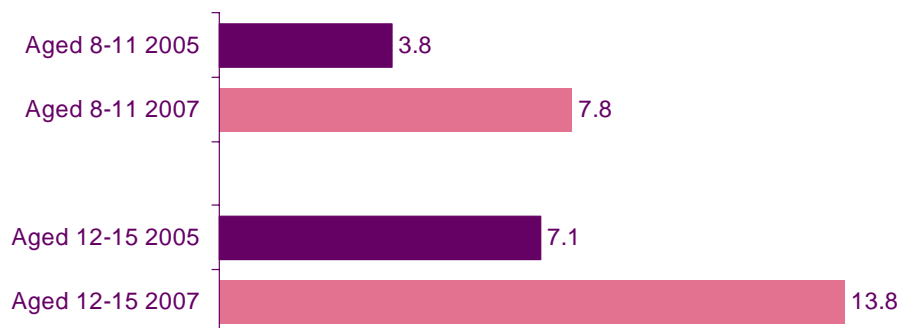


**Figure 12 Media consumption: hours per week among users of each medium**



Q: How many hours would you say he/ she spends ..... on a typical school day/ on a weekend day?  
 Base: Parents of children who partake in each activity  
 Source: Ofcom – Young People & Media, April - September 2007

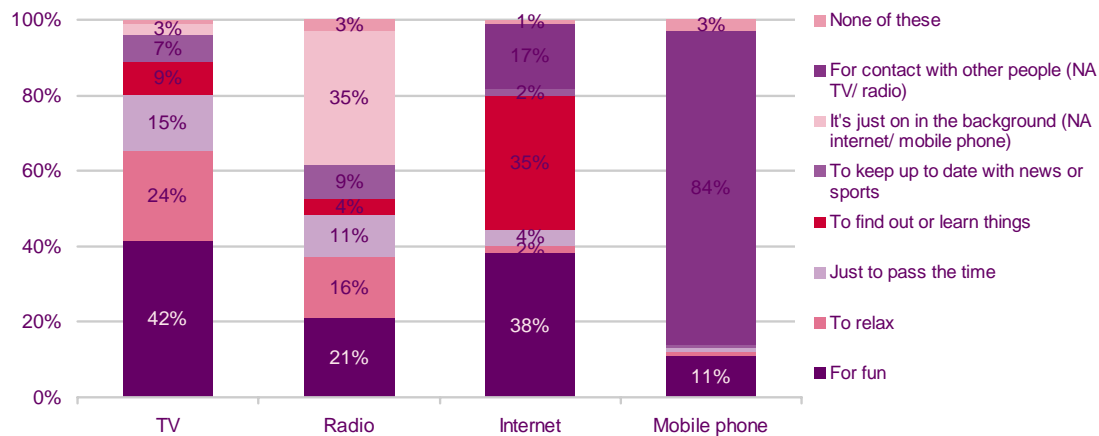
**Figure 13 Hours spent on the internet at home in a typical week (child responses): 2005 vs 2007**



Q: 2005 – How many hours would you say you spend using the internet at home in a typical week?  
 2007-Thinking about the time you spend using the Internet at home. How many hours would you say you use the internet on a typical school day/ weekend day?  
 Base: All who use the internet at home: Children aged 8-11 (2005= 378, 2007=877), 12-15 (2005 = 467, 2007=1040)  
 Source: Ofcom – Media Literacy Audit 2005/ Young People & Media, April - September 2007

It is interesting to compare the main reasons children use different media and the way in which each plays a specific role (figure 14). Television is very much an entertainment medium, used for fun or to relax. The role of the internet as a means of relaxing is much lower compared with television; it is more likely to be used to learn new things and keep in contact with others – although this does vary by age (figure 16).

**Figure 14 Main reasons for using media**



Q: Which one is your main reason for [using medium]?

Base: Children aged 5-15 who use each type of media at home (TV=3,652/ Radio=1,582/ Internet=2,397/ Mobile phone=1,960)

Source: Ofcom – Young People & Media, April - September 2007

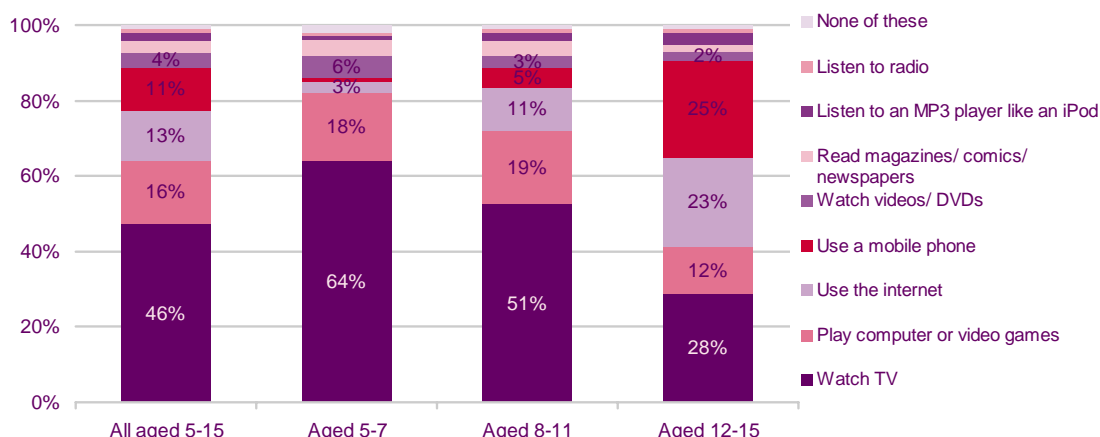
The increasingly important role of the internet, particularly for older children, is further demonstrated when we ask children about the media activity they would miss most (figure 15). The importance of television declines with age (64% 5-7 year olds would miss watching television most, compared with 28% of 12-15 year olds) as the internet and mobile phones become more important (3% of 5-7 year olds would miss using the internet most and 1% would miss their mobile phones most, versus 23% and 25% of 12-15 year olds respectively).

13% of all children aged 5-15 say they would miss the internet most – rising to 20% among those with internet access at home and 35% of those who have access in their own bedrooms.

Gender differences also exist. Girls aged 5-15 are more likely to say they would miss their mobile phones (15% versus 8% of boys) and boys are more likely to miss their games consoles most (26% compared with 7% of girls aged 5-15).

Ofcom's 2005 research into media literacy found that 6% of 8-11 year olds (compared with 11% in 2007) and 8% of 12-15 year olds (versus 23% in 2007) said they would miss the internet the most – this demonstrates further the growing importance of the internet to young people.

**Figure 15 Media activity children would miss most**



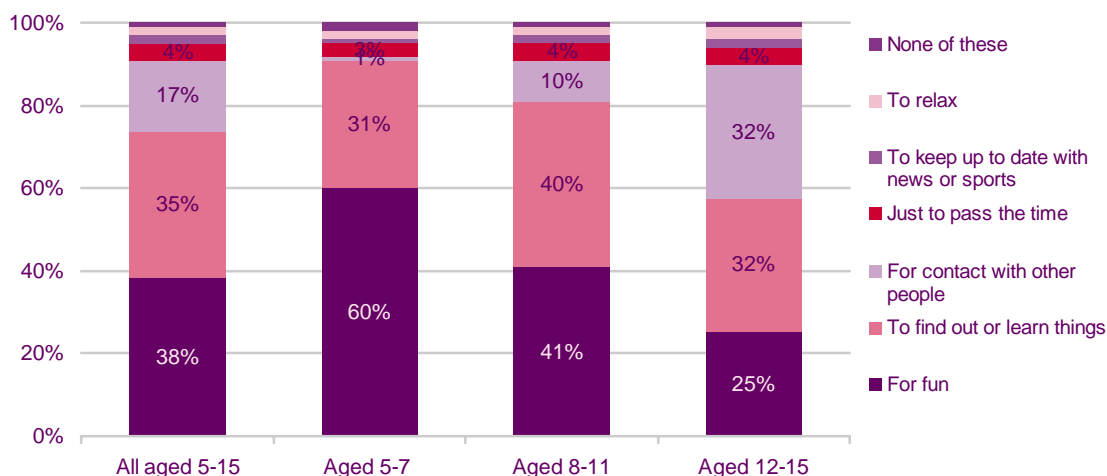
Q: Now of the ones you do almost every day, which one of these would you miss doing the most if it got taken away?

Base: Children aged 5-15 (3,696), 5-7 (1,008), 8-11 (1,344), 12-15 (1,344)

Source: Ofcom – Young People & Media, April - September 2007

Many of the differences in access to the internet among children of different ages will be driven by the needs of the child and their skill levels – for example, as children get older they are more likely to use the internet for school/college work (figure 16). When asking children about their main reasons for using the internet there are significant age group differences which highlight this effect – younger children are more likely to use the internet for fun; the use of the internet as a learning tool peaks among 8-11 year olds; and 12-15 year olds are the most likely of all age groups to say they use it as a communications tool. Girls are more likely than boys to be using the internet for contact with other people (21% compared with 14% of boys) and boys are more likely to use it for fun (42% vs 34% of girls).

**Figure 16 Main reason for using the internet**



Q: Which one is your main reason for using the internet?

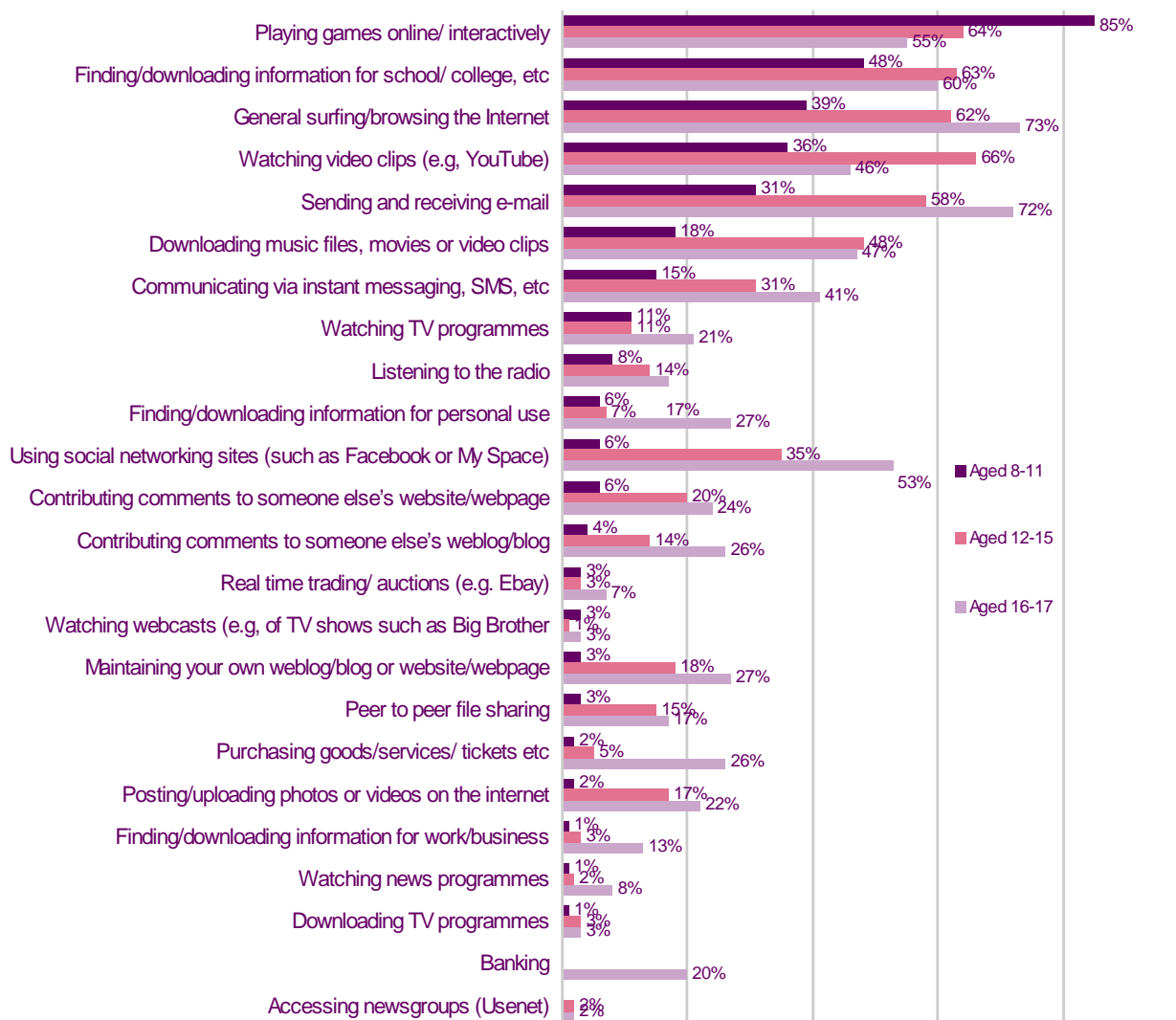
Base: Children aged 5-15 who use the internet at home (2,421), 5-7 (504), 8-11 (877), 12-15 (1,040)

Source: Ofcom – Young People & Media, April - September 2007

The early age at which children are starting to use various technologies means they will grow up with more experience of downloading and uploading content onto the internet, using webcams, etc., than their parents. This is demonstrated when we ask parents and children about their skill at using the internet and how they rate themselves and each other.

As seen in figure 16, there are a number of differences across the age groups with regard to what the internet is used for. This is further demonstrated when we look at the specific uses on the internet by age group (figure 17). Children aged 8-11 are more likely to say they are going online for gaming purposes, 12-15 year olds are using it as an educational tool and for downloading music/movies/videos and watching video clips, and the oldest age group (16-17 year olds) are most likely to be sending email, visiting social networking sites, uploading photos/videos and either maintaining their own or contributing to other people's blogs/sites.

**Figure 17 Children's use of the internet by age group**



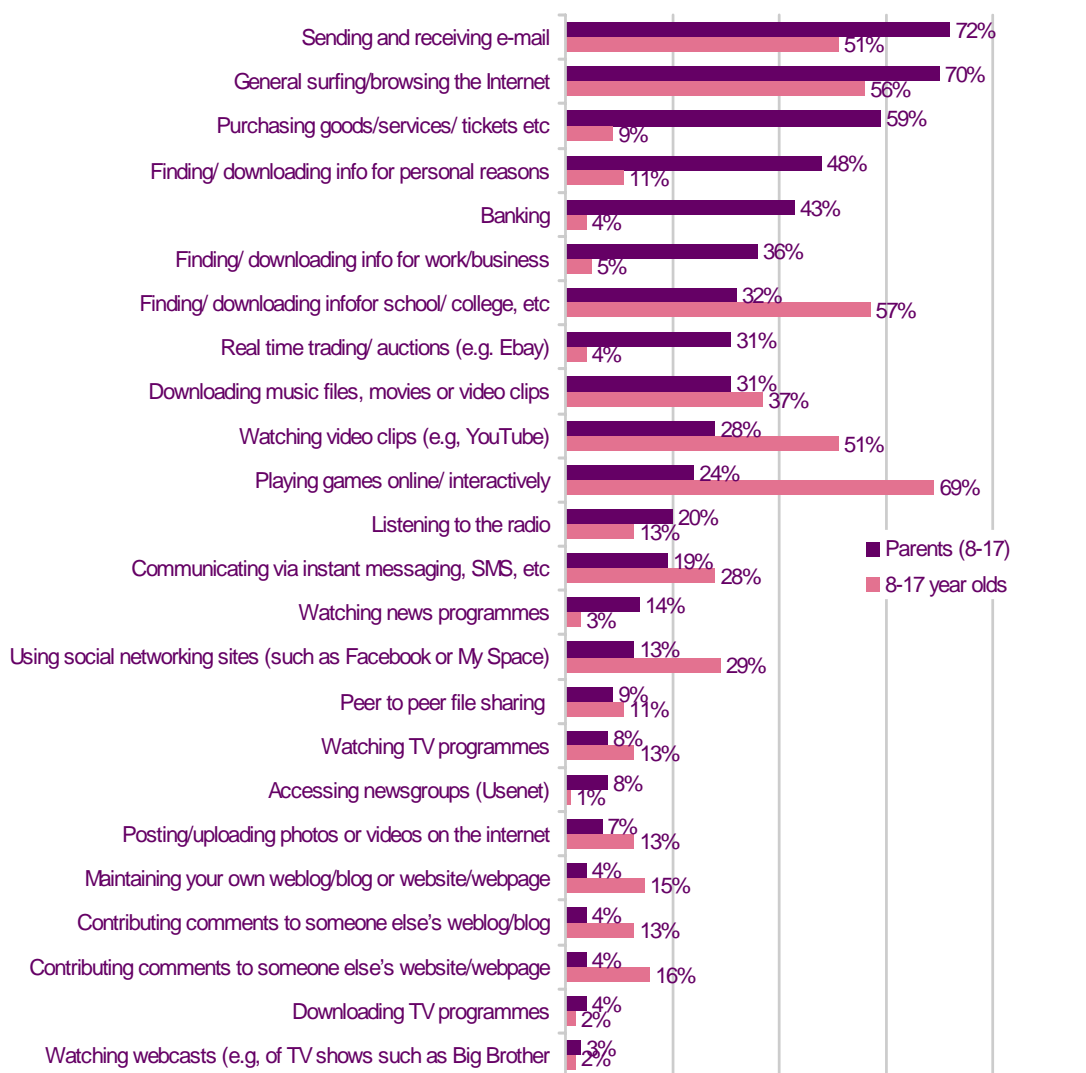
Q: Which, if any, of these do you use the Internet for whilst at home?

Base: All who use the internet at home: Children aged 8-11 (147), 12-15 (188), 16-17 (89)

Source: Ofcom – Children, Young People & Online Content, October 2007

There are clear differences in the ways in which parents and children use the internet (figure 18) with parents more likely to use it as a functional tool to purchase tickets, to send email, for banking purposes, etc. Children, on the other hand, are more likely to use the internet as an entertainment medium, for playing games online, downloading music, watching video clips, etc., as well as using it for educational purposes.

**Figure 18 Use of the internet: parents vs children**



Q: Parents: Which, if any, of these do you use the Internet for?

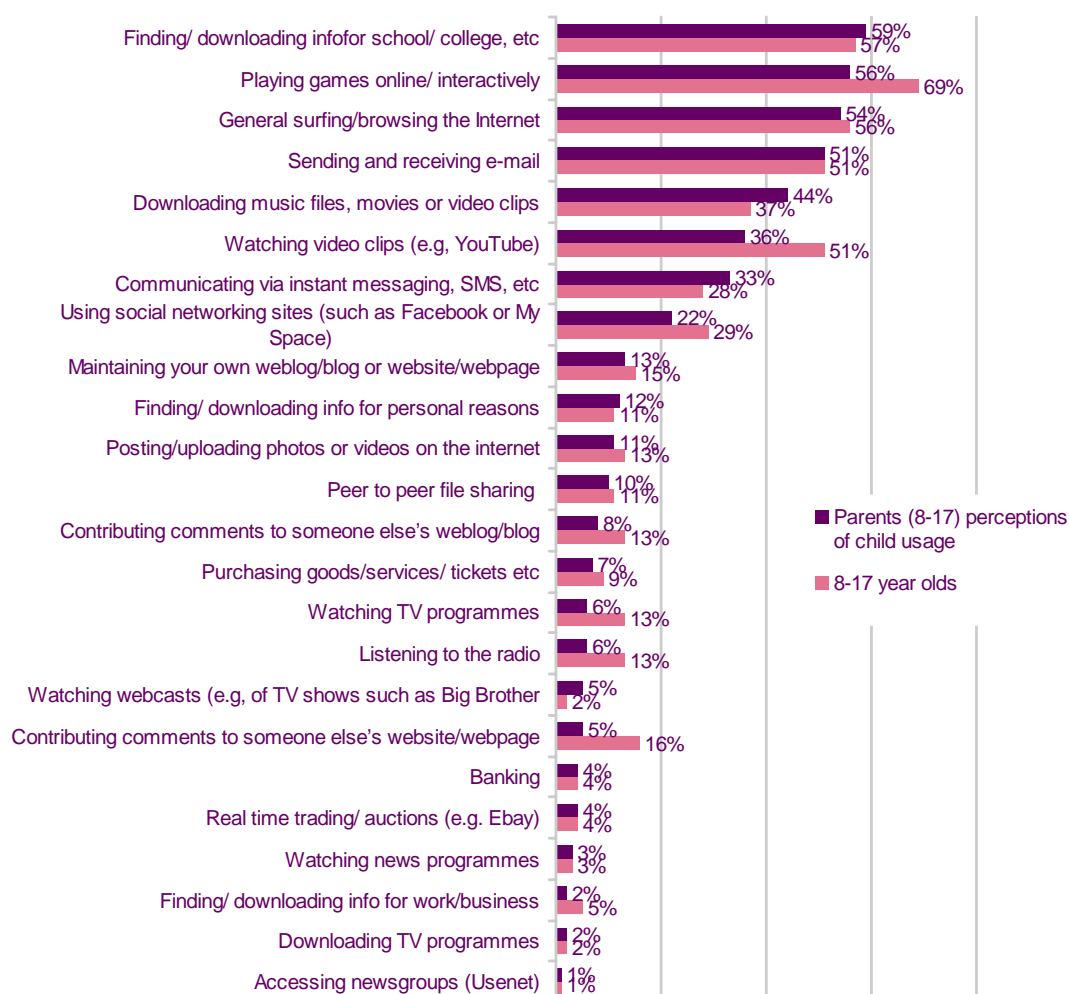
Children: Which, if any, of these do you use the Internet for whilst at home?

Base: All who use the internet: Parents of 8-17 year olds (444)/ All who use internet at home: Children aged 8-17 year olds (424)

Source: Ofcom – Children, Young People & Online Content, October 2007

Figure 19 looks at the differences between what parents think their children are doing online at home and what the children themselves report doing on the internet. Again, this comparison suggests that parents are well informed about many of the activities their children are taking part in when online, but differences do exist, particularly with regard to playing games online, watching television, listening to the radio, watching video clips on sites such as YouTube, visiting social networking sites and contributing to someone else's website.

**Figure 19 Children’s use of the internet at home: parents perceptions vs child responses**



Q: Which, if any, of these do you use the Internet for whilst at home? Which, if any, does your child use the internet for whilst at home?

Base: All whose child/who use the internet at home: Parents of 8-17 year olds (445), 8-17 year olds (424)

Source: Ofcom – Children, Young People & Online Content, October 2007

Ofcom research also shows that children are comfortable using multiple media devices at once, or ‘media cramming’ – this increases with age as children become more proficient at using devices and therefore more confident in multi-tasking. 77%<sup>13</sup> of 12-15 year olds say they are often engaged with other media (watching television, listening to CDs/MP3 players/the radio, using mobile phones, etc) while using the internet at home, compared with 26% of 5-7 year olds. The most common activity children are engaged with when online is watching television (32% of 5-15 year olds) – although for 12-15 year olds the most common activity is using a mobile phone (50%).

As well as media cramming, children are demonstrating their consumption of converged media<sup>14</sup>. 9% of 8-15 year olds say they have used the internet to watch television programmes – this increases to 13% of 12-15 year olds. 4% of 8-15 year olds claim to have

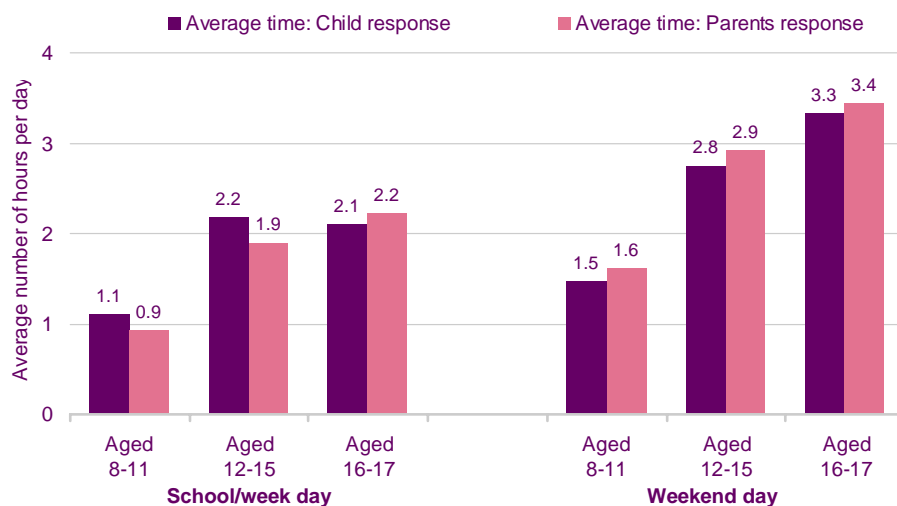
<sup>13</sup> Source: Young People & Media, April-September 2007

<sup>14</sup> Source: Young People & Media, April-September 2007

watched television programmes on a portable player such as a Sony PSP and a similar number say they have watched programmes on a mobile phone.

Having asked children how long they spend online at home and their parents how long they *think* their children are online<sup>15</sup>, we found only minor variations between the two groups, suggesting that parents are aware of how long their children are spending using the internet when at home (figure 20).

**Figure 20 Hours of internet use at home among children: parents vs children**



Q: Thinking about the time your child spends/you spend using the internet at home.

How many hours would you say he/ she spends using the internet on a typical school day/ weekend day?

How many hours would you say you use the internet on a typical school day/ weekend day?

Base: All whose child/who use the internet at home: Parents with children aged 8-17 (445), children aged 8-11 (147), 12-15 (188), 16-17 (89)

Source: Ofcom – Children, Young People & Online Content, October 2007

In order to understand possible reasons for gaps in the knowledge of parents and children's behaviour, parents and children were asked to rate themselves and each other with regard to skills in using the internet, and who they think is the most skilled in the household (figures 21 & 22).

Parents tend to rate their children's skills more highly than their own; 75% of parents of 8-17 year olds rate themselves as a beginner/average but only 52% say the same of their children (8-17). The older the child, the more likely the parents are to say that he/she is more skilled than themselves.

In contrast, children aged 8-17 are more likely to say their parents are beginners than to rate themselves at this level (63% versus 59%). 14% of 8-17 year olds say their parents are experts versus 6% of 8-17 year olds who rate themselves as experts - this is skewed by the younger age group who may consider themselves relatively inexperienced compared with their parents (26% of 8-11 year olds rate their parents as experts). Older children rate themselves highly with 52% of 16-17 year olds saying their skills are advanced/expert compared with 29% of 8-11 year olds.

<sup>15</sup> Note: There may be variations between data presented in this chart and that in figures 12 & 13 due to different sources being referenced.

The UK Children Go Online study found that 37% of 9-19 year old internet users rated themselves as either advanced or expert. Although the age groups are not directly comparable, this is similar to the 40% of 8-17 year olds rating themselves this way in 2007. 14% of parents of these 9-19 year old internet users saw their own skills as being advanced or expert in 2004, while in 2007 25% of parents of 8-17 year olds who used the internet rated themselves as advanced/expert. However, parents are also more likely to rate their child's skills as advanced or expert now, compared with 2004 – 28% of parents of 9-19 year olds rated their child's skills this way in 2004 compared with 45% of parents of 8-17 year olds. This suggests that although the skills of the parents may be improving, children are still seen as more skilled and therefore the knowledge gap between the two groups still exists.

