Ofcom's Children's Media Literacy 2020 Technical Report

To accompany the data tables for Survey 1

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Preface

The Children's Media Literacy Research 2020 has been run by Critical Research on behalf of Ofcom. The objective of the survey is to provide detailed evidence on media use, attitudes and understanding among children and young people aged 5-15, as well as detailed information about the media access and use of young children aged 3-4.

In previous years this research has been conducted face to face in-home using Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI). In 2020, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and in common with other Ofcom tracking studies with an element of in-home interviewing, it was not possible to conduct the research in this way. Various alternative methods of conducting research have been tested across different tracking surveys in 2020; including online panels, outbound telephone interviews, and approaches based on initial mailings and reminders, with these postal approach studies completed online, by phone or on paper (either requested or unsolicited).

For this study, alternative methods were considered and discounted. The interview was considered too complex to administer on paper by post, and there was the additional issue of needing to interview both a parent and child (where a child aged 8-15 was present and willing to be interviewed). A telephone approach was discounted due to the volume of (prompted) questions which would be difficult to administer by phone. An approach that wholly relied on a postal approach (by mailing to households in significant numbers and inviting those with children to participate) would have resulted in a significant waste of paper and would also not have been a cost-effective solution. Thus, for this study, the only option was to encourage eligible households to complete the survey online, through a combination of post-to-web and online panel interviewing.

In order to adapt the 2019 in-home CAPI questionnaire to an online approach it was necessary to reduce the number of questions that were asked of respondents. Some of these questions were therefore removed, with the potential to be reinstated on a future survey. There remained, however, too many questions to be accommodated on one online survey. The remaining survey questions were therefore fielded across two online studies in 2020: a 'main' online study (Survey 1) and an 'overflow' online study (Survey 2). The questions that had been asked of all children, rather than all who go online, tended to be retained on the 'main' survey (Survey 1) while those that were asked of children that go online were incorporated into Survey 2.

The remainder of this document outlines the approach for Survey 1, with a separate Technical Report available for Survey 2.

For Survey 1, the methodology consisted of a **postal sample** being invited to complete an online interview, plus an **online panel**. This was necessary to achieve a similar Effective Sample Size (ESS) to previous years without a significant increase in budget, and also to allow minimum sample requirements to be met – for example, using the panel to boost the number of interviews with those respondents which the postal sample had under-represented. Moreover, using two rather than one approach offers a degree of robustness when we are forced to change the sampling method to something relatively unknown.

Hard quotas were not set by age group within nation, but a broad objective was to obtain samples along these lines: broadly equal samples by the four age groups of interest (aged 3-4, 5-7, 8-11 and 12-15) and ideally 100 internet users per age group per nation.

An online panel study was used to top up the interviews achieved through the initial postal approach.

The questions that were fielded on this study related to the following areas:

- Media devices/services access, ownership and use of various media;
- TV content consumption – use of live broadcast TV and video-on-demand services;
- Children's attitudes towards TV content;
- Parental concerns, rules and mediation for each type of media;
- Parental and children's attitudes towards benefits and risks of child being online;
- Awareness and use of privacy measures online among children;
- Critical understanding among children of online sites and apps;
- Negative online experiences among children, and any related actions undertaken.

The total number of interviews achieved across the postal approach and the online panel, by age, was as follows:

	Total	Postal sample	Panel sample
AGE: 3-4	782	292	490
AGE: 5-7	756	299	457
AGE: 8-11	694	241	453
AGE: 12-15	740	266	474
AGE: 5-15	2190	806	1384

The ratio of panel to postal sample was kept as low as possible within budget constraints and balanced across sample groups as far as possible.

As we were using two new methods to replace the in-home CAPI interviewing, we ran additional analysis to compare these methods on a like-for-like basis. To do this, weights were calculated which gave the correct overall UK profile for the total sample, panel only and postal only. Comparisons were then done across some key variables between the two identically weighted sub-samples. Where there were differences the historic data was used to identify which, if either, was "more accurate". The result of this comparison was the conclusion that, although there were some differences, there was nothing consistent or substantial enough in the impact on the overall 2020 data to necessitate any corrective weighting between the two samples.

The research for Survey 1 was conducted between 6th October 2020 and 15th January 2021, which is a slightly longer fieldwork period compared to previous years[1], to allow respondents adequate time to respond to the post-to-web survey, and conduct additional top-up interviews in the online panels.

Details of the sampling frame, research methodology, and weighting procedures are outlined overleaf. A note on statistical reliability is also included.

[1] Fieldwork in previous years was conducted April- July, but postponed until later in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic

Sample Design – Random sample of households

The broad principles of the sample design remain the same as in previous years. The sample is drawn across the whole of the UK, stratified by nation, region and urbanity, with fixed quotas by nation to meet interviewing requirements. In order to achieve as many interviews as possible within the initial fixed cost of the mailouts, the postal sample excluded households located in Super Output Areas/ SOAs which had fewer than 15% of households with children, according to the 2011 Census.

