

Generation **M**: **Media** in the Lives of 8–18 Year-olds



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A Kaiser Family Foundation Study
MARCH 2005

Generation **M**: **Media** in the Lives of 8–18 Year-olds

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| INTRODUCTION | 4 |
| KEY FINDINGS | |
| 1: Time Spent with Media | 6 |
| 2: Media in the Home | 9 |
| 3: Influence of Bedroom and Household Media Environment | 12 |
| 4: Media Use and Time Spent in Other Activities | 14 |
| 5: Demographic Differences In Media Use | 16 |
| 6: Parental Rules About Media Use..... | 18 |
| 7: New vs. Old Media | 21 |
| 8: Media Multitasking..... | 23 |
| 9: Media Use, Grades, and Contentment | 24 |
| 10: Television..... | 26 |
| 11: Music | 28 |
| 12: Computers and the Internet | 30 |
| 13: The Digital Divide | 32 |
| 14: Reading | 35 |
| 15: Video Games..... | 36 |
| CHANGES FROM 1999 | 37 |
| CONCLUSION | 39 |
| METHODOLOGY | 40 |

Generation M:

MEDIA IN THE LIVES OF 8-18 YEAR-OLDS

Introduction

KEEPING UP WITH THE CHANGING FACE OF MEDIA IN THIS COUNTRY CAN LEAVE THE CASUAL observer breathless. Not only is everything constantly changing, but the *pace* of change is accelerating as well. Media devices are simultaneously becoming bigger and smaller, portable and more built-in. New homes come complete with special nooks for oversized TV screens and home entertainment centers, while new cars come with personal TV screens in the back of each seat. The amount of media a person used to consume in a month can be downloaded in minutes and carried in a device the size of a lipstick tube. Today we get movies on cell phones, TVs in cars, and radio through the Internet. Media technologies themselves are morphing and merging, forming an ever-expanding presence throughout our daily environment. Cell phones alone have grown to include video game platforms, e-mail devices, digital cameras and Internet connections.

This ever-changing media whirl presents a host of questions, particularly with regard to young people. Questions range from broad societal issues (what does it mean for the nature of childhood? or to interpersonal and familial connections?) to health concerns (what about the impact of ever more graphic sex and violence? or the link to childhood obesity?) to issues of cognitive development (can new media offer educational content in an appealing and effective format? or do they distract from more substantive pursuits such as reading and homework?). Do media stifle or inspire creativity in young people? Empower or disenfranchise them? Offer powerful tools for health education, or model unhealthy habits?

We can't even begin to address these questions—or to ask the many others we should be discussing—without first establishing just what role media play in young people's lives. Traditionally, data about children's media use have been in the domain of marketers and media companies, the result of proprietary surveys conducted for commercial purposes and not available to the broader public.

To help spur a national dialogue—involving policymakers, parents, consumer groups, media companies, educators, marketers, public health organizations, and young people themselves—there needs to be publicly available, reliable, and objective data documenting the patterns and trends of media use among young people.



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This report attempts to provide those data. It is based on a large (2,032) national sample of 3rd- to 12th-graders (8–18 years old), conducted via anonymous written questionnaires of about 40 minutes in length, focusing in detail on media use the prior day. The study also included nearly 700 (694) young people who completed a detailed seven-day diary of their media use in addition to the questionnaire. The survey and diaries attempt to document the following:

- Which media young people use
- The duration of use
- With whom they use media
- Where kids use media
- What media genres or activities they prefer
- What rules, if any, govern their use of media

- What their home media environment is like
- What relationships, if any, exist between their use of various media and their relations with their parents, the grades they get, their overall contentedness, and the amount of time they spend with *other* media and in other activities such as homework or exercise.

This executive summary provides the key findings from the survey and draws some brief conclusions. A fuller discussion of the findings, a complete set of tables, and a copy of the survey questionnaire and diary are available in the full report from which this summary is drawn. All findings presented here concern children age 8–18, unless otherwise specified.

1 Key Finding

T I M E S P E N T W I T H M E D I A

YOUNG PEOPLE TODAY LIVE MEDIA-SATURATED LIVES,
SPENDING AN AVERAGE OF NEARLY
6¹/₂ HOURS A DAY (6:21) WITH MEDIA.

ACROSS THE SEVEN DAYS OF THE WEEK, THAT AMOUNT IS THE EQUIVALENT OF A FULL-TIME JOB, with a few extra hours thrown in for overtime (44¹/₂ hours a week). Indeed, given that about a quarter (26%) of the time young people are using media, they're using more than one medium at a time (reading and listening to music, for example), they are actually exposed to the equivalent of 8¹/₂ hours a day (8:33) of media content, even though they pack that into less than 6¹/₂ hours of time.

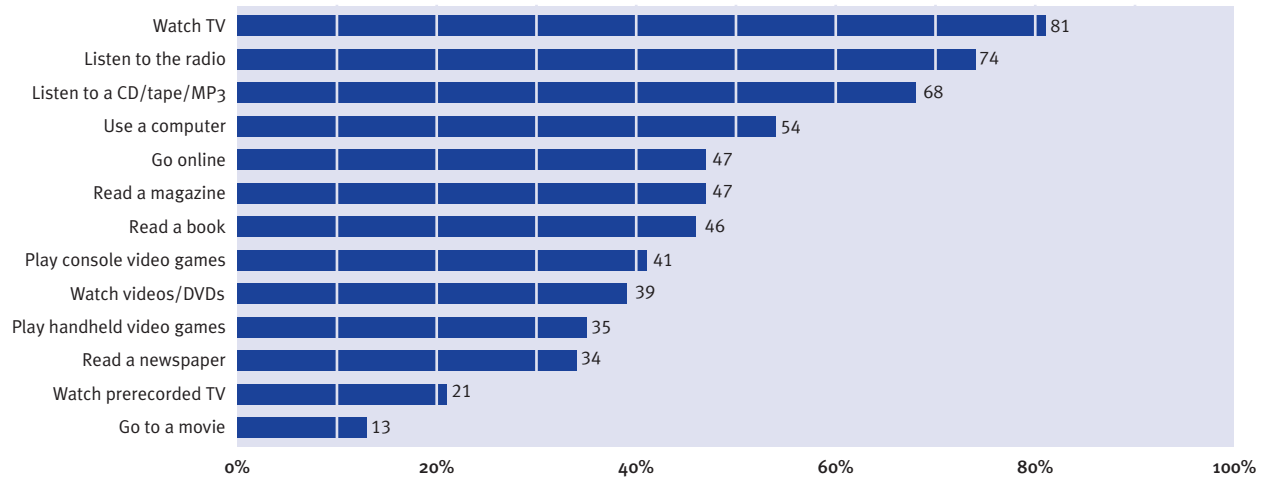
TV and music are the dominant youth media, with young people spending an average of three hours a day watching TV (nearly four hours (3:51) when videos, DVDs, and prerecorded shows are included), and about 1³/₄ hours a day (1:44) listening to the radio or to CDs, tapes, or MP3 players. Interactive media come next, with young people averaging just over one hour a day on the computer (1:02) outside of schoolwork, and just under 50 minutes a day (0:49) playing video games. Reading is close behind, at an average of 0:43 a day spent reading

books, magazines, or newspapers for something other than schoolwork.

The 6¹/₂ hours a day devoted to media compares to about 2¹/₄ hours (2:17) spent hanging out with parents, almost 1¹/₂ hours (1:25) spent in physical activity each day, just under one hour (0:50) spent doing homework, and about ¹/₂ hour (0:32) spent doing chores (data on homework and chores were collected among 7th- to 12th-graders only; it should be noted that all figures are averages across seven days of the week).