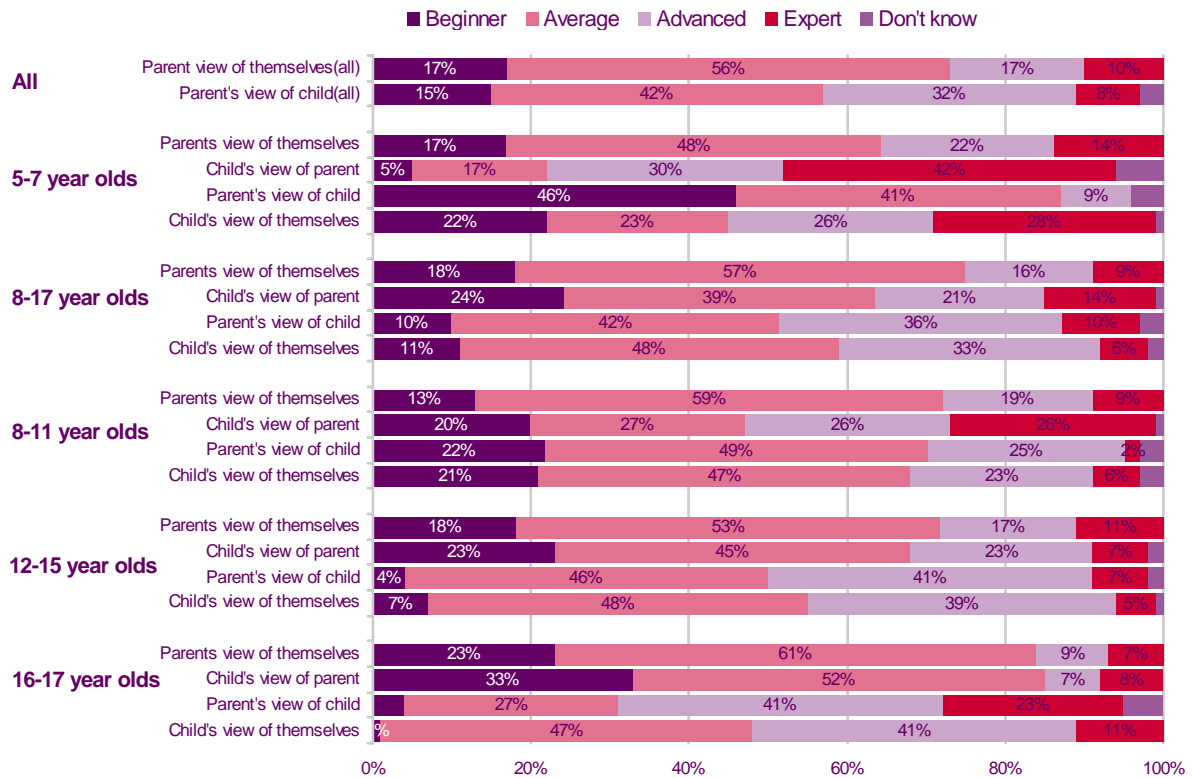
When asked who they thought was the most skilled in the household, 55% of 8-17 year olds mentioned a child in the household (themselves or a sibling) and 41% mentioned a parent. Older children (77%) are more likely to say they, or a sibling, are the most skilled in the household, as are children in DE households (71% mention themselves or a sibling).

When parents were asked the same question 41% of those with children aged 8-17 mentioned either themselves or the other parent, and 53% mentioned either the child that was interviewed or another child in the household. There are differences by demographic group – ABC1 parents (61%) are more likely to say they or another parent are the most skilled in the household, and 58% of C2DE parents say their child is the most skilled. Younger parents (59% of 16-34 year old parents) and those with younger children (72% of those with children aged 5-7 and 57% of those with 8-11 year olds) are more likely than older parents (33% of those aged over 45) and those with older children (39% of parents of 12-15 year olds and 23% with 16-17 year old children) to mention a parent being the most skilled.

In addition, 65% of parents of 8-17 year olds agree with the statement: “my child knows more about the internet than I do” and 62% of children aged 8-17 agree that they know more about the internet than their parents. This demonstrates the understanding members of the household have of each other's skills, and the fact that parents are aware of a gap between their skill level and that of their children.

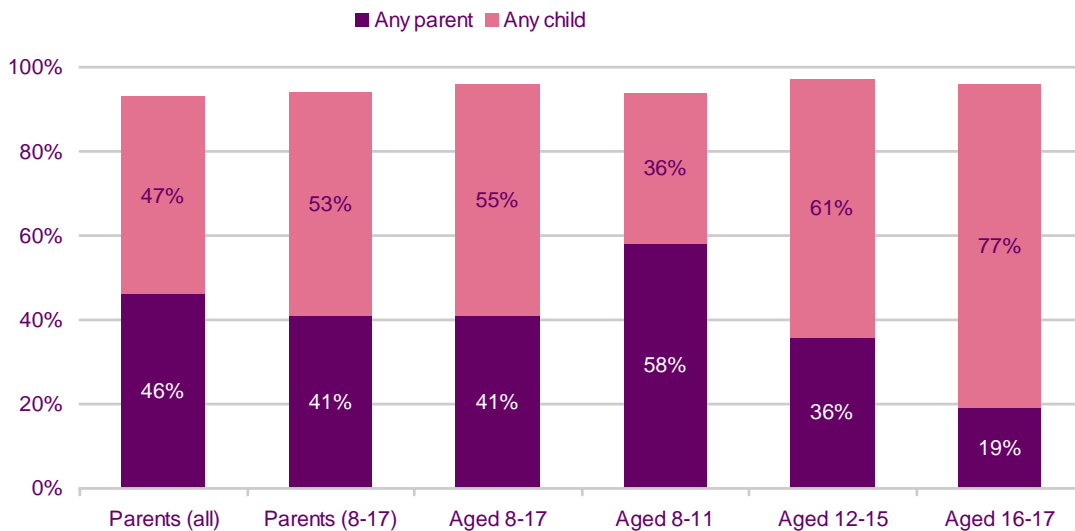


**Figure 21 Skill levels: parents vs children**



Q: Overall, how skilled would you say that you personally are at using the internet? How would you judge your child's/parent's skills in using the Internet? Note: 5-7 year olds were asked to rate themselves/their parents as Beginner/OK/Good/Very Good  
 Base: All who/whose child/parent use(s) the internet  
 Source: Ofcom – Children, Young People & Online Content, October 2007

**Figure 22 Most skilled in the household**

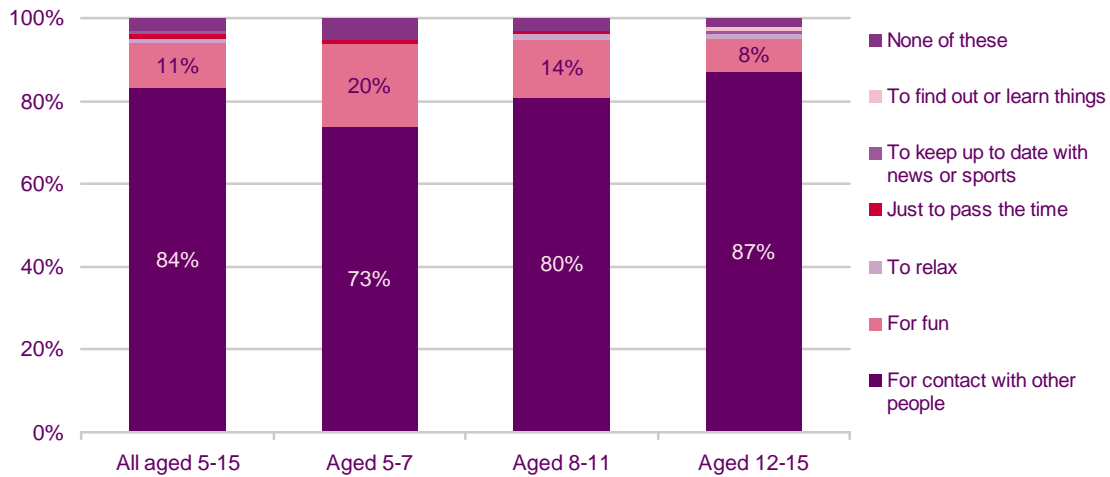


Q: Of all the people in your house, who would you say is the most skilled at using the internet?  
 Base: Parents of children aged 5-17 (653), parents of children aged 8-17(537), children aged 8-17 (513), 8-11(198), 12-15 (208), 16-17 (107)  
 Source: Ofcom – Children, Young People & Online Content, October 2007

As well as using the internet for a range of activities, children are also using mobile handsets for more than just making calls. As expected, the main use of the mobile phone is as a

communications tool (84% of 5-15 year olds – see figure 23), although children of all ages are using handsets for a number of other reasons such as taking photos (51% of 8-15 year olds) and making videos (28% of 8-15 year olds). However, its role as an internet access point is still, for now, relatively small (figure 24)<sup>16</sup>.

**Figure 23 Main reason for using mobile phones**

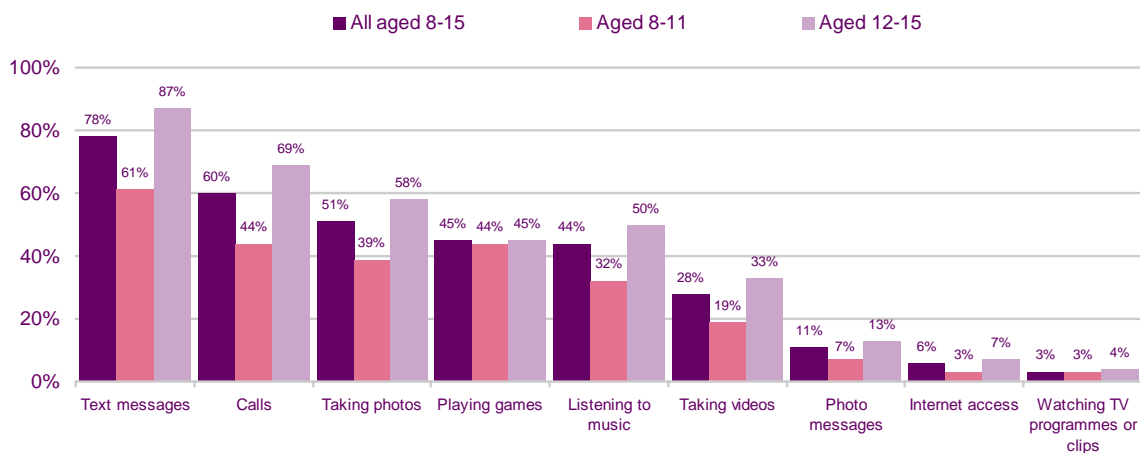


Q: Which one if your main reason for using a mobile phone?

Base: Children aged 5-15 with their own mobile phone (1,895), 5-7 (119), 8-11(624), 12-15 (1,152)

Source: Ofcom – Young People & Media, April - September 2007

**Figure 24 Mobile phone use – at least once per week**



Q: Thinking about what you use your mobile phone for, do you use your mobile phone to do any of these?

Base: Children aged 8-15 with their own mobile phone (1,777), 8-11 (624), 12-15 (1,152)

Source: Ofcom – Young People & Media, April - September 2007

NB - question wording amended between waves

<sup>16</sup> Note: There may be minor variations between data presented in this chart and those in figure 11 due to different sources being referenced.

### 3. Focus: Social networking and user-generated content sites

The past couple of years has seen rapid growth in the use of social networking and user-generated content sites, and this is being driven to a large degree by young people (see next section: What children are doing online). This was illustrated in the previous section - two of the popular uses of the internet among children are visiting social networking sites and watching video clips on user-generated content sites, and this is particularly so for older children. Comparisons of parent/child internet use and parents' perceptions of child use versus what children say they are doing online, show that in these two areas there are gaps between the two groups - we have therefore looked in detail at parents' understanding and children's use of these sites<sup>17</sup>.

#### Key findings

- Total awareness of social networking sites among parents and children is similar, with around nine in ten saying they know of these types of sites.
- Although parents' awareness of social networking sites is high, they are not as well informed as to whether their children are using these sites. When parents with children aged 8-17 were asked whether they thought their child had a profile on a social networking site, 37% of those who were aware of these sites said that they thought this was the case. This compares to 49% of 8-17 year olds who said they have a profile.
- As well as the gap between parents' knowledge of whether their child has a profile on a social networking site, many parents are unaware of the security settings used by their child. When asked whether their child's profile was currently visible, 70% of parents of 8-17 year olds with a page on a social networking site said it was, 10% said it was not visible, and 20% replied 'don't know'. In comparison, 83% of 8-17 year olds with a profile said that their profile was currently visible and 12% said it was not.
- Children are most likely to be using their profile to stay in touch with friends and family or to look at their own or other people's profiles. In addition, 59% say they are making new friends through social networking sites, ranging from 48% of 8-11 year olds to 70% of 16-17 year olds – demonstrating the fact that some children are more likely to make new friends online than others. There is further demonstration of the gap between parents' knowledge and children's activities: while a substantial proportion of parents say their child does not make new friends this way, a notable group say they do not know how often their child is making friends online.
- Spontaneous awareness of the term 'user-generated content' sites is much lower than that recorded for the term 'social networking sites' – although overall awareness stands at 83% among parents and 86% among 8-17 year olds.
- Half of all parents of 8-17 year olds say their child has viewed content on one of these sites – in contrast to the 70% of 8-17 year olds who say they have. An additional 19% of parents do not know if their child has viewed content on UGC sites

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<sup>17</sup> Ofcom has conducted further qualitative research looking at the use of and attitudes towards social networking sites amongst teenagers and adults – this is due to be published in early 2008.

– this is skewed towards parents in DE households (24%) and those parents who rate themselves as beginners on the internet (21%).

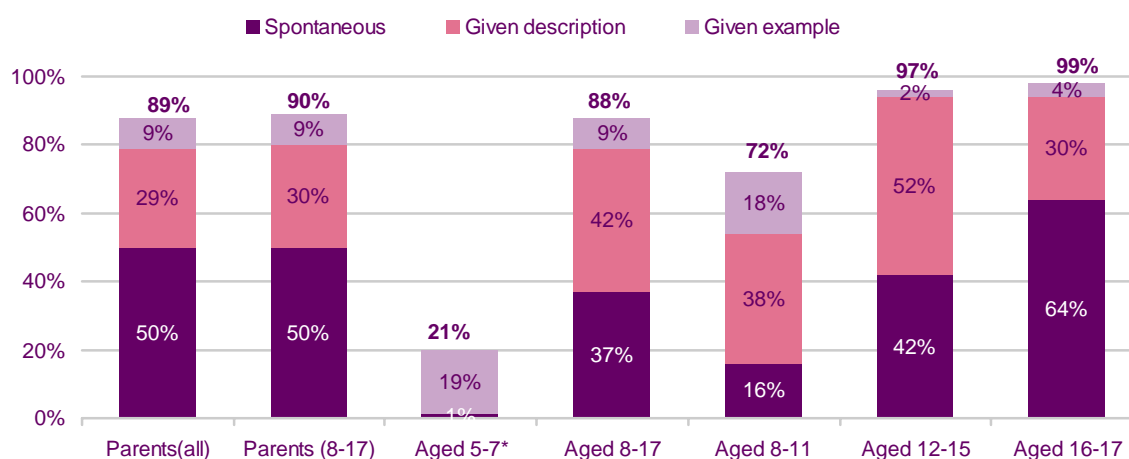
- Compared with social networking sites, families are less likely to have rules in place around the use of UGC sites. 46% of parents with children aged 8-17 who they say have visited these sites say they have rules in place, marginally lower than the 39% of 8-17 year olds who say this is so.

## Social networking sites

Survey respondents were asked whether they are aware of the term 'social networking sites'. 50% of parents and 37% of 8-17 year olds said they were aware of this term; awareness varied across the groups with 16-17 year olds children most likely to be familiar with the term.

Awareness increased among all groups, particularly 8-15 year olds, when they were presented with a short description of these sites, and awareness grew most among 8-11 year olds when they were given specific examples of sites. Total awareness among parents and older children was similar, with around nine in ten saying they know of these types of sites (figure 25).

**Figure 25 Awareness of SNS - parents vs children**



Q: Are you familiar with the term 'Social Networking Sites'?

\*5-7: given description and example in the same question

Base: Parents of 5-17 year olds (653), parents of 8-17 year olds (537), children aged 5-7 (140), 8-11 (198), 12-15 (208), 16-17 (107)

Source: Ofcom – Children, Young People & Online Content, October 2007

Figure 25 shows that overall awareness of these types of sites is high. This is further demonstrated by the 80% of all parents who said that they were aware of social networking sites (spontaneous and after having heard a description), naming a particular site. The most mentioned were Facebook (39%), Bebo (37%), MySpace.com (35%) and MSN Groups (35%).

Of the children who said they were aware of social networking sites (spontaneous and after having heard a description), 87% were able to name a site. Bebo was the most mentioned (60% of 8-17 year olds who said they are aware, rising to 70% of 16-17 year olds) followed by MySpace (52%), MSN Groups (35%) and Facebook (34%).

16% of parents aware of social networking sites (equivalent to 15% of all parents) say they have their own profile on a site (figure 26) – this compares to 49% of the 8-17 year olds

aware of social networking sites (43% of all 8-17 year olds). Younger parents (25% of 16-34 year olds), parents who rate themselves as advanced/expert (27%), and older children (67% of all 16-17 year olds), are all more likely to have a profile.

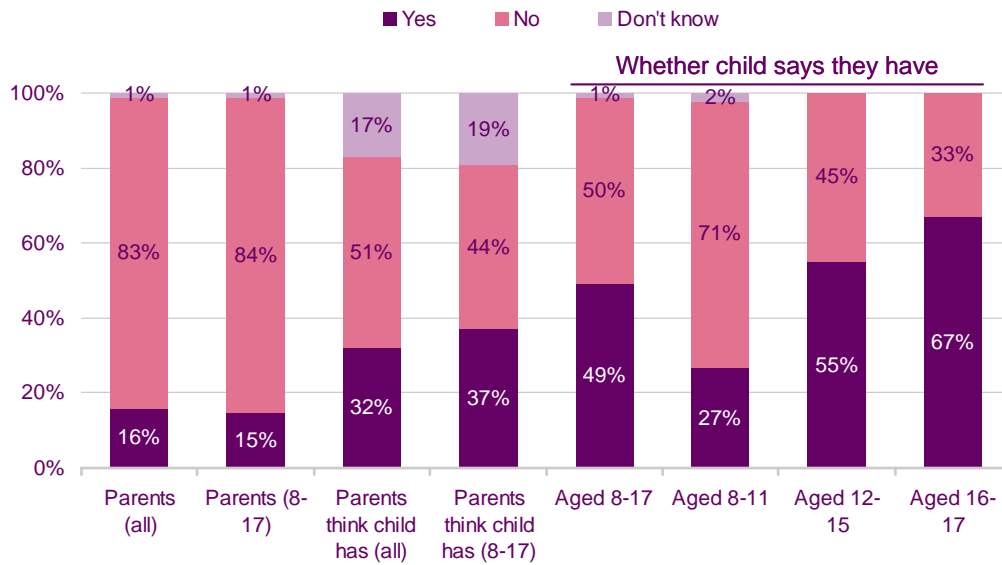
Although parents' awareness of social networking sites is high, they are less well informed about their children's use of these sites. When parents with children aged 8-17 were asked whether they thought their child had a profile on a social networking site, 37% of parents who were aware of these sites said they thought this was the case. This compares to 49% of 8-17 year olds who said they had a profile and suggests that around a quarter of the parents of children who have a site either think they don't, or say they don't know. Differences between parents and children are present across all three age groups, suggesting that this is very much an activity where parents' knowledge of their children's behaviour is incomplete:

- 17% of parents aware of social networking sites and with children aged 8-11 think their child has a profile; compared with 27% of 8-11 year olds who say they have one.
- 44% of parents aware of social networking sites and with children aged 12-15 say their child has a profile, compared with 55% of children aged 12-15 who say they have one.
- 54% of parents aware of social networking sites and with children aged 16-17 say their child has a profile, compared with 67% of those aged 16-17 who say they have one.

Of those parents (with children aged 8-17) who say their child has a profile on a social networking site, 52% mention Bebo as the site where their child has a page. This is also the most popular site mentioned by 8-17 year olds, with 63% naming it as the site where they have a profile.

The proportion of 8-15 year olds that say have a profile on a social networking site is particularly interesting, given the age restrictions these websites have in place – in most cases social networking sites require members to be over the age of 13 or 14.

**Figure 26 Profiles on SNS – parents vs children**

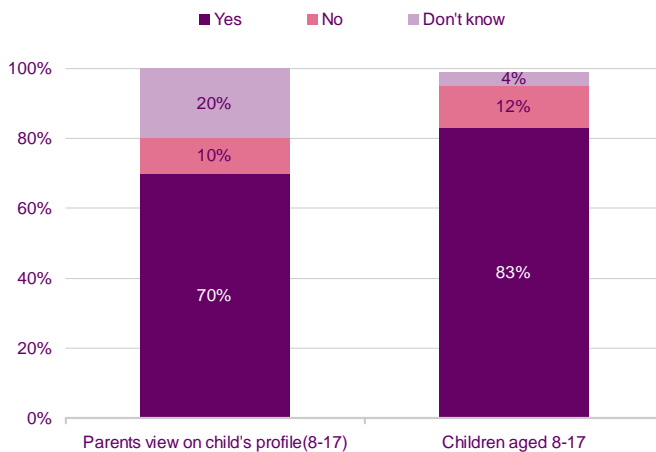


Q: Do you have a page or profile on a social network site? Does your child?

Base: All aware of social networking sites/whose child uses the internet –Parents of 5-17 year olds (579), parents of 8-17 year olds (481), children aged 8-17 (451), 8-11 (143), 12-15 (202), 16-17 (106)  
 Source: Ofcom – Children, Young People & Online Content, October 2007

As well as the gap in parents' knowledge of whether their child has a profile, many parents are also unaware of the privacy settings used by their child. When asked whether their child's profile is currently visible, 70% of parents of 8-17 year olds with a page on a social networking site said it was, 10% said it was not visible, and 20% replied 'don't know'. In comparison, 83% of 8-17 year olds with a profile said their profile was currently visible, 12% said it was not and 4% did not know (figure 27).

**Figure 27 Visibility of SNS profiles – parents vs children**



Q: Is this profile currently visible?

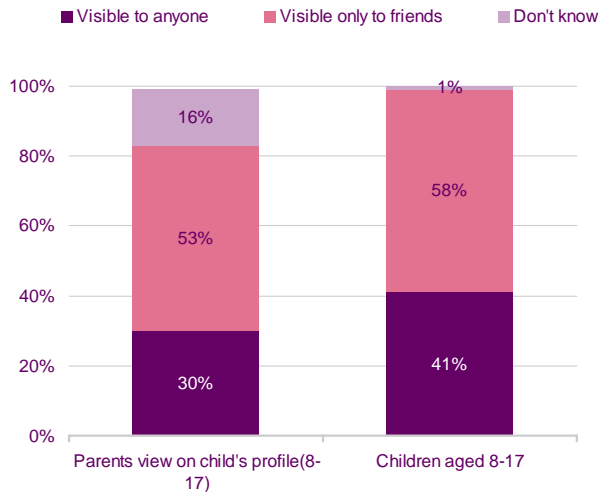
Base: All who have a profile/who think their child has a profile –Parents of 8-17 year olds (175), children aged 8-17 (220)

Source: Ofcom – Children, Young People & Online Content, October 2007

However, parents who are aware that their child's profile is visible are also aware that their child's profile is visible only to the child's friends – 53% of parents of 8-17 year olds said this

was the case, compared with 58% of 8-17 year olds. 30% of parents believe their child's profile is visible to anyone (compared with 41% of 8-17 year olds) and 16% say they do not know who their child's profile is visible to (figure 28).

**Figure 28 Who profile is visible to – parents vs children**



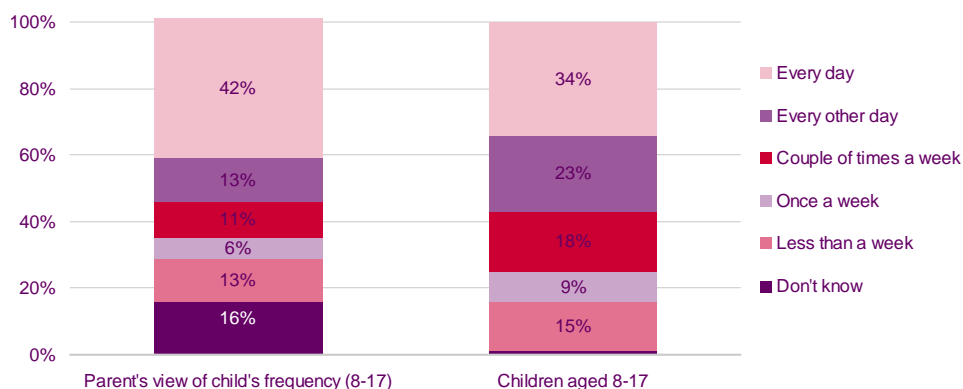
**Q: Who is it visible to?**

**Base:** All who have a visible profile/who think their child has a visible profile –Parents of 8-17 year olds (124), children aged 8-17 (183)

**Source:** Ofcom – Children, Young People & Online Content, October 2007

As described in the previous section, the time children say they spend online and the time parents *think* their children spend online are fairly similar. However, when asked about how often their children visit a social networking site, a significant proportion of parents (of 8-17 year olds) said they didn't know (16%); this increases with the age of the child, with 27% of parents of 16-17 year olds with a profile saying they do not know how often their children are visiting the sites (figure 29).

**Figure 29 Frequency of visiting SNS – parents vs children**



**Q: How often do you visit the sites where you have a profile? How often does your child visit?**

**Base:** All who/whose child have/has a profile on social networking site: Parents of children aged 8-17 (175), children aged 8-17 (220)

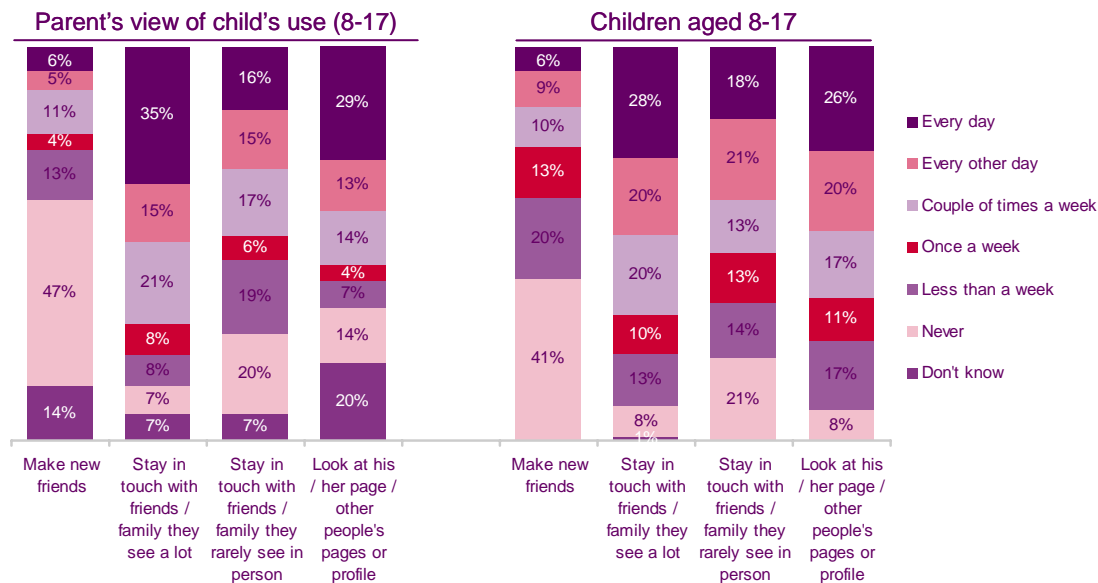
**Source:** Ofcom – Children, Young People & Online Content, October 2007

Children are most likely to be using their profile to stay in touch with friends and family or to look at their own or other people's profiles (figure 30). Although 41% of 8-17 year olds with a

profile say they have never made new friends through a social networking site, 59% say they are making new friends this way, ranging from 48% of 8-11 year olds to 70% of 16-17 year olds, and demonstrating the fact that some children are more likely to make new friends online than others.

