Additional Reading

New Media

Communications Market Report 2019

Publication date: 4 July 2019

What we have found – in brief

Internet take-up and smartphone ownership are both unchanged in 2019. Household internet take-up remains at 87%, and 79% of UK adults personally use a smartphone.

Consumers are upgrading to faster broadband. The number of fibre-to-the-cabinet connections overtook standard broadband copper connections for the first time this year, and the number of superfast broadband lines increased by 17% as people upgraded from standard broadband services.

And people are using more data. The volume of data used on fixed and mobile connections both grew by around a quarter, with 240GB being used on average each month per fixed broadband connection and 2.9GB in an average month being used on each mobile data connection.

Much of the growth in data use is driven by online video. Fifty-eight per cent of people watched on-demand video services, up from 53%. This is driven by increased use of subscription video-on-demand services such as Netflix and Amazon Prime Video. There was no change in the proportion of people watching the PSB broadcasters' free catch-up services (BBC iPlayer, ITV Hub, All4 and My5), and for some age groups, this declined.

The total volume of voice calls has fallen, but people are using their mobiles more for calling – and using their landlines less. The volume of minutes originating from fixed-line connections fell again in 2019 (by 17%), while the volume of minutes originating from mobiles went up by 5%. Losses in revenues from fixed voice services contributed to a 4% real-term decline in fixed telecoms revenues year-on-year.

And the volume of traditional text messages continues to fall. More than 5 billion fewer traditional SMS and MMS messages were sent in 2018, as people switched to messaging services such as WhatsApp. This will also have contributed to the increased data volumes on mobile connections.

Revenues stayed the same year on year for the commercial television and radio broadcasters. For commercial TV broadcasters, growth in pay TV and revenue from other sources compensated for a 4% decline in advertising revenue. For the commercial radio sector, losses in local commercial advertising revenue were offset by growth in national advertising revenues, sponsorship and other turnover.

INSTAGRAM
Statistics and Facts 2017

@soravjain

There are over 40 billion photos & videos shared on Instagram since its conception.

1 million

There are one million monthly active advertisers.

32%

32% of all Internet users are on Instagram.

60%

60% of users say that they have learned about a product or service on the platform.

Instagram influencers are charging up to $100,000 for a sponsored post.
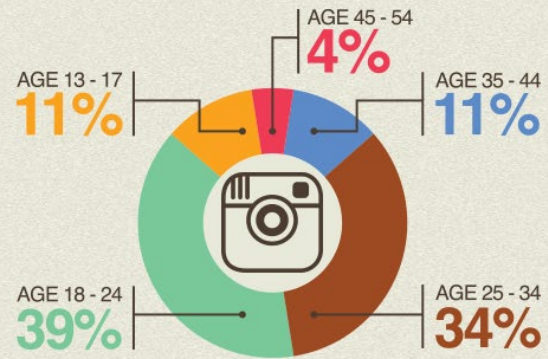
68.1 million followers | NIKE

NAT GEO | **65.7 million followers**

The top brands are Nike which has 68.1 million followers followed by National Geographic which has 65.7 million followers.
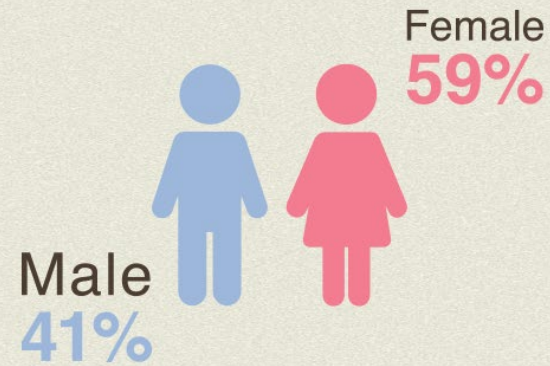
soravjain.com

INSTAGRAM USERS ARE YOUNG
73% OF THEM ARE AGED **18 - 34**

AGE 45 - 54
4%

AGE 13 - 17
11%

AGE 35 - 44
11%

AGE 18 - 24
39%

AGE 25 - 34
34%

TOP 5 HASHTAGS:

#hkig
#hkigshop
#hk

GENDER BREAKDOWN
SKEWED FEMALE IN A **60 / 40** SPLIT

Female
59%

Male
41%

EVERYDAY...