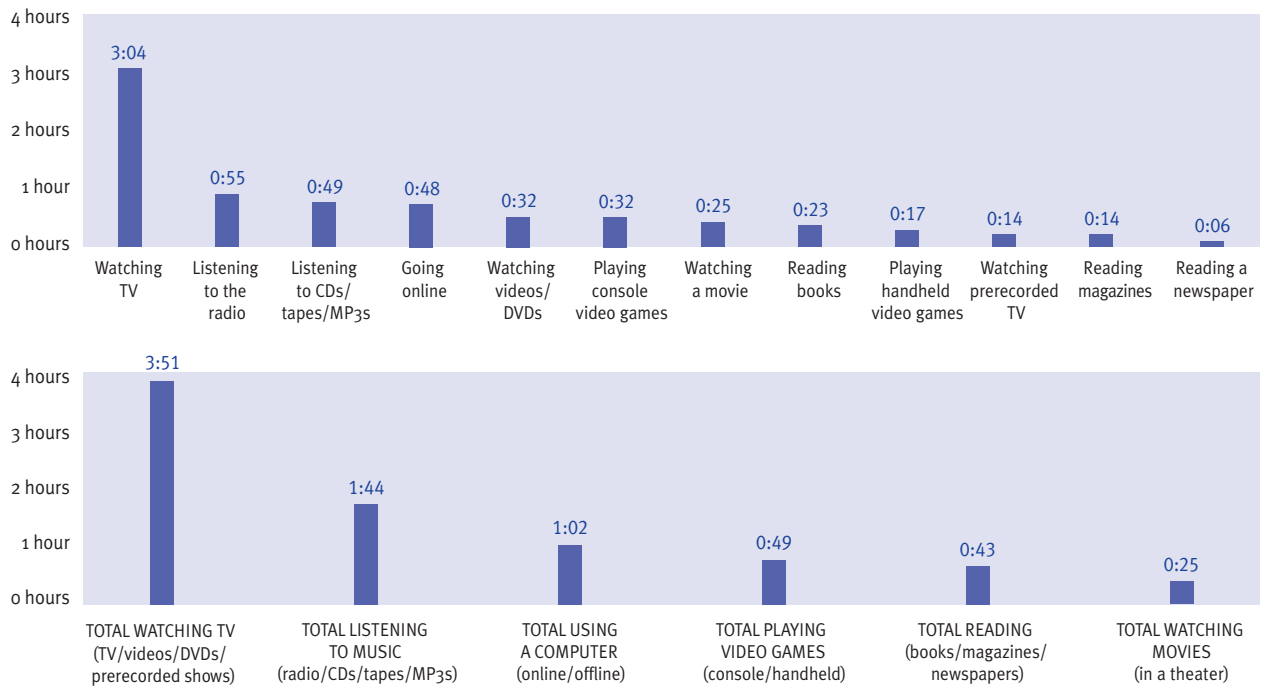
Which Media Young People Use

In a typical day, percentage of 8- to 18-year-olds who...



Time Spent With Media

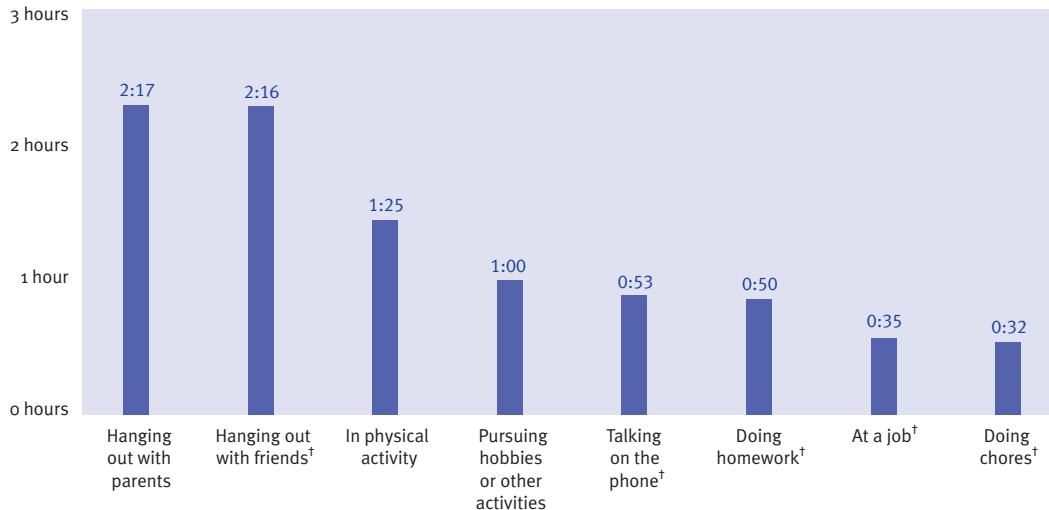
Average amount of time 8- to 18-year-olds spend per day...



Note: Due to overlapping media use, these figures cannot be summed. Average times are among all young people, not just those who used a particular medium that day.

Time Spent in Non-Media Activities

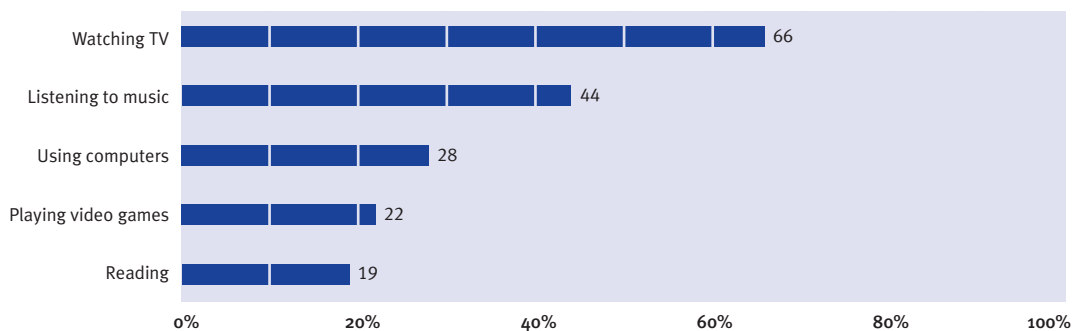
Average amount of time young people spend per day...



[†]Data collected among 7th- to 12th-graders only. All other results are among all 8- to 18-year-olds.

Most Popular Media Activities

In a typical day, percentage of 8- to 18-year-olds who spend more than an hour...





Key Finding

MEDIA IN THE HOME

YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE ACCESS TO AN UNPRECEDENTED AMOUNT OF MEDIA IN THEIR HOMES, THEIR BEDROOMS, AND THROUGH PORTABLE MEDIA DEVICES.

THE TYPICAL 8- TO 18-YEAR-OLD LIVES IN A HOME WITH AN AVERAGE OF 3.6 CD OR TAPE PLAYERS, 3.5 TVs, 3.3 radios, 2.9 VCRs/DVD players, 2.1 video game consoles, and 1.5 computers. Indeed, one in four (24%) live in homes with five or more TVs, half (53%) live in homes with three or more VCRs/DVD players, half (56%) have two or more video game players, and one-third (34%) live in homes with a digital video recorder. Cable or satellite TV service is widely available (more than eight in ten young people have one or the other), and a majority of youth (55%) get premium channels such as HBO at home.

In many young people's homes, the TV is a constant companion. Two-thirds (63%) live in homes where the TV is usually on during meals, and half (51%) live in homes where the TV is left on most of the time, whether anyone is watching it or not.

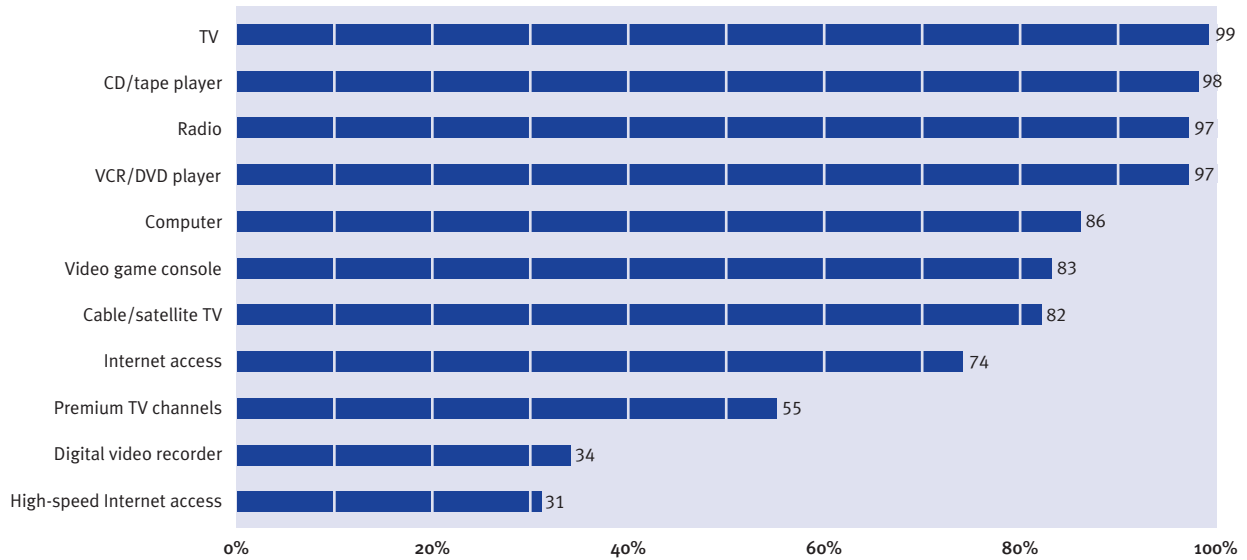
Many young people have to go no further than their own bedrooms to access these media. Two-thirds (68%) have a TV in their bedroom, half have a VCR/DVD player (54%) and a video game player (49%), and nearly one-

third (31%) have a computer in their room. Boys are more likely than girls to have a TV (72% vs. 64%), VCR (59% vs. 49%), video game console (63% vs. 33%), and computer (35% vs. 26%) in their bedroom.