There is further demonstration of the gap between parent's knowledge and children's activities: while a substantial proportion (47%) of parents of 8-17 year olds say that their child does not use their profile to make new friends, a notable proportion of parents (14%) respond by saying they do not know how often their child is making friends online.

**Figure 30 Children's use of SNS – parents vs children**



Q: Do you have any rules around the use of social networking sites? / Do your parents have any rules...?

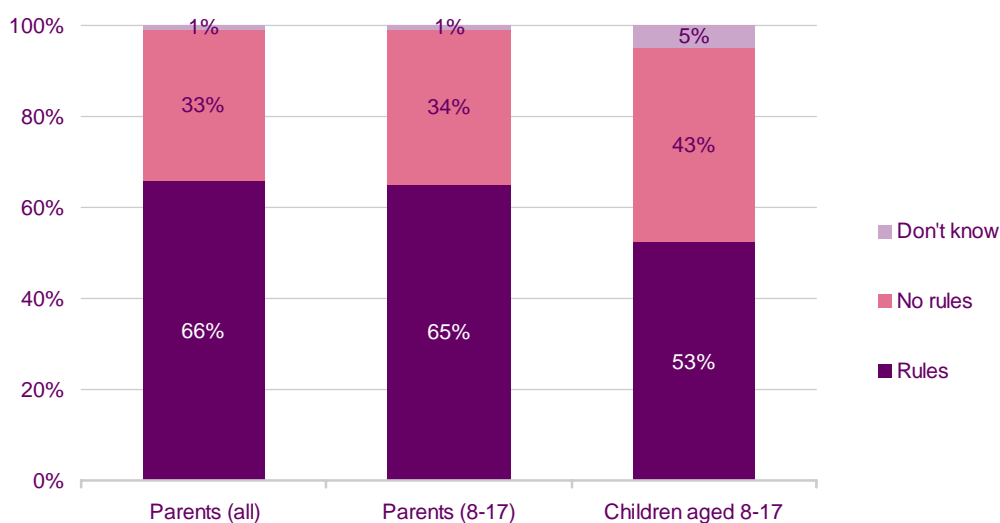
Base: All whose child/who have a profile on social networking sites: Parents of 8-17 year olds (175), children aged 8-17 (220)

Source: Ofcom – Children, Young People & Online Content, October 2007

Further differences between parents and children emerge when asking about rules governing use of SNS (figure 31). 65% of parents of 8-17 year olds with a profile say there are rules in place around the use of social networking sites, compared to 53% of 8-17 year olds. The key rules in place are to do with meeting new people (30% of parents, 13% of 8-17 year olds); giving out personal details (27% of parents, 26% of 8-17 year olds), and rules about meeting in person new people that they have met through these sites (17% of parents, 10% of 8-17 year olds). These figures suggest that although rules such as giving out personal information on these sites may be well understood by children, the importance parents place on rules about meeting new people is not being communicated to children.



**Figure 31 Rules for using SNS – parents vs children**



Q: Do you have any rules around the use of social networking sites? / Do your parents have any rules...?

Base: All whose child/who have a profile on social networking sites: Parents of 5-17 year olds (178), parents of 8-17 year olds (175), children aged 8-17 (220)

Source: Ofcom – Children, Young People & Online Content, October 2007

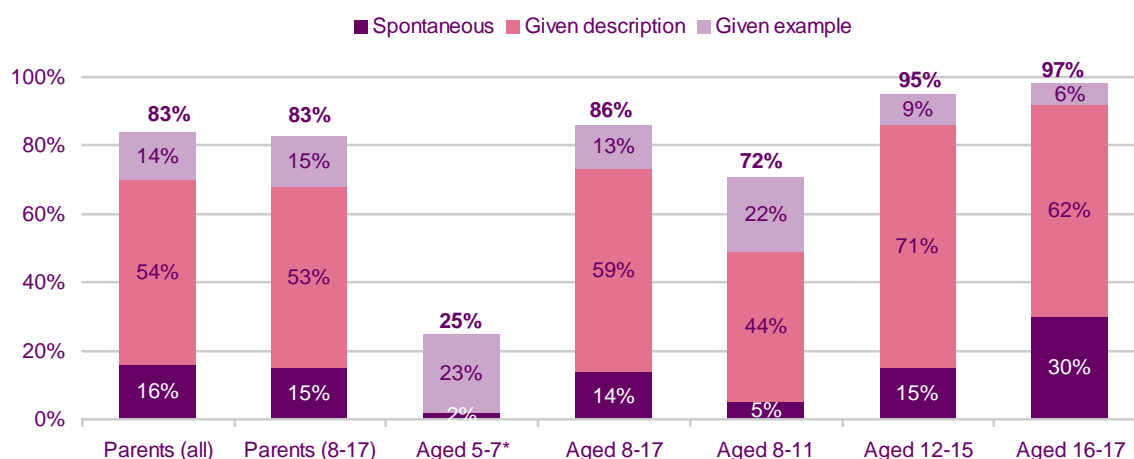
### User-generated content (UGC) sites

Spontaneous awareness of the term 'user-generated content' sites is much lower than that recorded for social networking sites; 15% of parents of 8-17 year olds and 14% of 8-17 year olds said they were aware of this term (figure 32). Awareness rose significantly after respondents were presented with a short description of these sites and further still when given specific examples of websites. Overall awareness is high across both groups - 83% of all parents and 86% of 8-17 year old children.

87% of children aged 8-17 who said they are aware of the term (spontaneous and after having heard a description) were able to name a website – the most mentioned being YouTube (69%), Google Video(17%) and MSN Video(16%).

Fewer parents were able to name a UGC site, compared with those who could name a social networking site. 68% of all parents (and 66% of parents of 8-17 year olds) who said they are aware of user-generated content sites named a site – YouTube again being the most mentioned (48%) followed by Google Video (11%) and MSN Video (10%).

**Figure 32 Awareness of UGC sites – parents vs children**



Q: Are you familiar with the term 'user-generated content' sites?

Base: All parents (653), parents of children aged 8-17 (537), children aged 5-7 (140), 8-11 (198), 12-15 (208), 16-17 (107)

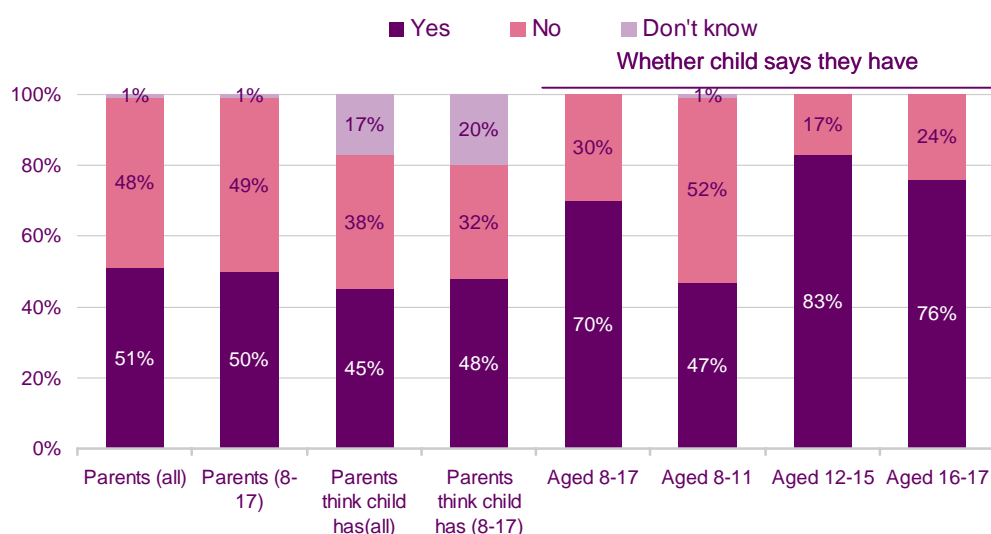
Source: Ofcom – Children, Young People & Online Content, October 2007

Half of all parents who are aware of user-generated content websites say they have viewed content on such sites (figure 33). A similar proportion of parents of 8-17 year olds say their child has viewed content on one of these sites – in contrast to the 70% of 8-17 year olds who say they have. An additional one in five parents do not know if their child has viewed content on UGC sites – this is skewed towards parents in DE households (24%) and those parents who rate themselves as beginners (21%). This suggests that 30% of the parents of those children who have viewed user-generated content either think their child hasn't visited such sites or do not know.

Children aged 12-15 (83%, versus 70% average for all 8-17 year olds), and those with a profile on a social networking site (84%), are more likely to have visited these sites.

As with social networking sites, age restrictions apply to those viewing content on user-generated content sites; in most cases the minimum age limit is 13. The fact that almost half of all 8-11 year olds aware of UGC sites have viewed content on these sites suggests that these age limits are not particularly effective.

**Figure 33 Viewed content on UGC sites – parents vs children**



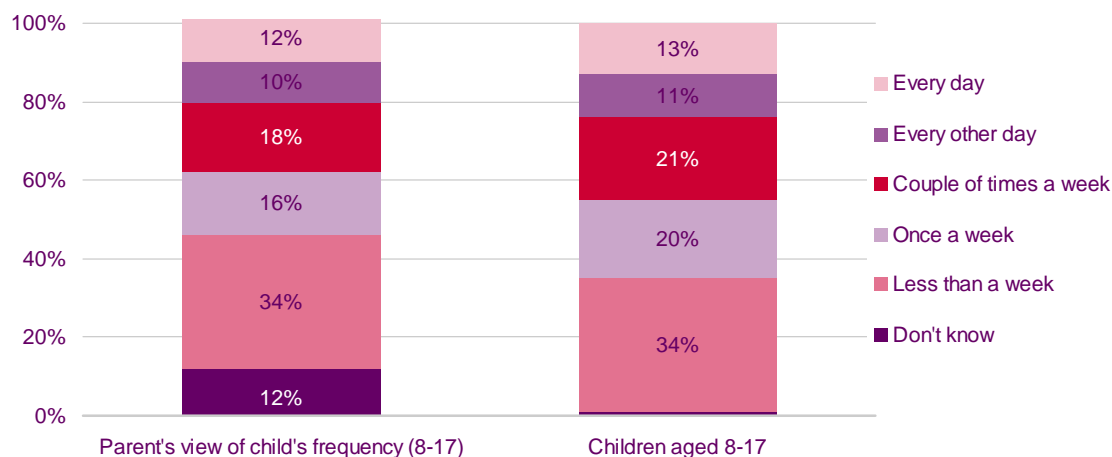
Q: Have you viewed any content (photos or videos) on a user-generated content site, such as YouTube or Flickr in the last 6 months?

Base: All aware of user-generated content sites: Parents of children aged 5-17 (524), parents of children aged 8-17 (443), children aged 8-11 (142), 12-15 (197), 16-17 (104)

Source: Ofcom – Children, Young People & Online Content, October 2007

54% of parents of 8-17 year olds who think their child has visited a site featuring user-generated content say they do this at least once a week – this compares with the 64% of 8-17 year olds who say they do this. 12% of parents say they are unaware of how often their children are visiting such sites (figure 34).

**Figure 34 Frequency of visiting UGC sites – parents vs children**



Q: How often do you visit user-generated content sites? How often does your child visit?

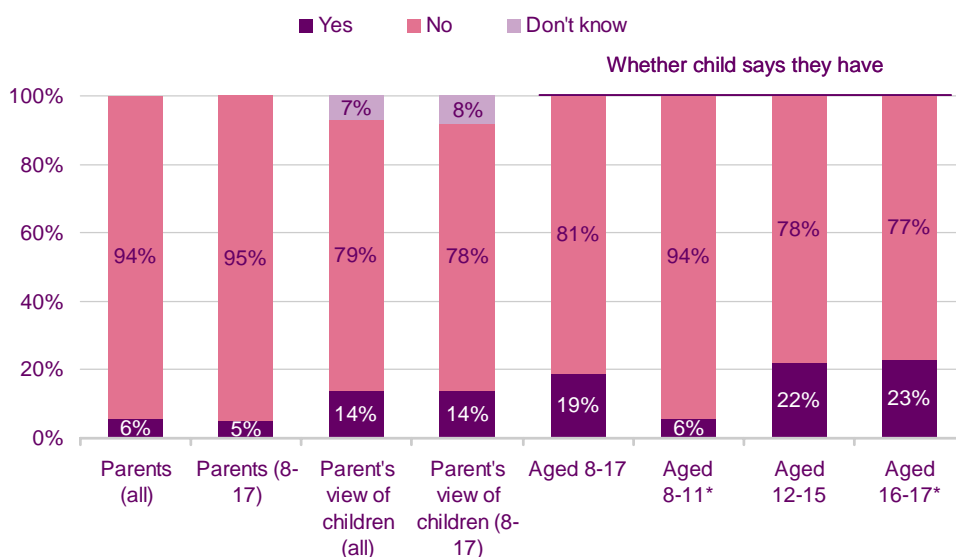
Base: All who/whose child have/has visited user-generated content sites: Parents of with children aged 8-17 (213), 8-17 (309)

Source: Ofcom – Children, Young People & Online Content, October 2007

Only 6% of parents who have visited UGC sites say they have posted content themselves (figure 35). 14% of parents with 8-17 year olds who have visited these sites say their child has posted content such as photos or videos, while 19% of 8-17 year olds say this is the case. Together with the fact that there is a proportion of parents who do not know what their child is doing on UGC sites (8% of parents of 8-17 year olds who have visited such sites

don't know if their child has posted content), this reveals yet another gap between children's behaviour and parent's knowledge of it.

**Figure 35 Ever posted content on UGC sites – parents vs children**



Q: Have you ever posted on a user-generated content site?

Base: All who/whose children have visited user-generated content sites: Parents with children aged 5-17 (278), parents with children aged 8-17 (224), children aged 8-17 (309), 8-11 (67), 12-15 (163), 16-17 (79). \*Caution: low base size (<100)

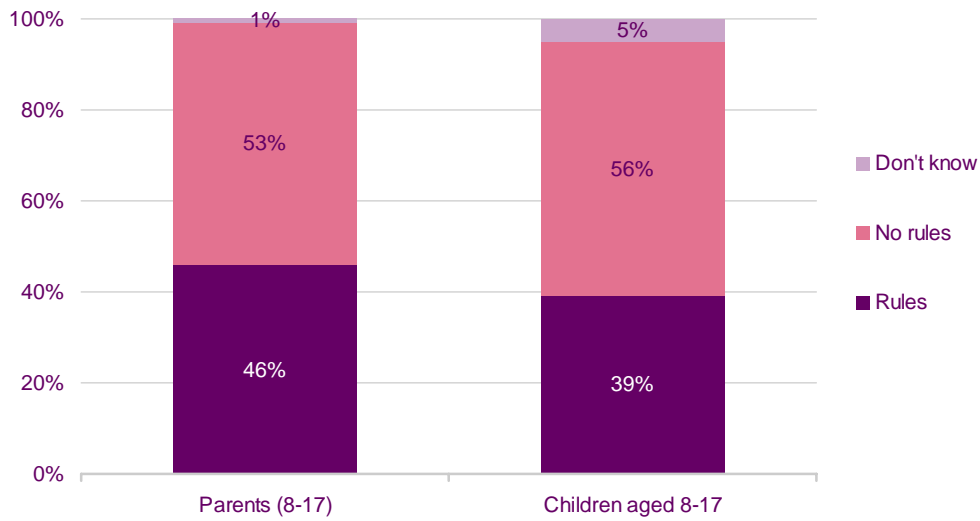
Source: Ofcom – Children, Young People & Online Content, October 2007

Compared with social networking sites, families are less likely to have rules in place around the use of UGC sites (figure 36). 46% of parents with children aged 8-17 who they say have visited these sites say they have rules in place, marginally higher than the 39% of 8-17 year olds who say this is so.

10% of parents of 8-17 year olds whose child has viewed content on UGC sites say that one of their rules is not to visit these sites at all – a similar proportion mention restrictions around the viewing and posting of content.

7% of 8-17 year olds say they are not allowed to visit UGC sites, 12% say there are restrictions on posting content and 13% mention restrictions on viewing content.

**Figure 36 Rules for using UGC sites – parents vs children**



Q: Do you have any rules around the use of user-generated content sites / Do your parents have any rules...?

Base: All who/whose children have visited user-generated content sites: Parents of 8-17 year olds (213), 8-17 (309)

Source: Ofcom – Children, Young People & Online Content, October 2007

## 4. What children are doing online

As well as reporting on how children say they are using the internet, we are also able to analyse what they are actually doing on the internet by examining audience measurement data supplied by Nielsen Online.

Nielsen Online provides user-based data for internet users aged 2 or over. The following analysis is based on data for **home use** of the internet, and as well as presenting data for all internet users, we focus on the use of 6-11 and 12-17 year olds.

### Key findings

- Children aged 6-17 constituted 14.7% of the overall home internet population in August 2007.
- The top 20 websites by unique audience for 6-11 and 12-17 year olds in August 2007 included social networking, user-generated content, and online games websites. A file-sharing website also featured in the top 20 websites for 12-17 year olds.
- Of the member community websites, Bebo has the highest unique audience among 6-11 and 12-17 year olds, reaching 15.4% and 47.7% of internet users in the respective age categories. Among all internet users aged 2+, MySpace had the highest unique audience of all member community websites in August 2007. However, it has since been overtaken by Facebook.
- YouTube is the most commonly visited video-sharing site among all internet users aged 2+, as well as among 6-11 and 12-17 year olds, reaching 25.9% and 44.2% of internet users in the respective age categories.
- MiniClip is the most commonly visited online games site among all internet users aged 2+. It also has the highest unique audience among 6-11 and 12-17 year olds, reaching 13.7% and 16.0% of internet users in the respective age categories.
- Limewire is the most popular file-sharing website among 12-17 year olds, reaching 8.0% of internet users in this age bracket. Children's use of other peer-to-peer file sharing sites cannot be measured using Nielsen Online data, because the age groups have insufficient sample sizes for reliable projection of their use.

### Profile of UGC, SNS and online games websites

An analysis of Nielsen Online demonstrates that the most popular websites among the UK population are relatively diverse and have, by and large, remained stable over the 6-month period from February to August 2007<sup>18</sup> (table 2). The websites featuring in the top ten, in terms of the highest unique audience<sup>19</sup>, include search engines, web portals and shopping

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<sup>18</sup> August data was used as this was the latest period of data available at the time of starting the analysis. Trend data shows only minor variation in the time children and young people spend online in August compared with other months.

<sup>19</sup> A unique audience is defined by Nielsen as the total number of unique persons that have visited a website or used an application at least once in the specified reporting period. Persons visiting the same website or using the same application more than one time in the reporting period are only counted once.

sites. Search functions feature in three of the top four websites (Google, MSN/Windows Live and Yahoo!).

Social networking websites Facebook and Bebo appear in the top twenty, having the 15<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> highest number of unique visits during August 2007. Facebook has risen quickly in popularity; it was only ranked 90<sup>th</sup> six months earlier. MySpace is also present under its brand name Fox Interactive Media (FIM) – according to Nielsen Online, 84% of FIM’s unique audience is contributed by MySpace users. User-generated content site YouTube also features during August 2007.

**Table 2 The top ranked websites, by unique audiences**

Brand	Rank		Category*
	Aug 07	Feb 07	
Google	1	1	Search and navigation
MSN/Windows Live	2	2	Web portal
Microsoft	3	3	Software and applications
Yahoo!	4	4	Web portal
BBC	5	5	News and information
eBay	6	6	Shopping
Apple	7	7	Technology and entertainment
Amazon	8	8	Shopping
YouTube	9	13	Video-sharing
Real Network	10	9	Media player
AOL Media Network	11	10	Web portal
Fox Interactive Media	12	12	Member community / entertainment
Ask Search Network	13	14	Search and navigation
Wikipedia	14	11	Information
Facebook	15	90	Member community
Lycos Europe	16	15	Web portal
Virgin Media	17	16	Entertainment and communications
Bebo	18	22	Member community
Tesco	19	19	Shopping
PayPal	20	17	Online trading

Source: Nielsen Online (sites highlighted represent UGC or SNS sites) /\*Ofcom categorisation

## Mapping sites of interest to this paper to Nielsen categories

The types of website that we are particularly interested in for this report are social networking services, those containing user-generated content and online games sites. We have attempted to map these website types onto Nielsen's own sub-categories. Websites can suggest which Nielsen category they think they belong to, but ultimately Nielsen decides how each site is categorised.

The Nielsen sub-categories which we have deemed to contain the largest number of relevant websites are 'member communities'<sup>20</sup>, 'videos/movies'<sup>21</sup>, 'photography'<sup>22</sup> and 'online games'<sup>23</sup>. However, these categorisations are relatively broad and also contain a number of sites which are not of interest to this report. It should also be noted that it is possible that a few sites relevant to our purposes may fall into other Nielsen categories and therefore will have been missed.

As the Nielsen sub-categories are quite wide we have assessed what percentage of the sites in each sub-category are of interest to the Byron Review. To do this we have restricted ourselves to websites which attracted at least 2.5% of their category's total audience in August 2007.

- For member communities we found that 100% of these met with our expectation of a social networking service.
- In the videos/movies category 35% of the top sites contain a significant amount of user-generated content and this rises to 58% of sites in the photography category; examples of sites not relevant to our study in these two categories are film recommendation sites and photo management/printing sites.
- 73% of the top online games sites are made up of sites providing such games; the other sites in the category focus on games news and reviews.

Figure 37 shows that member community sites are the most popular of the four sub-categories and are visited by over half of all internet users, with this figure increasing from 55% in February 2007 to 58% in August 2007.

Video and photo sites have also increased in popularity and reach a high proportion of internet users, 45% and 27% respectively. YouTube alone had over 1.5 million more users in August 2007 than it did six months earlier, taking its unique audience to over 7 million.

Online games sites remained stable over the 6-month period, having been visited by 34% of the internet population – which equates to over 8 million unique users.

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<sup>20</sup> Examples of member community sites are Bebo, Facebook, MySpace and Blogger

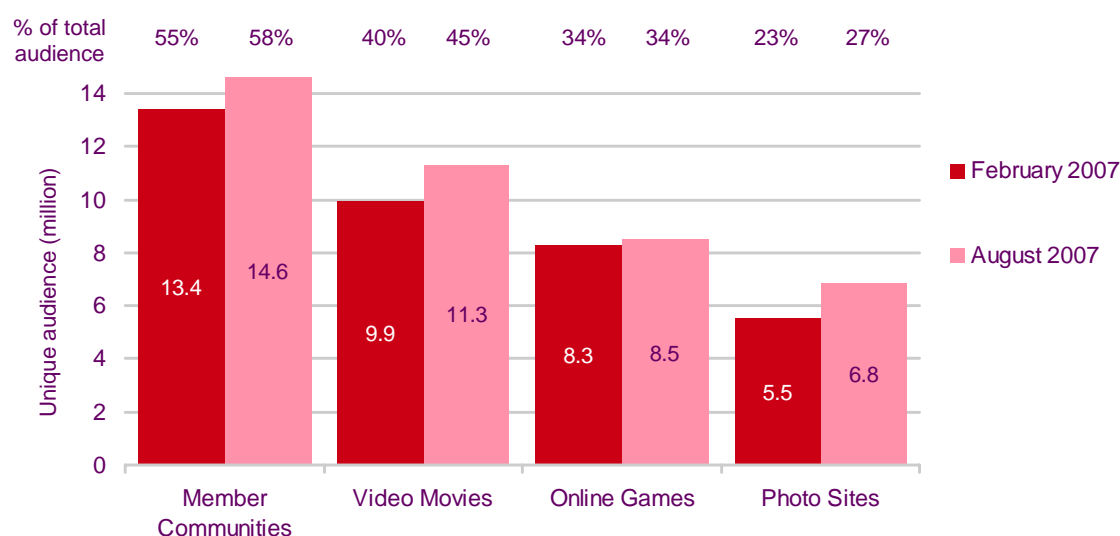
<sup>21</sup> Examples of videos/movies sites are YouTube, Google Video, Odeon, and VideoEgg

<sup>22</sup> Examples of photography sites are Slide, Photobucket, Flickr, Kodak and Jessops

<sup>23</sup> Examples of online games sites are MiniClip, GameSpot, RealArcade Network and Electronic Arts



**Figure 37 Unique website audiences, by sub-category**



Source: Nielsen Online

Screen Digest and ComScore have also provided some data about the UK online video market for adults, from which YouTube emerges as the top online video site in terms of both unique audience and streams per video user (table 3). The data also show how YouTube sits high above the online offerings of the mainstream broadcasters.

**Table 3 UK online video metrics**

	Video users (mil)	Streams per video user	Video users as % of total visitors
Google/YouTube	17.0	51	62
Yahoo	4.0	11	19
BBC	5.0	7	24
DivX (Stage 6)	2.0	14	93
Channel 4	2.0	8	31
ITV	0.7	4	20
Channel 5	0.2	2	40
Sky sites	0.1	2	3

Sources: Screen Digest, ComScore (quoted in *Converging Media* 19/10/2007)

### Children and UGC, SNS and online games websites

The children's age categories focused on in this section, 6-11 year olds and 12-17 year olds, accounted for 6.0% and 8.7% respectively of the overall internet population in August 2007. The average 6-11 year old who uses the internet viewed 430 pages and spent 12¼ hours online during the month; 12-17 year olds more than doubled this, having viewed an average of 1,071 pages and spent 23¾ hours online<sup>24</sup>. This is still less than the average internet user

<sup>24</sup> Figures showing time spent online sourced from Nielsen Online and those presented in figures 12 & 13 will vary due to differences in methodology used. Nielsen Online data is based on tracking actual use of the internet and the data from the *Young People & Media* survey is based on claimed average use.

across all age groups, who spent almost 30 hours online and looked at an average of 1,356 pages.

The website brands which had the highest number of unique child users in August 2007 are very similar to those ranked as most popular for adults; and this is particularly true for 12-17 year olds (table 4). The younger age group's top website brands include sites popularised by children's TV channels – Disney Online and Nickelodeon, but also includes SNS, UGC and online games sites. The most popular social networking site among 6-11 year olds is Bebo, followed by MySpace (a constituent part of Fox Interactive Media). However, Bebo has an age minimum of 13 and MySpace members must be 14 or older.

