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Research and analysis

Media Literacy Parent's study

Research to help parents talk with their children about the content they see online.

From:

[Department for Science, Innovation and Technology](#)

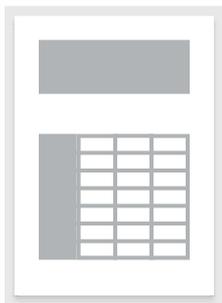
Published

10 February 2026

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/media-literacy-parents-study?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govUK-notifications-topic&utm_source=d48cd94e-f18b-4f93-a26f-4febe586a629&utm_content=daily

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[Media Literacy Parent's study: Accenture results](#)

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Details

This research – along with insight from University College London (UCL) – is part of the government commitment to support families, improve online safety and strengthen digital wellbeing. The research supports the [‘You Won’t Know until You Ask’](#) campaign.

Key findings

- a clear gap between the confidence many parents feel about understanding their child’s online activity and the reality of what young people are exposed to
- a need for clear, accessible guidance and a central hub where parents can get practical help
- a need to normalise frequent conversations about online content, rather than reacting only when problems arise
- evidence that young people, particularly boys, may be exposed to harmful content through no deliberate action of their own

Summary of the findings

Parents think they understand platforms, but not the content:

- 80% of parents say they feel confident they know which platforms their child uses
- only 24% feel very confident about what their child actually sees on those platforms

This suggests many parents may be unaware of the harmful content their children encounter.

Most parents have not seen online safety resources:

- 61% of parents haven’t come across resources, don’t recall seeing them, or don’t know if they’ve

seen them

This highlights the importance of a central, clearly signposted online safety hub offering trusted, practical guidance.

Parents strongly value a centralised hub:

- 49% of parents rate a centralised hub as “very useful” (8–10/10)
- the hub’s average usefulness rating is 7.3/10

Conversations about online experiences remain rare:

- fewer than 1 in 2 parents (47.8%) say they have spoken to their child about their online experiences at all
- of those who have spoken, almost half say those conversations are one-off or rare

This suggests that discussions tend to be reactive, happening only after a problem arises, rather than forming part of regular family habits.

Differences between mothers and fathers:

- mothers are 8 percentage points more likely than fathers to say they are very confident discussing online experiences
- children are also more likely to speak to their mother about what they encounter online

This suggests mothers often act as the primary emotional and digital-safety contact, and that fathers may benefit from targeted confidence-building resources.

Influence varies by gender and age:

- older fathers are the least likely to see themselves as the biggest influence in their child’s digital life.

- younger mothers are the most likely to see themselves as central to shaping their child's online behaviour

Support for parents and carers

Visit the [You Won't Know until You Ask](#) campaign to find:

- conversation starters
- safety-setting guides
- practical advice on harmful content, misinformation, ragebait and misogyny

Background

This research underpins the government's commitment to supporting families, improving online safety and strengthening digital wellbeing. The following academics contributed to evaluating the results of this research:

- Dr Kaitlyn Regehr, Associate Professor in Digital Humanities
- Dr Katharine Smales, Researcher in Digital Culture and Society
- Dr Photini Vrikki, Lecturer in Digital Media and Cultural Analysis

The study was conducted by YouGov on behalf of DSIT.

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 1105 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 23 December 2025 to 4 January 2026. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB parents with children aged 8 to 14 years old. The research referenced in this release was conducted by University College London (UCL), in partnership with

the University of Kent and the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL).

The study combined interviews with young people and school leaders alongside an algorithmic modelling exercise on TikTok. Fieldwork involved creating test accounts representing teenage archetypes and reviewing recommended content over a period of 5 days. The study found a 4 fold increase in misogynistic content served to these accounts during this period.

Published 10 February 2026

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