

The Role of
Generation Alpha
in decision making

LITTLE VOICES BIG IMPACT





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Why Generation Alpha, Why Now?

At the7stars, we're passionate about understanding different audiences and how best to engage them. We believe that taking a people-first approach to planning is foundational to strong media performance and, ultimately, driving business success.

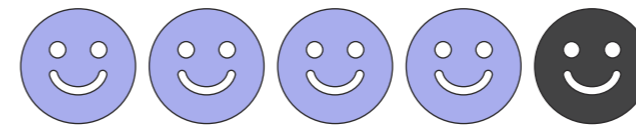
This year, our attention has turned to Generation Alpha – children born between 2010 and 2024. The timing is key. In 2026, the eldest members of this cohort will turn 16, placing them on the cusp of adulthood and making them increasingly relevant to advertisers across all categories – not just kid-centric ones.

Generation Alpha is also the largest generation in history, overtaking both Baby Boomers and Generation X. Globally, they amount to an estimated 2.5 billion (WGSN, 2025), with an economic footprint projected to reach £4.32 trillion by 2029 – almost equivalent to Millennials and Gen Z combined (BBC, 2024).



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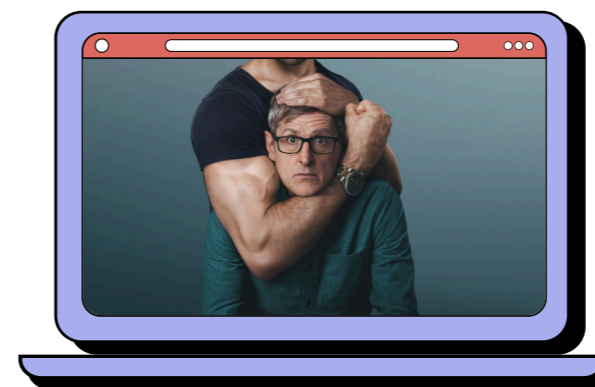
Generation Alpha is the largest generation in history



4 in 5



watch YouTube at least weekly



They are the first generation to be born entirely into a world dominated by social media. Instagram launched in the same year as the first Gen Alphas were born, a fact that might make many marketers feel their age. Today, 2 in 5 UK 7–15-year-olds are on TikTok, and 4 in 5 watch YouTube at least weekly (TGI Youth, 2025). This is a cohort exposed to an unprecedented amount of information, on demand and on their own terms, from primary school age. This access gives them ideas and levels of inspiration (and aspiration) that previous generations at their age would not have been privy to.

The generational rift between Alphas and their parents has hit headlines and been the centre of widespread cultural and political debate. Recent portrayals – from the award-winning Netflix series *Adolescence* to Louis Theroux's 'Manosphere' documentary – have painted a picture that is often uncomfortable and, at times, damning of UK teens and pre-teens. Headlines convey a generation that is disconnected from their parents, immersed in tight knit and toxic digital worlds that adults struggle to understand, let alone breakthrough.

This context led us to revisit a long-standing marketing concept: pester power. Traditionally framed as children nagging parents into purchases, pester power has often been portrayed negatively – as emotional manipulation or parents feeling defeated. But in an age where children are digitally fluent and more independent, we asked a simple question:

Is Generation Alpha changing family dynamics and shifting traditional roles when it comes to household decision making?

Either way, the answer to this question today directly impacts all brands seeking to understand the generation who will deliver growth for them over the coming years.

Please note that our research and findings are directly related to 11–15 year olds – the older members of Generation Alpha. This group is both more immediately relevant for brands and is more appropriate to engage from an ethical research perspective.

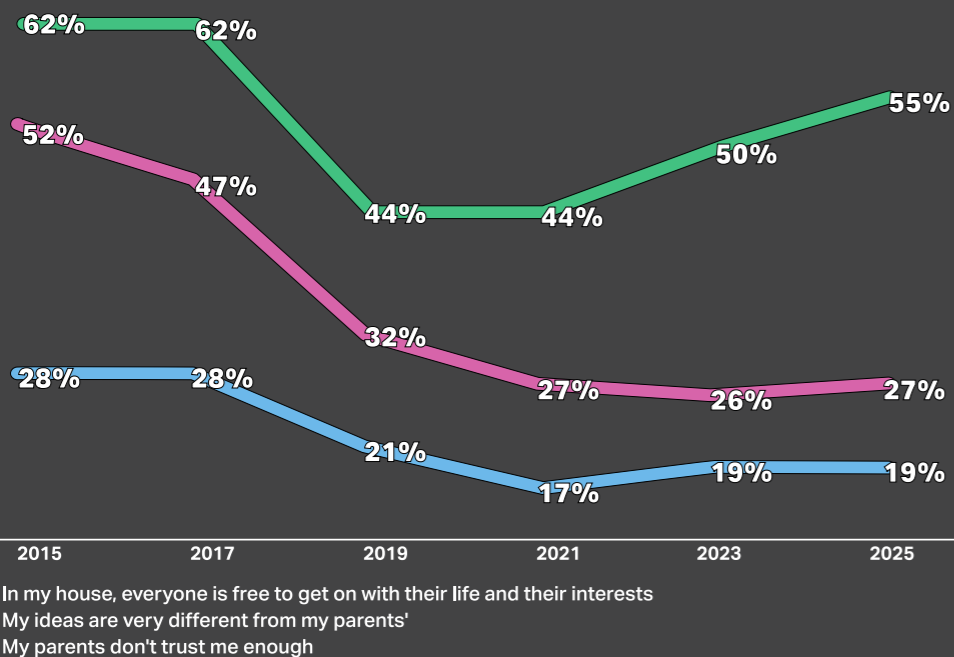


Shifting Family Dynamics

Despite widely circulated negative depictions of this generation, our research finds that the relationship between children and their parents has evolved into one of mutual trust and increased freedom within the home.

Attitudes within the home

Source: Kantar TGI Youth 2015-2025, 11-15 year olds, n~2,500



Since 2015, the percentage of children who say their ideas are "very different" from their parents has nearly halved (52% to 27%). A perceived lack of trust between parents and children has also declined, from 28% to 19% (TGI Youth, 2025).

These attitudinal changes suggest a move away from authoritative parenting towards more democratic family dynamics. Over half of 7-15-year-olds now agree that their mum is their best friend (TGI Youth, 2025).

At the same time, we see increasing individual autonomy within households. Since lockdown, more teenagers agree that in their home, everyone is free to get on with their own lives and interests.

We also see more similarities in media attitudes and behaviours among 11-15 year olds and their parents (Millennials) than Millennials do with their parents (Baby Boomers), suggesting a smaller generational rift than ever before. (see overleaf)

Together, this convergence in attitudes and behaviours set the context for how influence, trust and decision-making now operate within families.



"Me and my mum have similar interests. I give her fashion advice and I share with her things on social media that I think she'd like."