**Table 4 The top ranked children's website brands by unique audience, August 2007**

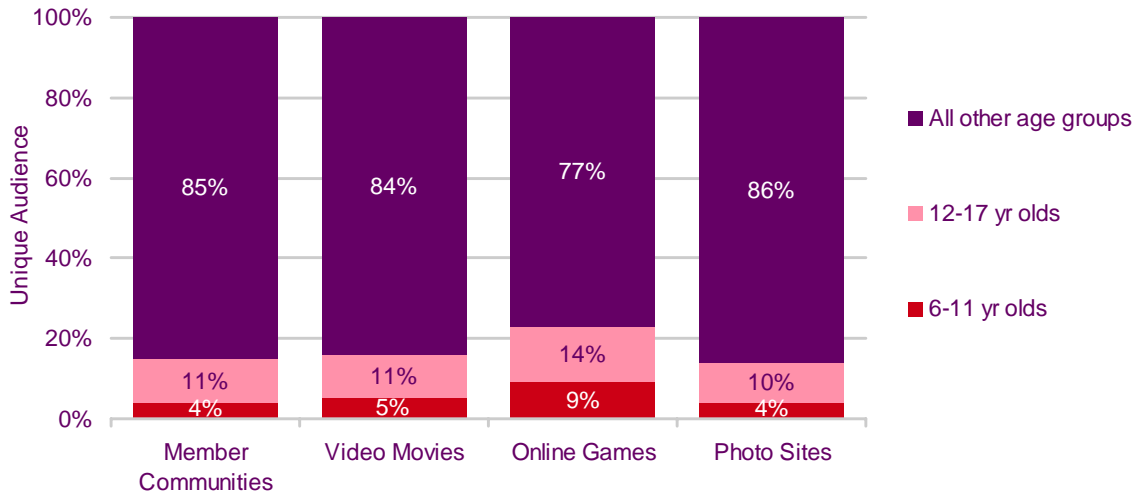
Rank	6-11 year olds	Category	12-17 year olds	Category
1	Google	Search and navigation	Google	Search and navigation
2	MSN/Windows Live	Web portal	MSN/Windows Live	Web portal
3	BBC	News and information	Microsoft	Software and applications
4	Yahoo!	Web portal	Bebo	Member community
5	Microsoft	Software and applications	YouTube	Video-sharing
6	eBay	Shopping	Apple	Technology and entertainment
7	YouTube	Video-sharing	BBC	News and information
8	AOL Media Network	Web portal	Yahoo!	Web portal
9	Apple	Technology and entertainment	Fox Interactive Media	Member community / entertainment
10	Ask Search Network	Search and navigation	eBay	Shopping
11	Disney Online	Children's entertainment	Real Network	Media player
12	Amazon	Shopping	AOL Media Network	Web portal
13	Real Network	Media player	Ask Search Network	Search and navigation
14	Fox Interactive Media	Member community / entertainment	Wikipedia	Information
15	Bebo	Member community	Amazon	Shopping
16	Nickelodeon Kids and Family Network	Children's entertainment	Lycos Europe	Web portal
17	MiniClip	Online games	MiniClip	Online games
18	Club Penguin	Member community / online games	Slide	Photo-sharing
19	Virgin Media	Entertainment and communications	LimeWire	File-sharing
20	Shopping.com Network	Shopping	Virgin Media	Entertainment and communications

Source: Nielsen Online (sites highlighted represent UGC, SNS, online games or file-sharing sites) / \*Ofcom categorisation

The percentages of users of each website category who are children are similar across the member community and audio-visual categories, with roughly 15% of users of these sites being aged between 6 and 17 years old (figure 38). This mirrors the overall make-up of

children using the internet during August 2007 – which was 14.7%. Online games, however, have a larger than average proportion of young visitors, with 23% of their users being children, and 60% of these falling into the 12-17 age group.

**Figure 38 Website sub-categories by age, August 2007**



Source: Nielsen Online

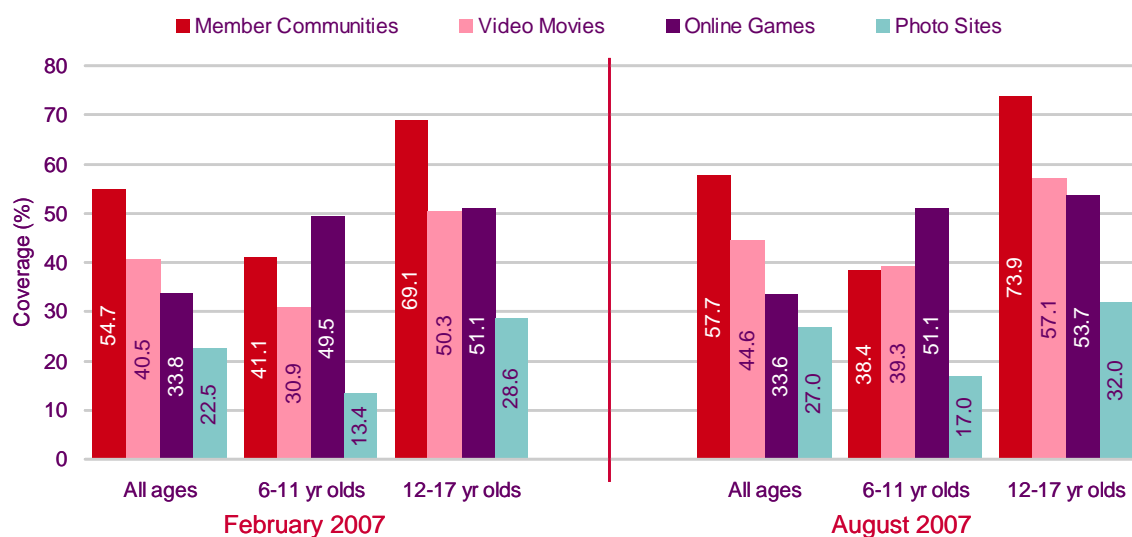
Figure 39 illustrates that of the four categories, member communities had the highest coverage of 12-17 year olds, up from 69.1% in February 2007 to 73.9% in August 2007<sup>25</sup>. However, for the younger age group online games were the most popular, reaching over half of the age group in August 2007.

All four categories have increased their coverage over the 6-month period across both age groups, apart from member communities in the 6-11 year old category, which declined slightly.

Video movies saw the greatest rise in the percentage of children visiting the sites over the 6-month period, increasing respectively by 27.3% for 6-11 year olds and by 13.4% for 12-17 year olds.

<sup>25</sup> Nielsen defines coverage as the percentage of unique persons falling within a specific demographic target that visited a particular website or used a particular application.

**Figure 39 Demographic coverage of website categories<sup>26</sup>**



Source: Nielsen Online

### Member communities

This section focuses on the member community services which feature highly among the child and teen audiences. Therefore, sites such as Friends Reunited, aimed at adults wishing to reunite with old acquaintances, are not included.

Among 12-17 year olds, Bebo had more coverage than any other website in any of the Nielsen categories we are focusing on, reaching almost half of all internet users in this age group (figure 40). Bebo is an online community which, among its many features, allows users to connect with friends, personalise their own page, share photos and write blogs. Bebo’s nearest counterpart, MySpace, which works in a very similar way, also reached a substantive proportion of the 12-17 age group – 30% in August 2007.

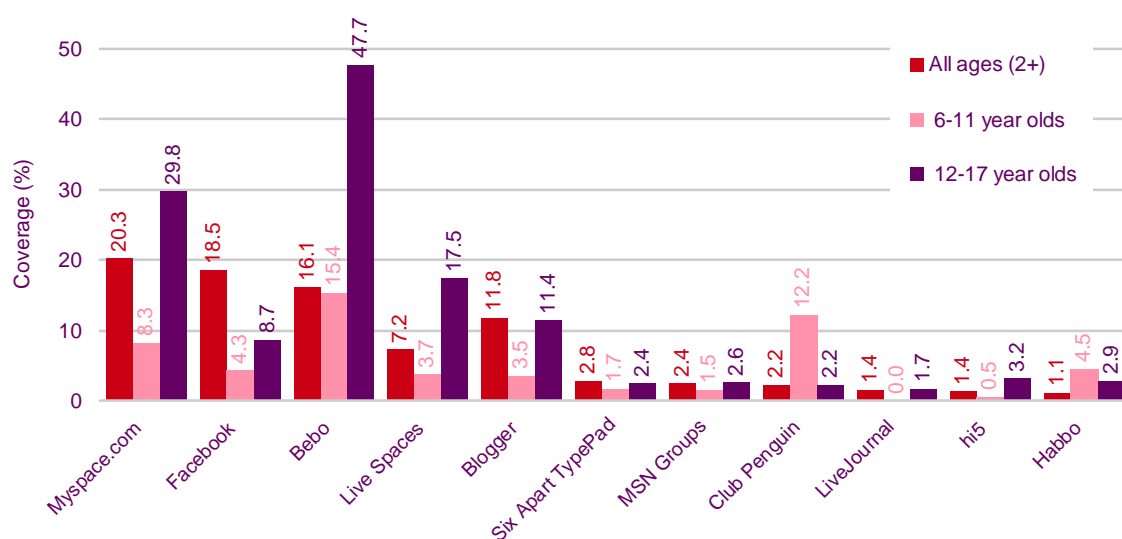
Another comparable site, Facebook, had less coverage among children and teens than it did with overall internet users during August, perhaps due to the fact it was originally created to connect Harvard University students and therefore has less of a child-focused look and feel.

The social networking services popular among children come in a number of guises and their boundaries with online games and user-generated content sites are blurred. Club Penguin, a subscription site particularly popular among younger children, is a virtual world where children can interact and play games with each other. Blogger, on the other hand, is a blog publishing system, where visitors create their own blogs, comment on other people’s blogs and connect to each other.

Another popular site, Habbo, is a ‘virtual hotel’ where “teenagers can hang out and chat” and each user is represented by a personalized character. However, despite the fact that Habbo is specifically aimed at teens, it received a much higher coverage among the 6-11 year old age group, with 4.5% of those online having viewed the site in August, than among the 12-17 year olds, where a comparative 2.9% of those online accessed the site.

<sup>26</sup> Nielsen defines coverage as the percentage of unique persons falling within a specific demographic target that visited a particular website or used a particular application.

**Figure 40 Coverage of selected member community sites, August 2007**



Source: Nielsen Online

### Video-sharing and photo-sharing sites

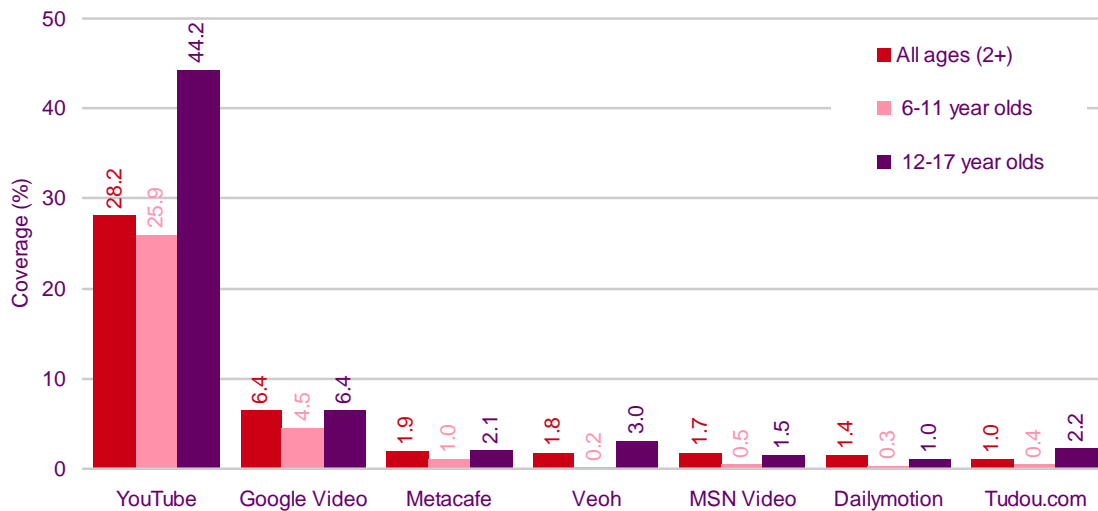
Sites containing user-generated content sites fall into two broad areas: those which focus on sharing video content and those that are based on sharing still photographs. Some sites, such as Photobucket, cover all areas; from image and video hosting to photo sharing and slideshow creation.

Video-sharing site YouTube was by far the most popular UGC site across all age groups in August 2007, with over five times more 6-11 and 12-17 year olds accessing it than its nearest competitor, Google Video (figure 41). YouTube, created in early 2005 and bought out by Google in October 2006, displays a wide variety of professional and amateur content and its popularity has led to the creation of many YouTube internet celebrities who attract publicity through their videos.

Most of the other websites in this category provide video-sharing services with similar content. For example, Google's own-branded video-sharing and video search engine site, Google Video, allows anyone to upload videos to the Google server. MetaCafe states that it "specializes in short-form original content - from new, emerging talents and established Hollywood heavyweights alike".

However, the one major difference between sites in this category is whether their content is pre- or post-moderated. YouTube and Google Video's content, for example, is post-moderated, with users themselves flagging videos which they deem to be unacceptable. Metacafe, on the other hand, distributes uploaded videos to a community of volunteer reviewers, which report any videos which violate the websites guidelines before they appear on the site; Metacafe warns that this process can take up to seven days. According to Wikipedia (yet to be confirmed by a native speaker) China-based Tudou has in-house reviewers who screen 100% of the content before it is approved for the site.

**Figure 41 Coverage of selected video-sharing sites, August 2007**



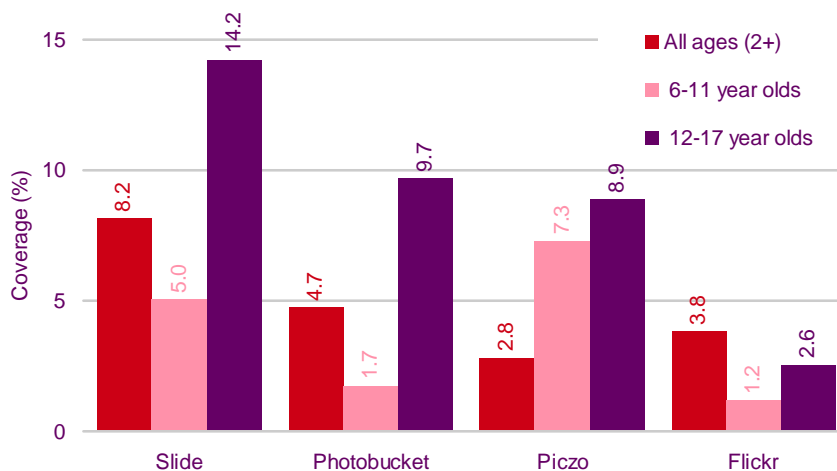
Source: Nielsen Online

Slide, a provider of photo-sharing applications for social networking sites, was the most visited photo-sharing site among teens in August 2007 - reaching 14.2% of online 12-17 year olds. Slide also includes features like Slide Shows, Guestbooks (where friends can add photos and comments) and FunPix (where users can add stickers, themes and skins to their pictures). These are popular on the social networking services, including MySpace, Facebook and Bebo (Figure 42).

Piczo, viewed by 7.3% of 6-11 year olds and 8.9% of 12-17 year olds using the internet, is categorised by Nielsen as a photo site, but it also enables users to create their own personal websites by uploading images, text content, message boxes and more.

Photo-sharing site Flickr, which received higher coverage across all age groups than it did among children, enables photos to be classified using 'Folksonomy'. This means that users can categorize images by using keyword 'tags' (metadata), to enable photos on a particular topic to be found.

**Figure 42 Coverage of selected photo-sharing sites, August 2007**



Source: Nielsen Online

## Online games

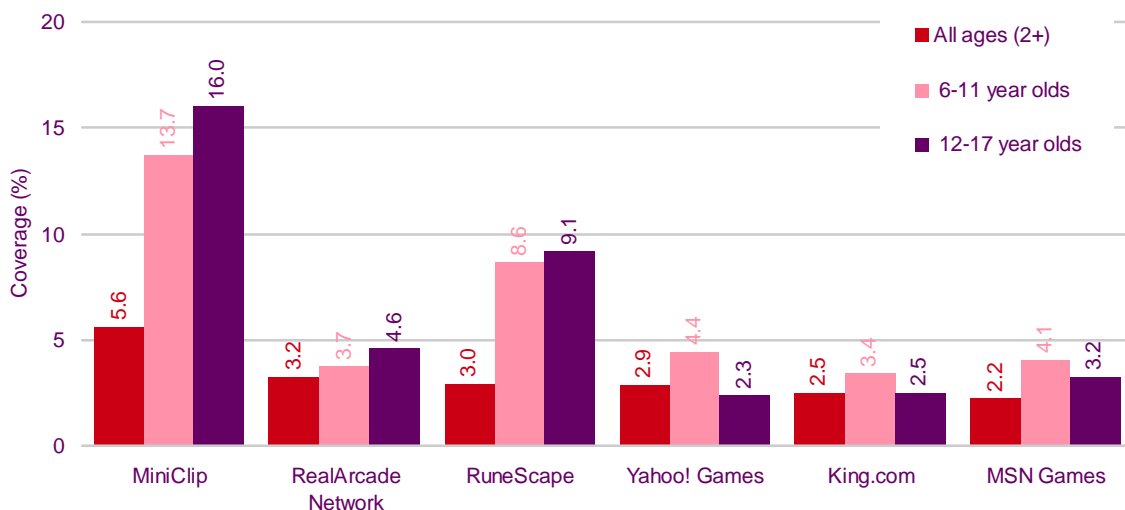
RuneScape and MiniClip were the clear leaders among children in the UK online games category during August 2007, and were also the two most popular sites six months earlier, in February 2007.

MiniClip, which reached 13.7% of 6-11 year olds and 19.0% of 12-17 year olds using the internet (figure 43), is the world's largest online games website and claims to have 34 million unique users a month. MiniClip holds over 300 free-to-use game titles, which range from single-player to large multiplayer games. The site's popularity originally grew from a game which enabled players to control President George Bush's dance moves called *Dancing Bush*.

MiniClip's closest competitor in the children's market during August 2007, RuneScape, reached roughly 9% of internet users in both the younger and older children's age groups. Offering both free and subscription content, RuneScape is classed as a 'massively multiplayer online role-playing game' (MMORPG) in which a large number of players can interact with each other in a virtual world. A fantasy-themed role playing game, it enables as many as two thousand people to play on a single server at any one time.

Other popular free online games sites include Yahoo! Games, King.com and MSN Games, alongside RealArcade Network which offers free downloadable games. Club Penguin, classified by Nielsen as a member community, but which has games as the large majority of its content, would also feature highly if compared against the online games sites, as it reached over 12% of internet users in the 6-11 year old category.

**Figure 43 Coverage of selected online games sites, August 2007**



Source: Nielsen Online

## Peer-to-peer (P2P) file-sharing sites

Peer-to-peer (P2P) file-sharing networks are networks in which users exchange files directly between each other rather than uploading / downloading files to a central storage space, as on YouTube or Flickr. P2P technology allows users to search other people's hard drives for shared files and download them directly to their own hard drive. The downloaded file can then be shared with other people in the network.

In a pure P2P network a user must have at least one connection to a second user in order to be part of the network. The second user must have at least one other connection to a third user, etc. Any search query is thus propagated from user to user until it 'expires' (times out) or until it is 'matched' (a file is found). Examples of P2P networks include Gnutella and Fasttrack. In order to connect to a P2P network a user must have an application such as *Kazaa*, *eDonkey*, *Limewire* etc.

### **P2P site technology descriptions:**

**Bit Torrent** is a P2P file distribution protocol that allows users to create simultaneous connections to multiple sources, therefore reducing the traffic load on individual sources. In order to use Bit Torrent a user requires a client application; to download a shared file the user must first download the associated 'torrent' file that contains information about the shared file to be downloaded. The torrent file is usually hosted on a tracker/indexer; a website that tracks the user hosting the shared file. Access to the torrent files, and therefore to the shared files, can be controlled by the website. Popular tracker/indexer websites include PirateBay and Mininova, and popular Bit Torrent clients include Azureus, uTorrent, BitComet etc.

**Gnutella** is a decentralised P2P network that relies on pre-determined connections between users in order to search for shared files. Each user has a number of connections with other users, who in turn have connections with further users. So a search request initiated by one user will be forwarded to their immediate connections, who will then forward it to their connections and so on, until a sufficient number of requests have been made and the file is found (or not). Once the file is found a connection is created between the user who requested the file and the user hosting the file and the transfer is initiated. Popular client applications that use the Gnutella network include *LimeWire* and *Morpheus*. **LimeWire's** code is open source, is freely available to the public and developed in part by a programmer community.

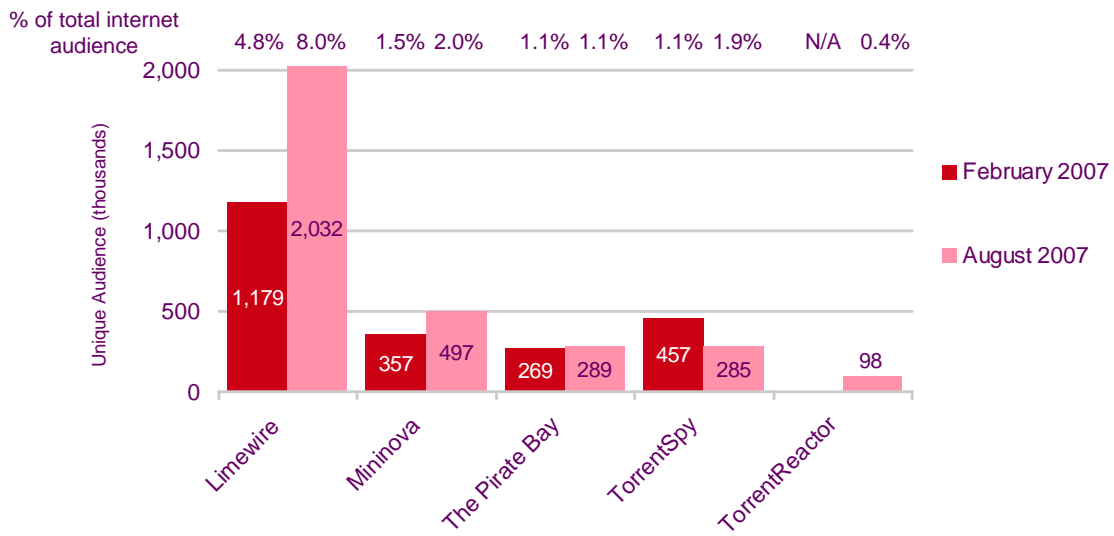
**Fasttrack** is a P2P file sharing network similar in operation to the Gnutella network, with additional support for downloading from multiple peers. Popular client applications include *Kazaa* and *MLDonkey*.

**Soulseek** is a centralised file sharing network; i.e. it relies on a server that facilitates searching. The network is used for sharing music files, although sharing of other content is also possible. A dedicated client application is used for accessing the network.

P2P sites feature in the multi-category entertainment sub-category within the Nielsen entertainment category. Unique audience and active reach figures can be obtained for these sites, with the exception of Limewire, where children's usage profiles cannot be calculated, because the age groups have insufficient sample sizes for reliable projection of demographic measures (figure 44). In August 2007 Limewire had a coverage of 13.9% among 12-17 year olds (figures not available for 6-11 year olds).



**Figure 44 Coverage of selected peer-to-peer file sharing sites, August 2007**



Source: Nielsen Online

## 5. Rules and restrictions

This section looks at the rules put in place by parents for different media (in particular the restrictions set around use of the internet) and how proactive parents are in ensuring they make the internet a safe and enjoyable experience for their children.

### Key findings

- 86% cent of parents of 5-7 year olds say that they have rules governing use of the internet – in comparison 66% of 5-7 year olds say there are such rules. This gap may be explained by the types of rules the two groups say exist. A greater proportion of parents mention rules such as ‘regularly checking on children’, ‘supervised use only’ and ‘only visiting children’s websites’ compared to their children; however, parents may see these as restrictions but for young children they may be seen as the norm.
- 68% of parents of 8-17 year olds, compared with 64% of 8-17 year olds, say they have restrictions around the use of the internet – the presence of rules declining as the child’s age increases. The most mentioned rules by 8-17 year olds and by their parents are ‘regularly checking up on the child’, ‘supervised use’ and ‘not giving out personal information’. In almost all cases children tend to be less aware of any specific rules, suggesting that specific rules that are important to parents are possibly not being effectively communicated to children.
- When asked whether they thought their child had given out personal details online, 9% of parents of 5-7 year olds and 23% of parents of 8-17 year olds said they thought their child had done this. When children were asked whether they had given out personal details online, 11% of 5-7 year olds and 36% of 8-17 year olds said yes - rising to 61% of 16-17 year olds. Interestingly 71% of parents who use the internet said they had given out personal details themselves. However, this may be due to the differences in internet uses across the two groups, with parents more likely to use banking facilities and to purchase goods/services online.
- Parents and children were asked about a number of things they may or may not have discussed with their child to make the internet a safe experience for them, such as how to stay safe online, how to search for information effectively and what the child can and cannot do online. Responses suggest that children and parents are in broad agreement about what has been discussed or explained. 75% of all parents say they have taken at least one of the precautions asked about - younger parents, those in DE households and those whose child only uses the internet outside the home are less likely to have done any of these.
- 57% of parents whose child uses the internet say they are unaware of sources they can turn to in order to get information about how to protect their child online. This is skewed towards younger parents, C2DE parents and those who rate themselves as beginners.
- Both parents and children were asked about whether or not they were aware of software which can control or block access to certain websites/content. Overall awareness is high, with 82% of parents of 8-17 year olds and 74% of 8-17 year olds saying they are aware of this type of software.
- Just over half of parents (54%) with internet access at home say they currently use this type of software. Of those parents who say they have never used filtering

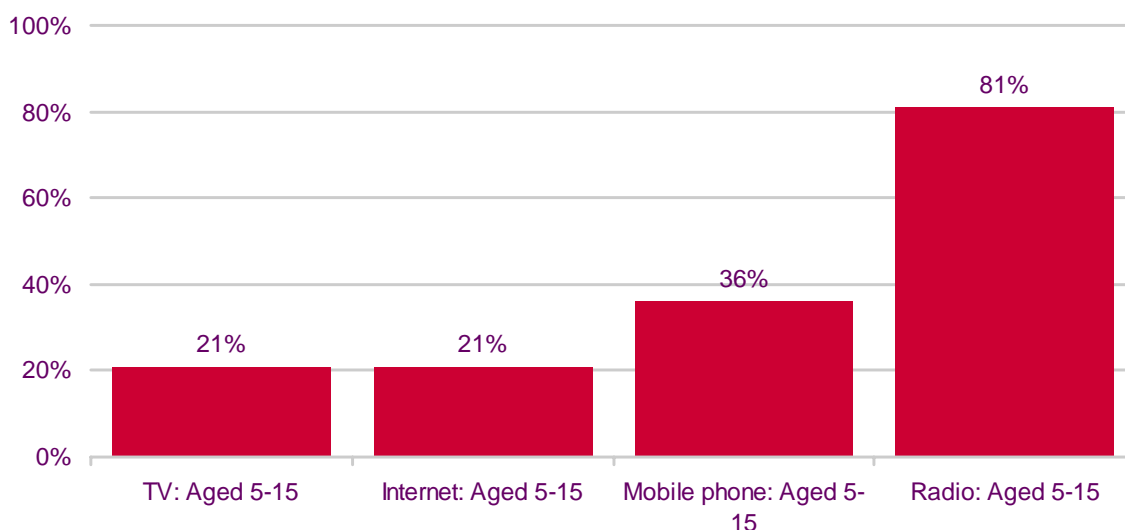
software but say they are aware that it exists (19%) the reason most frequently given for this is that they 'trust in their child'. Parents' trust in their children is further highlighted by responses to the statement, 'I trust my child to use the internet safely' - 90% of those with 8-17 year olds agree with this and 93% of 8-17 year olds agree that their parents trust them.

- 15% of parents of 8-17 year olds using filtering software say their child can unset or bypass its controls. When children were asked whether or not they could override the controls, a further gap between parents' knowledge and what children say they can do was highlighted - 33% of 8-17 year olds claimed they could bypass the controls.

### Current rules and restrictions

Results of Ofcom's *Young People & Media* tracking study show that four out of five (79%) households with children have rules governing children's use/viewing of television, videos and DVDs, including: no viewing of sexual or violent content, restrictions around when they can view and only watching DVDs/videos suitable for their age. When asked about rules around the use of mobile phones, 64% of households where children have their own mobile phones have restrictions, which tend to be cost related, such as limits on how often credit can be put on the phone account (35%), and the rule that children are responsible for their own top-ups/bills (17%). In comparison, the majority (81%) of households with children who listen to the radio have no rules or restrictions around radio listening (figure 45).

**Figure 45 Rules & restrictions by medium – no rules in household**



Q: Do you have any of these rules or restrictions about .....? – No rules

Base: Parents of children aged 5-15 who partake in each activity

Source: Ofcom – *Young People & Media*, April - September 2007

Table 5, below, summarises the findings of the *Children, Young People & Online Content* research, looking at whether or not households have rules regarding the use of the internet.