14m ♥ likes
453k shared

Half of UK 10-year-olds own a smartphone

By Zoe Kleinman Technology reporter, BBC News

4 February 2020

Fifty per cent of the UK's 10-year-olds owned a smartphone in 2019, according to a report by media regulator Ofcom.

The amount of young phone owners doubled between the ages of nine and 10, which Ofcom dubbed "the age of digital independence".
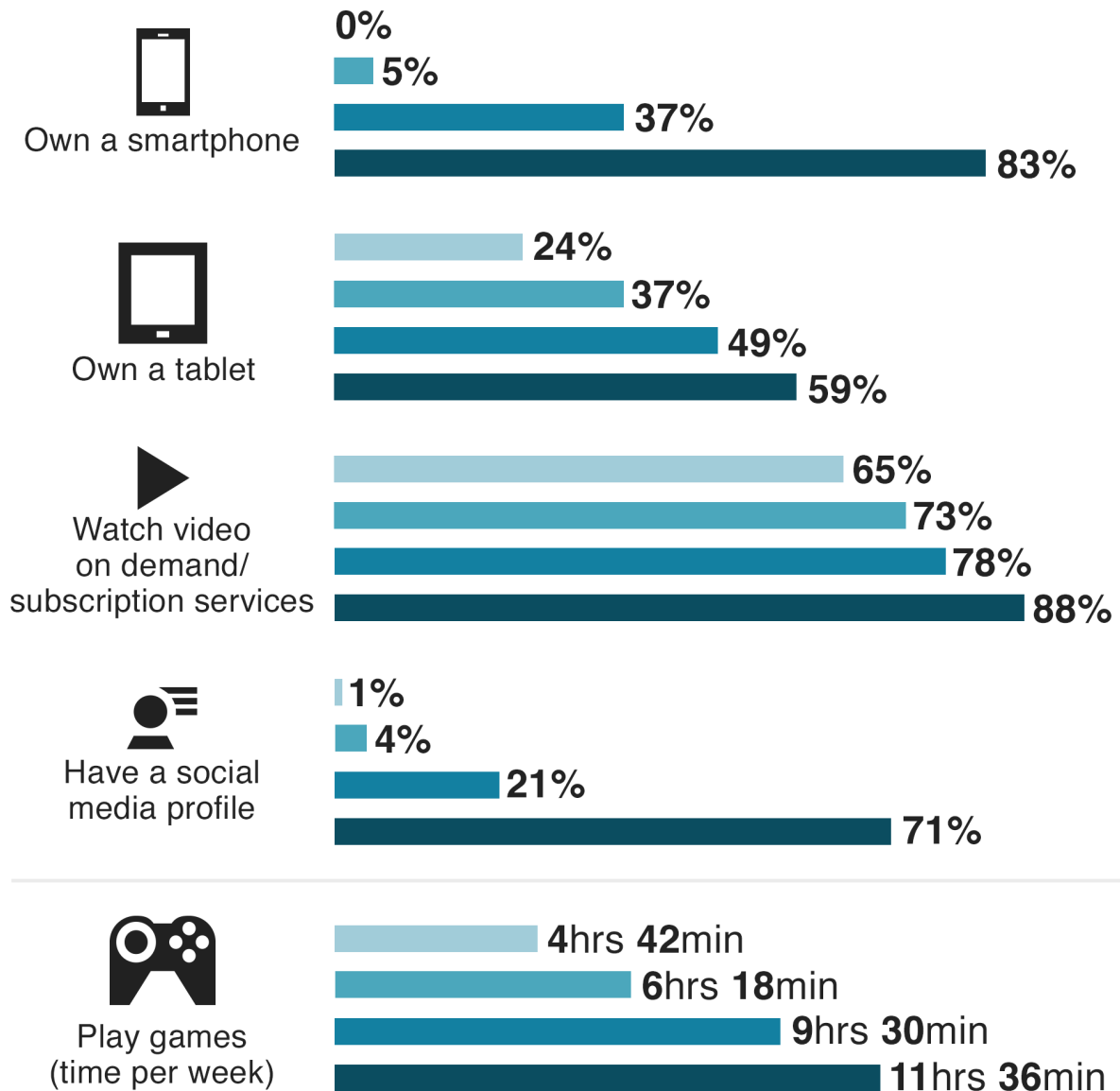
In addition, 24% of 3 and 4-year-olds had their own tablet, and 15% of them were allowed to take it to bed.

