

Gay, lesbian, bisexual preteens spend 4 more hours on screens daily, finds study

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A new national study finds that lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) preteens ages 10–14 reported 10.4 hours of daily recreational screen time, which was nearly four hours more than their straight peers.

"Lesbian, gay, and bisexual adolescents are more likely to experience school-based bullying and exclusion from peer groups due to their sexual orientation, leading them to spend less time in traditional school activities and more time on screens," says lead author, Jason Nagata, MD, assistant professor of pediatrics at the University of California, San Francisco.

"Texting, and using social media and the internet for virtual communication could be helpful for LGB preteens to find and receive support from other LGB people who may not be available in their local communities."

The researchers analyzed data from 10,339 preteens who are part of the Adolescent Brain Cognitive Development Study, the largest long-term study of brain development and [child health](#) in the United States. Data were collected from 2018-2020 and the study was published in *Annals of Epidemiology*. The preteens answered questions about their screen time habits and [sexual orientation](#).

The researchers found that preteens who identified as LGB reported experiencing more problematic social media use. Examples of problematic [social media](#) use included using it too much, having conflicts related to it, needing more of it over time, and having difficulty quitting even when they wanted to.

"LGB [young people](#) in particular face marginalization and discrimination based on [sexual identity](#) at relatively high rates," says co-author, Kyle T. Ganson, Ph.D., assistant professor at the University of Toronto's Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work. "Adolescent development is a challenging time for many given the social pressures and physical, psychological, and emotional changes that occur."

The authors argue that while [digital media](#) can have important benefits,

such as support and socialization for LGB adolescents, parents should try to mitigate the risks of excessive screen use, which can include physical inactivity, poor sleep, and problematic use.

"Parents should regularly talk to their children about screen usage and develop a family media use plan," Nagata says.

More information: Jason M. Nagata et al, Associations between sexual orientation and early adolescent screen use: Findings from the Adolescent Brain Cognitive Development (ABCD) Study, *Annals of Epidemiology* (2023). [DOI: 10.1016/j.annepidem.2023.03.004](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annepidem.2023.03.004)

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