86% of parents of 5-7 year olds say that there are rules in place – in comparison 66% of 5-7 year olds say there are.

68% of parents of 8-17 year olds and 64% of 8-17 year olds say they have restrictions around the use of the internet – and the presence of rules declines as the child’s age increases.

Parents in C1 (76%) and C2 (77%) households are more likely to say that rules exist, as are those who rate themselves as advanced/expert (82%), and those who currently use filtering software (81%). Those parents who say they have concerns about content on the internet (74%), those who say they have rules in place around social networking sites (74%), and those who say they have rules on UGC sites (74%), are only marginally more likely to say they have rules in place more generally for use of the internet.

Only 57% of those parents whose child accesses the internet only outside the home, and 62% of DE parents, say there are restrictions in place.

These results highlight the variations between demographic groups in setting rules governing use of the internet; those with greater knowledge are more likely to set rules and those whose children only access the internet outside the home are less likely to apply restrictions. However, the fact that parents whose children access the internet outside the home are less likely to have rules in place could be related to the fact that the majority of these children are most likely to be using it at school, and therefore parents may feel less need to set rules for these children.

**Table 5 Rules and restrictions around internet use: summary**

		5-7 year olds	8-17 year olds	8-11 year olds	12-15 year olds	16-17 year olds
<b>Child responses</b>						
Rules		66%	64%	71%	59%	59%
No rules		27%	36%	29%	41%	41%
<b>Parent responses</b>	<b>All</b>					
Rules	71%	86%	68%	81%	69%	50%
No rules	29%	14%	32%	19%	31%	50%

*Q: Do you / your parents have any rules or restrictions about using the internet?*

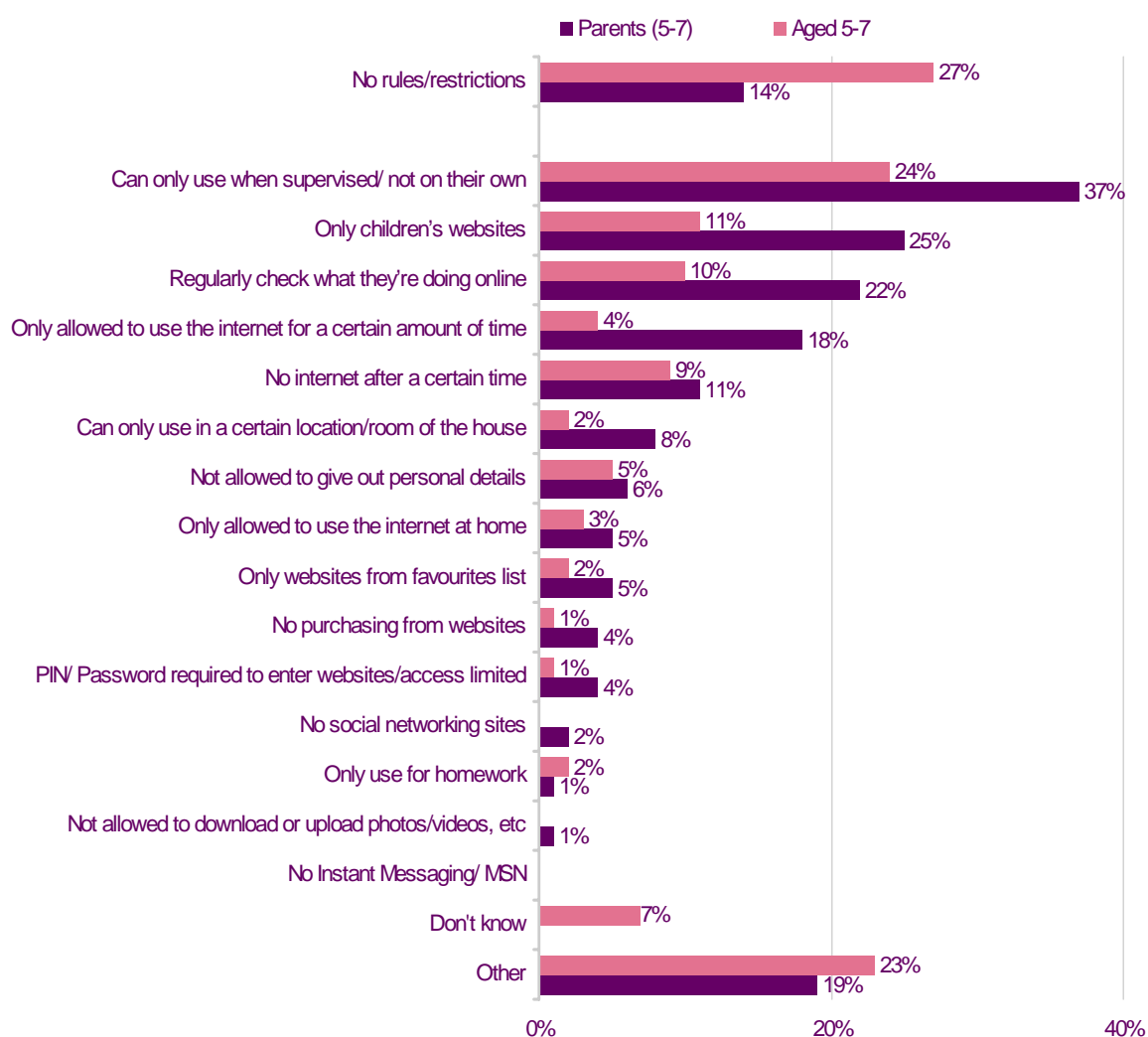
*Base: All who/whose children use(s) the internet: Parents of 5-17 year olds (621), parents of 8-17 year olds (526), children aged 5-7 (118), 8-11 (198), 12-15 (208), 16-17 (107)*

*5-7 year olds asked what rules rather than restrictions*

*Source: Ofcom – Children, Young People & Online Content, October 2007*

The knowledge gap that we noticed between the responses of 5-7 year olds and their parents about rules for internet use may be explained by the types of rules the two groups say exist (figure 46). A greater proportion of parents mention rules such as regularly checking on children, supervised use only and only visiting children’s websites compared with their children – while parents may see these as restrictions, children may see them as the norm.

**Figure 46 Rules and restrictions for internet use: parent vs. children: 5-7 year olds**



Q: Do you / your parents have any rules or restrictions about using the internet?

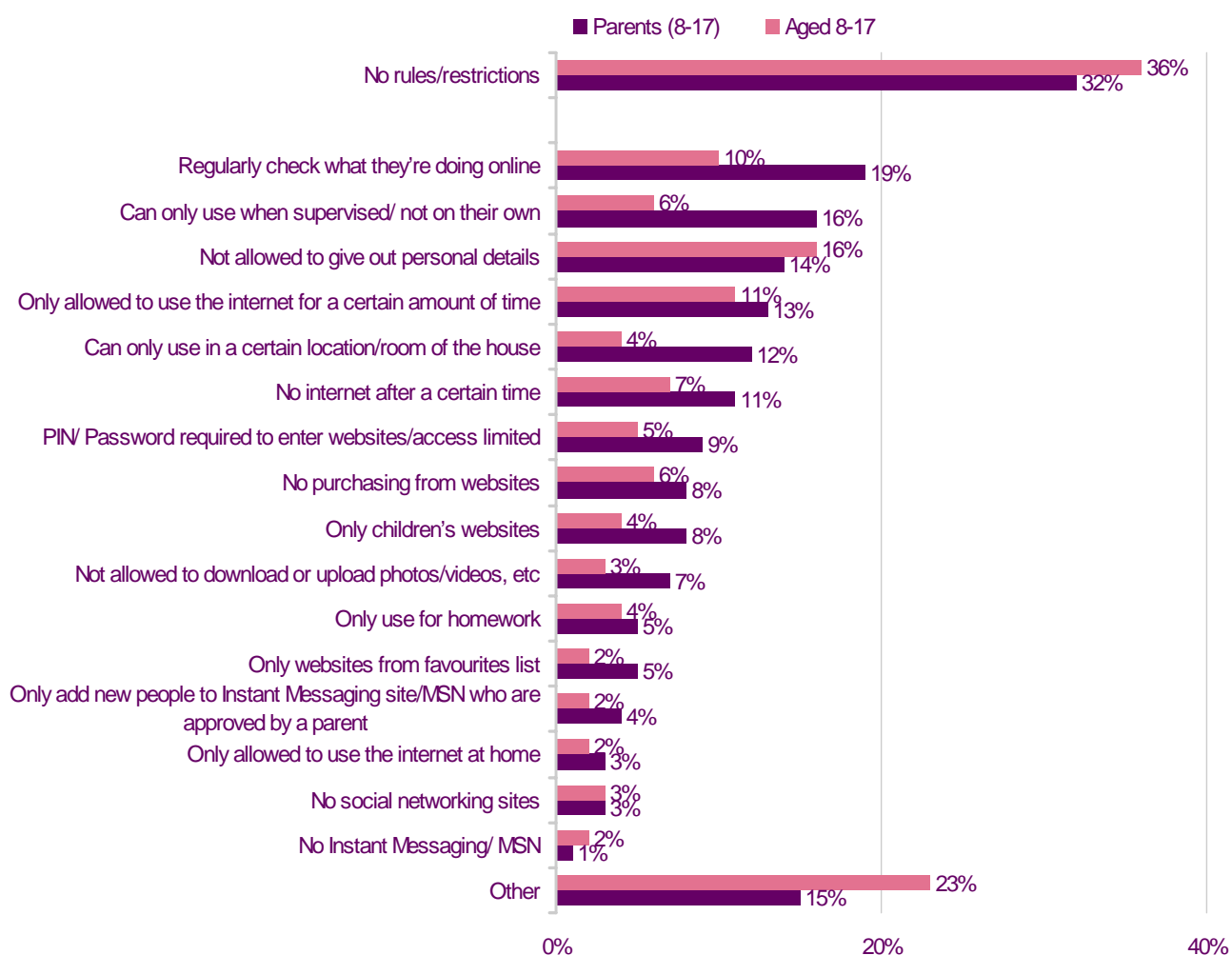
Base: All who/whose children use(s) the internet: Parents of 5-7 year olds (95), children aged 5-7 (118)

5-7 year olds asked what rules rather than restrictions

Source: Ofcom – Children, Young People & Online Content, October 2007

The most mentioned rules by 8-17 year olds and their parents are: regularly checking up on the child, supervised use and not giving out personal information. In almost all cases children tend to be less aware of specific rules, suggesting that specific rules that are important for parents are not being effectively communicated to children (figure 47).

**Figure 47 Rules and restrictions for internet use: parent versus children: 8-17 year olds**



Q: Do you / your parents have any rules or restrictions about using the internet?

Base: All who/whose children use(s) the internet: Parents of 8-17 year olds (526), children aged 8-17 (513)

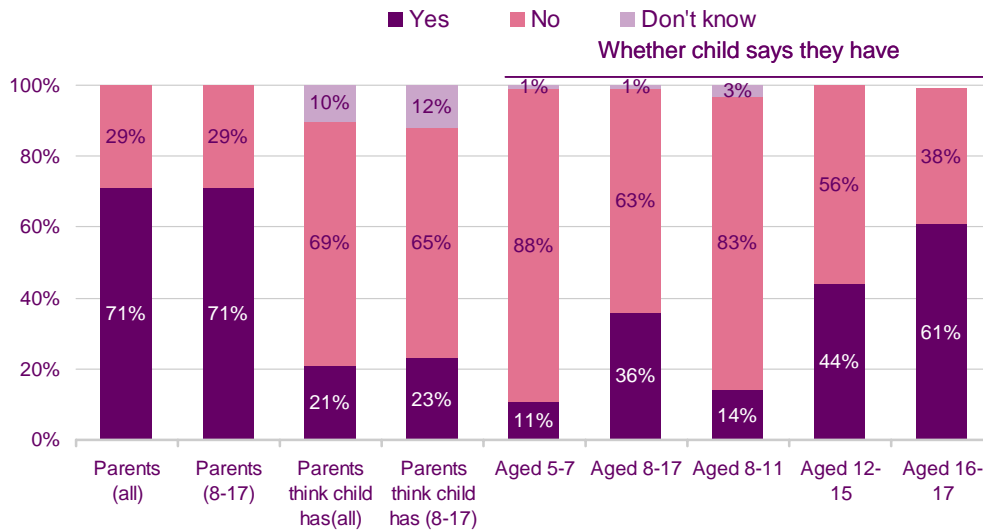
Source: Ofcom – Children, Young People & Online Content, October 2007

6% of parents of 5-7 year olds and 14% of parents of 8-17 year olds who use the internet spontaneously mention: ‘not allowed to give out personal details’ as one of the restrictions in place. However, when specifically asked about the giving out of details, 88% of parents agree with the statement: ‘it’s a risk that children may give out personal or private information online’ – suggesting that this issue may not be particularly top-of-mind for parents, or that they do not think specific rules for this are needed for their children.

When asked whether they thought their child had given out personal details online, 9% of parents of 5-7 year olds and 23% of parents of 8-17 year olds said they thought their child had done this. When children were asked whether they had given out personal details online, 11% of 5-7 year olds and 36% of 8-17 year olds said yes - rising to 61% of 16-17 year olds. Interestingly, 71% of parents who use the internet said they had given out personal details themselves (figure 48). However, this may be due to the differences in internet uses across the two groups, with parents more likely to use banking facilities and to purchase goods/services online.

The differences between responses to spontaneous and prompted questions about giving out personal information, and the differences between parents' understanding of whether or not their children had given out details, and children's actual behaviour, together suggest that although this is an issue for parents, they are not enforcing this strongly with their children, and indeed are fairly relaxed about giving out information themselves.

**Figure 48 Giving out personal details online: parents vs children**



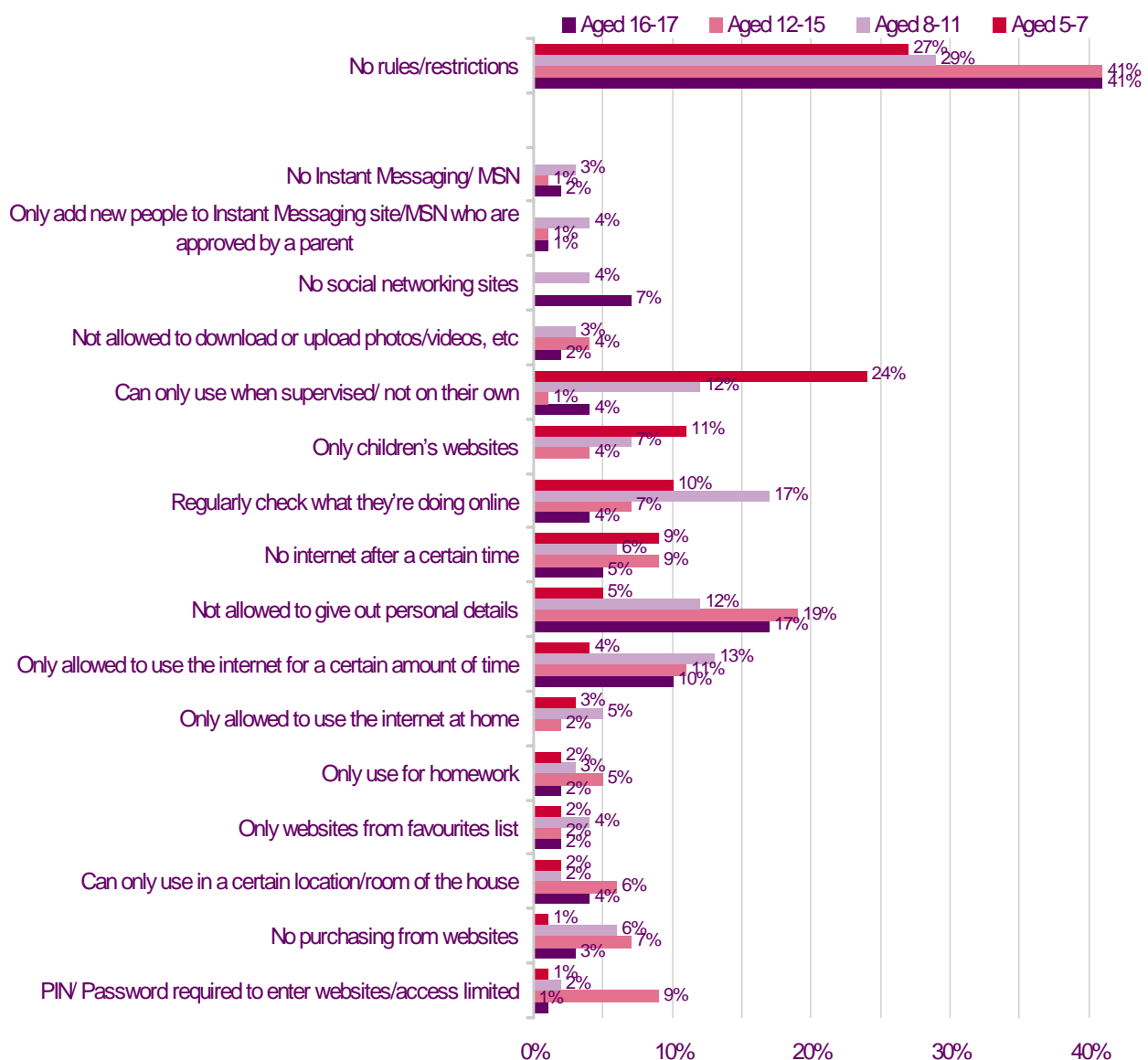
*Q: Have you/has your child ever given out personal details such as your name, address or date of birth online?*

*Base: All who/whose children use(s) the internet: Parents who use the internet (543), parents of 5-17 year olds who use the internet (621), parents of 8-17 year olds who use the internet(526), children aged 5-7 (118), children aged 8-11 (198), children aged 12-15(208), children aged 16-17(107)*

*Source: Ofcom – Children, Young People & Online Content, October 2007*

Older children are more likely to say that no rules are in place; but the rules they do have are likely to be about the length of time they spend on the internet, or about giving out personal details.(figure 49).

**Figure 49 Rules and restrictions for internet use: child responses, by age of child**



Q: Do your parents have any rules or restrictions about using the Internet?

Base: All who use the internet: Children aged 5-7 (118), 8-11 (198), 12-15 (208), 16-17 (107)

Source: Ofcom – Children, Young People & Online Content, October 2007

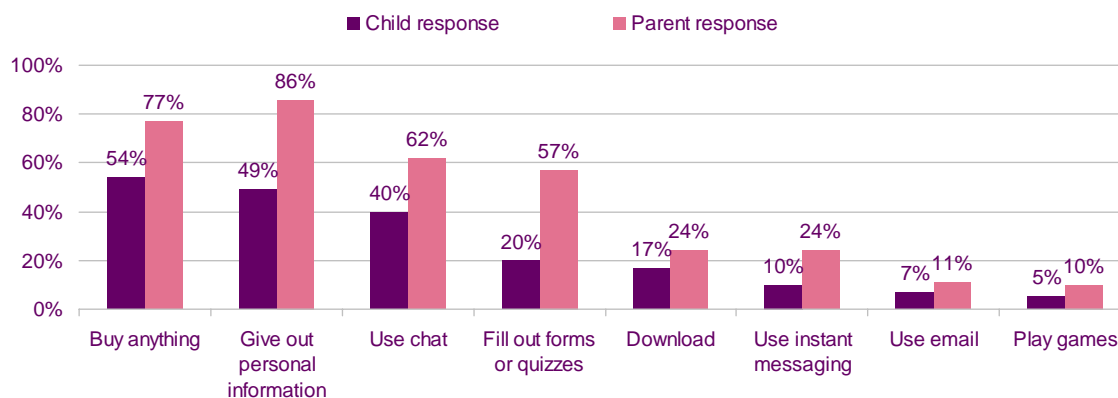
The *UK Children Go Online*<sup>27</sup> study conducted in 2004 asked children and parents about the rules and restrictions they had in place around using the internet. This study found significant differences between the restrictions parents and children said were in place, as well as the type of monitoring used by parents. For example, 86% of parents said their child was not allowed to give out personal information, whereas only 49% of children mentioned this. 81% of parents in the 2004 study said that they asked their child what he/she was doing online – only 25% of children said this was the case (figure 50 & 51).

<sup>27</sup> S. Livingstone & M.Bober (July 2004) *UK Children Go Online - Surveying the experiences of young people and their parents*. <http://personal.lse.ac.uk/bober/UKCGOsurveyreport.pdf>



It is important to note that this study presented respondents with a range of possible measures and asked whether these were used within the household. The 2007 *Children, Young People & Online Content* asked for spontaneous responses to the question about which rules were in place. This difference in questioning approach is likely to be driving the higher proportions of respondents mentioning specific rules in the 2004 study than in 2007, rather than a dramatic reduction in the precautions parents are taking.

**Figure 50 Restrictions around the use of the internet - 2004**

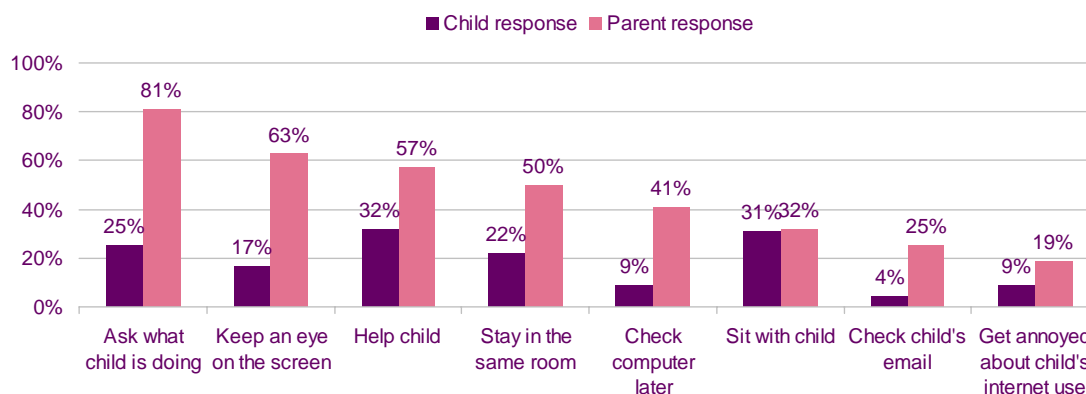


Q: Are there any things which you are (your child is) not allowed to do on the internet...? (Multiple response)

Base: 9-19 year olds who use the internet at least once a week - 1257; Parents of 9-17 year olds whose child has home internet access - 677

Source: UK Children Go Online, 2004

**Figure 51 What parents do when child is using the internet - 2004**



Q: What parents do when child is using the internet (Multiple response)

Base: 9-17 years who live with parent(s) and use the internet at least once a week - 1060; Parents of 9-17 year olds whose child has home internet access - 677

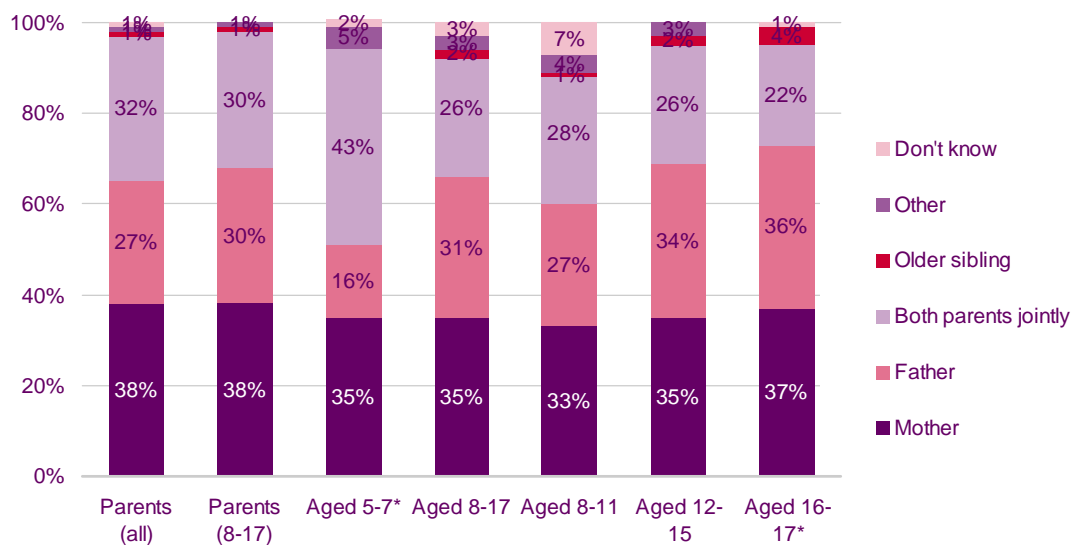
Source: UK Children Go Online, 2004

There are notable differences across the age groups of children with regard to who they believe is responsible for making decisions on the rules and restrictions in place. The youngest children are more likely to say that both parents are jointly responsible. The older the children are, the less likely they are to say this, and the more likely they are to mention the father only (figure 52).

Parents themselves are most likely to say that the mother is responsible (38%), followed by it being a joint decision (32%). Parents in AB households are more likely to say the father (33% versus 27% for all parents), and both parents jointly (40% versus 32% for all parents)

are responsible. Younger parents (48% of 16-34 year olds), those who rate themselves as beginners (52%), DE parents (50%) and, in particular, single-parent households (72%) are more likely to mention the mother.

**Figure 52 Main decision-maker for rules and restrictions set on internet use: parents vs. children**



Q: Who is the main decision-maker around rules or restrictions set on using the internet?

Base: All who have rules/restrictions around their (child's) use of the internet: Parents of children aged 5-17 (440), parents of children aged 8-17 (358), children aged 5-7 (78) 8-11 (141), 12-15 (123), 16-17 (63) - \*Caution: low base size (<100)

Source: Ofcom – Children, Young People & Online Content, October 2007

Parents and children were asked about a number of things they may or may not have discussed together in order to make the internet a safer experience for the child, such as: how to stay safe online, how to search for information effectively and what the child can and cannot do online. Responses suggest that children and parents are in broad agreement about what they have discussed or explained (figure 53).

75% of all parents say they have undertaken at least one of the precautions asked about - younger parents (64% of 16-34 year olds), those in DE households (65%), and those whose children only use the internet outside the home (45%), are less likely to have done any of these.

The proportion of parents who say they have discussed at least one of the areas asked about is driven by those with children who use the internet at home (80%) – with only 45% of those whose child only accesses the internet outside the home saying they have undertaken at least one precaution. As previously shown, these households are also less likely to have restrictions in place and may be related to the fact that many children are accessing the internet at school and so parents may feel less obliged to have such discussions with their child.

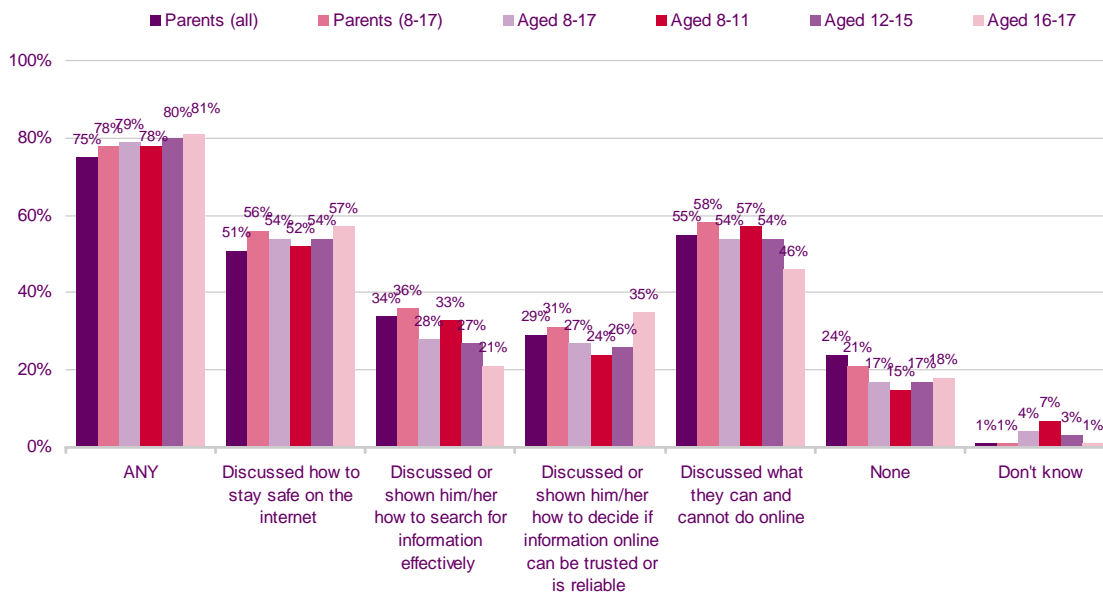
The research also shows that 84% of parents of 8-17 year olds agree with the statement: 'I have provided my child with enough information to keep him/her safe online' and 85% of children aged 8-17 agree that their parents have provided them with enough information to help keep him/her safe online (figure 54). However, this is lower among younger parents

(72% of 16-34 year olds), DE parents (71%) and those parents whose child uses the internet but not at home (61%).

