

Youths Spend 7+ Hours/Day Consuming Media

Kids and teens are spending more and more time in front of screens, according to a study published Wednesday. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation study, which followed 2,000 young people between ages 8 to 18, kids spend almost as much time on a computer, watching television, using their cell phones, playing video games or listening to music as an adult spends during a full day at work. Kids and teens ages 8 to 18 spend seven-and-a-half hours a day, seven days a week, engaging with media, more time than they spend with any other activity besides sleeping. That number jumps to 10 hours and 45 minutes a day when taking into account that young people often engage with more than one form of media at a time. Those numbers are a big jump from five years ago. According to the study, the Foundation reported that half a decade ago, young people averaged 6 hours and 21 minutes a day engaging with media, and packed more than 8-and-a-half hours worth of media content into that time by multitasking.

The only type of media usage that has not increased is reading, according to the study. Time spent reading magazines dropped from 14 to nine minutes a day over the past five years, and time spent reading newspapers decreased from six minutes a day to three. However, time spent reading books remained steady, and actually increased slightly over the past 10 years (from 21 to 25 minutes a day). The availability of cell phones has also fueled the increase in media exposure. Over the past five years, the proportion of 8-to-18-year-olds who own their own cell phone has grown from about four in ten (39 percent) to about two-thirds (66 percent). And they're using them for a lot more than just chatting. Young people ages 8 to 18 spend an average of a half-hour a day talking on their cell phones, and an average of 49 minutes a day listening to, playing or watching other media on their phones. In addition, 7th- to 12th-graders spend an hour and a half a day text messaging. However, the children who spend their time consuming so much media seem to have a harder time in school. Nearly half (47 percent) of the young people who were classified as heavy users - meaning they consume more than 16 hours of media in a typical day - say they usually get fair or poor grades (mostly C grades or lower), compared to 23 percent of moderate

users, who consume anywhere from three to 16 hours of content. Heavy users are also more likely to get into trouble, and are often sad, unhappy, or bored, according to

the study. Efforts by parents to limit time staring at screens can help. Children who live in homes where media opportunities are limited spend less time consuming. For example, kids whose parents don't allow them to have a television in their room, don't leave the TV on during meals or in the background when no one is watching and impose some kind of media-related rules spend significantly less time consuming media than young people with more lenient parents. Other findings from the study: -Children ages 11-14 consume more media than the other age groups in the study. They consume, on average, just under nine hours of media use a day, or nearly 12 when multi-tasking is taken into account. -Black and Hispanic youth average about 13 hours of media exposure daily, as opposed to less than nine hours for white children. They also, on average, spend about an hour more a day with music and a half-hour more with video games. -Just 59 percent of young people's TV watching occurs on a TV set at the time the programming originally airs. Forty-one percent is either time-shifted or occurs on a platform other than a TV set. -The 8- to 18-year-olds surveyed spend an average of an hour and a half daily using the computer outside of school work, an increase of almost half an hour over five years ago.

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