And when they leave home, many young people carry their media with them: almost two-thirds have a portable CD, tape, or MP3 player (65%), and half (55%) have a handheld video game player.

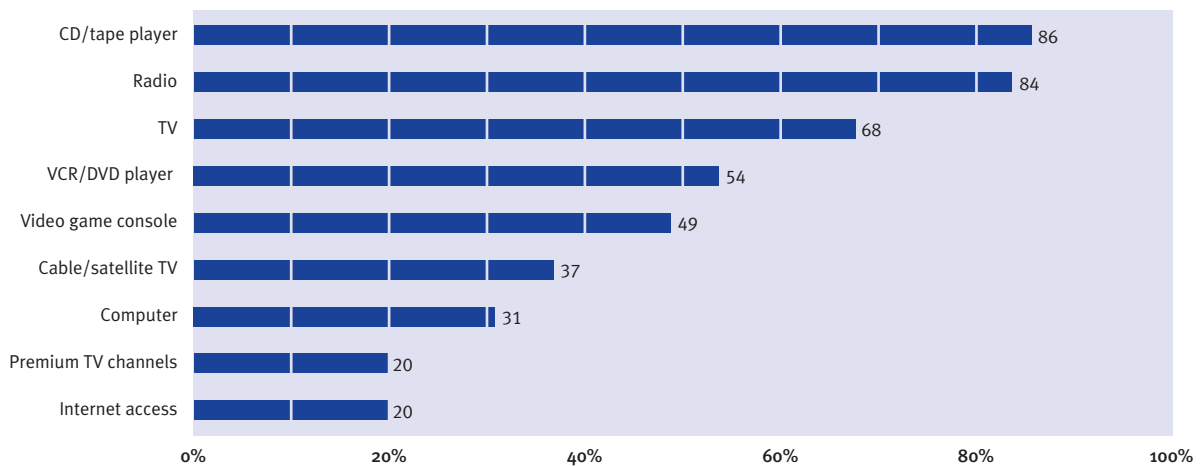
Media in the Home

Percentage of 8- to 18-year-olds who live in homes with...



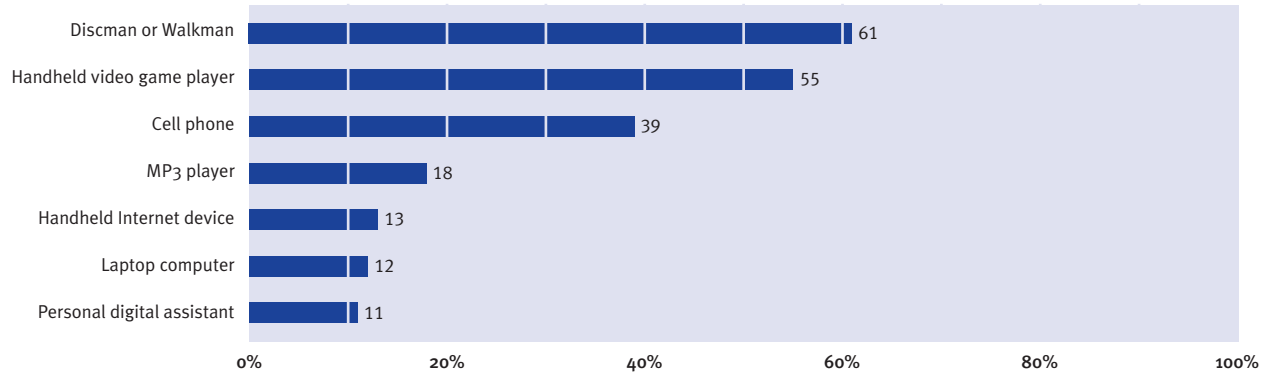
Media in Children's Bedrooms

Percentage of 8- to 18-year-olds with bedrooms containing...



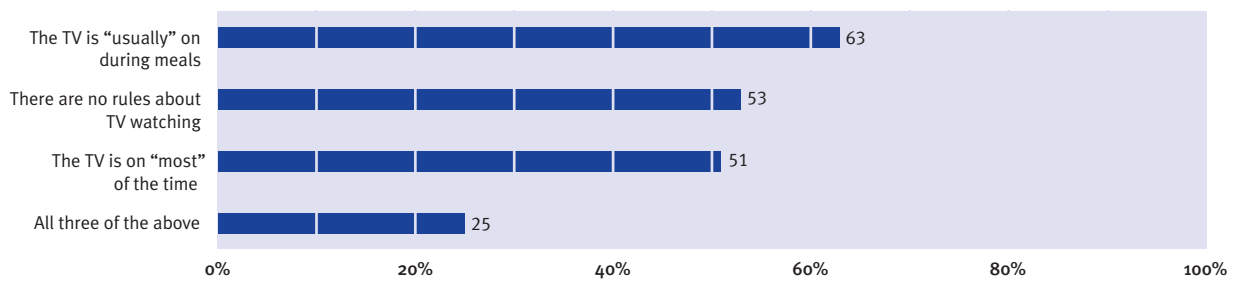
Portable Media Ownership

Percentage of 8- to 18-year-olds who have their own...



Household TV Orientation

Percentage of 8- to 18-year-olds who live in homes where...



3 Key Finding

INFLUENCE OF BEDROOM AND HOUSEHOLD MEDIA ENVIRONMENT

CHILDREN WITH EASY ACCESS TO MEDIA TEND TO
SPEND MORE TIME USING THOSE MEDIA.

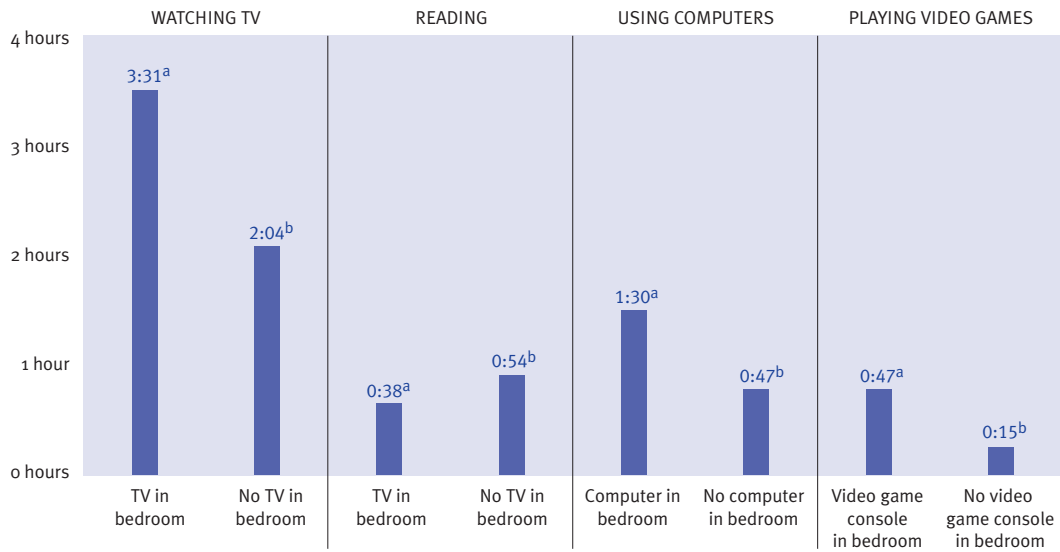
YOUNG PEOPLE WHO GROW UP IN TV-ORIENTED HOMES OR WITH TVs OR GAME CONSOLES IN THEIR bedrooms spend more time watching TV and playing video games, and less time reading. For example, those with a TV in their room spend almost $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours (1:27) more in a typical day watching TV than those without a set in their room. Statistical tests indicate that differences between those with and without bedroom media remain even when holding age, gender, race, or socio-economic status constant.

Of course, it may be that children who already watch more TV are the ones who end up getting a TV in their bedroom (perhaps their parents were sick of them

monopolizing the family room set), but it may also be that the ready access to a television set increases children's viewing time.

