



SHEBBEAR COLLEGE

Insights into the Digital Lives of Young Children: An Ofcom Study

A recent Ofcom report highlights the increasing presence of young children, specifically those aged 5 to 7, in the digital world.

This report provides key insights into how these young users are navigating online spaces, with a concerning one-third of them using social media unsupervised.

Key findings from the study reveal:

- A significant number of children in this age group (24%) own smartphones, and an even higher percentage (76%) use tablets.
- There is a notable rise in online activities among these children, including messaging, voice and video calls, and consumption of live-streamed content.
- Social media engagement has grown, with platforms like WhatsApp, TikTok, Instagram, and Discord seeing increased use among 5 to 7-year-olds.
- Online gaming is also on the rise, with an increasing number of children engaging in shooter games.

Ofcom is responding to these trends by preparing a set of comprehensive proposals aimed at bolstering online safety for children.

These include leveraging AI tools to detect illegal content and prevent harm to children.

The agency emphasises the importance of the Online Safety Act, which holds tech firms accountable for protecting young users from harmful content.

For parents, the report underscores the importance of engaging with their children about online safety.

A positive note is that three-quarters of parents are discussing these critical issues with their young children, helping to lay a foundation for safer online experiences.

As digital participation among young children continues to grow, it is imperative for both regulators and parents to keep pace with changing technologies to ensure a safe and enriching online environment for the youngest users.

<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/news-centre/2024/a-window-into-young-childrens-online-worlds>