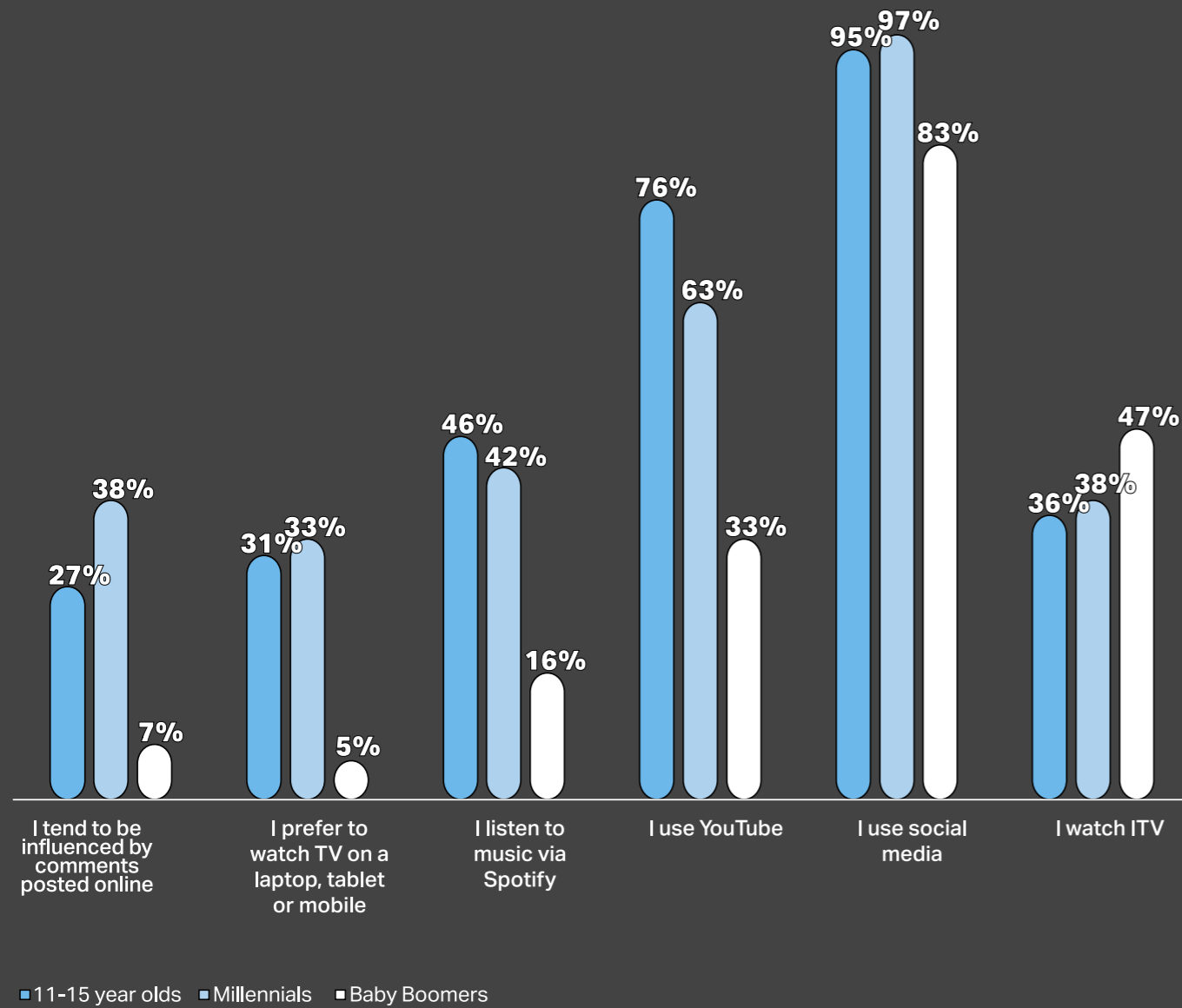
14-year-old girl, St Albans





> Key Media Usage and Attitudes by Generation

Source: Kantar TGI Youth 2025. TGI, February 2026



Three Themes

- 1. Autonomy In Action** – how autonomy and independence play out in day-to-day behaviours
- 2. Invested Influencers** – how Generation Alpha bring informed ideas within the home
- 3. From Pestering to Partnership** – the role of parent and child relationships in decision making

Autonomy in Action

The rise in personal devices and increased freedom in the home has clearly impacted the autonomy Generation Alpha have when making key purchasing decisions.

Our research revealed that at least three in five 11-15-year-olds feel they have control over most aspects of their lives. Control over clothing and food is expected, but many also feel empowered in areas that feel more traditionally "adult", such as financial management, particularly among 14-15 year olds.