Relationship of Bedroom Media to Time Spent Using Media

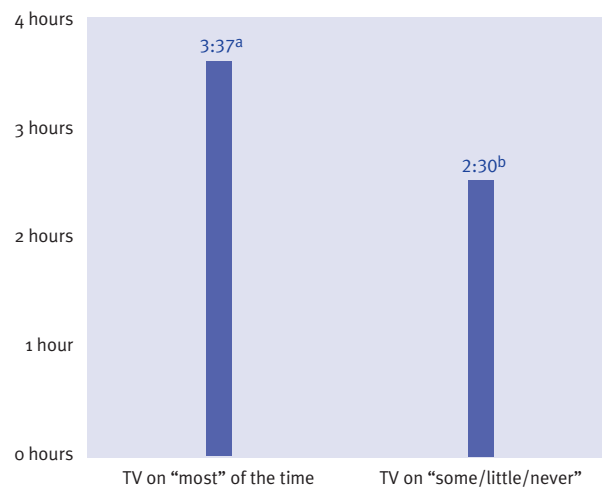
Average amount of time 8- to 18-year-olds with and without bedroom media spend per day...



Note: Results in any one cluster with a different superscript differ significantly.

Relationship of Household TV Orientation to Time Spent With Media

Average amount of time 8- to 18-year-olds from high and low TV orientation households spend watching TV per day...



Note: Results with a different superscript differ significantly.

4 Key Finding

MEDIA USE AND TIME SPENT IN OTHER ACTIVITIES

YOUNG PEOPLE WHO SPEND THE MOST TIME WITH MEDIA ALSO REPORT SPENDING MORE TIME WITH THEIR PARENTS, BEING PHYSICALLY ACTIVE, AND PURSUING OTHER HOBBIES.

CONTRARY TO MOST EXPECTATIONS, IT DOES NOT APPEAR THAT SPENDING TIME WITH MEDIA TAKES away from the time children spend in other pursuits; in fact, it seems that those young people who spend the most time using media are also those whose lives are the most full with family, friends, sports, and other interests.

Indeed, those young people who spend the most time watching TV (the 20% who watch for more than five hours a day) also reported spending more time with their parents than any other group (2:42, or 0:33 more than light TV users), indicating perhaps that that's how kids and their parents spend time together. In fact, the proportion of time the diary respondents in this study reported watching TV with their parents went up from 5% of total TV-watching time in 1999 to 32% in 2004.

On the other hand, it's unclear how much real interaction occurs between parents and their children when they're watching TV together. Young people who live in homes where the TV is usually on during meals or is simply left on most of the time are less likely to say they talk their problems out with their parents than are other kids (32% of those from homes where the TV is usually on during meals say it's "not at all" like them to talk their problems

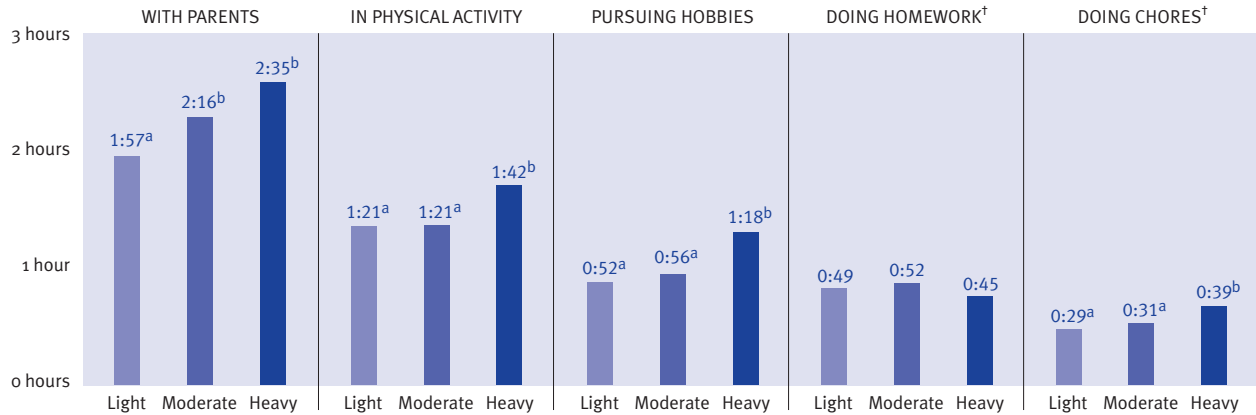
out with their parents, compared to 20% of all other kids; and 34% of those in homes where the TV is "usually" left on say the same, compared to 21% of all others).

One activity in which heavy TV users spend less time engaged is homework (0:19 less per day than light TV users). What the survey can't tell us is the direction of this relationship: it may be that those young people who don't have much homework in any given day spend that extra time watching TV. On the other hand, it may be that those youngsters who spend a lot of time watching TV end up having less time to devote to their homework.

Given the national interest in childhood obesity, it is of particular interest to note that there does not appear to be any difference in the amount of time children report spending in physical activity between the heavy and the light TV users, or between those who spend the most time with all forms of media and those who spend less time with media.

Media Use and Time Spent in Other Activities

Average amount of time light, moderate and heavy media users spend per day...

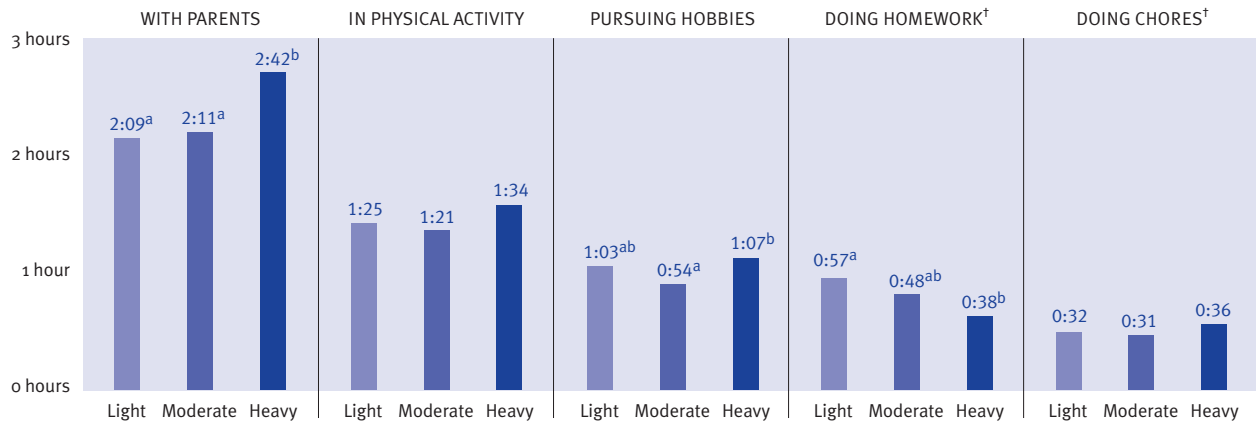


[†] Asked of 7th- to 12th-graders only.

Note: Results in any one cluster with a different superscript differ significantly. For results based on the total sample, the bottom 18% of respondents were classified as “light” media users, and the top 20% were classified as “heavy” users. For results based on 7th–12th graders only, 16% were considered “light” users and 19% “heavy” users.

TV Use and Time Spent in Other Activities

Average amount of time light, moderate and heavy TV users spend per day...



[†] Asked of 7th- to 12th-graders only.

Note: Results in any one cluster with a different superscript differ significantly. Those who watched 1 hour or less in a typical day (34% for the total sample, 37% for 7th- to 12th-graders only) were classified as “light” users, and those who watched more than 5 hours per day (20% for the total sample, 18% for 7th- to 12th-graders only) were classified as “heavy” users.

5 Key Finding

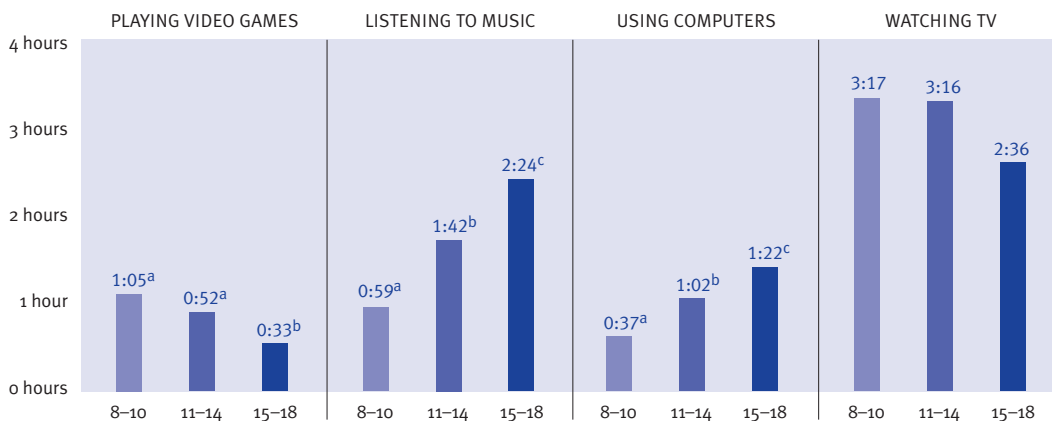
DEMOGRAPHIC DIFFERENCES IN MEDIA USE

THERE ARE SOME SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES IN THE AMOUNT OF TIME YOUNG PEOPLE SPEND WITH DIFFERENT TYPES OF MEDIA, BASED ON AGE, GENDER, AND RACE.