Sample for the online study was provided via online consumer panels through our research panel partners Savanta, Lucid and WALR. Sourcing sample from multiple panel providers and their affiliates tends to minimise potential panel based- bias from using a single panel. The sample was de-duplicated to ensure that respondents could not complete the survey more than once.

Fieldwork and Quotas

As mentioned above, the postal sample were contacted first, to allow quotas to be finalised for the panel interviews based upon actual completions from the postal study. The only control we had over the sample was in terms of the size of the total mailout by nation, as follows:

England	25,479
Devolved nations (each)	6,675

While we could not control the numbers of interviews completed by age group from the postal sample, the online interview was programmed to select in the most beneficial order where more than one child was present in the household, with aged 3-4 then aged 5-7 prioritised. Following completion of the postal study, the remaining interviews conducted on the panel had quotas set by gender within age, by nation as well as on socio-economic group for the overall sample. Within England soft quotas were set to ensure a good mix by English region.

The final sample sizes achieved met almost all of the objectives but demands on online samples in Northern Ireland across all panel providers meant that there was a shortfall in interviews in the age groups within Northern Ireland.[2]

[2] The following number of interviews by age group were achieved in N Ireland: 97 aged 3-4, 93 aged 5-7, 71 aged 8-11, and 95 aged 12-15.

Weighting

The combined panel and postal data are weighted within nation to the correct profile of age and gender and urbanity, and overall to the correct SEG profile.

After weights were calculated, the relative weights within nation were capped at 1.75, to provide as high as possible ESS, after checking this did not significantly impact sample profile.

The following table shows the initial unweighted sample and the final weighted sample profile for the final sample.

Figures are based on UK children aged 3-15	Census profile	Interviews achieved Unweighted**	Interviews achieved Weighted**
Boys aged 3-4	8%	13%	8%
Girls aged 3-4	8%	13%	8%
Boys aged 5-7	12%	11%	12%
Girls aged 5-7	12%	13%	12%
Boys aged 8-11	16%	12%	15%
Girls aged 8-11	15%	12%	15%
Boys aged 12-15	15%	12%	15%
Girls aged 12-15	14%	12%	15%
SEG – AB	22%	31%	24%
SEG – C1	31%	27%	29%
SEG – C2	21%	18%	19%
SEG – DE	26%	22%	27%

**Figures are based on UK children aged 3-15 in households using the internet

Guide to Statistical Reliability

The variation between the sample results and the "true" values (the findings that would have been obtained if everyone had been interviewed) can be predicted from the sample sizes on which the results are based, and on the number of times that a particular answer is given. The confidence with which we can make this prediction is calculated at the 99% limit for the 2020 data due to the change in methodology.[3] This means that the chances are 99 in 100 that the "true" values will fall within a specified range. However, as the sample is weighted, we need to use the effective sample size (ESS) rather than actual sample size to judge the accuracy of results.

The following table compares ESS and actual samples for some of the main analysis groups within the main sample.

	Actual	ESS
Total 3-15s	2972	1963
AGE: 3-4	782	546
AGE: 5-7	756	546
AGE: 8-11	694	504
AGE: 12-15	740	521
AGE: 5-15	2190	1535
BOYS AGED 3-4	398	281
GIRLS AGED 3-4	384	266
BOYS AGED 5-7	379	268
GIRLS AGED 5-7	377	278
BOYS AGED 8-11	346	250
GIRLS AGED 8-11	348	254
BOYS AGED 12-15	371	262
GIRLS AGED 12-15	369	259
SEG – AB (AGED 5-15)	698	525
SEG - C1 (AGED 5-15)	604	427
SEG - C2 (AGED 5-15)	414	291
SEG – DE (AGED 5-15)	456	336

[3] Prior to 2020, this was at 95%

The table below illustrates the required ranges for different sample sizes and percentage results at the "99% confidence interval".

Approximate sampling tolerances applicable to percentages at or near these levels

Effective sample size	10% or 90% ±	20% or 80% ±	30% or 70% ±	40% or 60% ±	50% ±
1,963 (Total aged 5-15)	1.7	2.3	2.7	2.9	2.9
250 (Boys aged 8-11)	4.9	6.5	7.5	8.0	8.2
336 (SEG DE aged 5-15)	4.2	5.6	6.5	6.9	7.0

For example, if 30% or 70% of a sample of 1,963 gives a particular answer, the chances are 99 in 100 that the "true" value will fall within the range of + 2.7 percentage points from the sample results.

When results are compared between separate groups within a sample, different results may be obtained. The difference may be "real", or it may occur by chance (because not everyone has been interviewed). To test if the difference is a real one – i.e. if it is "statistically significant" – we again have to know the size of the samples, the percentages giving a certain answer and the degree of confidence chosen. If we assume "99% confidence interval", the difference between two sample results must be greater than the values given in the table below to be significant:

Differences required for significant at or near these percentages

Sample sizes being compared	10% or 90% ±	20% or 80% ±	30% or 70% ±	40% or 60% ±	50% ±
525 vs. 336 (AB vs. DE aged 5-15)	5.4%	7.2%	8.2%	8.8%	9.0%
250 vs. 254 (boys vs. girls aged 8-11)	6.9%	9.2%	10.5%	11.2%	11.5%