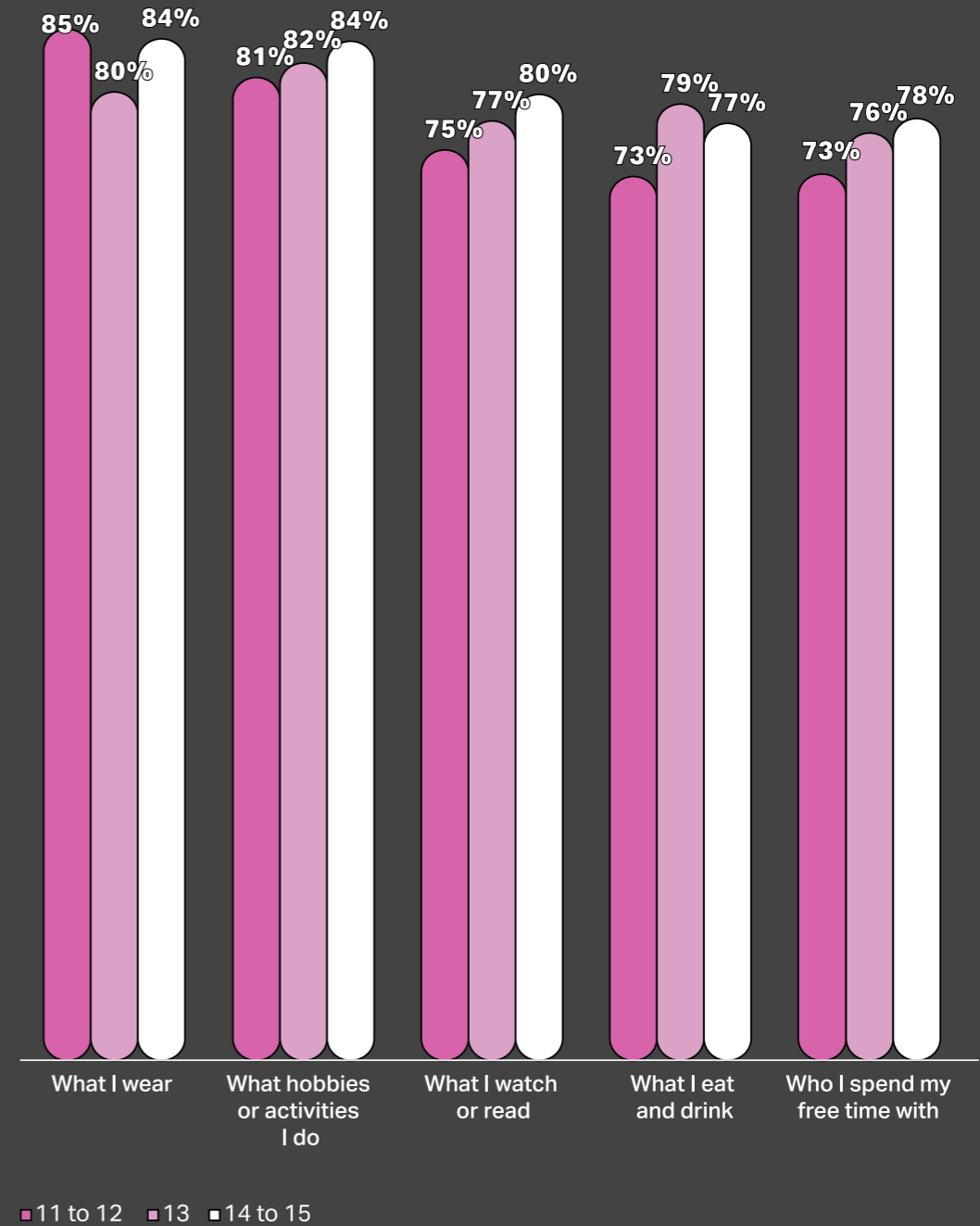
2 in 3

11-12-year-olds feel they have control over what they buy



Have full / most control over - lifestyle (by age)

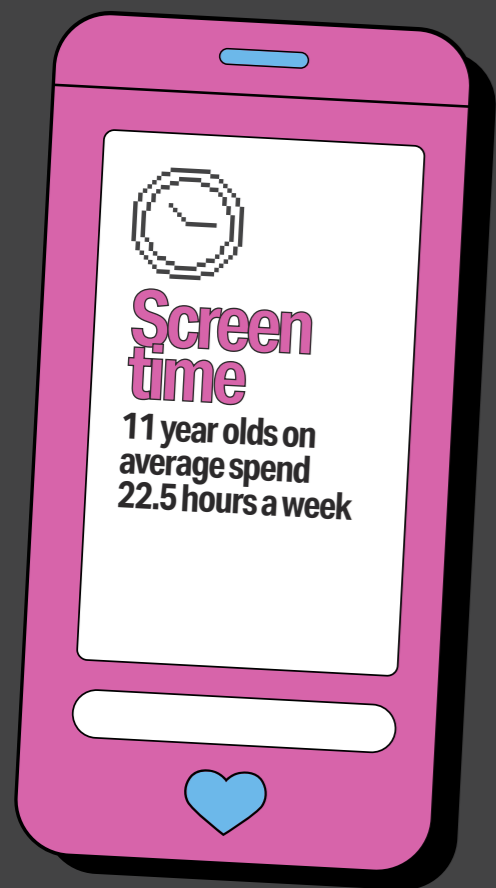
Source: the7stars Little Voices Big Impact, 2025. Base: n=1000 children aged 11-15, nationally representative





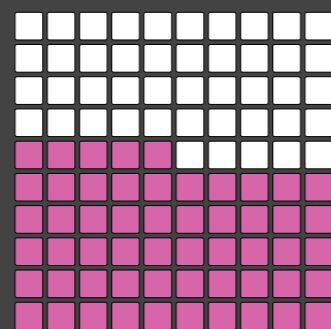
"Now I have my own iPad, I can choose what I watch. My parents do ask what I'm watching but it's up to me really."

10-year-old boy, Basildon



This level of autonomy is also seen within the media landscape, 55% of Generation Alpha feel they have full or most control over the social media platforms they use, with a similar proportion believing they have at least the majority say in TV or films watched. Autonomy here does increase by age, suggesting parental boundaries relax as kids get older. However, as boundaries ease, hours of screentime grow. Whilst 11 year olds on average spend 22.5 hours a week online, 15 year olds spend an hour more on screens each day – rising to 29.5 hours per week on average. (TGI Youth, 2025)

This perception of control contradicts with parental narratives. Ofcom reports that 84% of parents monitor their children's online activity in some way, highlighting a gap between perceived and actual behaviours.