Ofcom's annual report looks at the media habits of children, and the types of devices they are using.

The 2019 study was based on more than 3,200 interviews with children and parents around the UK.

Children's online and viewing habits

■ 3-4 years **■ 5-7 years** **■ 8-11 years** **■ 12-15 years**

Own a smartphone
- 0%
- 5%
- 37%
- 83%

Own a tablet
- 24%
- 37%
- 49%
- 59%

Watch video on demand/ subscription services
- 65%
- 73%
- 78%
- 88%

Have a social media profile
- 1%
- 4%
- 21%
- 71%

Play games (time per week)
- 4hrs 42min
- 6hrs 18min
- 9hrs 30min
- 11hrs 36min

Source: Ofcom

BBC

"The mobile phone is the device of choice for children," said Yih-Choung Teh, strategy and research group director at Ofcom.

"I'm conscious that for these children who have never known a world without the internet, in many respects their online and offline worlds are indistinguishable."

The report also found that more older children were using social media to express their support for social causes and organisations, with 18% having shared or commented on a post, and one in ten having signed an online petition.

Ofcom dubbed this "the Greta effect" after the 17-year-old environmental campaigner Greta Thunberg.

Other key findings for 2019 included:

- 48% of girls aged 5-15 played online games, compared with 71% of boys. Boys spent twice as long playing, clocking up 14.5 hours per week, compared with 7.5 for girls

- Snapchat and Facebook remained the most popular social media platforms of older children, but 62% were also using WhatsApp (up from 43% in 2018)

- 99% of children aged 5-15 used a TV set, 27% used a smart speaker and 22% used a radio

- 80% of the children in the report watched video-on-demand, and 25% watched no live broadcast TV at all. One nine-year-old girl told researchers: "I don't really like the TV because you can't pick what channels are on it".

Ofcom also interviewed parents about their concerns. It found that 45% of parents thought the benefits of children using the internet outweighed the risks, but there was an overall increase in parental concern about young people seeing content that might lead them to self-harm.

Just under half (47%) of the parents spoken to were worried about pressure to spend money within games, especially on loot boxes, where the reward is not clear before purchase.

Of those parents with children aged between 5 and 15, 87% had sought advice about how to keep them safe online.

"We are seeing around half of 12-15 year olds saying they have seen hateful content online, and an increase in parents who are concerned about it," said Yih-Choung Teh.

"The good news is, more conversations about staying safe online are also happening across the country."

Following the report, children's charity the NSPCC called for independent regulators to force social media platforms to protect their users from viewing harmful material.

"While it's encouraging that parents are talking to their children about their media use, we must look to tech giants to protect their users and ensure they are a force for good not bad," said Andy Burrows, head of child safety online policy.

Two Gulf states to ban some Blackberry functions

Two Gulf states have announced bans on some functions of the Blackberry mobile phone, claiming security concerns.

The United Arab Emirates is to block sending e-mails, accessing the internet, and delivering instant messages to other Blackberry handsets.

Saudi Arabia is to prevent the use of the Blackberry-to-Blackberry instant messaging service.

Both nations are unhappy that they are unable to monitor such communications via the handsets.

This is because the Blackberry handsets automatically send the encrypted data to computer servers outside the two countries.

The UAE ban is to start in October, while the Saudi move will begin later this month.

Abdulrahman Mazi, a board member of state-controlled Saudi Telecom, has admitted that the decision is intended to put pressure on Blackberry's Canadian owner, Research in Motion (RIM), to release data from users' communications "when needed".

The UAE's telecoms regulator, TRA, said the lack of compliance with local laws raised "judicial, social and national security concerns".

Gulf expert Jim Crane on the "spat" between Blackberry and the UAE

RIM said in a statement that it "does not disclose confidential regulatory discussions that take place with any government".