OLDER TEENS SPEND MORE TIME LISTENING TO MUSIC AND USING THE COMPUTER, WHILE THEIR video game-playing and TV-watching goes down. Boys spend more than twice as much time playing video games as girls do, while girls listen to more music than boys. And African American youth spend far more time watching TV, going to movies, and playing video games than White youth do.

Differences in Media Use by Age

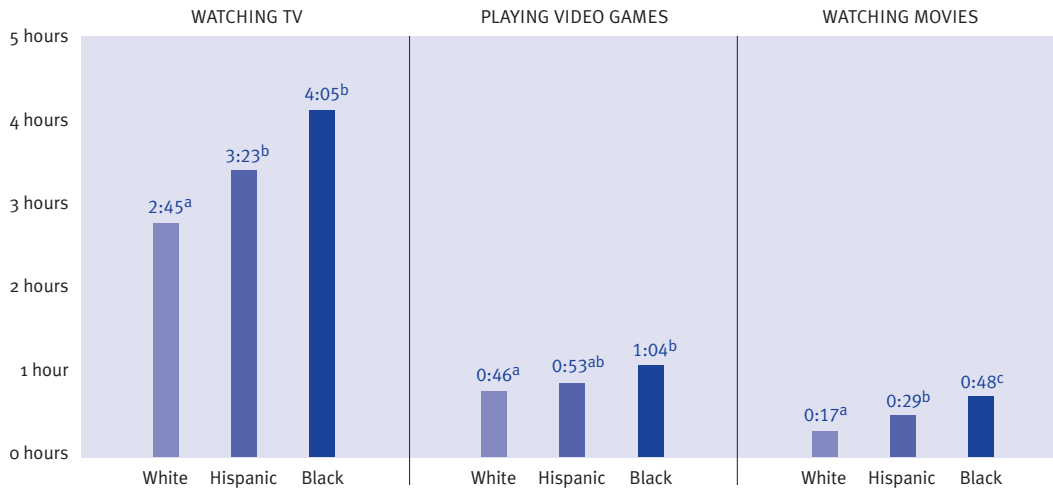
Average amount of time young people spend per day...



Note: Results in any one cluster with a different superscript differ significantly.

Differences in Media Use by Race

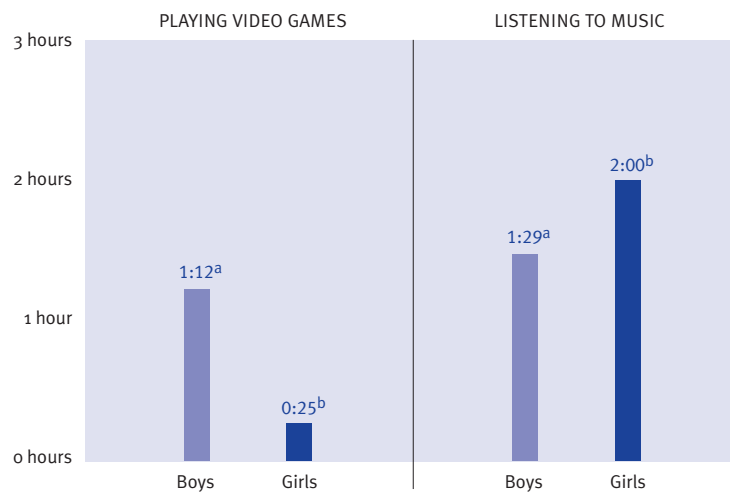
Average amount of time 8- to 18-year-olds spend per day...



Note: Results in any one cluster with a different superscript differ significantly.

Differences in Media Use by Gender

Average amount of time 8- to 18-year-olds spend per day...



Note: Results in any one cluster with a different superscript differ significantly.

6 Key Finding

P A R E N T A L R U L E S A B O U T M E D I A U S E

THE MAJORITY OF YOUNG PEOPLE SAY THEIR PARENTS DON'T IMPOSE ANY RULES ON THEM REGARDING THEIR USE OF TV, VIDEO GAMES, MUSIC, OR COMPUTERS.

ABOUT HALF (53%) OF ALL 8- TO 18-YEAR-OLDS SAY THEIR FAMILIES HAVE NO RULES ABOUT TV watching. Forty-six percent (46%) say their families do have some rules, including 20% who say their rules are enforced most of the time, while the rest say their rules are enforced either some of the time, a little of the time, or never. Among the youngest children in the study (8- to 10-year-olds) just over half (55%) said there were TV rules in their home.

Seventh- to twelfth-graders in this study were asked more detailed questions about media rules. The most common rule is to have to do homework or chores before watching TV (36% of 7th- to 12th-graders report having such a rule). Beyond that, parents appear to be most likely to regulate their children's computer use. For example, when it comes to setting rules about the media *content* their kids consume, 23% have rules about what their kids can do on the computer, compared to 16% who set limits about the type of music their kids can listen to, 13% who have rules about which TV shows children can watch, and 12% who restrict the type of video games they can play (among 7th- to 12th-graders who have the relevant medium in their homes). For all the public controversy about video game content, only 5% of older teens (age 15–18) say their parents have imposed any limits on

which games they can play, while about one in four (25%) younger teens (age 11–14) says the same.

Similarly, parents are more likely to restrict the amount of time their kids can spend on the computer (23%) than playing video games (17%) or watching TV (14%), despite the fact that young people spend an average of two more hours per day watching TV than using computers (among 7th- to 12th-graders who have each medium).

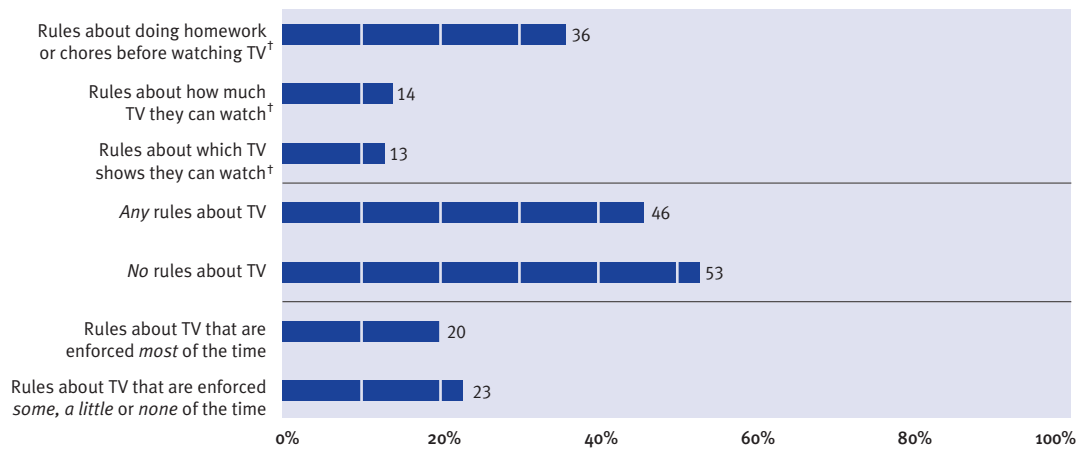
Parents are also more likely to avail themselves of the tools to help them monitor their children's computer use: 25% of 7th- to 12th-graders with a computer at home say it has a filter or parental controls on it, while only 6% say their parents use parental control technology for the TV (e.g., the V-Chip). Fourteen percent (14%) say their parents check the parental advisories on music, while 10% say they make use of the advisories on video games.

Parents who impose rules and stick to them get results, at least in terms of how much time young people devote to media. Kids in homes with TV rules report almost two hours less (1:50) daily media exposure than kids from homes without rules. For example, among all 8- to 18-year-olds, kids whose parents have rules about TV

and enforce them “most” of the time spend an average of 0:38 less a day watching TV, and 0:16 more a day reading than kids without rules about TV. Seventh- to twelfth-graders with rules about how much time they can spend watching TV spend one hour less each day watching TV.