86% of children aged 8-17 agree that there are certain things they don't do online because they know it is dangerous – compared with 90% of parents of 8-17 year olds who say their child knows not to do certain things online because they are dangerous.

The data suggest that children are more confident in protecting themselves when online compared with their parents – 81% of 8-17 year olds (versus 66% of their parents) say they know what to do if they come across harmful material when online and 82% (versus 70% of their parents) say they know how to avoid online content that is inappropriate or harmful.

**Figure 53 Provision of information about keeping safe online: parents vs. children**

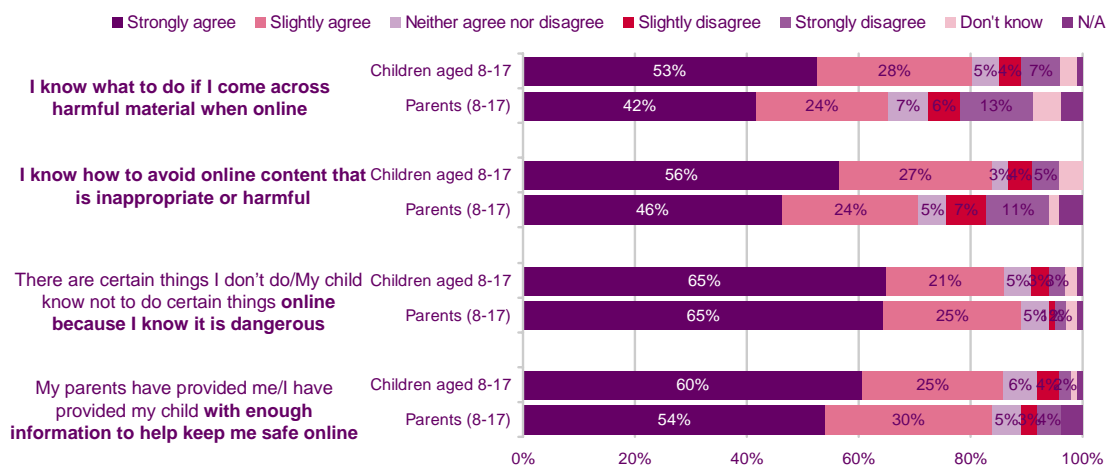


Q: Have you EVER done any of the following with your child? Have your parents ever done any of the following with you?

Base: All whose child / who uses the internet: Parents of 5-17 year olds (621), parents of 8-17 year olds (526), children aged 8-17 (513), 8-11 (198), 12-15 (208), 16-17 (107)

Source: Ofcom – Children, Young People & Online Content, October 2007

**Figure 54 Attitudes towards online protection**

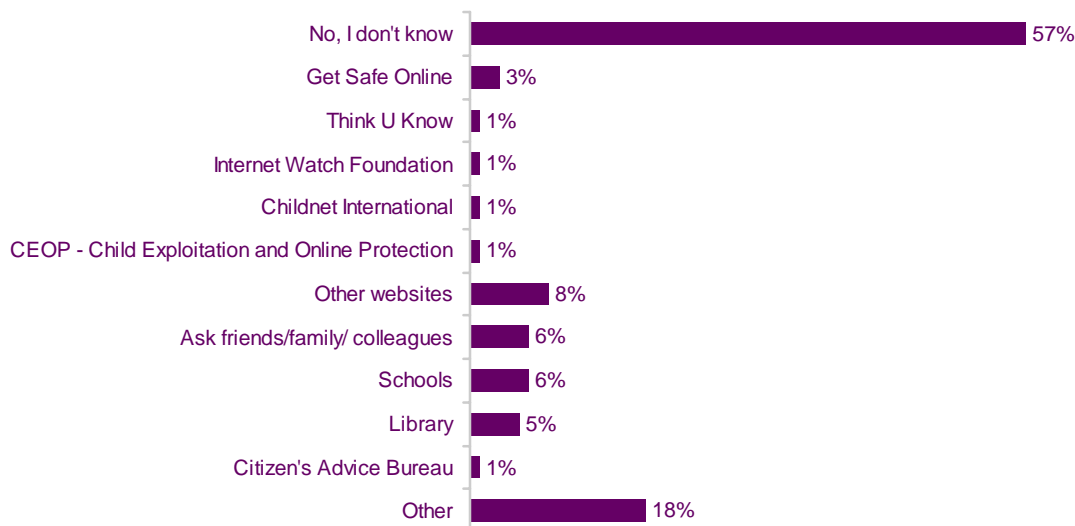


Base: Parents of 8-17 year olds (537), children aged 8-17 (513)

Source: Ofcom – Children, Young People & Online Content, October 2007

57% of parents whose child uses the internet say they do not know where to go to get information about how to protect their child online – this is skewed towards younger parents (70% of 16-34 year olds), C2DE parents (66%) and those who rate themselves as beginners (76%). Mentions for specific websites were low, with 6% looking to schools, 6% asking friends/family/colleagues and 5% going to the library for information (figure 55).

**Figure 55 Where parents get information on helping them protect their children online**



Q: Do you know where to go in order to get information to help you protect your child when online?

Base: All whose child uses the internet: Parents (621)

Source: Ofcom – Children, Young People & Online Content, October 2007

When asked about what would help them ensure their child uses the internet effectively and safely, the 2004 *UK Children Go Online* study found that parents wanted tougher laws around online pornography (85% of parents of 9-17 year olds), more/better teaching and guidance in schools (75%), more/better information for parents (67%) and improved filtering software (66%). 64% also mentioned the need for more sites developed specially for children.

The Internet in Britain 2007<sup>28</sup> OxIS study, which included a survey of 2,350 adults, asked respondents about their views on children's content on the internet. The survey found that 85% of adults thought there should be some restrictions on children's content and 97% of them said that if there were such restrictions, parents should be responsible for making them; 74% of current internet users believed that schools/teachers should be responsible and 70% said the ISPs should be responsible; 52% of users said the Government should be responsible for restricting children's content, and this rose to 67% among non- or ex-users.

As part of the research conducted by Ofcom on media literacy in 2005, survey respondents were asked about regulation of the internet. Results found that 29% of all adults (and 32% of all adults with children at home) believe the internet *is* regulated – however, the majority of those who say this do not know who is responsible for this (58% of adults and 61% of those with children).

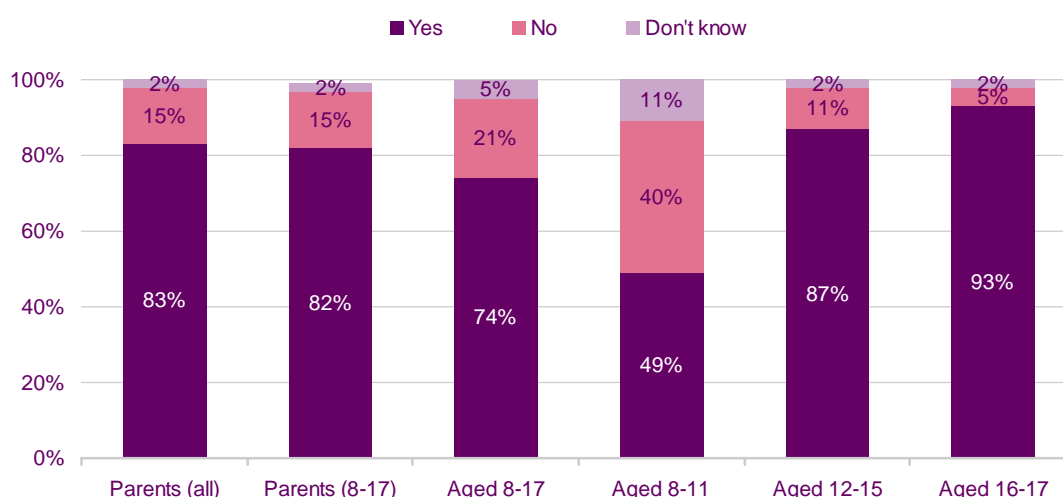
<sup>28</sup> W. H. Dutton & E. Helsper (2007), *The Internet in Britain 2007*, <http://www.oii.ox.ac.uk/microsites/oxis/>

## Use of content filtering systems

Both parents and children were asked about whether or not they are aware of software which can control or block access to certain websites/content. As shown in figure 56, overall awareness is high, with 82% of parents of 8-17 year olds and 74% of 8-17 year olds saying they are aware of this type of software.

Awareness is skewed towards parents in ABC1 (90%) households, those whose child has their own internet access in the bedroom/elsewhere (92%), and those who rate themselves as advanced/expert on the internet (97%).

**Figure 56 Awareness of internet filtering software**



Q: Are you aware that it is possible to install software on your computer which can control or block access to certain websites and/or certain types of content?

Base: All who use the internet or whose child uses the internet: Parents of children aged 5-17 (635), parents of children age 8-17 (528), children aged 8-11 (198), 12-15 (208), 16-17 (107)

Source: Ofcom – Children, Young People & Online Content, October 2007

Just over half of all parents (54%) with internet access at home say they currently use this type of software (figure 57) – this is skewed towards younger parents (60% of 16-34 year old parents), those with children aged 8-11 (69%) and those who rate themselves as advanced/expert (65%). 60% of those parents who said they had rules in place for using the internet said they used this type of filtering, compared with only 38% of parents who said they have no rules in place. Use of filtering software is not significantly higher among parents who say they have concerns about content on the internet (55%).

9% of all parents who were not aware of this type of software before the research was conducted said they would be interested in using it in the future – this is skewed towards DE parents (14%) and those who rate themselves as beginners on the internet (18%). 8% who were previously unaware said they would not be interested in it in the future.

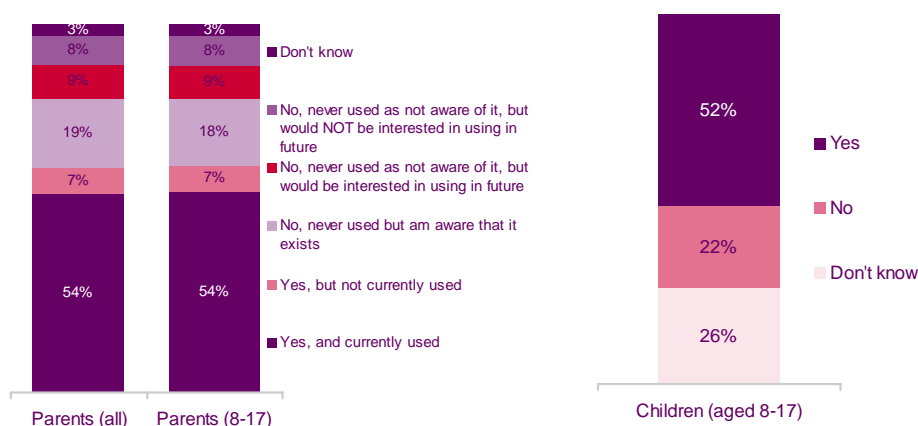
Those parents who said they had never used filtering software but said they were aware that it existed were asked why they didn't use it. 17% said there was no need, and 12% said their child was too young to use the internet. The most mentioned reason for not using this type of software was that parents trust their child (25%) – this suggests that a proportion of parents think this type of software is used to *prevent* children from accessing certain sites/content rather than as a tool which could provide *protection* for the child.

Parents' trust in children is further highlighted by their responses to the statement, 'I trust my child to use the internet safely' - 90% of those with 8-17 year olds agreed with this and 93% of 8-17 year olds agreed that their parents trust them. 66% of parents of 8-17 year olds and 68% of 8-17 year olds said they agreed that it was safe for children to spend time online,

45% of all parents who use, or whose child uses the internet, are aware of other filtering systems, and of these just under half were aware (spontaneously) of the filters offered by their ISP (44%) and just under a third were aware of filters available on search engines (32%).

The 2005 Eurobarometer<sup>29</sup> survey conducted on behalf of the European Commission found that 46% of UK parents with children aged under 15 said they used filtering software at home – this was the highest level of penetration across all countries surveyed. In comparison, the average level of use across Europe in 2005 was 28% and similar penetration figures were found in France (26%), Germany (30%) and Italy (26%).

**Figure 57 Use of filtering software at home**



*Q: Parents: Have you ever used software on your home computer which can control or block access to certain websites and/or certain types of content/material?*

*Children: Is there any software installed on your computer which can control or block access to certain websites and/or certain types of content/material*

*Base: All who have internet access at home: Parents of children aged 5-17 (524), parents of children aged 8-17 (442) / All aware that it is possible to install blocking/controlling software on your computer children aged 8-17 (379)*

*Source: Ofcom – Children, Young People & Online Content, October 2007*

Among those parents (of children aged 8-17) who said they currently used this type of software, 78% said that they themselves or another adult installed it, and 6% say the child being interviewed, or another child, installed the software (figure 58). However, 23% of children aged 8-17 years said they or a sibling installed the software, and 51% mentioned a parent.

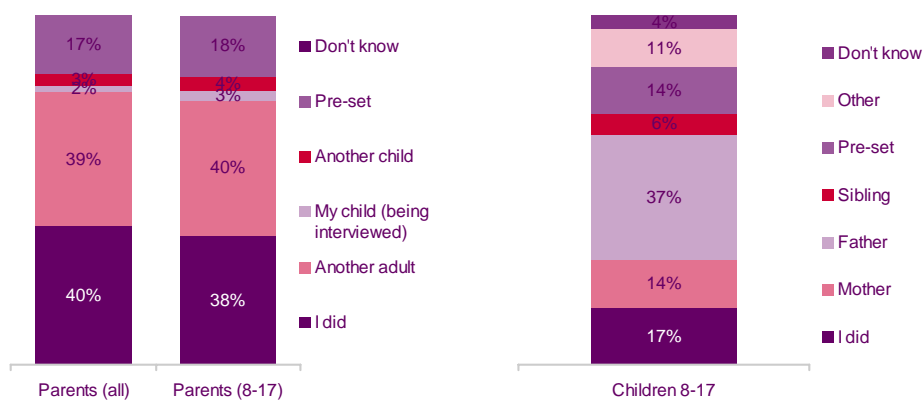
13% of all parents (15% of parents of 8-17 year olds) using this software say that their child can unset or bypass the controls – responses range from no parents with children aged 5-7

<sup>29</sup> European Commission (2005), *Special Eurobarometer No 250 – Safer Internet* [http://ec.europa.eu/information\\_society/activities/sip/eurobarometer/index\\_en.htm#national\\_reports](http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/sip/eurobarometer/index_en.htm#national_reports)

saying their child can override the controls to 22% of parents of 12-15 year olds. 20% of parents with 16-17 year olds say their child can unset the controls – a further 14% of their parents say they don't know.

When children were asked whether or not they can override the controls, a further gap between the parents' knowledge and what children say they can do was highlighted – to some extent this calls into question the effectiveness of the precautions parents have in place. 33% of 8-17 year olds said they could bypass the controls – 8-11 year olds were least likely to say so (21%) and 12-15 year olds the most likely (38%).

**Figure 58 Who installed internet filtering software**



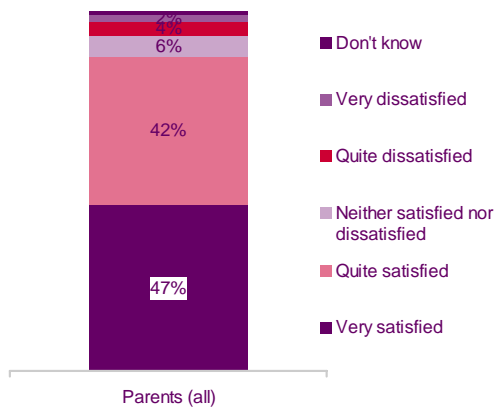
Q: Who installed this software on your computer?

Base: All who currently have software installed on their home computer and use it: Parents of children aged 5-17 (282), parents of children aged 8-17 (237), children aged 8-17 (196)

Source: Ofcom – Children, Young People & Online Content, October 2007

Parents currently using software to control or block certain sites/content tend to be either 'very satisfied' (47%) or 'quite satisfied' (42%) with it (figure 59). Younger parents (56% of 16-34 year olds), DE parents (52%) and those rating themselves as advanced/expert (55%) are more likely to be 'very satisfied' with the software used.

**Figure 59 Parents' satisfaction with internet filtering software**



*Q: How satisfied are you with the controls or software you use to prevent your child from accessing potentially harmful or inappropriate material?*

*Base: All who currently have software installed on their home computer and use it: Parents of children aged 5-17 (282)*

*Source: Ofcom – Children, Young People & Online Content, October 2007*



## 6. Experience of the internet

### Key findings

- Ofcom's most recent survey shows that 59% of parents agree (18% disagree) with the statement: 'The benefits of the internet for my child outweigh any risks'.
- 66% of all parents say they have some concerns, compared with 39% of non-parents. Parents who are more likely to be concerned are those in AB households (80%), those rating their own skills as advanced/expert (75%) and those who say their child has been exposed to harmful or inappropriate content on the internet in the last six months (88%)<sup>30</sup>.
- In contrast, 30% of children aged 8-17 say they have concerns – this declines by age from 35% of 8-11 year olds to 23% of 16-17 year olds.
- Comparison of the responses of parents and children about the type of content they have concerns about shows that parents are more concerned about all issues than their children – this is particularly the case with sex-related concerns. The two issues that parents of 8-17 year olds say they are most concerned about are sexual content (37%) and paedophiles masquerading as younger people (31%).
- Although parents are more concerned about it than their children, the gap between the responses of the two groups with regard to violent content is closer than for sexual content, and children are almost as likely as their parents to mention cyberbullying and pop-up adverts with harmful or inappropriate material. Furthermore, although sexual content is mentioned by 28% of 8-17 year olds as the issue they are most concerned with, 12% mention violent content compared with 8% of their parents.
- All groups are much less concerned about content on mobile phones. Those who say they have concerns mention similar issues to those on the internet. 60% of all parents mention sexual content and 39% violent content. 29% of parents say they are concerned about bullying, 22% mention 'happy slapping' and a further 8% mention the misuse of camera phones.
- The findings of the October 2007 study show that 12% of children aged 5-7 and 16% aged 8-17 say they have come across harmful or inappropriate content on the internet in the last six months<sup>31</sup>.
- 12% of parents of 8-17 year olds who use the internet say their child has come across such content, and a further 8% of parents say they don't know – compared with responses of the 8-17 year olds this suggests another gap between the experiences of the child and the knowledge of the parents.
- While children are most likely to have come across this type of material at home, almost one in seven parents and one in five children mention schools.

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<sup>30</sup> Caution: small sample size (63)

<sup>31</sup> The survey asked respondents if they had come across harmful or inappropriate material in the past six months and if they had, they were asked the open-ended question 'What type of content was it?' Thus these findings relate to self-reported harmful or inappropriate material.

- When questioned about the type of content children have come across, there appears to be another gap between the knowledge of the parents and the experiences of the child – 66% of parents of 8-17 year olds say their child has come across inappropriate sexual content, compared with 46% of 8-17 year old children. Children are more likely than their parents to say the inappropriate content they came across was violent.
- This gap in parents' knowledge may come as a result of the responses given by children about what they did in response to seeing this content – 40% left the site immediately, 21% did nothing and only 19% said they told a parent. This is despite the fact that 87% of 8-17 year olds agree with the statement 'I would tell my parents if I came across something online that made me uncomfortable' and 85% of parents of 8-17 year olds agree that their child would tell them/their spouse if he/she came across something online which made him/her uncomfortable (but this could also be because the child is not sufficiently concerned or worried about what they came across).
- High proportions of parents (38%) and of non-parents (55%) say they do not know who they can complain to about inappropriate content on the internet. The police were mentioned by 30% of parents and by 11% of non-parents, followed by internet service providers and the websites themselves. Children are less likely to say they don't know who to complain to, as the majority would turn to a parent – although this course of action tends to be lower for 16-17 year olds; they are more likely to mention the websites, ISPs and the police.

### Qualitative research findings

Qualitative research conducted by the Ofcom Consumer Panel in 2007<sup>32</sup> found that all children are keen to have the internet and see many real benefits which they say outweigh any negatives. The particular benefits for children are regarding social communication and inclusion, which the research found was facilitated through instant messaging, which allows them to communicate freely with friends and to widen their social group. It could be suggested this particular use of the internet is becoming increasingly important with the growth of social networking sites.

Children who took part in this study also said they believed the main impact of not having the internet at home was on networking and developing their identity. Although the role of the internet as an educational tool was seen as being of secondary importance to many of the children, it was still felt to be a real advantage. Many felt that access to the internet allows students to achieve a higher quality of presentation and content – the research also found that the internet has a role of re-engaging some of the educationally disengaged as they enjoy the control and fun of working with a PC, as well as enabling the academically able to work more effectively.

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<sup>32</sup> Ofcom Consumer Panel (June 2007), Children and the internet [http://www.ofcomconsumerpanel.org.uk/information/documents/Children\\_and\\_the\\_internet.pdf](http://www.ofcomconsumerpanel.org.uk/information/documents/Children_and_the_internet.pdf). The overall target for this piece of qualitative research was socially disadvantaged children and families (DE socio economic grade) and included a diverse mix of people from ethnic minority communities. The study consisted of in-home observations, mini group discussions with children, family interviews and group discussions with parents. Fieldwork took place between March-April 2007.

The parents who took part in this qualitative study agreed that having the internet at home would give their children some advantage in the future, by helping to build skills, knowledge and confidence. They also believed that without these skills children would be at a disadvantage with regard to their education and future job prospects. While most parents with internet access said they could not imagine family life without it, they did highlight some concerns, such as increased fragmentation within the household and potential security/safety issues. Although these disadvantages are recognised both by children and parents, many parents feel the risks are manageable if they exercise control.

These qualitative findings are quantified by Ofcom's recent survey which shows that:

- 59% of all parents agree (18% disagree) with the statement: 'the benefits of the internet for my child outweigh any risks' .
- Children also see the benefits of the internet – 81% of 8-17 year olds agree that: 'having the internet at home helps me with school work' (although this is lower than the proportion of parents, 92%, who agree that the internet helps their child with school work).
- 92% of all parents agree that online, children discover interesting, useful things they didn't know before.
- 67% of parents with 8-17 year olds and 64% of children aged 8-17 agree that those who do not have the internet at home are at a disadvantage. Agreement with this statement is lower among 8-17 year olds who only access the internet outside their home (55%), C2 children (48%), young parents (57% of 16-34 year olds) and DE parents (55%).

Furthermore, the *Children, Young People & Online Content* research found that children are more confident in protecting themselves than their parents – 81% of 8-17 year olds (versus 66% of their parents) said they knew what to do if they came across harmful material online and 83% (versus 70% of parents) said they knew how to avoid online content that was inappropriate or harmful.

## Concerns

Ofcom's 2005 research into media literacy in the UK looked at the concerns adults and children have about using different media and at their experiences of using them. The study found that 50% of parents and 44% of non-parents have concerns about what is on television, and most concern is about violence, bad language or sexual content.

People were less concerned about mobile phones (45% of parents and 36% of non-parents said they had concerns about mobile phones) and the concerns they did have tended to be related to health worries and costs.

When asked about their concerns about what is on the internet, 68% of parents said they have concerns, compared with 51% of non-parents, and the main concerns mentioned were related to offensive material. This demonstrates that parents are more likely to be concerned about the internet than television or mobile phones.

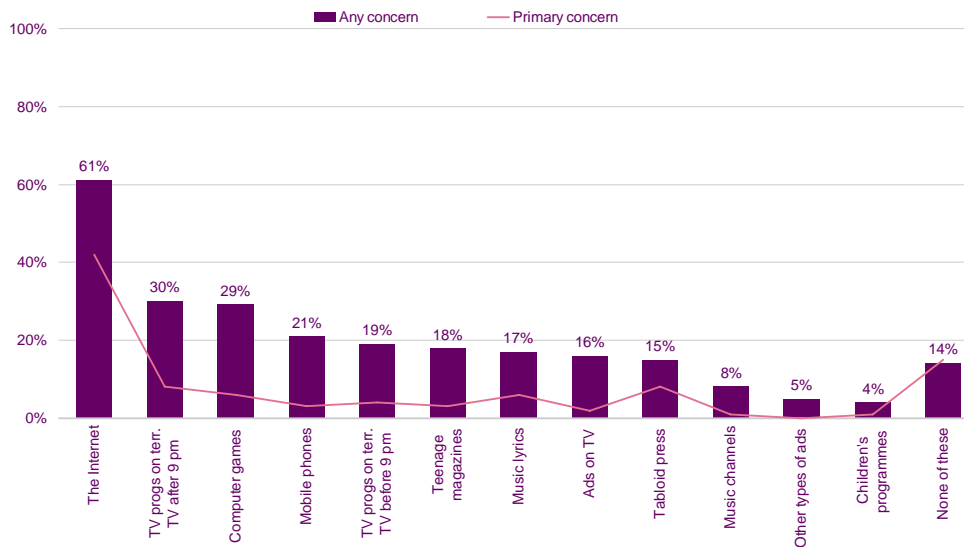
A similar finding was reported by Ofcom as part of research conducted in 2004 to inform the Broadcasting Code review. The report, *A Safe Environment for Children*<sup>33</sup>, found that

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<sup>33</sup> Ofcom (2005), *A Safe Environment for Children*,  
<http://www.ofcom.org.uk/research/radio/reports/bcr/environment.pdf>

parents were less concerned about television, as it is seen as a medium they understand and regard as 'safer', compared to the internet, which was found to be most worrying for two reasons: because of the content available and due to the feeling among parents that they didn't understand the medium as well as their children did (figure 60). Furthermore, the 2004 *UK Children Go Online* study reported that parents were far more likely to say their child was most likely to come across pornography on the internet (53% of all parents of 9-17 year olds) than on any other medium (20% television, 9% videos/DVDs, 5% magazines).

