



Children's exposure to age-restricted TV ads: Strategic review



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Executive summary

Executive summary

This report provides a summary and review of the analyses carried out by the ASA into children's exposure to age restricted broadcast television advertising. The findings cover a fourteen-year analysis period (2010-2023) and look at exposure to ads for alcohol, gambling and HFSS products (2016-2023). The charts featured in this report have been simplified; the detailed analysis can be accessed [here](#).

Throughout the reporting period, we observed a decline in children's exposure both to age-restricted and all broadcast TV ads. This pointed to an overall reduction in broadcast TV consumption, reflecting a change in children's media habits. This continued trend prompted first a move to a bi-annual reporting frequency, in 2024, and now a strategic review of the reports as a whole, which are based on BARB's seven-day consolidated impacts on TV sets.

As young audiences increasingly diversify their media diets, we have made the decision to shift our attention towards understanding children's experiences in online environments. With that in mind, this report also communicates our approach to online exposure measurement and highlights relevant ASA initiatives in this area.

Executive summary

Key findings across the reporting period include:

Alcohol

- ▶ Children's average exposure per week fell from 3.2 ads (2010) to 0.7 ads (2023).
- ▶ In 2023, children saw on average around one alcohol ad for every six seen by adults.

Gambling

- ▶ Children's average exposure per week fell from 4.4 ads (2013) to 1.8 ads (2023).
- ▶ In 2023, children saw on average around one gambling ad for every six seen by adults.

Executive summary

HFSS products

- ▶ Children's average exposure per week fell from 12.4 ads (2016) to 4.4 ads (2023).
- ▶ In 2023, children saw on average around one HFSS ad for every five seen by adults.

All TV ads

- ▶ Children's average exposure per week fell from 226.7 ads (2010) to 58.2 ads (2023).
- ▶ In 2023, children saw on average around two TV ads for every nine seen by adults.
- ▶ Children's exposure to all TV ads continued to decline at a steady rate from the peak of 229.3 (2013).
- ▶ The rate of decline for children's exposure to TV ads for alcohol and HFSS products fell at a similar rate to their exposure to all TV ads, whereas the rate of decline in children's exposure to gambling ads was marginally lower.



Background

Background

The **Advertising Standards Authority (ASA)** is the UK's independent advertising regulator. We have been administering the **UK Code of Non-broadcast Advertising and Direct & Promotional Marketing** (written and maintained by the **Committee of Advertising Practice**) for over 60 years and the UK Code of Broadcast Advertising (written and maintained by the **Broadcast Committee of Advertising Practice**) for over 20 years. We are responsible for ensuring that advertising is legal, decent, honest and truthful.

- ▶ The **Advertising Codes** include rules to protect people who are vulnerable, including children (which the Codes define as those aged 15 and under) and young people (those aged 16 and 17).
- ▶ They include rules on the scheduling and placement of ads to ensure that under-18's exposure to ads for certain product categories, such as alcohol and gambling, is appropriately limited.
- ▶ The rules prohibit these ads from appearing in children's and young people's media and, where they appear in media targeting a predominantly adult audience, the content is restricted to ensure that they cannot appeal particularly to those under the age of 18.

Children's ad exposure

- ▶ Since 2019, the ASA has reported on children's exposure to age-restricted TV ads, such as ads for alcohol and gambling products, at the UK level. The objective of the ASA's reporting in this area was to provide longitudinal analysis of children's exposure to those TV ads, over a number of years, for products which attract public policy considerations.
- ▶ The last report, published in 2024, provided an analysis of children's exposure to alcohol and gambling ads on TV starting from 2010, with an update of exposure data from 2022 and 2023. HFSS exposure data covering the period 2016-2018 was also included, with updated data for 2023. We also presented data on children's exposure to alcohol, gambling, and HFSS ads on a national basis, covering England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.
- ▶ This report provides a strategic review and summary of the analyses carried out by the ASA over the last seven years into children's exposure to age restricted television advertising. The findings cover a fourteen-year analysis period (2010-2023) and look at exposure to ads for alcohol, gambling and HFSS products (2016-2023). The charts featured in this report have been simplified; the detailed analysis can be accessed here.