TV Rules

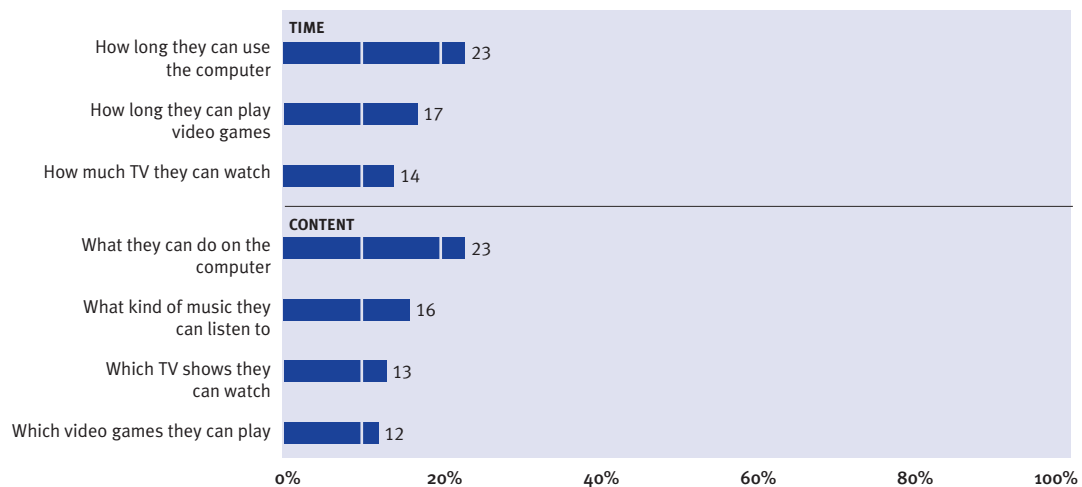
Percentage of young people who say their parents have...



[†] Among 7th- to 12th-graders only.

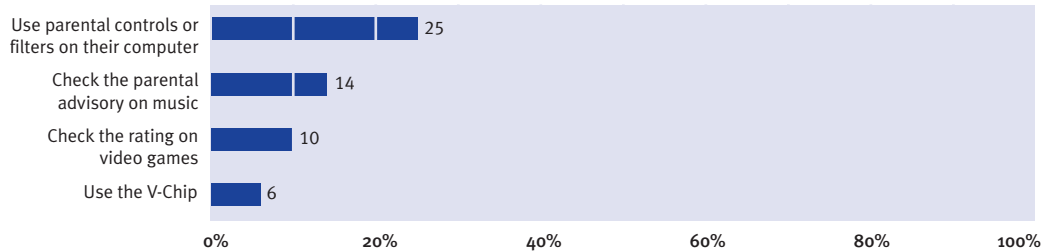
Media Rules About Time and Content

Among 7th- to 12th-graders with each medium, percentage who say they have rules about...



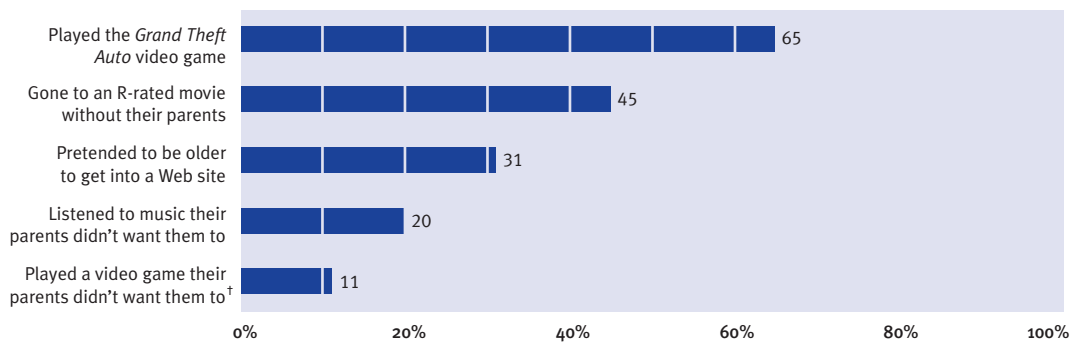
Parental Controls

Among 7th- to 12th-graders with each medium, percentage who say their parents...



Avoiding Parental Oversight

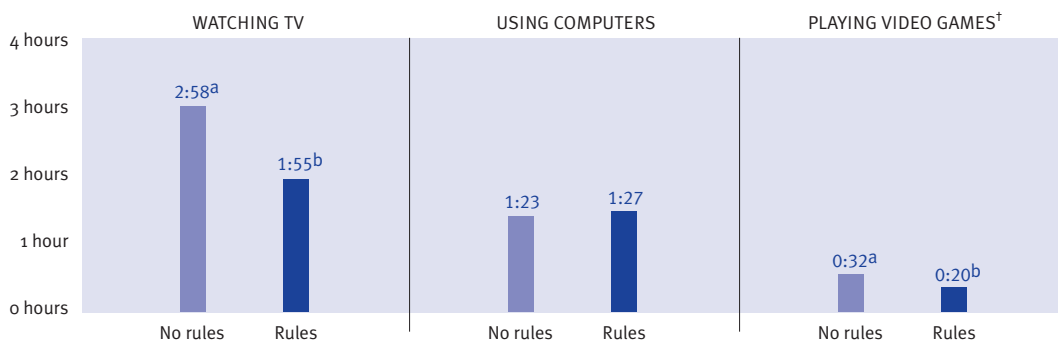
Percentage of 7th- to 12th-graders who say they have ever...



[†] Among all 8- to 18-year-olds.

Effect of Media Rules

Average amount of time 7th- to 12th-graders with and without time-based media rules spend per day...



[†] Console only.

Note: Results in any one cluster with a different superscript differ significantly.



Key Finding

NEW VS. OLD MEDIA

YOUNG PEOPLE’S USE OF “NEW” MEDIA SUCH AS COMPUTERS AND VIDEO GAMES DOES NOT SEEM TO DISPLACE THEIR USE OF “OLD” MEDIA SUCH AS TELEVISION AND MUSIC.

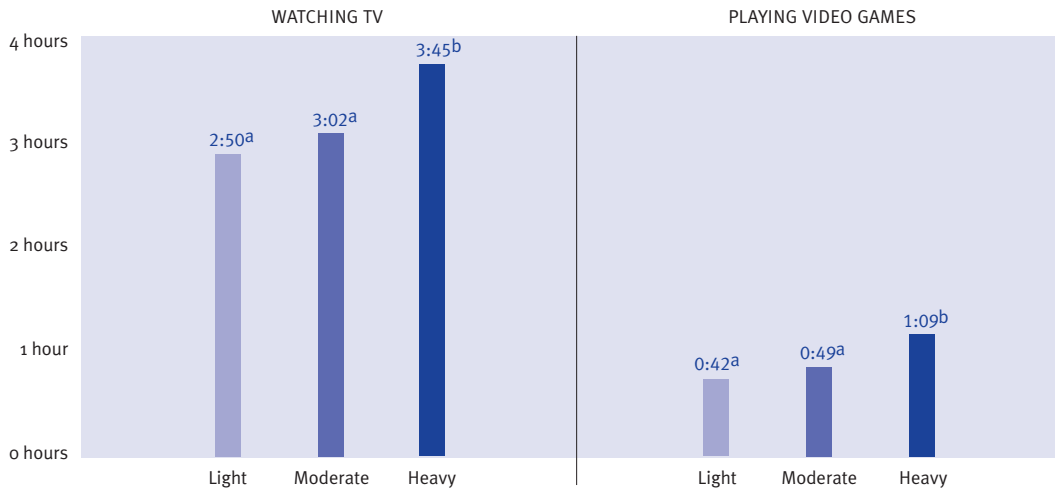
MANY OBSERVERS HAVE EXPECTED THAT AS MORE TEENS SPEND TIME PLAYING VIDEO GAMES OR going online, their TV viewing will start to decline. In fact, those young people who are the most avid users of computers and video games are the same kids who are spending the most time watching TV.

For example, kids who spend the most time using computers in any given day (the 16% who spent more than two hours) watched more TV (0:55 more), played more video games (0:27 more), and listened to more music (1:10 more) than the kids who didn’t use a computer that day. Likewise, those who spend the most time playing video games also spend more time using every other medium than do the kids who don’t play video games at all.

Of course, it is possible that these computer users and video game-players would have spent even *more* time watching TV if they hadn’t had these other media options, but they are certainly consuming more TV and music than their peers.