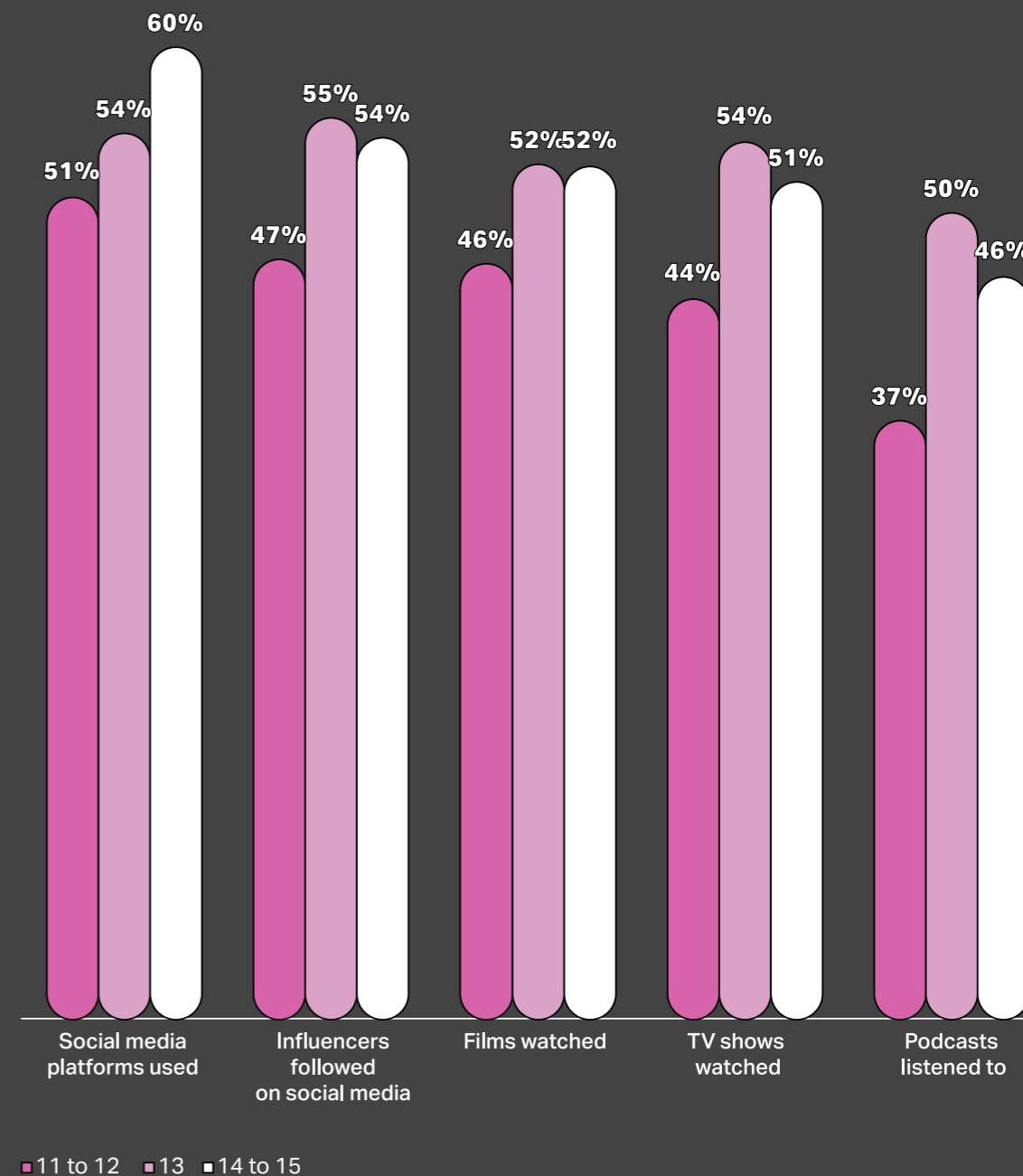


55%

of Generation Alpha feel they have full or most control over the social media platforms they use

> Have full / most control over - Media

Source: the7stars Little Voices Big Impact, 2025. Base: n=1000 children aged 11-15, nationally representative





There is no doubt financial autonomy has also increased for teenagers and pre teens compared to previous generations. Over the past decade, the proportion of teenagers receiving money to spend freely has doubled from 26% to 53% (TGI Youth). Qualitative conversations from our online communities revealed widespread use of tools such as GoHenry and Monzo cards – a clear shift away from cash pocket money towards digital money management. This level of power appears to be somewhat intentional from parents. 4 in 5 Gen Alpha parents agree it's important that their children understand and learn about money from a young age, and 2 in 5 believe their children grasp the concept of financial management much more than they did when they were children.

This growing access to information as well as widely encouraged financial freedom has seemingly led to increasingly informed purchasing behaviours, where Gen Alpha are on the front foot in family decision making. Far from the notion of 'pestering.'

When asked about their knowledge across categories, Generation Alpha reported high confidence. Many believe they know as much as, or more than, their parents – not only in expected areas such as clothing and technology, but also in areas less expected such as holidays and household items.

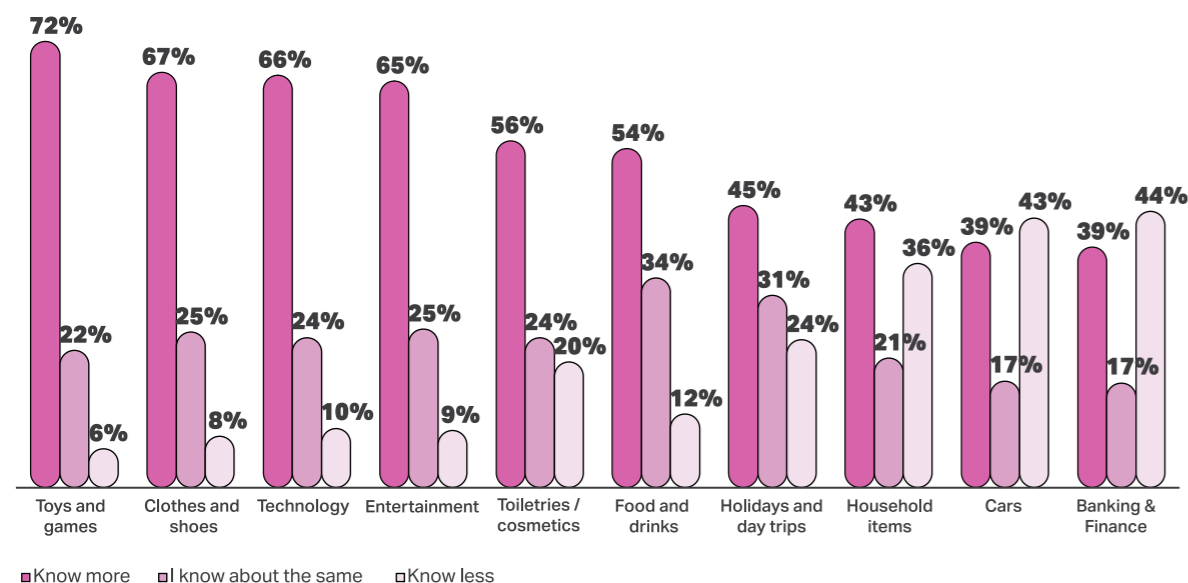
💙💙

"My parents put money into my Monzo and it's up to me how I manage it each month."

13-year-old boy, Ipswich

➤ Knowledge compared to parents

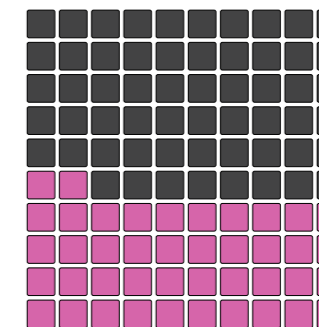
Source: the7stars Little Voices Big Impact, 2025. Base: n=1000 children aged 11-15, nationally representative



Only cars and financial products stood out as areas where parents retained a clearer knowledge advantage – and even here, the gap was statistically insignificant.

Interestingly, when speaking to the generation above, Generation Z, they do not cite the same levels of confidence. They are 42% less likely than Generation Alpha to claim they know more than their parents when it comes to clothes and shoes and are half as likely to feel clued up on more 'grown up' topics such as cars, despite their older age. This demonstrates that Generation Alpha are uniquely in the know – incomparable to previous generations.

Importantly, this confidence isn't limited to teenagers. From age 11, children already feel knowledgeable, with only expertise in clothes, technology and toiletries increasing with age, despite spending fewer hours online.