"However, RIM assures its customers that it is committed to continue delivering highly secure and innovative products that satisfy the needs of both customers and governments."

There are an estimated 500,000 Blackberry users in the UAE, and 400,000 in Saudi Arabia.

Censorship denial

TRA said some Blackberry services would be suspended from 11 October "until a solution compatible with local laws is reached".

"It's a final decision but we are continuing discussions with them," said TRA director general Mohammed al-Ghanem.

"Censorship has got nothing to do with this. What we are talking about is suspension due to the lack of compliance with UAE telecommunications regulations."

It follows an alleged attempt by TRA last year to install spyware on Blackberry handsets.

And in 2007 RIM refused TRA access to the code for RIM's encrypted networks so it could monitor email and other data.

Power play?

Media freedom watchdog Reporters Without Borders told the BBC last week that while the UAE was playing a "technological leadership role in the Arab world", this was backed by "repressive laws" and a "general trend of intensified surveillance".

BBC Middle East business reporter Ben Thompson said the threat by the UAE was likely to be an attempt to wring concessions out of RIM.

"Many here see this as little more than a power play from the UAE authorities - an attempt to force RIM to handover the security codes or face losing a lucrative market," he said.

India has also raised security concerns over Blackberry data services, saying they could be exploited by militants.

Google helps China search users avoid censored keywords

Google has began to offer search users in China suggestions about which words run foul of the country's strict censors.

Until now, users who searched for banned or sensitive words received a "webpage not available" message and their connection was temporarily cut.

Google will now advise users if they are entering a sensitive word, and let them try and find an alternative.

Google's business in China has been held back by censorship issues.

The company started redirecting mainland Chinese users to its Hong Kong website in 2010, citing concerns over censorship and hacking.

Keywords

Google said on its official blog that it had investigated error message complaints and website disconnection issues after being told by users that its search service inside China was erratic.

Google's engineers reviewed the 350,000 most popular search queries in China to look for problems, according to Alan Eustace, senior vice president.

"After digging into user reports, we've noticed that these interruptions are closely correlated with searches for a particular subset of queries," he said.

The company did not refer to these keywords as censored, but internet users said the vast majority of problem searches are related to politically-sensitive issues.

Mr Eustace cited examples involving the Chinese character jiang.

The character means river, but it is also a common surname, notably in the case of former President Jiang Zemin.

When erroneous rumours spread last July that Mr Jiang had died, Chinese officials told social media websites to block searches including the character.

The problem is that even searches which are not politically sensitive - for example for chang jiang, the Yangtze River - are affected by the same block.

Another example mentioned in the blog entry is the character zhou, which means week.

Recent internet rumours involving China's security chief Zhou Yongkang have also resulted in his name being filtered from searches on Weibo, China's equivalent of Twitter.

Facebook blocked in Pakistan over Prophet Mohammed cartoon row

By Rob Crilly in Islamabad

A Pakistani court has blocked Facebook amid a growing row over a competition on the social networking website to design cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed.

Plans for the "Everybody Draw Mohammed Day" contest drew an angry reaction, provoking street demonstrations in the Muslim majority country.

On Wednesday, Lahore High Court responded to a petition by the Muslim Lawyers Movement, ordering Pakistan's internet regulator to block the entire site.

Users lost access to Facebook about two hours later.

Rai Bashir, a lawyer involved in the case, said the site was blasphemous.

"There are so many insults to the Prophet on the internet and that's why we felt we had to bring this case," he said.

"All Muslims in Pakistan and the world will be supporting us."

It is widely considered offensive to visually depict the Muslim prophet. The Koran does not explicitly forbid images of Mohammed, but a number of hadith, or interpretations of the Islamic holy book, forbid figural representations.

The court in Lahore ordered Facebook to be blocked until May 31 – after the date of the contest – when a longer hearing is expected.

The contest was based on an idea by Seattle-based artist Molly Norris, who posted a cartoon on her website of a chair, cotton reel, cherry and other items each claiming to be Mohammed.

However, she said her idea was only ever a spoof. It was meant as a protest against censorship of the television show South Park, she said. The US cartoon recently featured the Muslim prophet dressed in a bear suit.

She added that she was horrified that her satire had been turned into a Facebook competition.

