

Transgender preteens report 13 hours of daily screen time

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A new national study has found that transgender preteens, 12 and 13

years old, reported 13 hours of daily recreational screen time, which was 4.5 hours more than their cisgender peers. Data were collected from 2019 to 2021, overlapping with the COVID-19 pandemic, and the study was [published](#) in *Annals of Epidemiology*.

"Transgender adolescents are more likely to experience school-based bullying and exclusion from peer groups due to their [gender identity](#), leading them to spend less time in traditional school activities and more time on screens," says lead author, Jason Nagata, MD, associate professor of pediatrics at the University of California, San Francisco. "Using social media and the internet for virtual communication could be helpful for transgender preteens to find and receive support from other [transgender people](#) who may not be available in their local communities."

The researchers analyzed data from 9,859 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. The preteens answered questions about their screen time habits and gender identity.

"Transgender preteens reported experiencing more problematic social media use, such as using it too much, having conflicts related to it, needing more of it over time, and having difficulty quitting even when they wanted to," says Nagata.

Transgender preteens were also found to have more problematic mobile phone and video game use than their cisgender peers.

"Transgender youth in particular face marginalization and discrimination based on their gender 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 researchers recognize the benefits of digital media use for [transgender youth](#), but warn that managing the risks associated with it is also important.

"Although digital media can have important benefits such as [support](#) and socialization for transgender adolescents, parents should try to mitigate risks from excessive screen use such as physical inactivity, poor sleep, and problematic use," Nagata says. "Parents should regularly talk to their children about screen usage and develop a family media use plan."

More information: Jason M. Nagata et al, Screen use in transgender and gender-questioning adolescents: Findings from the Adolescent Brain Cognitive Development (ABCD) Study, *Annals of Epidemiology* (2024). [DOI: 10.1016/j.annepidem.2024.04.013](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annepidem.2024.04.013)

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