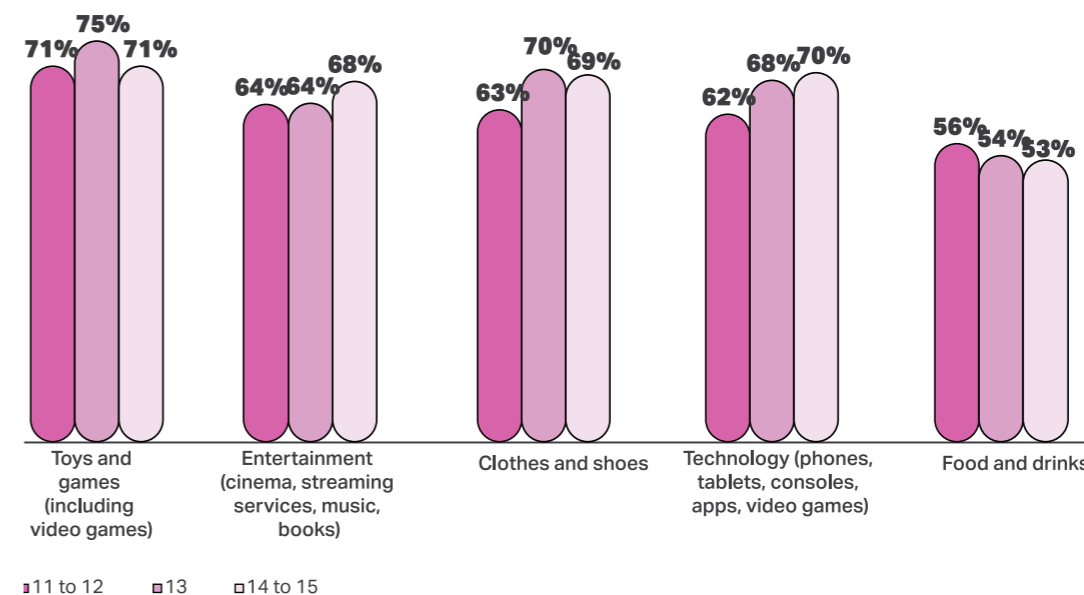


42%

Generation Z are 42% less likely than Generation Alpha to claim they know more than their parents when it comes to clothes and shoes

➤ 'Know more' compared to parents

Source: the7stars Little Voices Big Impact, 2025. Base: n=1000 children aged 11-15, nationally representative





"I'm always telling my mum about new beauty products she should buy. I see them on TikTok and then tell her about them. I don't think she'd know as much if I didn't tell her."

14-year-old girl, Hertfordshire

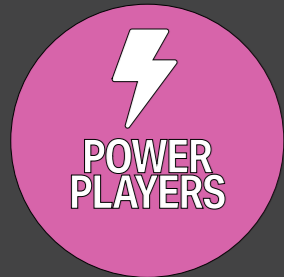
As a whole, 79% of Gen Alpha have a high level of influence within the home, with just under half displaying high knowledge and high influence.

Just 9% think they have low knowledge and influence within their household.

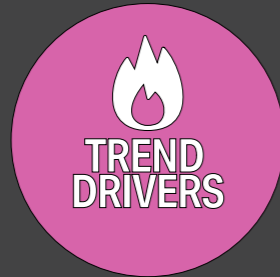
Additionally, 34% of 11-15 year olds have influence without knowledge, conveying confidence and enthusiasm among this generation within the home.

Identifying different cohorts within Gen Alpha

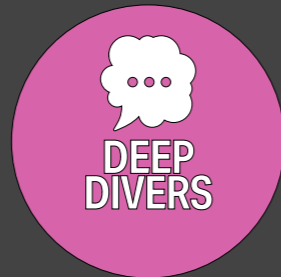
Source: the7stars Little Voices Big Impact, 2025. Base: n=1000 children aged 11-15, nationally representative



45%
know a lot and can shape what others think or do



34%
May not know as much but others listen to them or may follow them



12%
Know a lot but may not have as much sway with peers or parents yet



9%
Neither highly informed nor especially influential, but still part of the conversation

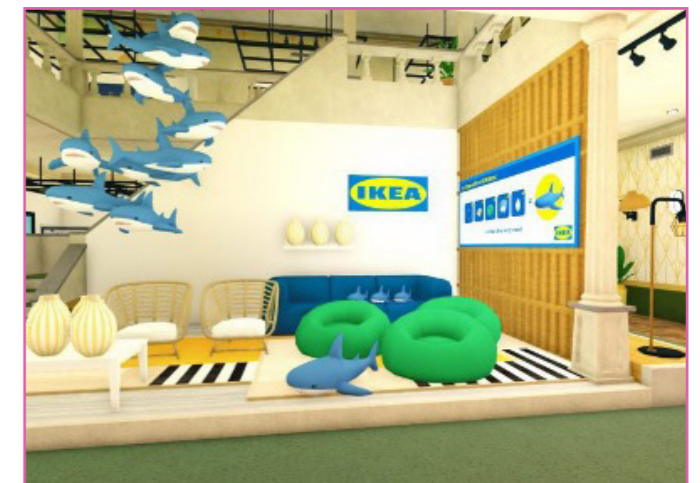
Implication for brands: Engage directly with Generation Alpha

Generation Alpha is a cohort of independent, confident and knowledgeable individuals who relish freedom and autonomy – even from the age of 11. Where in previous generations, brands could have had influence via parents, this generation are likely to seek more direct interactions from brands. Ensuring brands are personally discoverable via channels where Gen Alpha are most likely to show up, will be key in ensuring they are considered in both the short and long term.

Brand example: IKEA

In June 2024, IKEA invited and paid teenagers to become virtual co-workers in Roblox, in the hope they'll work for the stores IRL.

They then opened up their own showrooms via Roblox in Sweden and Australia earlier this year to maintain relevance and continuous engagement amongst this generation.



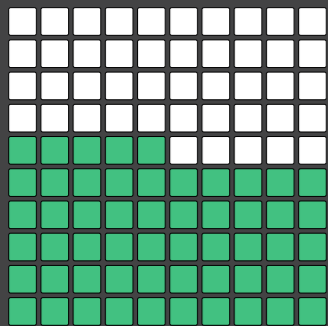


Invested Influencers

Gen Alpha brings not only knowledge and autonomy but also ideas, enthusiasm, and active participation throughout the customer journey, even on large ticket items that would have previously been considered an 'adults-only' realm, such as cars and holidays.

Around half of this group research holidays on behalf of their parents, 55% help weigh up and choose technology products, and 1 in 3 are involved in final decisions on home furnishings. This shows it's more than just occasional input, but rather a consistent influence. This active involvement is likely to be partly driven by their social media, and the image they want to portray online to those that follow them.

Interestingly, 11-year-olds often drive this contribution and offer more ideas than their older peers, presenting a unique opportunity for advertisers to ethically and authentically engage younger influencers – not just those creeping into adulthood. This is a stark contrast to Generation Z – only 28% of them recall always having a say in clothes and shoes purchases when they were pre-teens, compared with 58% of 11-year-olds currently.