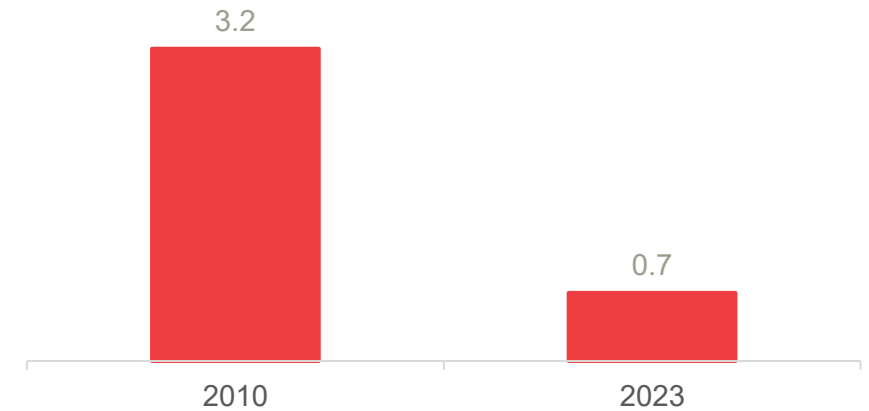
**Key findings: Children's
Broadcast TV ad
exposure 2010-2023**

Children's exposure to alcohol TV advertising fell to less than one ad per week in 2023

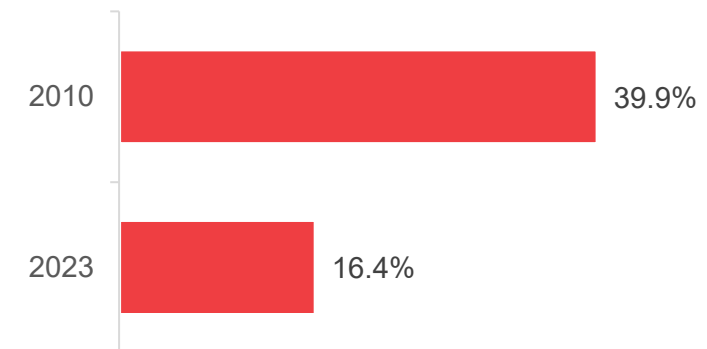
- ▶ Children's exposure to alcohol advertising on TV **decreased** by four fifths, from an average of 3.2 ads per week in 2010 (the peak over the analysis period) to 0.7 ads per week in 2023.
- ▶ Exposure to alcohol ads **remained at similar levels** for the final five years of reporting, with the lowest exposure rate reported in 2023.
- ▶ Alcohol ads made up 1.2% of all TV ads seen by children in the final year of reporting.
- ▶ Over the reporting period, children's exposure to alcohol ads relative to adults, fell from a peak of 39.9% in 2010 to 16.4% in 2023, around **one alcohol ad for every six seen** by adults.

For more information, please see [Children's exposure to age-restricted TV ads – 2023](#).

Average weekly exposure to alcohol ads



Children's exposure to alcohol ads as a percentage of adults' exposure

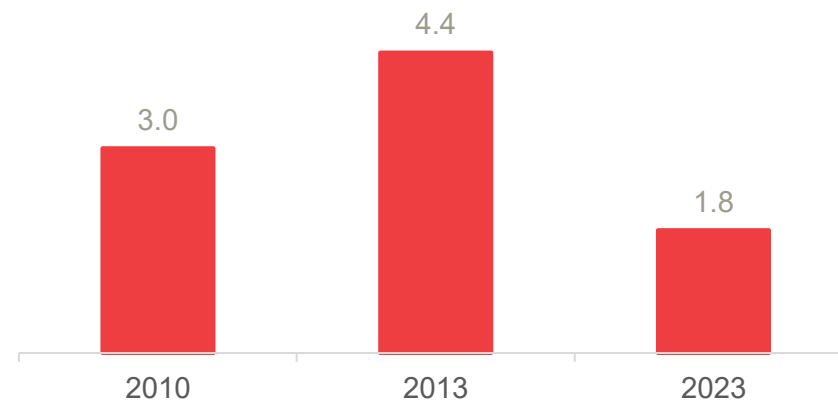


Children's exposure to gambling TV advertising fell to less than two ads per week in 2023