It is not the first time Pakistanis have reacted angrily to depictions of the Prophet Mohammed.

Tens of thousands of protesters took to the streets in 2006 when cartoons, which had originally been published in a Danish newspaper, were reprinted around the world.

Five people died when the demonstrations turned violent.

Lawyers for the Pakistan Telecommunications Authority had argued that only the offending page be removed, but Justice Ijaz Ahmad Chaudhry ordered the whole social networking site to be barred on Wednesday.

The "Great Firewall" has gotten much taller under Xi

Tara Francis Chan

Mar. 24, 2018, 6:23 PM

Censorship in China has soared under President Xi Jinping, targeting local and international dissidents.

• Thousands of censorship directives are issued every year, and there has been a significant increase in the number of restrictive laws and regulations that target everything from false information to content that endangers the "honor of the State."

• Group chats are a big focus of the Chinese government and group initiators can be held criminally liable for anything members say, indicating Beijing is more less concerned with dissent existing than it is spreading.

• All of China's online rules are incredibly vague, allowing police broad discretion and encouraging netizens to self-censor before they ever post anything.

 It was 10.07 p.m. on a cool Vancouver evening when Shawn Zhang's phone rang. It was his mom.

Based in Wuyi, in the eastern Chinese province of Zhejiang just south of Shanghai, she had just received a call from the police. They were asking questions about a post her son, a law student in Canada, had put up on Weibo — they said it wasn't good and it would be better if Zhang deleted it.

Just a day earlier, China's legislature had voted — almost unanimously — to scrap presidential term limits, paving the way for President Xi Jinping to rule indefinitely. After weeks of extensive censorship, where everything from Xi's name to the words "immortality" and "lifelong" were banned, Zhang wanted to see if retweeting a picture would draw the ire of censors.

So that afternoon he set up an anonymous account on Weibo, posted a cartoon of Xi encased in glass and draped in a communist flag, and then retweeted it from his own account.

But before the post was censored or his account suspended, public-security police called his mum. All told, it took fewer than eight hours and four minutes.

"I didn't expect this picture would trigger the police's response. It is a parody picture, not a political statement," Zhang told Business Insider.

It is not the first time Zhang's posts have attracted scrutiny back home.

Earlier this year, he tweeted a picture of the Tibetan flag with the words "Free Tibet" after hotel chain Marriott controversially listed Tibet, as well as Hong Kong and Taiwan, as countries despite China's claims to those territories. And last year he gave an answer on the question-and-answer website, Quora, about the disputed Doklam territory which borders China, India, and Bhutan, which received 38,000 upvotes.

Both times, public-security police contacted his parents to try and convince Zhang to remove the posts.

"It's really disturbing that police called again and again," Zhang said.

But this time felt different.

"I also didn't expect police to respond so quickly. It suggests my social media account is probably under their close monitoring. They will read everything I say," Zhang said. "Last time I posted a Tibet flag, police responded because someone reported my posts to the police. But this time, the police's response seems more proactive. I am probably on their watch list."

Whether he is on a watch-list or not, Zhang is not alone in thinking censorship in China is rapidly changing.

The "Great Firewall" has gotten much taller under Xi

In 2018, more than 600 million people will use social media in China — that's nearly one-quarter of all global users.

But these people will be faced with more censorship than ever before, according to a new report this month from human-rights organization PEN America, "Forbidden Feeds: Government Controls on Social Media in China."

While the term "Great Firewall" used to describe the large number of international websites blocked from China — Google, Facebook, Twitter — PEN says that censorship on local platforms has soared over the past six years.

"There has never been a particularly good time for internet freedom in China, or for free expression on social media in China specifically," the PEN report said. "Yet... the space for free expression online has been under increasing and unrelenting pressure by the government under the tenure of President Xi Jinping."

In September 2015, censorship-monitoring site China Digital Times received a rare image of a censorship directive — usually editors receive tips verbally to minimize a paper trail, deputy editor Samuel Wade told PEN. This particular directive was numbered 320 and came from the Central Propaganda Department.

Because this department is just one agency within the government and Communist Party that issues censorship orders, its fair to assume thousands of directives are ordered each year.