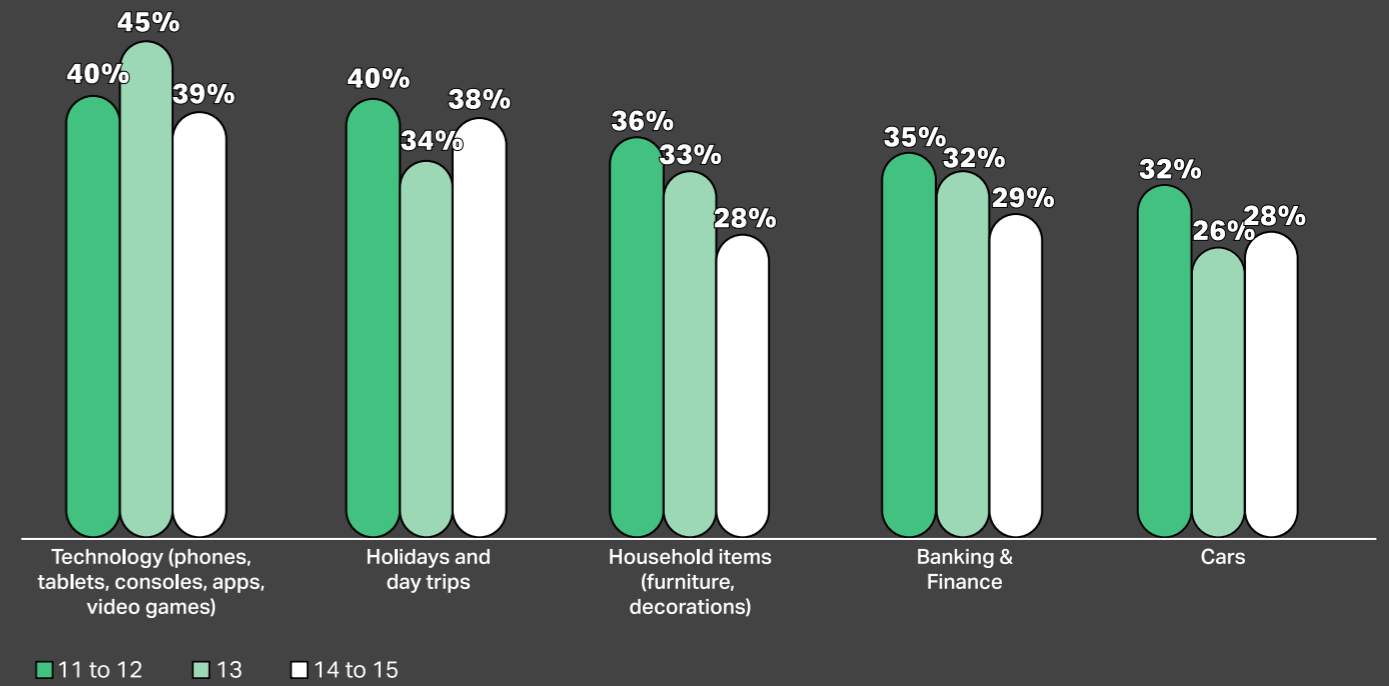
55%

help weigh up and choose technology products



Always have a say in purchases

Source: the7stars Little Voices Big Impact, 2025. Base: n=1000 children aged 11-15, nationally representative



Young boys appear to have more input than their female counterparts – particularly towards the beginning of the customer journey. 42% of 11-15 year old boys enjoy researching which household items to buy versus 28% of girls of the same age. Similarly, boys appear to be more involved with holiday planning (53% vs 41% of girls.)



"I enjoyed help plan a family trip abroad last year. I researched where to go and what to do – which my parents really took on board."

14-year-old boy, London

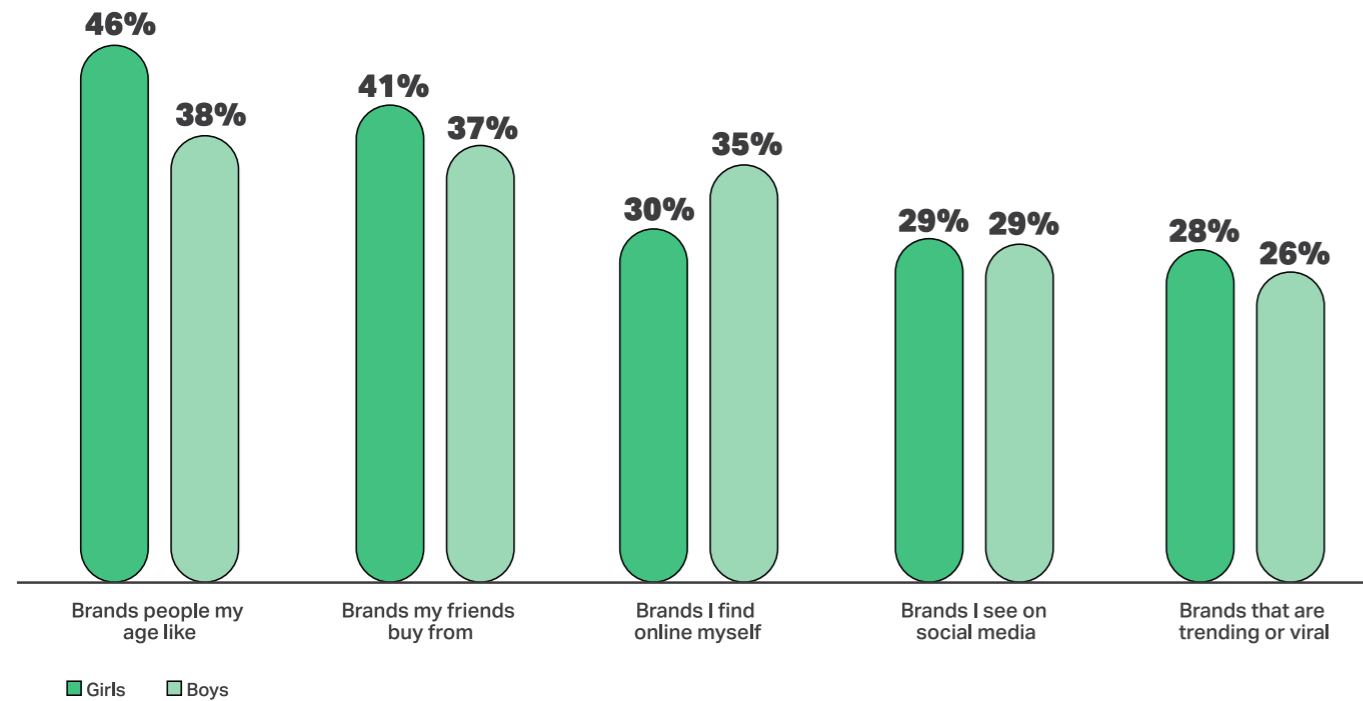


When researching, their go-to sources of information are ones that enable conversation and an unfiltered human opinion. Aside from search, friends (39%), YouTube reviews (35%) and parents (35%) are the top three ways to find out more about products and brands. This goes against negative stereotypes that this generation are cut off from human interaction – they do seek it out, but on their own terms.

This concept of social proofing also weighs heavily on the final decisions made. Despite being autonomous, in control and confident in their knowledge and decisions made, they will often opt for brands that come with a social currency, particularly among girls.