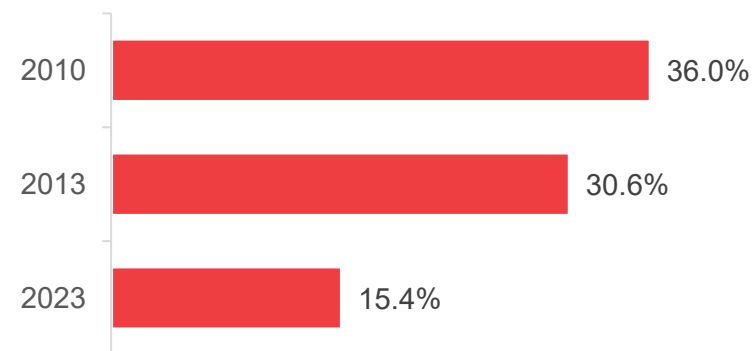
- ▶ Children's exposure to gambling advertising on TV **decreased** by three-fifths, from an average of 4.4 ads per week in 2013 (the peak over the analysis period) to 1.8 ads per week in 2023. The majority of gambling ads seen in 2023 were for Lottery & Scratchcards (0.8).
- ▶ Exposure to gambling ads **remained at similar levels** for the final five years of reporting, with the lowest exposure rate reported in 2021 and 2023.
- ▶ Gambling ads made up 3.1% of all TV ads seen by children in the final year of reporting.
- ▶ Over the reporting period, children's exposure to gambling ads relative to adults, fell from a peak of 36.0% in 2010 to 15.4% in 2023, around **one gambling ad for every six seen** by adults.

For more information, please see [Children's exposure to age-restricted TV ads – 2023](#).

Average weekly exposure to gambling ads



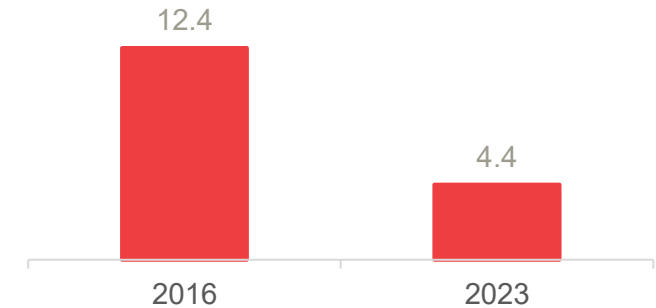
Children's exposure to gambling ads as a percentage of adults' exposure



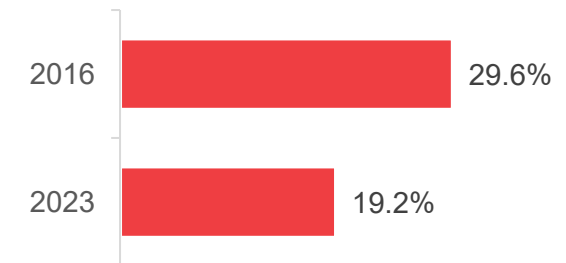
Children's exposure to HFSS products ads reduced by two thirds between 2016 and 2023

- ▶ Children's exposure to HFSS products advertising on TV **decreased** by two-thirds, from an average of 12.4 ads per week in 2016 (the peak over the analysis period) to 4.4 ads per week in 2023*.
- ▶ HFSS products ads made up 7.6% of all TV ads seen by children in the final year of reporting.
- ▶ Over the reporting period, children's exposure to HFSS products ads relative to adults, fell from a peak of 29.6% in 2016 to 19.2% in 2023, around **one HFSS ad for every five** seen by adults.
- ▶ Children's exposure to food and soft drink advertising on TV **decreased** by four-fifths from an average of 39.4 ads per week in 2010 to 7.8 ads per week in 2023.
- ▶ Exposure to food and soft drink ads has seen a **steady decline** over the 14-year period, with the lowest exposure rate reported in 2023.
- ▶ Food and soft drink ads made up 13.3% of all TV ads seen by children in the final year of reporting.

