

One million children aged 7-12 on Facebook 'every day'

By [Mintel Oxygen reports](#)

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LONDON, UK: While social networking sites have, for many, become an integral part of our daily lives - it appears that it is not only adults using them to keep up with the latest trends. Indeed, in a new report looking at British children in 2011, Mintel finds that half of all children aged 7-12 visit social networking websites - and nearly half (49% or an estimated 0.97 million) of those who do, go on Facebook 'every day'.



The research also reveals that an extra 46% of children who are social-networkers use it 'some days'- leaving just 5% who claim to 'never' use it. Everyday usage on Facebook is most common with girls aged 10-12 (54%), whilst boys are more likely to be less frequent users as less than half (47%) visit the site with the same frequency. The next most popular social networks are Twitter and Club Penguin; however the frequency of visits is much lower with only 9% of children who use social networks visiting every day.

Peer pressure a key driver

And it seems peer pressure is a key motivating force for using a particular social network; nearly two thirds (63%) of 7-12-year-olds using social networks, belong to a network because their friends do, with older children (67%) and in particular girls aged 10-12 (71%) the most likely to follow the crowd. Even though most of the social networking activities are done on the computer (54%), a significant minority of children (11%) are using their mobile phones to do most of their social networking, with boys aged 7-9 being the most likely to do so (15%) and girls aged 10-12 following closely (13%).

Ina Mitskavets, senior lifestyles analyst at Mintel, said: "Being the digital natives, today's children are well versed in all aspects of technology and the internet, with almost a million of children aged 7-12 use Facebook on a daily basis, highlighting just how popular the site has become amongst children.

Perhaps, joining Facebook is viewed as a rite of passage into secondary school and an absolute must-have for entering the social scene and maintaining social circles. Friends' acceptance is an important factor driving social network adoption, but peer influence is also essential in new product discovery, especially for games, electronic gadgets, music and films."

Favourite purchases

The report also highlights changing trends in children's pocket money - and how they spend it. Today, the average weekly amount of pocket money stands at £6.47* and the top five things children aged 7-12 buy with their pocket money are as follows: Boys: 1. Food (£12.8 million monthly), 2. Games / Video Games (£12.3 million monthly), 3. Put aside for savings (£10.7 million monthly), 4. Magazines and Comics (£6.5 million monthly), 5. Going Out (£3.7 million monthly). Meanwhile for girls the top five are: 1. Food (£11.4 million), 2. Put aside for savings (£9.7 million), 3. Magazines and Comics (£7.3 million monthly), 4. Appearance (£6.5 million monthly), 5. Games (£3.9 million monthly).

Although less significant, expenditure on mobile phones and going out is driven by the older girls (aged 10-12), who are spending nearly three and four times more respectively on these categories, relative to their younger counterparts aged 7-9. Indeed, girls' desire for communicating is apparent; 59% of children placing their mobile phone as their most prized possession are girls compared to 41% who are boys. Likewise, key adopters of mobile phones are the older children aged 10-12; over three quarters (78%) of those who agree that their mobile phone is their most prized possession are between

10 and 12 years compared to just over a fifth (22%) of 7-9 year-olds.

Mobile-savvy

Today, nearly a quarter (24%) of children aged 7-12 use a smartphone to access the internet - particularly significant when you consider just 41% of British adults who use their smartphone to go online. The majority of children display a fairly relaxed attitude towards their mobile phones with little importance or urgency shown when receiving a text message at dinner table when asked by Mintel.

However, behavioural changes occur amongst the different age groups; receiving a text becomes much more important to 10-12 year-olds. Nearly a fifth (17%) state that they would immediately check a text message compared to nearly six in ten (58%) 7-9-year-olds who would continue eating dinner. With nearly a third (31%) of 10-12-year-olds accessing the internet on their smartphones and nearly four in ten (37%) in this age group who can't live without their mobile phone on the weekends, the growing importance of the mobile channel cannot be overstated.

'Kidfluencing'

And it appears 'Kidfluencing' is gaining in popularity for today's children. Indeed, pester power does work for the majority of children; more than 6 in 10 (61%) display a certain degree of influence in getting their parents to buy them the things that they want. Younger boys report more difficulties in persuading their parents to cave into their demands (more than 4 in 10 (43%) say it's hard or very hard to convince their parents to buy them things they want), compared with girls of the same age (over a third (36%) say the same), while the situation is reversed for the older age group, with girls aged 10-12 finding it harder to persuade their parents versus boys of the same age (42% and 35% respectively).

Positively, over two thirds of children recognise the importance of being fit (67%) and healthy (66%) which is a positive sign, with younger boys (aged 7-9) attributing the highest importance (71%) and older girls (aged 10-12) the lowest (57%). However, is this thought actually conveyed into action? There is evidence to suggest the opposite, as Mintel's research reveals that children only spend 14% of their time doing sports or hobbies and that only over a third of children state that they could not live without exercise/sports.

Almost 20% of time spent in front of the TV

Mintel's research also finds children spend nearly a fifth of their time watching TV, which equates to approximately three hours and five minutes a day both during the term and on weekends. Indeed, it seems TV ads are most effective when it comes to informing children about new products, with over half (55%) learning about new music and films from TV advertisements, and around half citing advertising they see on TV, when learning about new games (52%), electronic gadgets (50%) and snacks and sweets (50%).

"Spending time in front of the 'big screen' takes up the largest single chunk of a child's day and is the most popular activity, which goes some way to explaining why TV ads, and to a lesser extent TV shows, have so much influence on kids. Children

pay as much attention to TV advertising as to recommendations from their friends, in contrast to adults who tend to exhibit more scepticism about TV ads and instead trust word-of-mouth recommendations to a much higher degree," Mitskavets concludes.

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