Brands drawn to (Top 5)

Source: the7stars Little Voices Big Impact, 2025. Base: n=1000 children aged 11-15, nationally representative



Generation Alpha is proving that influence isn't just about age—it's about knowledge, enthusiasm, and the ability to make the right decisions that are well informed and thoroughly researched. The dynamic has shifted from children only influencing 'kid-centric'

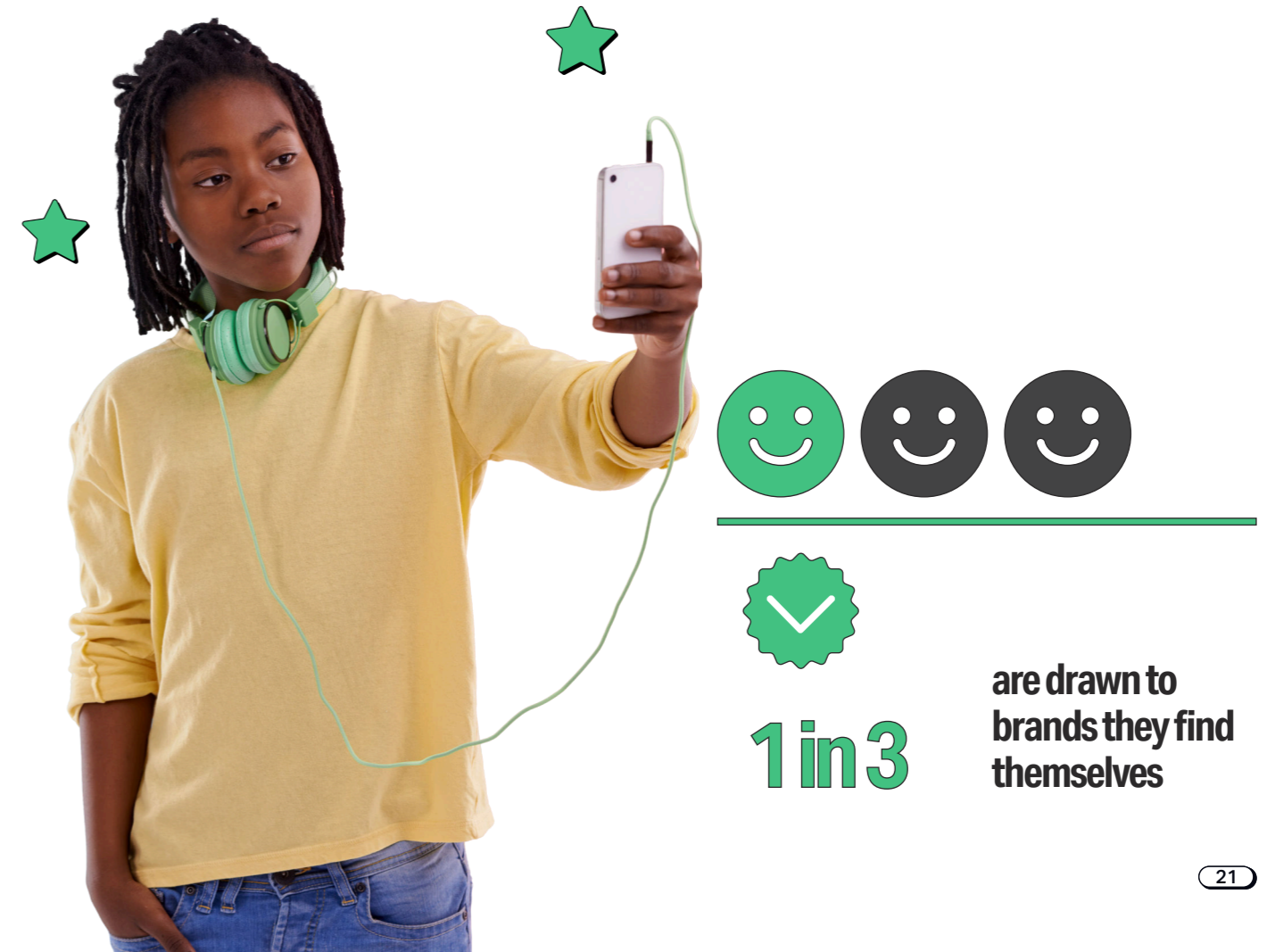
purchases to children playing an active role in most key decisions within the home – offering new ways of discovery and engagement with brands within the home, that may not have been on parents' radars.

Implication for brands: Age is just a number

Generation Alpha are not just informed, they are involved, enthusiastic and seek human connection in their decision making. They are active initiators and information seekers - suggesting advertisers should be paying more attention to this generation than what may be initially assumed – even in low interest categories and high ticket price items.

Brands who exclude them from the customer journey risk alienation. Being present across key moments

of discovery for this generation such as TikTok and YouTube will be vital to drive relevance and social currency across this generation. Tone of voice and representation needs to be considered too. Including Gen Alpha in creative and using positive messaging in non-patronising tones that actively acknowledge the valuable contributions of Generation Alpha will resonate far more strongly than anything resembling the 'nag factor'.



From Pestering to Partnership

Whilst it's easy to point the cause in rising autonomy amongst teens and pre-teens towards the accessibility of technology and information, there are also other cultural factors at play.

'Gentle parenting', popularised by author Sarah Ockwell-Smith in 2015, has shaped how many Generation Alphas have been raised. Built on empathy, respect, understanding and boundaries, it prioritises children's feelings and shifts the emphasis away from authoritative parenting to a relationship that is far more democratic between parents and children.

Recent depictions of parents and children in TV can often go as far as the children seeming to be more in control than their parents, for example, ITV's dating show, 'My Mum Your Dad,' puts children in the driving seat as their parents look for love. Even Peppa Pig's egocentric and demanding nature seems to put Daddy Pig on the backfoot.

With parents seeking to be more inclusive in their decision making, it begs the question: who do Generation Alpha turn to for information and advice to help shape their ideas and choices? Is that desire for democracy reciprocated?

Whilst parents might not be the first port of call for their pre-teen and teen children as a source of information (search, friends and YouTube are most

sought after), parents still are the most trusted when it comes to finding out new information. Social media, AI and influencers are surprisingly at the bottom of the list. Friends come in second place, strongly suggesting that despite the unlimited volume of data Generation Alpha has access to through their own devices, the 'human touch' is still highly valued among young people, meaning there is still a need for balance between data-driven and intuitive decision making.



"I'll definitely research online and find things out myself but if I'm not sure, I'll speak to my dad or stepmum."