Advanced censorship technology combined with new laws, regulations, and increased enforcement are increasingly being used to "repress dissident voices and shape online conversation," according to PEN.

Just this month, a former prosecutor was arrested for making comments online about the removal of presidential term limits. The Globe and Mail also reported that around the same time a teenager, who posted a tool on Weibo allowing users to connect with people whose accounts were deleted, had his computer seized by the police who also took some of his blood to collect his DNA.

And as Zhang's case shows, China's attempts at censorship are no longer limited by geography or technology. Beijing is also trying to crackdown on overseas dissidents whose families are still in the mainland, despite the fact many posts are on platforms like Twitter that aren't accessible in China.

"Under Xi, the "Great Firewall" is getting taller," the PEN report said.

Fear of censorship has turned into a fear of arrest

The law, the courts, and the police have all become stricter in the last six years.

In 2013, the Supreme People's Court increased penalties for posts that are defamatory of contain "false information." If a post is forwarded more than 500 times or clicked on over 5,000 times, the author can go to jail for up to three years.

China is expected to block VPNs, which can get around the Great Firewall, at the end of March. Apple already removed VPNs from its App store in China last year at Beijing's request.

Two years later it became illegal to post fabricated content about natural disasters, emergencies, or any reports of danger — encouraging netizens to closely stick to the government's narrative on major events.

Then last year, a new law made it illegal to endanger the "honor or interests of the State."

New regulations also urged social-media companies to begin rating users. Companies are encouraged to have a credit system for users, deducting points for disobeying regulations, and to grant the government access to the data.

"Before Xi Jinping we feared only that they would delete our posts. In the worst situation, they would delete [your account]," Qiao Mu, an academic told The Guardian in 2015. "But since Xi Jinping came to power this changed. They began to arrest people."

Chat groups are popular but their tendency to leak is dangerous

In 2016, blogger Liu Yanli was charged with defamation and spent eight months in jail for copying a number of short posts critical of Chinese leaders, including Xi, into a private WeChat group.

The following year Wang Jiangfeng was sentenced to two years prison for using the satirical nickname "Steamed Bun Xi," also in a private WeChat group.

WeChat groups are popular in China, where there can be as many as 500 members in each group.

And while there are numerous instances of the government appearing to have read private messages through some sort of back door, such large groups are, as PEN describes, "leaky by design" and can easily be infiltrated.

The problem isn't just limited to Chinese apps though. Despite WhatsApp's encrypted technology, Zhang Guanghong was charged last year with insulting the government for sharing an article that was critical of Xi in a group chat. According to The New York Times, this will be one of the first times conversation history from a non-Chinese app will be used as evidence.

Threats of prosecution pose risks for people who post content but also group creators. New regulations introduced in September last year hold group initiators criminally liable for content posted in any group they start.

The regulations also require the tech companies to monitor and keep records of chats for six months, and report any illegal activity to authorities. The companies have essentially been ordered to spy on their users.

Interestingly, group chats have more words censored than one-on-one chats, an indicator that China is focused more on dissent growing than it existing.

"China is more concerned about monitoring group opinion and preventing political mobilization than with censoring one-on-one discussions," the PEN report said.

Laws are intentionally vague and confusing so people will self-censor Giant Panda upside downChip Somodevilla/Getty Images

Aside from the new laws and regulations, since 2013 there have been seven "bottom lines" that social-media content shouldn't contravene: China's rules and laws, the socialist system, the country's national interests, the legitimate interests of citizens, public order, morality, and authentic information.

"The broad and vague nature of these lists provides authorities with unfettered discretion to crack down on anything they deem inappropriate," the PEN report said. "Additionally, it helps instill self-censorship among internet users, who are left with very little sense of what types of social media postings are appropriate."

Just this week, the values of the socialist system were interpreted to require an immediate crackdown on any and all parodies and spoofs.

"To be safe, a person must pull back in every respect, and moreover must become his or her own policeman," China scholar Perry Link wrote back in 2002.

For Zhang, he's already thinking about what posting online could mean for his family back in China.

"I was upset at that time because police harassed my family again," Zhang said. "I don't want them to be disturbed. Police calling gave them pressure. I have to think about my parents when I say something online."