Average weekly exposure to HFSS products ads



Children's exposure to HFSS products ads as a percentage of adults' exposure



*HFSS TV advertising data is only available from 2016 to 2018, with an update from 2023. For more information, please see [Children's exposure to age-restricted TV ads – 2023](#).

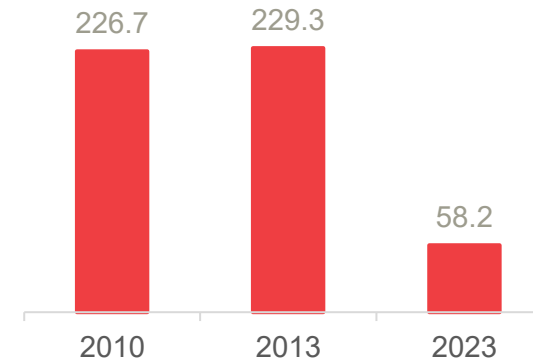
The changing landscape: Ad exposure in context

- ▶ Over the course of the reporting period, children's exposure to all TV ads **decreased** by 74.3%.
- ▶ In the **latest report**, children saw on average around **two TV ads for every nine** seen by adults. Children's exposure to all TV ads, relative to adults, **decreased** by three-fifths, from a peak of 60.9% in 2010 to 22.0% in 2023.
- ▶ In the final year of reporting, analysis of viewing data showed the **continuing decline** in the time children spent watching television. In 2023, children aged 4-15 watched an average of 4.1 hours of television per week, **down by three-quarters** from peak viewing levels in 2010 (17.6 hours per week).

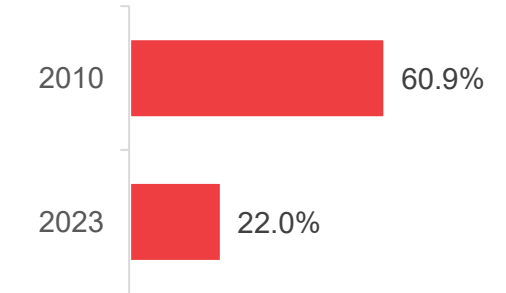
Viewing data shown here is based on the BARB Total TV C7 definition which measures linear broadcast viewing, including 7-day timeshift.

This definition corresponds to the basis on which BARB reports ad exposure data (linear broadcast and 7-day timeshift viewing).

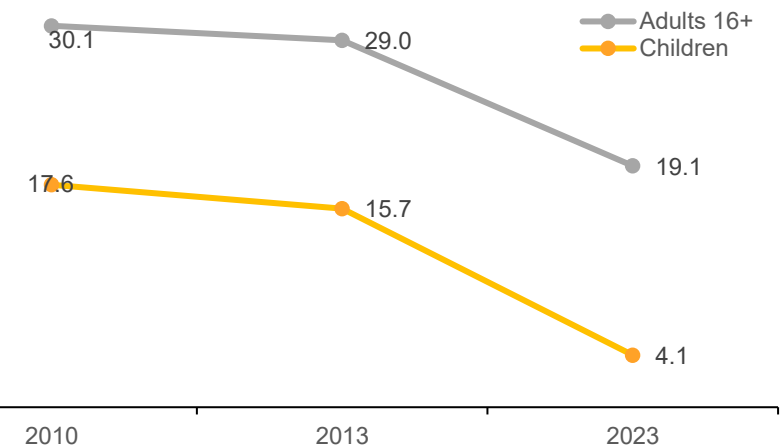
Average weekly exposure to all TV ads



Children's exposure to all TV ads as a percentage of adults' exposure



Average hours of television viewing – by age group



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Online exposure: Our approach and initiatives

Moving forward

Over the analysis period, we observed a **clear downward trend** in children's exposure to TV ads for age restricted products. We also saw a decline in children's overall exposure to TV ads, reflecting a change in media consumption habits.