11-year-old girl, Manchester

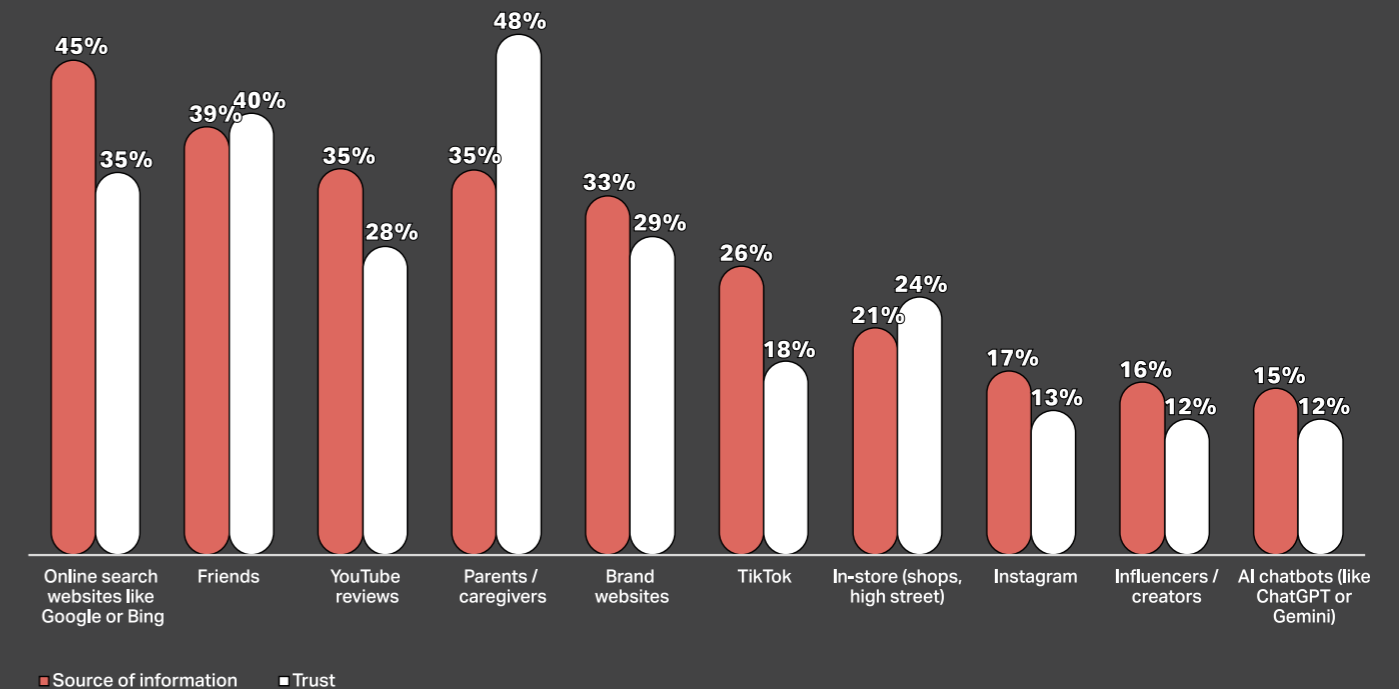


"My child likes to think they have it all under control but they ask me for advice more than they probably realise."

Parent of 12-year-old, London

> Where Gen Alpha go for information vs. where trust

Source: the7stars Little Voices Big Impact, 2025. Base: n=1000 children aged 11-15, nationally representative





The trust dynamic is reciprocated. 65% of parents to Generation Alpha say they take their children's opinions into account a lot or quite a lot when making purchasing decisions.

Parents welcome their children's perspectives, treating them as the opposite of nags in household and lifestyle decisions. In fact, 60% of Generation Alpha parents report that their relationships with their children are more collaborative than the ones they experienced with their own parents. From music and entertainment to clothing choices, children are

seen as worthy contributors and their voices are acknowledged, listened to, and respected. This is reflected in the topics of conversations had at home. Whilst discussions around TV, film, school and careers are almost universal, we see Generation Alpha enjoying conversations at home around topics that upskill their parents such as gaming (87%) and influencers (81%) but also equally engaging in topics that might feel more adult such as current affairs (88%) and politics (82%).



"Why would I not want to listen to my son? He knows more about what we should do at the weekends than I do."

Parent of 13-year-old, Glasgow



"Both my parents listen to me and take on board what I say and want."

12-year-old boy, Bristol

This evolving parent-child dynamic highlights a shift from top-down decision making to one that is based off shared mutual respect.



Implication for brands: Create shared moments of connection

Generation Alpha still seek out advice from their parents, and they in turn are embracing a relationship that is more collaborative with their children. Brands should be present in moments where parents' and children's interests collide to encourage greater moments of connection within the home. With trends and channels evolving at a faster pace than ever, brands need to continuously listen to families and refresh their content and messaging to ensure they are keeping up with the pace of change that exists within the home.

Brand example: Nintendo

The real opportunity for reaching families sits in shared viewing time - moments where parents and children are in the room together.

For Nintendo, this meant building a cross-screen plan that prioritised environments with a naturally high co-viewing index, ensuring the brand was present when families were most likely to be watching together.

In cinema, this translated into premium placements around tentpole family releases, such as Zootopia 2.

On AV, the focus was on programming with proven shared audiences, including I'm a Celebrity...Get Me Out of Here!, Gogglebox, and live sport, environments that consistently over-index for children watching alongside adults.

On YouTube, connected TV delivery was prioritised, leveraging lineups such as YouTube Select, particularly its "Fit for TV" inventory, to mirror the shared viewing dynamics of linear broadcast.

Over a three-month period, this CTV-led YouTube strategy delivered an additional 8% incremental reach driven by co-viewing environments.





Final Thoughts

Generation Alpha are respected and authoritative voices within the home, challenging outdated concepts around 'Pester Power.'

Generation Alpha are informed, confident and integrated into household decision making. The result of this is a collaborative model of influence - parents want to listen to them, and so should brands.

For brands, the opportunity lies not in exploiting pester power, but in understanding and supporting a new model of shared influence, where trust, respect and information flow both ways. Showing up in spaces where Gen Alpha seek information, inspiration and trust will be key. Being culturally relevant and encouraging word-of-mouth will be as important as ever – despite unhelpful and inaccurate perceptions of this generation not valuing human connection.

The most powerful occasions sit at the intersection of parent and child – whether that be co-viewing moments, gaming environments, or research conducted together. Brands that create cross-generational shared moments can strengthen engagement and relevance.



> A note on the methodology

We conducted a four-phase, multi-method research programme looking at both long term trends and in the moment insight.

1. Desk research, including robust analysis of 10 years' worth of trended data from TGI Youth

2. A quantitative survey of 1,000 nationally representative 11–15-year-olds, conducted in partnership with walr

3. Follow up quantitative surveys of 1,000 parents of 11–15-year-olds, nationally representative and n=1,000 Generation Zs, nationally representative

4. A three-day qualitative online community with 11–15-year-olds, supported by their parents to encourage richer responses

Research was conducted September – November 2025

Email TEAMINSIGHT@the7stars.co.uk for further information

> Additional Resources

Advertising to Children

Advertising to children (anyone under the age of 16) in the UK is strictly regulated by the CAP (non-broadcast) and BCAP (broadcast) codes, enforced by the Advertising Standards Authority.

Regulations include (but are not limited to):

- Direct appeals to children to buy or persuade parents to buy products
- Preventing the promotion of dangerous behaviour
- HFSS restrictions online and on TV before 9pm

Source: <https://www.asa.org.uk/advice-online/children-targeting.html>