**Figure 60 Concerns about children's exposure to content, by media**

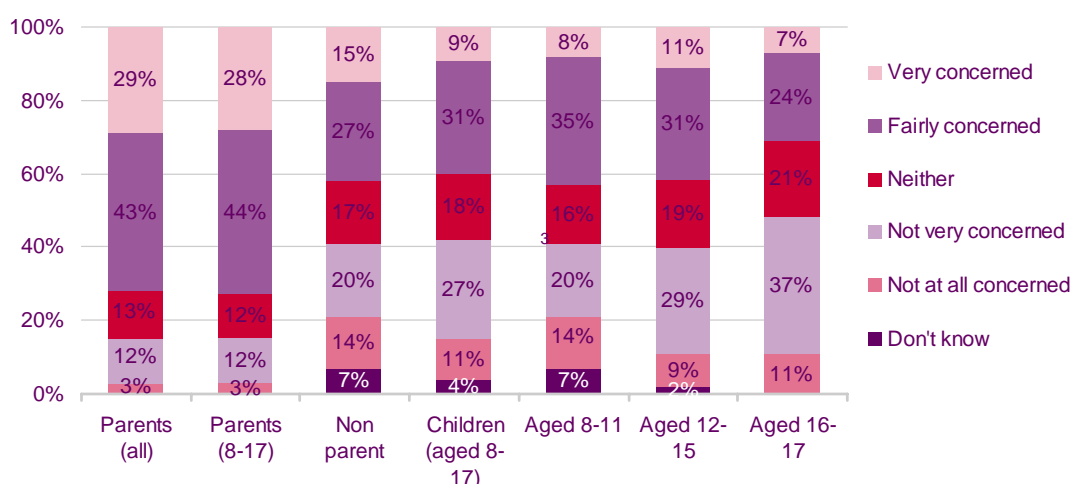


*Q: Please could you tell me which media, if any, you are concerned about children being exposed to*  
*Base: All adults aged 15+ (2,185)*  
*Source: Ofcom Research, 2004*

The 2005 research study on media literacy asked adults about their level of concern about what is on the internet. 48% of all adults said they were very, or fairly, concerned, breaking down to 59% of parents and 40% of non-parents. The 2007 research found this level of concern has risen to 72% among all parents, and 43% among non-parents (those without children aged 17 or under).

Parents are more likely to be 'very concerned' than children, and children aged 16-17 years are least concerned (figure 61). 33% of parents in C2DE households (compared with 23% of ABC1 parents) and 36% of parents whose children access the internet only outside the home say they are 'very concerned'.

**Figure 61 Level of concern about the internet**



Q: Overall, how concerned are you about what is on the internet?

Base: Parents (653), non-parents (279), children aged 8-17 (513), 8-11 (198), 12-15 (208), 16-17 (107)

Source: Ofcom – Children, Young People & Online Content, October 2007

66% of all parents said they had some concerns, compared with 39% of non-parents (figure 62). The overall number of parents saying they were concerned about the type of content on the internet has stayed the same as that reported by the 2005 research into media literacy (68% of parents in 2005) – but concern among non-parents has declined (51% in 2005 to 39% in 2007).

Parents who are more likely to be concerned are those in AB households (80%), those rating their own skills as advanced/expert (75%), and those who say their child has been exposed to harmful or inappropriate content on the internet in the last six months (88%)<sup>34</sup>. This demonstrates that if the parents have online experience, and if their child has already experienced inappropriate content, they are more likely to be aware of potential issues and therefore more likely to be concerned.

In contrast, 30% of children aged 8-17 said they had concerns; their level of concern declines by age from 35% of 8-11 year olds to 23% of 16-17 year olds. Those children aged 8-17 who use the internet but only outside the home (39%), and those who have been exposed to harmful or inappropriate content (41%),<sup>35</sup> are more likely to be concerned.

In trying to put the level of concern into context, survey respondents were presented with a number of statements:

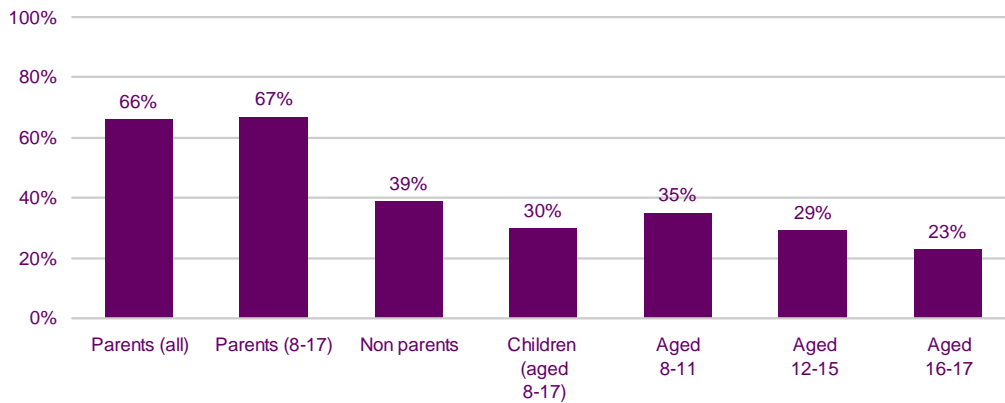
- When presented with the statement 'I am more concerned about harmful content on television than the internet', 35% of parents agreed, 26% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 38% disagreed.
- 56% of parents of 8-17 year olds and 68% of 8-17 year olds agreed that problems like bullying and violence in real life were more of a concern to them than inappropriate content on the internet.

<sup>34</sup> Caution: small sample size (63)

<sup>35</sup> Caution: small sample size (80)

So, although these results suggest that parents are fairly undecided about whether or not television is more of an issue than the internet, both groups are more concerned about real-life issues than about content on the internet.

**Figure 62 Concerns about content on the internet: those saying they have concerns**



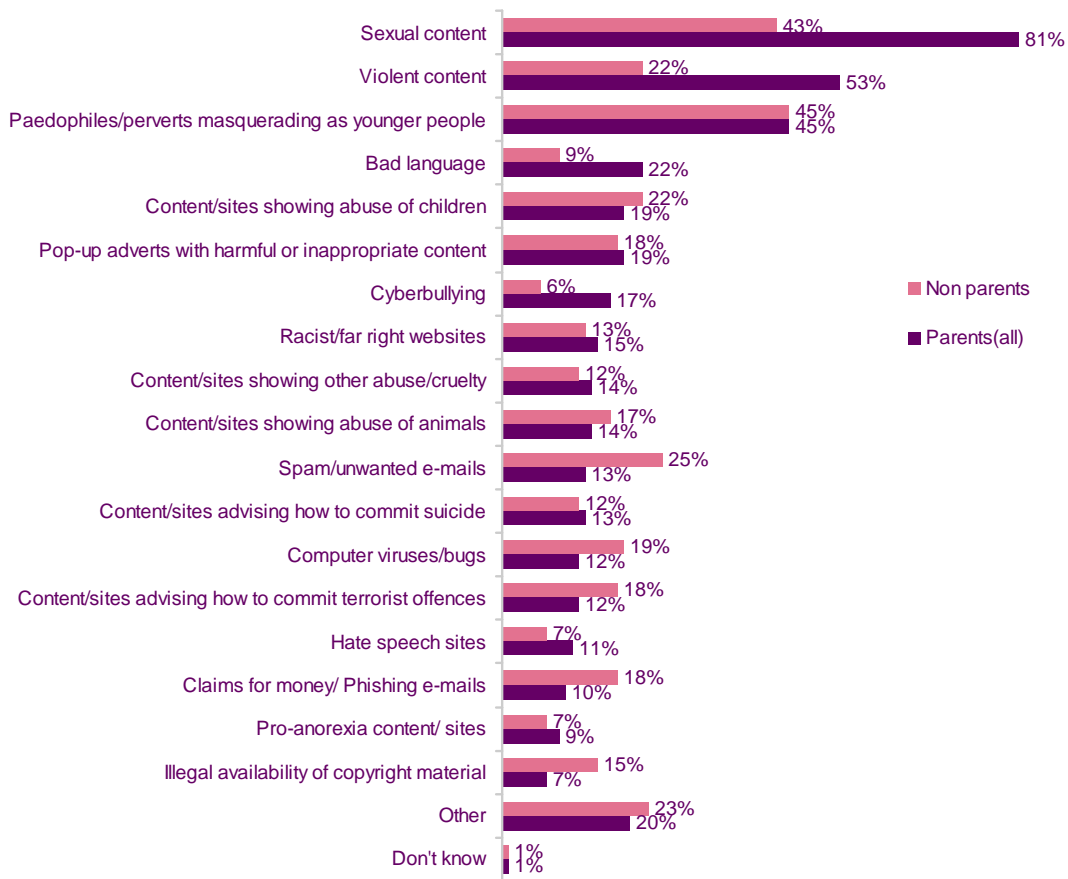
Q: Can you tell me if you have any concerns about the type of content / material on the Internet?

Base: All respondents: Parents (653), non-parents (279), children aged 8-17 (513), 8-11 (198), 12-15 (208), 16-17 (107)

Source: Ofcom – Children, Young People & Online Content, October 2007

Parents are significantly more likely than non-parents to be concerned about sexual content, violent content and content with bad language (figure 63). Both parents and non-parents are concerned about paedophiles masquerading as younger people – but on the whole the concerns of non-parents tend to be based on those which they may encounter themselves, such as unwanted email and computer viruses.

**Figure 63 Concerns about content on the internet – type of material: parents vs non-parents**



Q: *What sort of things are you worried about?*

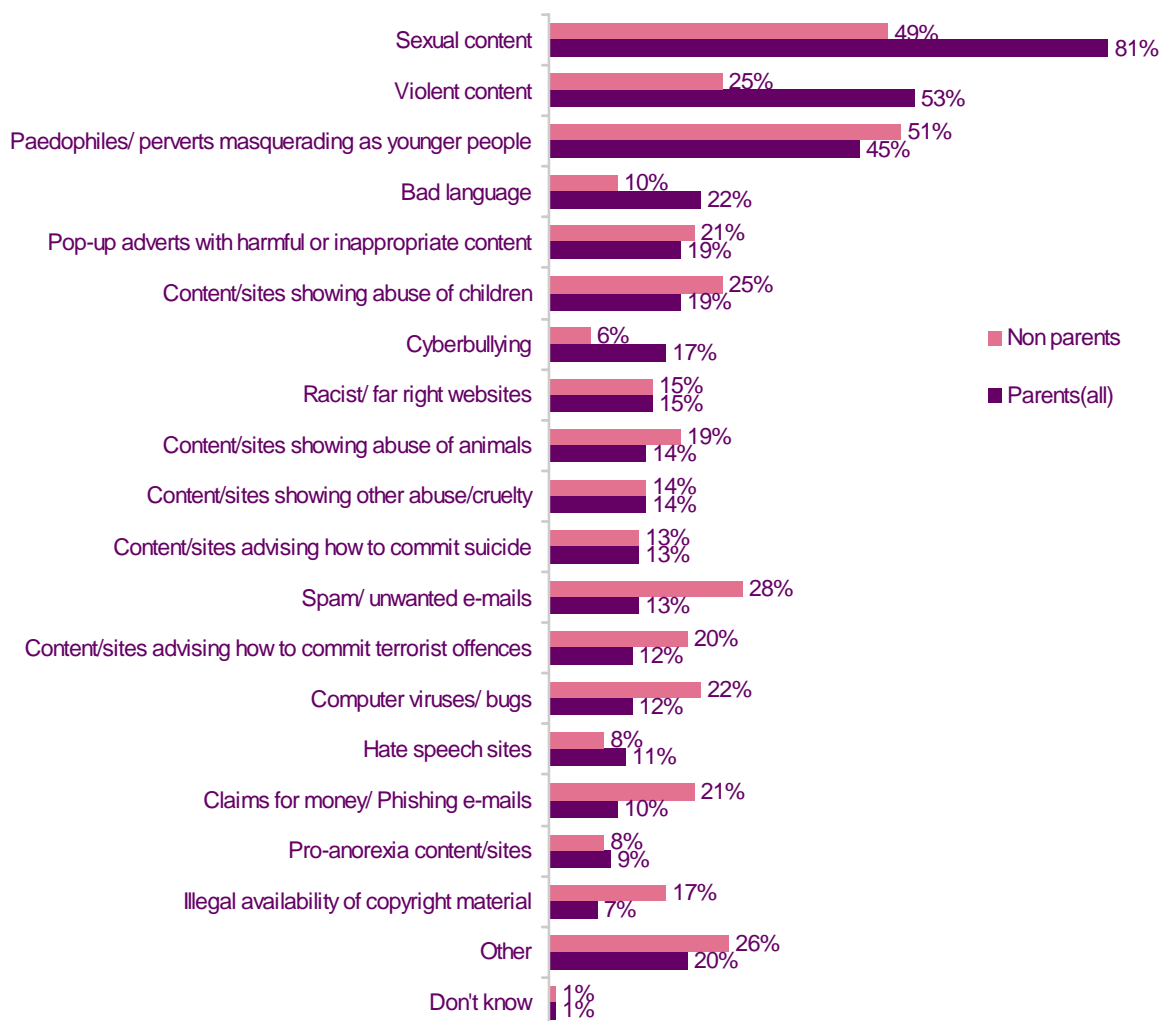
Base: *Asked of all who expressed concerns about content on the Internet: Parents of children aged 5-17 (432), non-parents (108)*

**DATA RE-BASED TO BE REPRESENTATIVE OF ALL PARENTS & NON-PARENTS**

Source: *Ofcom – Children, Young People & Online Content, October 2007*

Figure 64 shows the same information based only on those who said they had some concerns about content on the internet.

**Figure 64 Concerns about content on the internet – type of material: parents vs non-parents**



Q: What sort of things are you worried about?

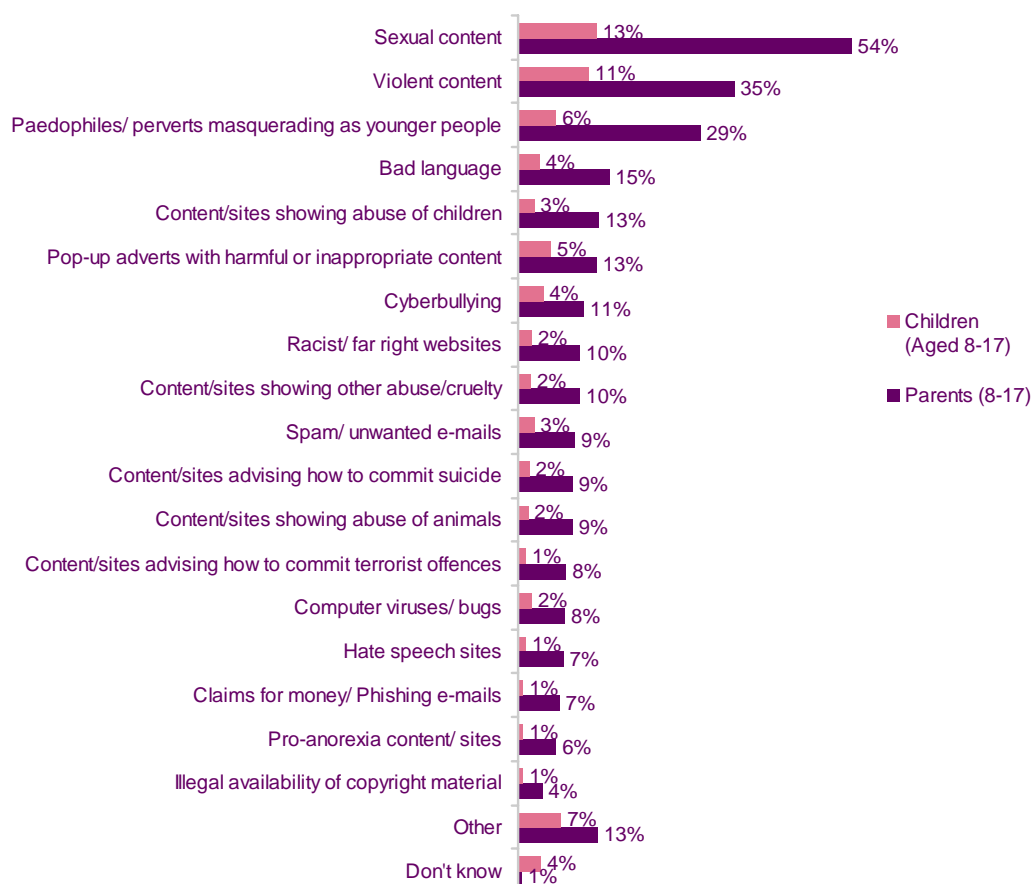
Base: All who expressed concerns about content on the Internet: Parents of children aged 5-17 (432), non-parents (108)

Source: Ofcom – Children, Young People & Online Content, October 2007

Children aged 8-17 were also asked about the type of content on the internet they have concerns about. Comparison of their responses with those of parents shows a marked gap between the concerns the two groups have about specific content (figure 65). While 13% of all 8-17 year olds say they are concerned about sexual content – this is around a quarter of the proportion of all parents of 8-17 year olds saying this type of content concerns them (54%).



**Figure 65 Concerns about content on the internet – type of material: parents vs children**



Q: What sort of things are you worried about?

Base: Asked of all who expressed concerns about content on the Internet: Parents of 8-17 year olds (357), children 8-17 (154)

DATA RE-BASED TO BE REPRESENTATIVE OF ALL PARENTS OF 8-17 YEAR OLDS & CHILDREN AGED 8-17

Source: Ofcom – Children, Young People & Online Content, October 2007

**The following analysis is based on the sub-set of those respondents who say they have concerns about content on the internet.**

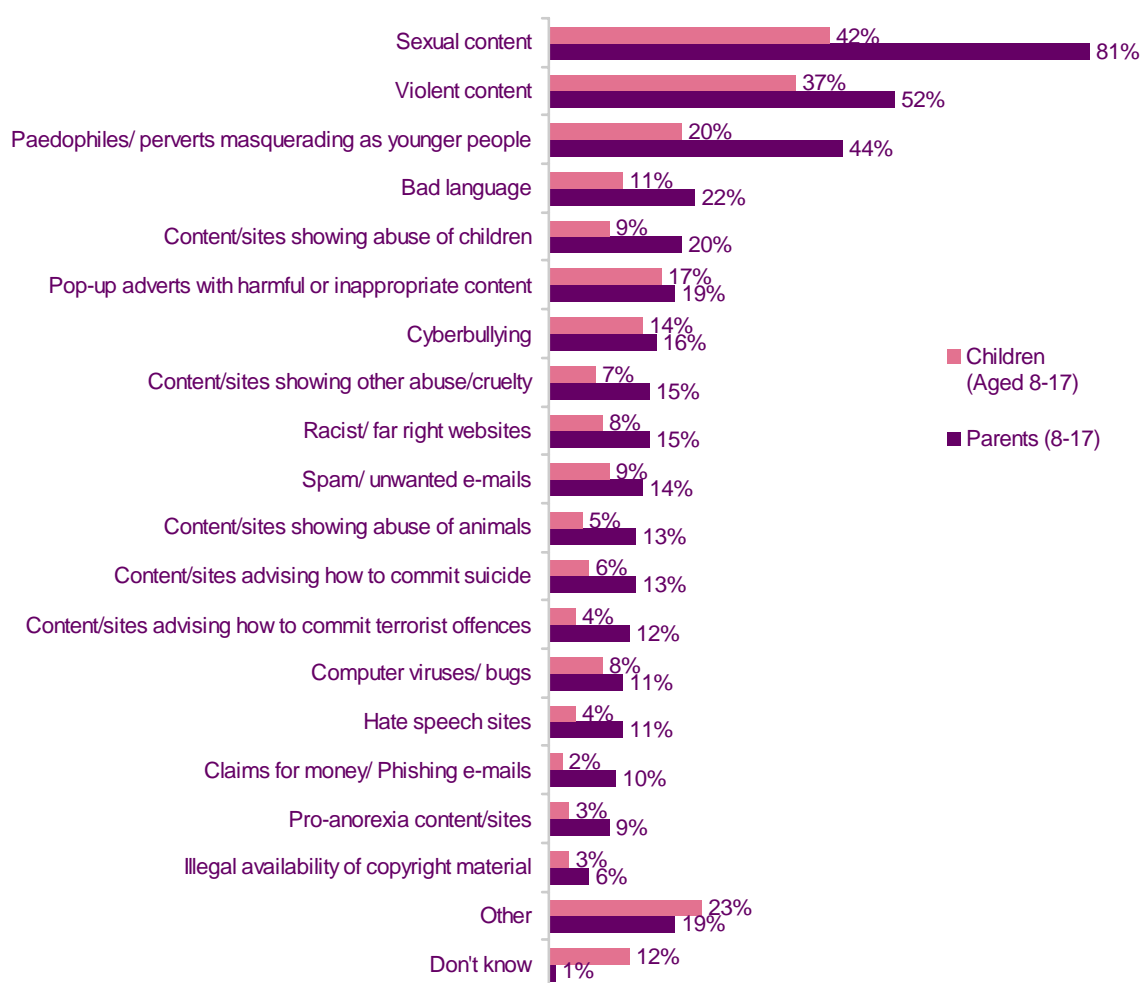
Parents are more concerned about all types of inappropriate internet content than their children; this is particularly the case with sex-related content (figure 66). The two issues that parents of 8-17 year olds with concerns say they are most concerned about are sexual content (37%) and paedophiles masquerading as younger people (31%).

Although parents are more concerned about these issues than their children, the gap between the responses of the two groups with regard to violent content is closer than for sexual content, and children are almost as likely as their parents to mention cyberbullying (16% of parents mention cyberbullying as something they are concerned about compared with 14% of children aged 8-17 - concern is highest among children aged 12-15 years with 25% mentioning this type of content) and pop-up adverts with harmful or inappropriate content (17% of 8-17 year olds compared with 19% of parents). And although sexual content is mentioned by 28% of 8-17 year olds as the issue they are most concerned with, 12% of this group mention violent content, compared with 8% of parents of 8-17 year olds.

The fact that parents are particularly worried about exposure to sexual content, while children tend to be more concerned about violence, may be because children can relate to depictions of violence more easily than to the inappropriateness of sexual content – this is highlighted by the proportion of children spontaneously mentioning cyberbullying (one of a few issues where there is little difference between the responses of the two groups). It may also be the case that children, particularly in the younger age range, may not be comfortable with mentioning this type of content. We see some variations in the concerns mentioned by the different age groups with; older children (48% of 12-17 year olds) more likely to mention sexual content than 8-11 year olds (35%) and older children (29% of 12-17 year olds) and girls (29%) more likely to mention paedophiles<sup>36</sup>.

As well as mentioning violent content in general, parents in particular mentioned content related to abuse of various natures and racist content.

**Figure 66 Concerns about content on the internet – type of material: parents vs children**



Q: What sort of things are you worried about?

Base: All who expressed concerns about content on the Internet: Parents of 8-17 year olds (357), children 8-17 (154)

Source: Ofcom – Children, Young People & Online Content, October 2007

In addition to this, responses to a number of statements also demonstrate parents' greater concern about sexual content as opposed to violent content, and the fact that children are less concerned about content on the internet than their parents (figure 67):

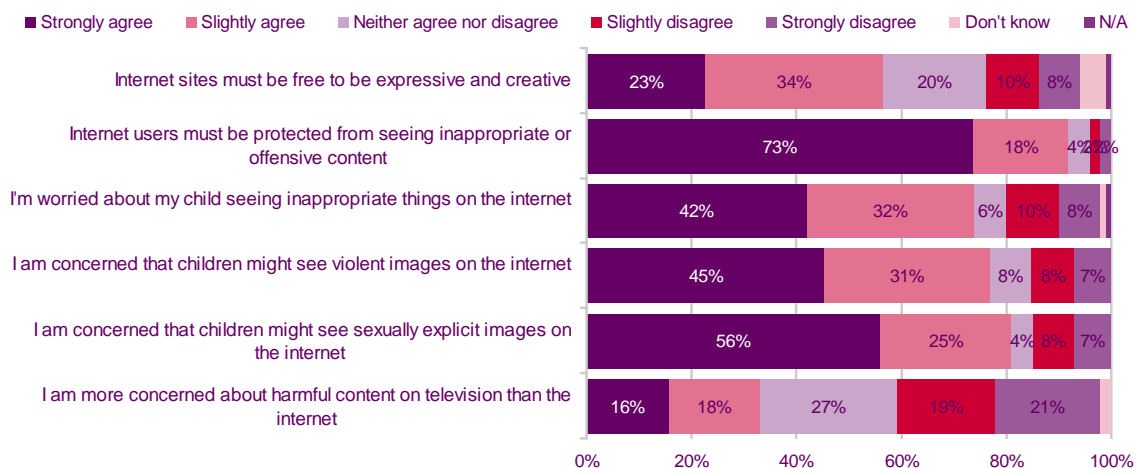
<sup>36</sup> Caution – small sample sizes

- 81% of parents of 8-17 year olds agree that they are concerned that children might see sexually explicit images online (15% disagree);
- 76% of parents of 8-17 year olds agree that they are concerned that children might see violent images on the internet (15% disagree); and
- 53% of 8-17 year olds agree that they are worried about seeing inappropriate things on the internet and 32% disagree – this compares with 74% of parents of 8-17 year olds saying they are worried about their child seeing inappropriate things on the internet.

While parents are concerned about internet content and overwhelmingly believe that internet users must be protected from seeing inappropriate or offensive content, just over half agree that internet sites must be free to be expressive and creative:

- 91% of parents of 8-17 year olds believe that internet users must be protected from seeing inappropriate or offensive content; and
- 57% of parents of 8-17 year olds agree that internet sites must be free to be expressive and creative; 20% neither agree nor disagree and 18% disagree.

**Figure 67 Concerns about the internet: parents of 8-17 year olds**



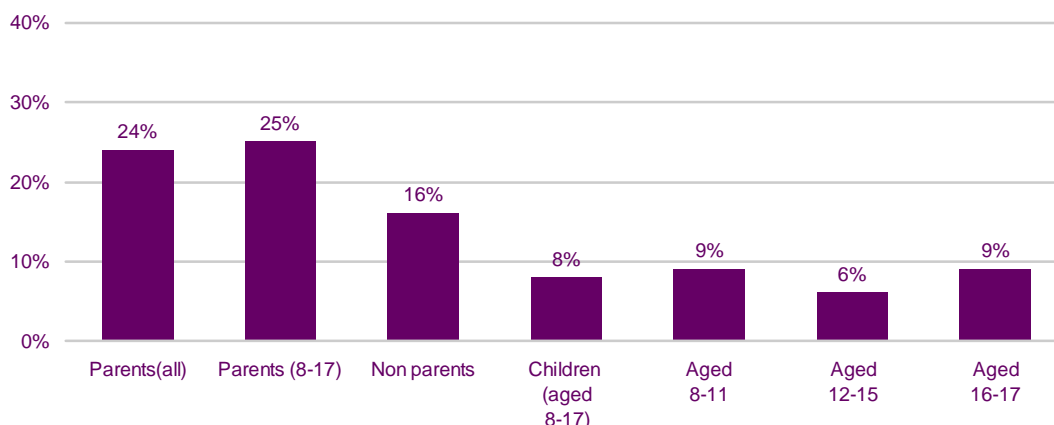
Base: All parents of 8-17 year olds (537)

Source: Ofcom – Children, Young People & Online Content, October 2007

All groups are much less concerned about content on mobile phones (figures 68 and 69). Those who have concerns mention similar issues to those on the internet. 60% of all parents mention sexual content and 39% mention violent content. 29% of parents say they are concerned about bullying, 22% mention 'happy slapping' and a further 8% mention the misuse of camera phones.

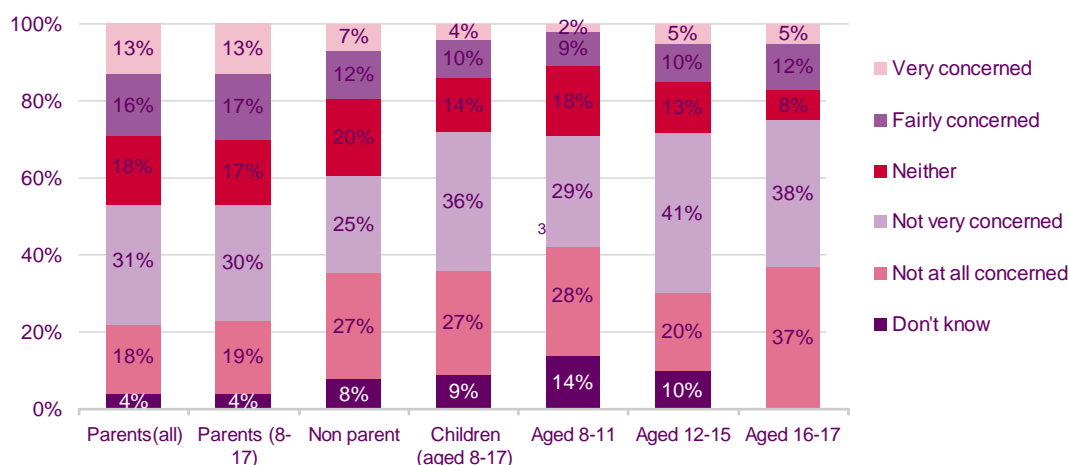
Sample sizes for children aged 8-17 years who say they have concerns about content on the internet are low, and therefore responses to the issues they are concerned about may not be reliable.