The exposure data reported on throughout this series are based on BARB's seven-day consolidated impacts on TV sets. While BARB has made significant developments in measuring viewing across platforms and devices, access to similarly detailed ad exposure data across child audiences **remains limited**. As children's media consumption moves towards a wider range of media and across multiple devices, the available data provide an incomplete picture of children's exposure to age-restricted TV ads.

These considerations have informed our decision to publish this strategic review. As young audiences are moving increasingly online, we have shifted our focus accordingly to explore ways of monitoring those environments. Our commitment to continuing and expanding our capacity to measure children's exposure to age-restricted advertising, **wherever it appears**, remains unchanged.

Our approach to online exposure measurement

The online content landscape is both vast and fragmented. Measuring exposure across a wide range of different websites, apps, platforms, logged-in and open access environments, is **considerably more challenging** compared to tracking audience data across BARB-reported TV channels.

The targeted nature of online ads means that exposure is personalised and non-uniform, which creates a challenge in assigning a specific audience to a particular ad. Contrastingly, TV schedules are broadly linear, which allows us to isolate specific ads and based on BARB's panel, determine who viewed the ad and in what numbers.

In the absence of an industry-standard audience measurement data source which reports on children's exposure to online advertising, we have invested and continue to invest in a **diverse range of projects** to monitor and improve our understanding of children's online experiences.

For more information, please see [Measuring exposure: a research perspective](#).

Monitoring real exposure – 100 Children report

- ▶ Using metering software, we passively monitored the personal devices of 97 children aged 11-17 across the UK.
- ▶ This report provided a child's eye view of the ads they actually see online and on social media.
- ▶ Across the 7-day monitoring period, **11,424** online ads served to the personal devices of our children panel.
- ▶ **435** of those ad impressions were for age-restricted products, accounting for **3.8%** of all impressions.
- ▶ Ad impressions for age-restricted products totalled **74** for HFSS, **269** for gambling, **86** for alcohol products, and **6** for cosmetic interventions or weight loss.
- ▶ The findings of the report highlighted the importance of using targeting tools not just age data, to serve age-restricted ads away from children.
- ▶ For more information, please see [The 100 Children Report](#).



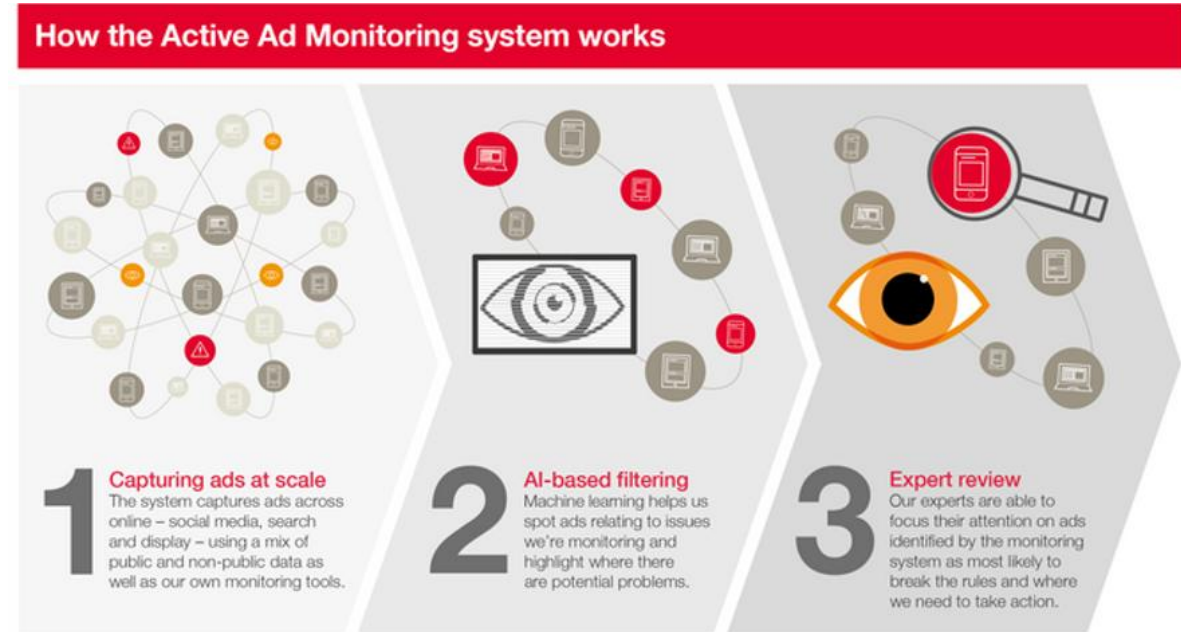
Using Avatar technology to explore diverse age experiences