Computers vs. TV and Video Games

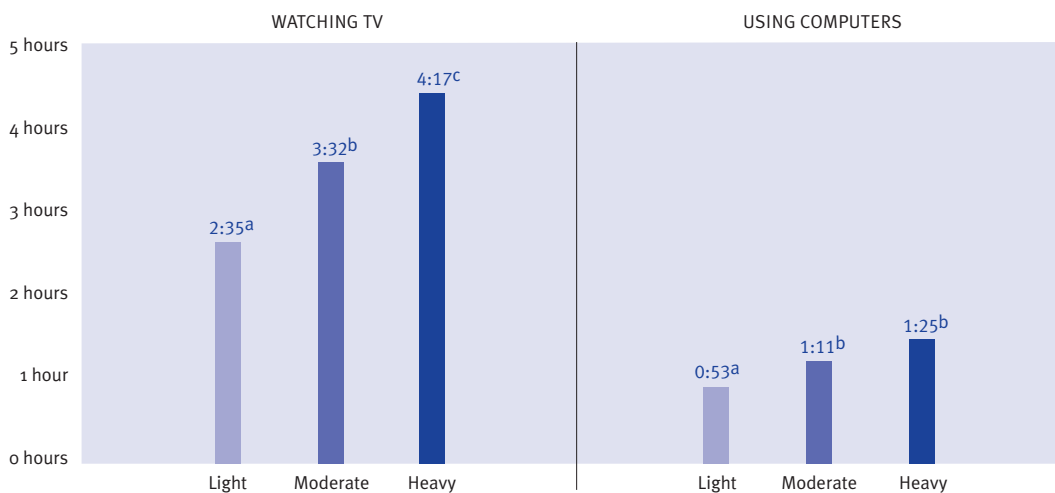
Average amount of time light, moderate and heavy computer users spend per day...



Note: Results in any one cluster with a different superscript differ significantly.

Video Games vs. TV and Computers

Average amount of time light, moderate and heavy video game users spend per day...



Note: Results in any one cluster with a different superscript differ significantly.

8

Key Finding

MEDIA MULTITASKING

TODAY'S YOUTH ARE MASTERS OF MULTITASKING.

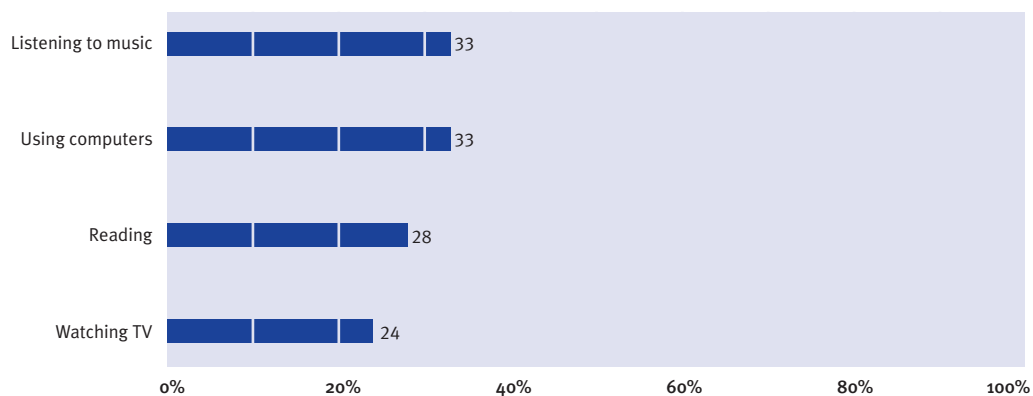
ABOUT A QUARTER (26%) OF THE TIME YOUNG PEOPLE ARE USING ONE MEDIUM, THEY'RE DOING something else media-related at the same time (such as listening to music while using the computer, or watching TV while reading a magazine).

Homework has also become a magnet for multitasking, with many young people failing to devote the kind of single-minded attention for which their teachers might hope. Just under one-third (30%) of young people say

they either talk on the phone, instant message, watch TV, listen to music, or surf the Web for fun “most of the time” they’re doing homework. Another third (31%) say they do so “some” of the time.

Media Multitasking

Percentage of 8- to 18-year-olds who say they use another media (TV, computers, print or music) “most” of the time while...



9 Key Finding

MEDIA USE, GRADES, AND CONTENTMENT

THIS GENERATION IS LARGELY HAPPY AND WELL-ADJUSTED, BUT THOSE WHO ARE LEAST CONTENT OR GET THE POOREST GRADES SPEND MORE TIME WITH VIDEO GAMES AND LESS TIME READING THAN THEIR PEERS.

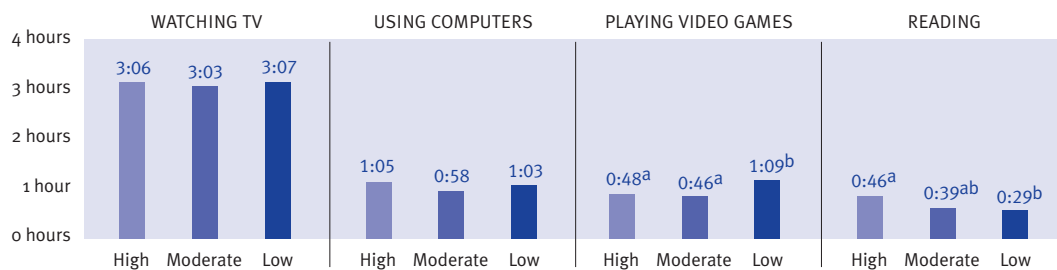
MOST YOUNG PEOPLE INDICATE THAT THEY HAVE LOTS OF FRIENDS, GET GOOD GRADES, AREN'T unhappy or in trouble often, and get along pretty well with their parents.

But the 18% of young people who are lowest on a scale of “contentedness” spend more time using media than their most highly contented peers (9:44 vs. 8:07 in total media exposure¹). For example, those who are least content spend close to a half hour more a day listening to music (0:26) and 0:19 more playing video games than the most content young people. Likewise, those with the

lowest grades spend more time playing video games (1:06 vs. 0:48) and less time reading (0:29 vs. 0:46) than those with the best grades (although the amount of time they spend with TV or computers is not related to grades). Of course, these data cannot tell us whether heavy media use contributes to a sense of discontent and poor grades, or vice versa.

Media Use and Grades

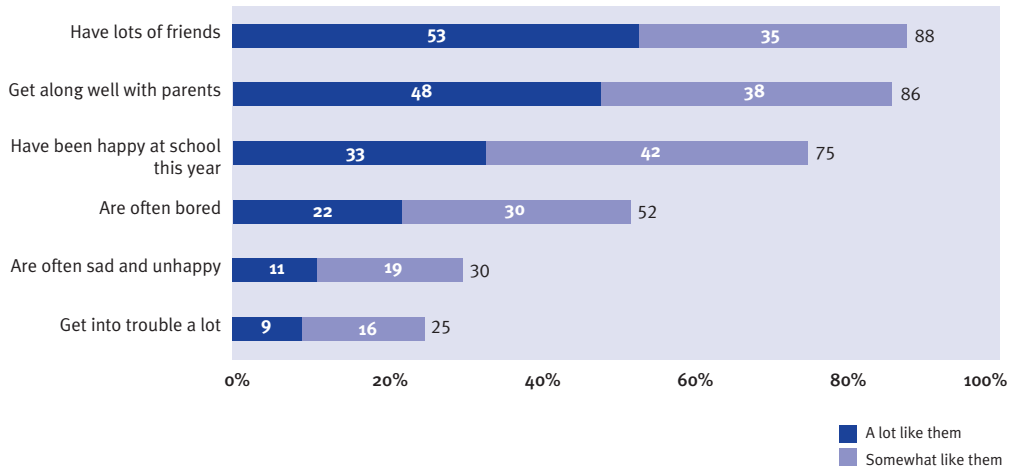
Average amount of time 8- to 18-year-olds with high, moderate and low grades spend per day...



Note: Results in any one cluster with a different superscript differ significantly.