**Figure 68 Concerns about content on mobile phones: those saying they have concerns**



Q: Can you tell me if you have any concerns about the type of content / material on mobile phones?  
 Base: All respondents: Parents of 5-17 year olds (653), parents of 8-17 year olds (537), non-parents (279), children aged 8-17 (513), 8-11 (198), 12-15 (208), 16-17 (107)  
 Source: Ofcom – Children, Young People & Online Content, October 2007

**Figure 69 Level of concern about content on mobile phones**



Q: Overall, how concerned are you about content on mobile phones?  
 Base: All respondents: Parents of 5-17 year olds (653), parents of 8-17 year olds (537), non-parents (279), children aged 8-17 (513), 8-11 (198), 12-15 (208), 16-17 (107)  
 Source: Ofcom – Children, Young People & Online Content, October 2007

### Children’s exposure to potentially harmful or inappropriate content

When questioned about nasty, worrying or frightening material on the internet, 16% of children aged 8-15 questioned as part of Ofcom’s 2005 media literacy research said they had come across such material. The *UK Children Go Online* survey in 2004 found that 57% of 9-19 year olds who go online had come across pornography on the internet – ranging from 21% of 9-11 year olds to 80% of 18-19 year olds. This contact was most likely to come in the form of a pop-up advert (38% of all 9-19 year olds) or from accidentally going to a site showing pornographic material (36% of 9-19 year olds). The survey also found that 61% of all 9-17 year olds who use the internet at least once a week say they would tell their parents if they came across something on the internet which made them uncomfortable - this rose to 70% of girls and 71% of 9-11 year olds.

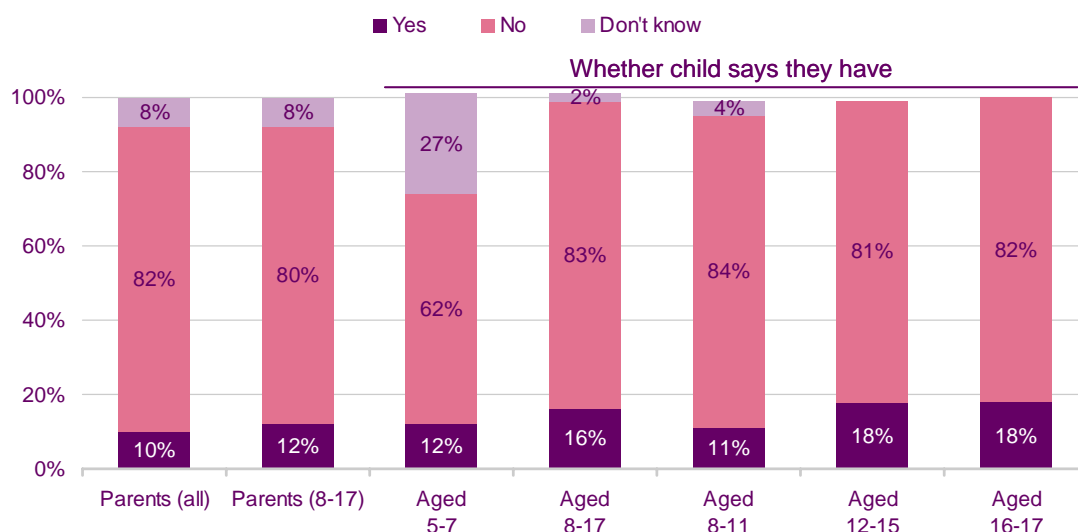
It is important to note that the research conducted by Ofcom in October 2007 asked if children had come across harmful or inappropriate material in the past six months and if they had, they were asked the open-ended question: 'What type of content was it?' These findings therefore relate to self-reported harmful or inappropriate material, and the differences in reported levels of exposures between this survey and the 2004 *UK Children Go Online* survey could stem from how the questions were asked, as well as differences in the composition of the base of children surveyed.

Findings of the October 2007 study show that 12% of children aged 5-7 and 16% of those aged 8-17 who use the internet say they have come across harmful or inappropriate content on the internet in the last six months (figure 70) – this finding is similar to that of the 2005 Media Literacy study, suggesting that there has been no change in the level of exposure to such material (although again, it is important to note the variation in question wording).

Children most likely to have come across content they feel was harmful or inappropriate (based on child responses) are those in AB households (26%) and those who rate their own internet skills as being advanced (25%). Interestingly, those accessing the internet only outside the home (16%) and those who say they do not have rules around the use of the internet (15%), are no more likely to have come across this type of content.

12% of parents of 8-17 year olds who use the internet say that their child has come across such content, and a further 8% of parents say they don't know – compared with the responses of the 8-17 year olds, this suggests another gap between the experiences of the child and the knowledge of the parents. Older children are more likely to have come across harmful/inappropriate content – and parents of these children are more likely to say they don't know whether or not their child has come across this type of material.

**Figure 70 Children's exposure to inappropriate content on the internet in the last six months: parents vs children**



Q: Has your child come across any harmful or inappropriate content/material on the internet, in the last 6 months?

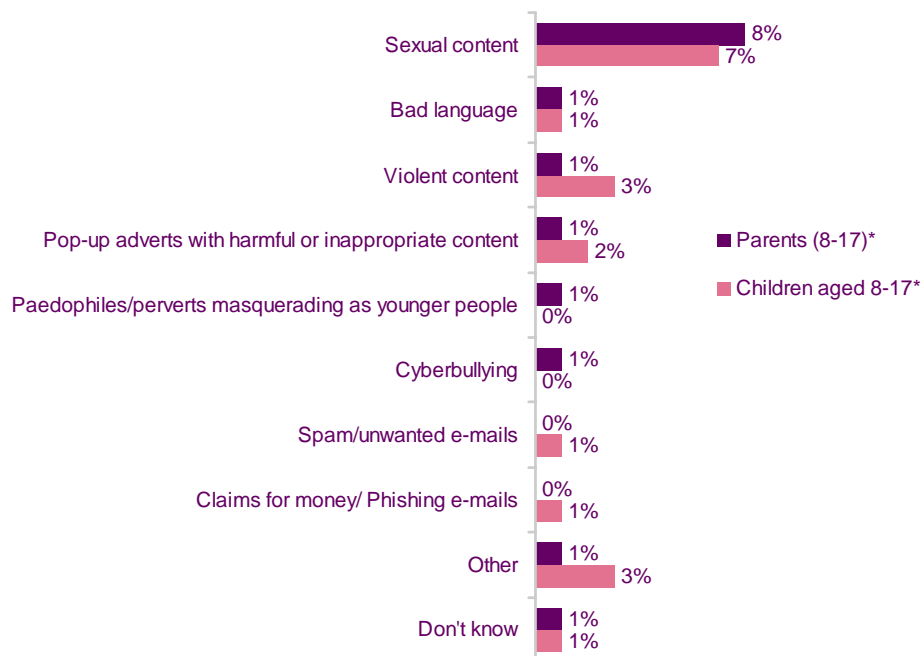
5-7 year olds: Have you seen anything that you don't think you should have seen on the Internet?

Base: All who/whose child use(s) the internet: Parents of 5-17 year olds (621), parents of 8-17 year olds (526), children aged 5-7 (118), 8-11 (198), 12-15 (208), 16-17 (107)

Source: Ofcom – Children, Young People & Online Content, October 2007

Of those 8-17 year olds who use the internet 7% say they have come across sexual content – 8% of parents say this is the case. Children are more likely than their parents to mention having come across violent content and pop-ups with harmful content (figure 71).

**Figure 71 Type of inappropriate content children exposed to: parents vs children**



Q: What type of content / material was it?

Base: Asked of all who/whose child have/has come across harmful/inappropriate content on the internet: Parents of 8-17 year olds (62), children aged 8-17 (80), \* caution- low sample size

DATA RE-BASED TO BE REPRESENTATIVE OF ALL WHO/WHOSE CHILD USES THE INTERNET

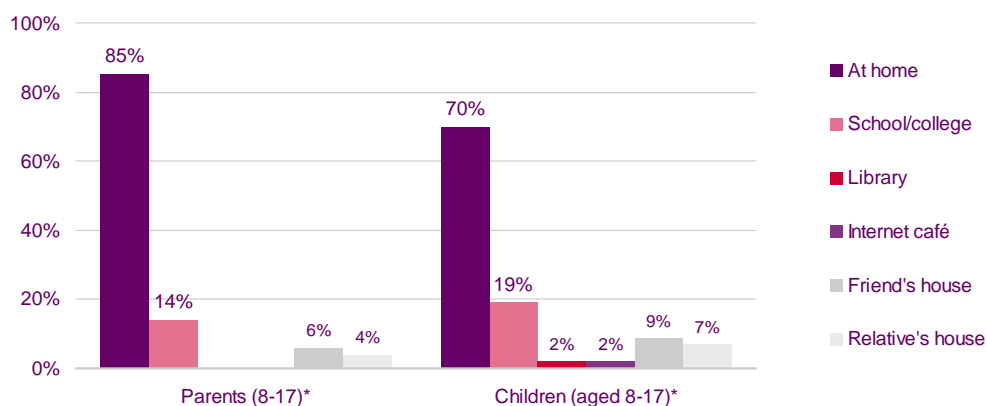
Figures below 0.5% have not been shown

Source: Ofcom – Children, Young People & Online Content, October 2007

**The following analysis is based on the sub-set of those respondents who say they have come across harmful/inappropriate content on the internet.**

Children are most likely to have come across this type of material at home (although there is a large gap between the responses of the two groups) and almost one in seven parents and one in five children mention schools (figure 72). Another gap between the two groups concerns the location where the child has come across inappropriate content; children are more likely than parents to mention a friend’s or relative’s house. This may be linked to the earlier finding that parents are not always aware that their children are accessing the internet at these locations.

**Figure 72 Where children came across inappropriate content: parents vs children**



*Q: Where did they / you (children) come across this content / material on the internet?*

*Base: All who/whose child have/has come across harmful/inappropriate content on the internet:*

*Parents of children aged 8-17 (62), children aged 8-17 (80), \* caution – low sample size*

*Source: Ofcom – Children, Young People & Online Content, October 2007*

When questioned about the type of content children have come across, there appears to be another gap between the knowledge of the parents and the experiences of the child – 66% of parents of 8-17 year olds say their child has come across inappropriate sexual content, compared with 46% of children (figure 73). Children (16%) are more likely than their parents (6%) to say the inappropriate content they came across was violent.

For each occasion the child came across such content, children and parents were asked what they did in response. The net results<sup>37</sup> for these responses show that just under half of all parents (44%) said they talked to their child about it, 33% told their child to leave the site immediately and 24% made a complaint. The gap in parents' knowledge about what their children have been exposed to may be linked to the responses given by children about what they did in response to seeing inappropriate content – 40% left the site immediately, 21% did nothing and only 19% told a parent. This is despite the fact that 87% of 8-17 year olds agreed with the statement 'I would tell my parents if I came across something online that made me uncomfortable' and 85% of parents of 8-17 year olds agreed that their child would tell them/their spouse if he/she came across something online which made him/her uncomfortable.(but this could also be because the child is not sufficiently concerned or worried about what they came across).

These findings suggest that although children appear to be relatively more concerned about violent content (when comparing the differences in concern between parents and children of sexual and violent content), and although they were more likely to mention having come across this type of material (compared with the responses given by parents) they are less likely to have talked about exposure to this type of content with their parents (mentions of violent content are lower among parents than children). Indeed, the higher level of concern about violent content among children and parents is demonstrated by their responses to the statement: 'problems like bullying and violence in real life are more of a concern to me than inappropriate content on the internet' - 56% of parents of 8-17 year olds and 68% of 8-17 year olds agreed with this.

<sup>37</sup> Caution – small sample sizes (63)

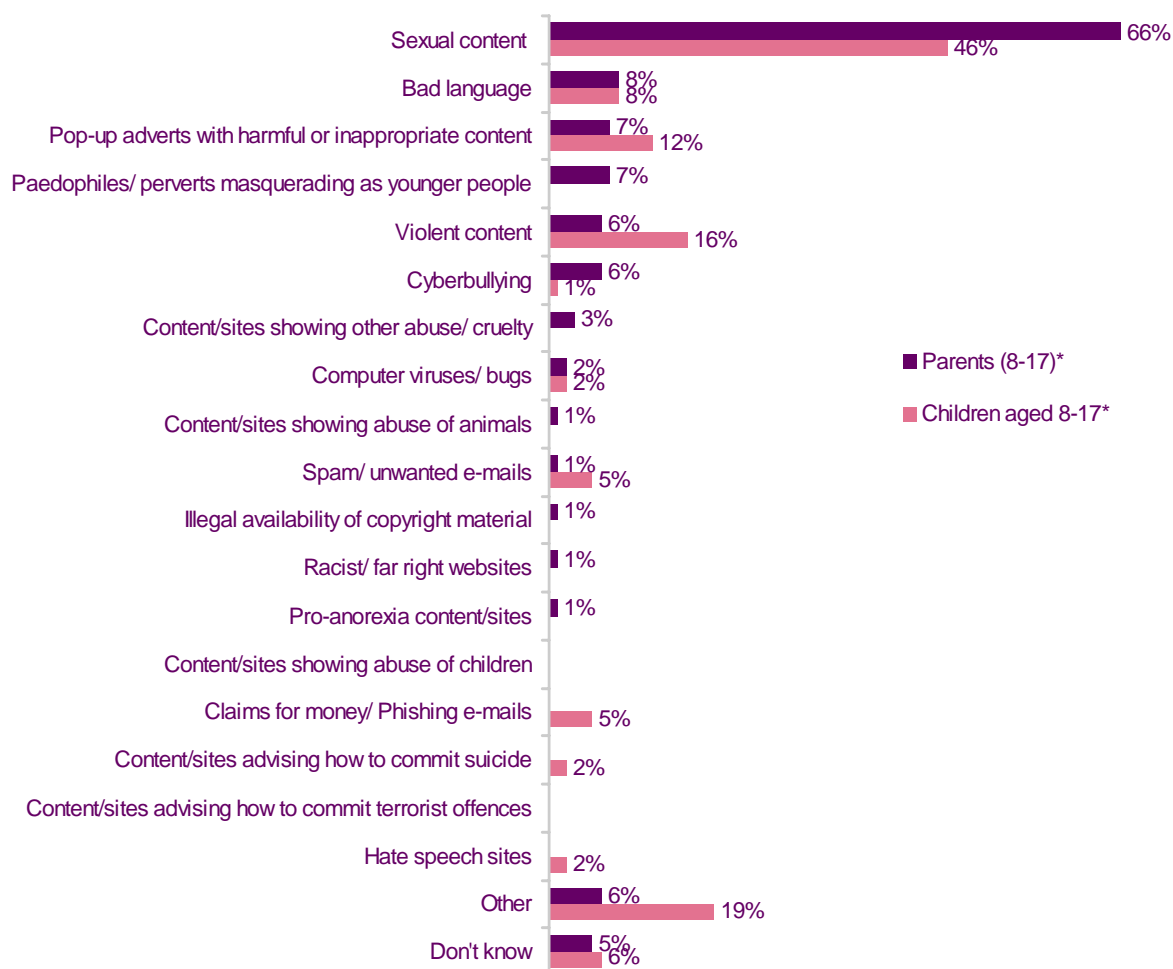


In addition, a survey conducted by the NSPCC<sup>38</sup> in 2007 found that 81% of children see violence as a major problem in their lives, and 60% of secondary school pupils fear they could be attacked by someone using a weapon.

Interestingly, while there was little difference between the spontaneous responses of parents and children regarding concern around cyberbullying (figure 66), parents are more likely to mention that their child has been exposed to such material compared with children – only 1% of children aged 8-17 say they have been exposed to cyberbullying on the internet.

Children’s exposure, as reported by both parents and children, to other types of inappropriate content that both say they are concerned about such as content/sites showing abuse or racist material, is low.

**Figure 73 Type of inappropriate content children exposed to: parents vs children**



Q: What type of content / material was it?

Base: All who/whose child have/has come across harmful/inappropriate content on the internet:

Parents of 8-17 year olds (62), children aged 8-17 (80), \* caution- low sample size

Source: Ofcom – Children, Young People & Online Content, October 2007

Of the small proportion of children aged 8-17 who access the internet via their mobile phones, only 5% say they have come across harmful or inappropriate content on their phones in the last six months; this is overall a negligible proportion of all children. Sample

<sup>38</sup> [http://www.nspcc.org.uk/whatwedo/mediacentre/pressreleases/2007\\_21\\_may\\_NSPCC\\_100\\_day\\_challenge\\_for\\_Gordon\\_Brown\\_to\\_tackle\\_violence\\_against\\_children\\_wdn46037.html](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/whatwedo/mediacentre/pressreleases/2007_21_may_NSPCC_100_day_challenge_for_Gordon_Brown_to_tackle_violence_against_children_wdn46037.html)



sizes for those parents who say their child accesses the internet via a mobile phone are too small to report figures on exposure to harmful or inappropriate content.

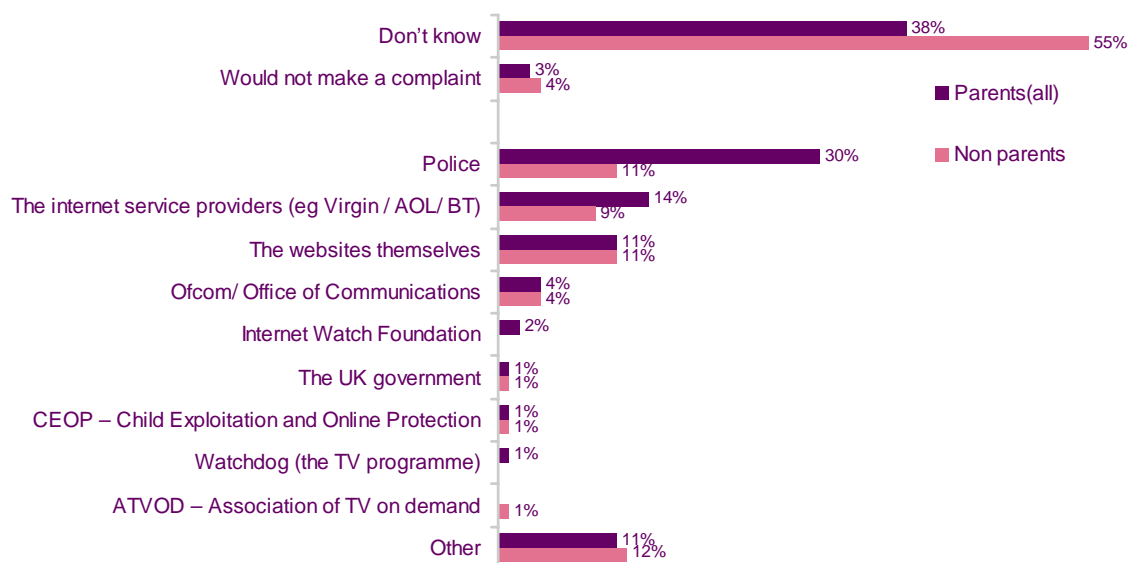
### Making complaints

Those parents who said their child had come across harmful or inappropriate content were asked what they did in response. Those who did not make a complaint were asked why<sup>39</sup>, and the most common response was that they didn't know who to complain to, followed by the fact that they thought it wouldn't make any difference if they did.

The research study also looked at whether or not people are more generally aware of who they can complain to about inappropriate content on the internet (Figure 74). High proportions of both parents (38%) and non-parents (55%) said they did not know. The police were mentioned by 30% of parents and by 11% of non-parents, followed by internet service providers (ISPs) and the websites themselves.

The lack of awareness of who to complain to is fairly similar across all socio-demographic groups of parents (ranging from 35% of C1 parents saying they don't know to 40% of C2DE parents) and the age of the child in the household (ranging from 35% of those with 12-15 year olds and 40% of those with children aged 8-11 or 16-17 say they don't know). However, only 23% of those who rate themselves as advanced or expert say they don't know who to complain to.

**Figure 74 Awareness of who to complain to about inappropriate content on the internet: parents vs non-parents**



Q: As a general rule, who would you contact if you had a complaint about content / material you saw online that you considered harmful / inappropriate?

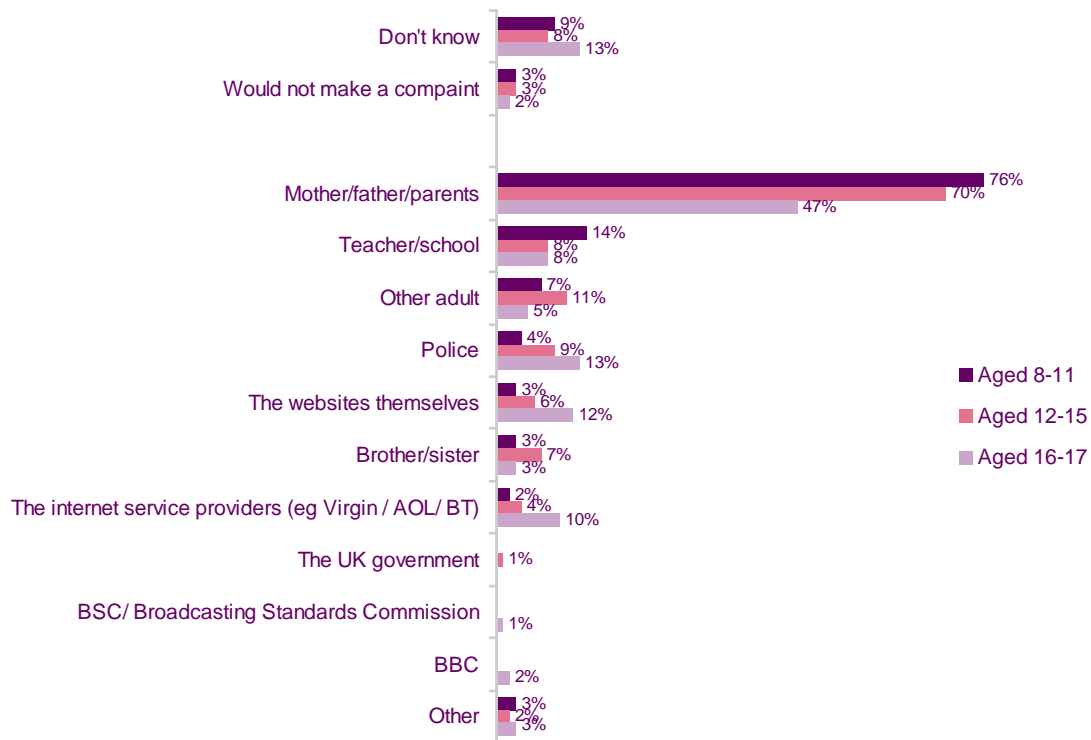
Base: Parents (653), non-parents (279)

Source: Ofcom – Children, Young People & Online Content, October 2007

Children were less likely to say they didn't know who to complain to, as the majority would turn to a parent (figure 75) – although this course of action tends to be lower for 16-17 year olds as they are more likely to mention websites, ISPs and the police.

<sup>39</sup> Caution – small sample sizes (62)

**Figure 75 Awareness of who to complain to about inappropriate content on the internet, by age of child**



Q: As a general rule, who would you contact if you had a complaint about content / material you saw online that you considered harmful / inappropriate?

Base: Children aged 8-11 (198), 12-15 (208), 16-17 (107)

Source: Ofcom – Children, Young People & Online Content, October 2007

## Appendix 1

# Research methodology

## Methodology

This quantitative survey was conducted face-to-face in homes, using CAPI (Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing).

The sample was structured as follows:

- ***Interviews with parents aged 16-59 and children aged 5-17***

The parent and child were recruited from the same household, to enable comparison between their responses. Only one child was interviewed per household.

Quotas were set on the age of the child (interviews were split approximately equally between those aged 5-7, 8-11, 12-15 and 16-17), plus gender of parent and gender of child.

Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland were oversampled to ensure robust base sizes for analysis.

- ***Interviews with non-parents aged 16+ who do not live at home with their parents.***

In this instance, non-parents were defined as those without children aged 17 or under living with them.

Quotas were set on age and gender of the respondent, with Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland again oversampled.

## Sampling

A sample frame was constructed using postcode geography to reflect the required sample. Sample points were selected with probability proportional to size to ensure a representative sample (allowing oversampling of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland where appropriate). Within each selected sample point, interviewers were issued with a locating address and instructed to work within a set postcode sector. When interviewing, they followed a random route starting at their given address.

## Interviews with children

When interviewing children, particularly young children, certain procedures need to be followed, such as obtaining written consent from a parent for those aged 15 or under to take part. Given the sensitive nature of some of the questions included in this survey, a number of additional measures were introduced.

First of all, the parent's interview was always conducted before the child's interview. In this way, the parent could sit in on the child's interview (if he/she wished) without biasing the results of their own survey. It was recorded at the end of the interview whether the parent sat in on all or part of it (and also whether anyone else was present).

The recruitment was very specific about the research being conducted for Ofcom, ensuring parents were aware of the integrity and value of the research. They were made aware that a small number of the questions asked to both them and their child, would be of a sensitive nature, however their right to refuse to answer a question was also explained to them and a

'parent refused' option was included in the CAPI script for the more sensitive questions in the child's interview.

For both parents and children, many of the questions (especially those of a sensitive nature) were asked spontaneously. As well as establishing unprompted responses, this also ensured that respondents were not shown anything that might be sensitive or potentially offensive.

Finally, the children's questionnaires were adapted (from the parent's version) where necessary, to ensure that the questions asked and the language used were appropriate and understandable for the ages concerned. The content and language were tested with children of relevant ages prior to fieldwork. The younger children's interview (for those aged 5-7) was also shortened considerably, to 10 minutes, compared with the 20 minutes for older children and parents.

### **Fieldwork dates**

Fieldwork was conducted between 25<sup>th</sup> October and 7<sup>th</sup> November 2007.

### **Sample sizes**

The final unweighted sample sizes achieved were as follows:

Parents	653
Older children (aged 8-17)	498
Younger children (aged 5-7)	155
Non-parents	279

### **Data weighting**

The data were weighted back to the correct proportions (to remove the effect of the oversampling). The following matrix was used for the weighting:

#### ***Parents***

##### *Age of youngest child:*

5-7	33.3%
8-11	30.4%
12-15	25.4%
16-17	10.9%

##### *Gender of parent:*

Male	44.2%
Female	55.8%

##### *Region:*

North	24.2%
Midlands	25.7%
South	33.3%
Scotland	8.6%
Wales	5.0%
Northern Ireland	3.2%

**Children***Age of child:*

5-7	21.4%
8-11	30.3%
12-15	31.9%
16-17	16.4%

*Gender of child:*

Male	51.6%
Female	48.4%

*Region:*

North	24.4%
Midlands	25.6%
South	33.5%
Scotland	8.2%
Wales	5.0%
Northern Ireland	3.3%

**Non-parents:***Age:*

16-34	27.1%
35-54	22.3%
55+	50.6%

*Gender:*

Male	50.4%
Female	49.6%

*Region:*

North	23.7%
Midlands	25.2%
South	35.0%
Scotland	8.7%
Wales	5.0%
Northern Ireland	2.4%