Since 2019 we have conducted four studies using avatars that simulate children's online profiles to uncover the ads they are exposed to.

- ▶ **HFSS ads appearing around children's media** (2019): Across the two-week monitoring period, we captured **95,665** ads gathered through a total of **196,000** website visits on 250 web pages both on desktop and mobile. We found that **2.3%** of the **41,030** ads seen by the child avatars were for HFSS products.
- ▶ **Age-restricted ads appearing in online mixed-age media** (2021): Across the three-week monitoring period, we captured **27,395** ad impressions gathered through **252,000** site visits on 250 websites. Ad impressions for age-restricted products were **0.7%** for HFSS, **0.9%** for gambling and **0.00%** for alcohol products.
- ▶ **Online supply pathway of age-restricted ads** (2024): Across the **three-month** monitoring period, we captured **82,657** ad impressions across the monitored media. Of these, only **50** ad impressions (**0.06%**) were served to a child avatar. These ads were from **12** advertisers and related to HFSS products, gambling, weight-loss products or treatments, and e-cigarettes. No alcohol ads were served to child avatars.
- ▶ **Online ad supply pathway of in-app ads that harmfully objectify women** (2025): Across the **three-month** monitoring period, we gathered **5,923** instances when ads were served to the avatars. **Eight** of these ads (**0.14%** of all ad impressions), objectified women in a way that was likely to breach our rules. **7** of these ads were served to child avatar profiles.

Continuous intelligence gathering – the Active Ad Monitoring system (AAMs)

- ▶ Using AI and machine learning to proactively search at pace and scale for ads that potentially breaks our rules.
- ▶ In 2025 we used our system to process **60 million ads**, a 114.3% increase from 2024 (28 million).
- ▶ Currently, the system **scans around 10k paid online ads** by licensed gambling operators per month, with high-risk ads reviewed by our human experts, resulting in action where necessary.
- ▶ For more information, please see **ASA System briefing note on our Active Ad Monitoring system**.



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Annex: Methodology

Methodology – TV ad exposure

Audience demographics

- ▶ Adults – defined by BARB as aged 16+.
- ▶ Children – defined by BARB as aged 4-15 years; some additional analysis have been included to examine exposure levels across the UK for younger children, aged 4-9, and older children, aged 10-15.

Data source

- ▶ Ad exposure and viewing analysis presented is based on data reported by BARB Audiences Ltd.
- ▶ Children's TV ad exposure data is based on viewing via TV sets on linear channels and 7-day timeshift viewing. It does not include ad exposure across devices or exposure on non-linear BVOD services, SVOD/AVOD services or video-sharing services.

Analysis period

- ▶ The report calculates ad exposure to alcohol, gambling ads, on TV on a weekly average basis for each year from 2010 to 2023.

Methodology – Further information

When considering the data presented in this report, readers should also refer to important contextual information set out in the ASA's [first exposure report](#), in particular the following:

- ▶ BCAP's policy objectives and delegated statutory duties (page 5)
- ▶ Scheduling rules: determining 'particular appeal' of programmes (page 6)
- ▶ Q&A (page 35)

BCAP guidance on [scheduling and audience indexing](#) aims to help broadcasters comply with the scheduling rules in Section 32 of the BCAP Code. It outlines a variety of approaches, which broadcasters might be expected by the ASA to follow as part of their scheduling policies. They ensure that those programmes that appeal particularly to children and young people are correctly identified, allowing broadcasters to place restrictions on the advertisements in the commercial breaks during and adjacent to them.

For more information, please consult Annex A of the [2023 exposure report](#).