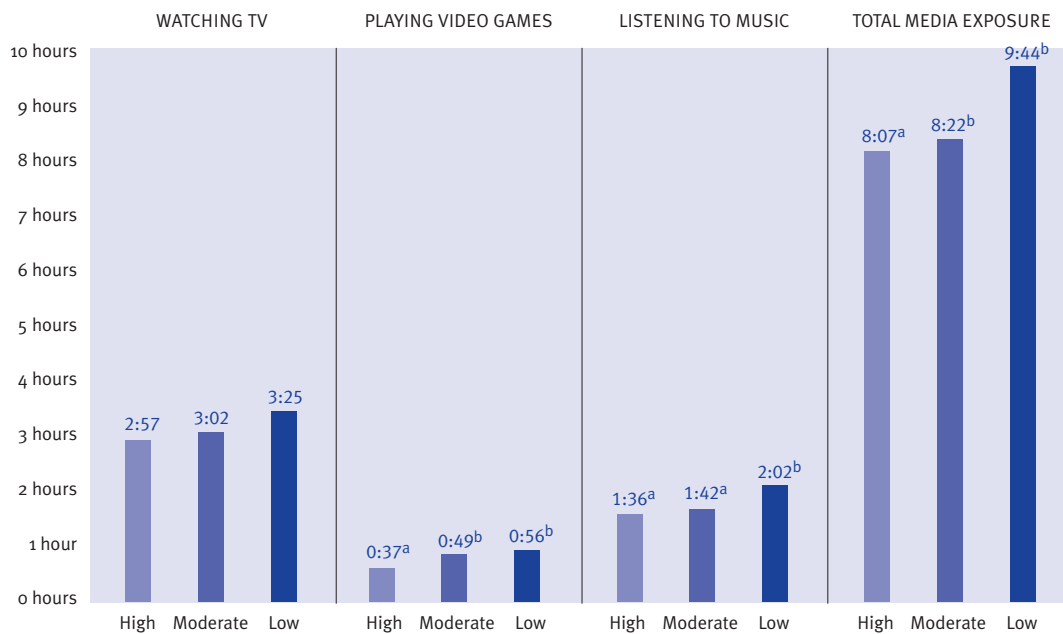
Contentedness

Percentage of young people who say each description is a lot or somewhat like them



Media Use and Contentedness

Average amount of time high, moderate and low contented 8- to 18-year-olds spend per day...



Note: Results in any one cluster with a different superscript differ significantly.

¹ Media exposure sums the time spent with each medium; but since a quarter of that time is spent using more than one medium at a time, the actual number of hours out of the day spent using media is lower (for example, 6:21 among all 8- to 18-year-olds, on average, compared to an average of 8:33 of total media exposure).

10

Key Finding

TELEVISION

TELEVISION REMAINS BY FAR THE DOMINANT MEDIUM FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TODAY, BUT SOME THINGS ABOUT HOW THEY WATCH TV MAY BE CHANGING.

MORE YOUTH TUNE IN TO CABLE TV EACH DAY THAN TO BROADCAST, MANY ARE TIME-SHIFTING their TV viewing through digital video recorders (DVRs), and others are going online in conjunction with the TV shows they're watching.

Young people spend an average of three hours a day watching TV, and close to four hours a day (3:51) when videos and prerecorded shows are included. TV-watching time is highest among younger kids: 8- to 10-year-olds spend more than four hours a day (4:10), including videos and recorded shows.

In any given day, two-thirds (69%) of all young people watch cable TV, while just under half (49%) watch broadcast (a nearly exact reversal of the situation in 1999, when 69% watched broadcast TV and 50% watched cable). A sizeable number of youth say they're usually doing something else at the same time they're watching TV, such as eating, doing homework, or talking on the phone (40% say they're doing something else "most" of the time while watching). In a typical day, 35% of kids who watch TV say they watch with someone else either none of the time (17%) or only a little of the time (18%). On the other hand, 40% say their parents usually know what they're watching.

New digital video recorders may be changing how young people watch TV. One-third (34%) say they have

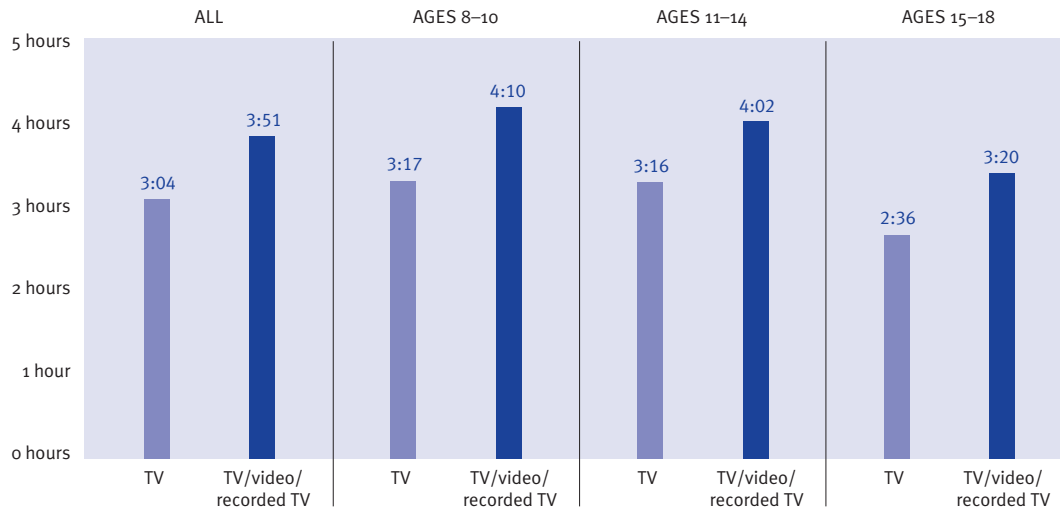
a DVR such as TiVo in their homes, and those who do also reported spending about ten minutes more each day watching prerecorded TV than other kids (0:21 vs. 0:11).

Another change in the way young people watch TV has to do with the inter-relatedness of computers and television. One in four (28%) youth say they "often" (10%) or "sometimes" (18%) go online while watching TV to do something related to the show they're watching. And the potential is there for this trend to grow: 60% of those with computers at home say their sets are located where they can watch TV while using the computer.

Sitcoms are the most popular genre among young people today, with more than one-third (37%) tuning in to a sitcom each day. Educational shows and children's programs are popular among younger kids, with nearly half of 8- to 10-year-olds watching in any given day (47% and 45%, respectively). Other popular genres include movies, reality shows, and entertainment/variety shows. Girls are more likely to watch sitcoms (41% vs. 32%), and boys are more likely to watch sports (19% vs. 5%).

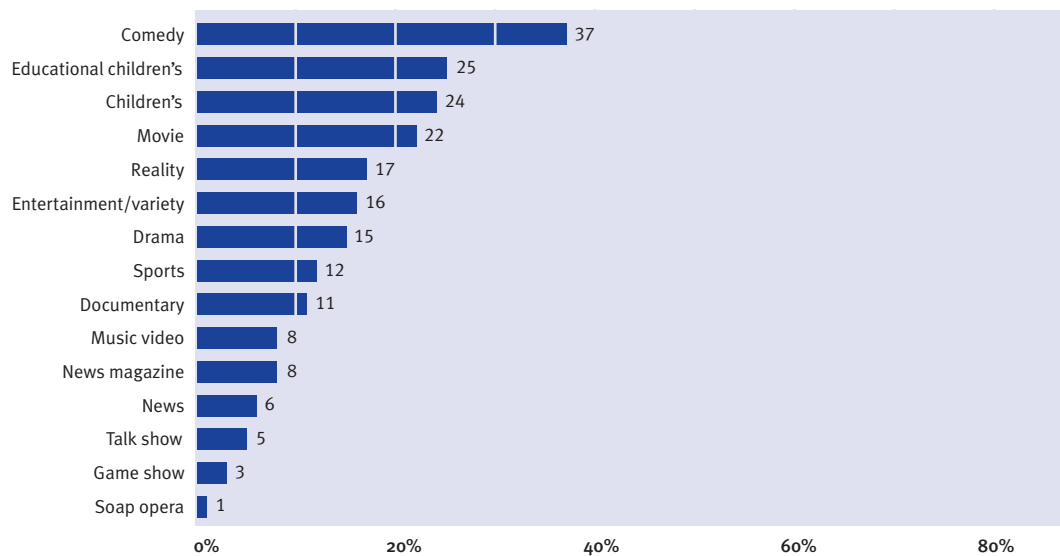
Time With TV

Average amount of time young people spend watching TV, per day, by age



TV Genres

Among 8- to 18-year-olds who watch TV in a typical day, percentage who watch...



11

Key Finding

MUSIC

LISTENING TO MUSIC CONTINUES TO BE HUGELY POPULAR, ESPECIALLY AMONG OLDER KIDS, BUT *HOW* THEY LISTEN TO MUSIC IS CHANGING, WITH MP3 PLAYERS AND INTERNET RADIO JOINING THE MIX.

IN ANY GIVEN DAY, MORE THAN EIGHT OUT OF TEN (85%) YOUNG PEOPLE LISTEN TO MUSIC. ON average, 8- to 18-year-olds spend 1³/₄ hours (1:44) a day listening to the radio or to CDs, tapes, or MP3s, with older teens (15- to 18-year-olds) spending nearly 2¹/₂ hours (2:24) a day.

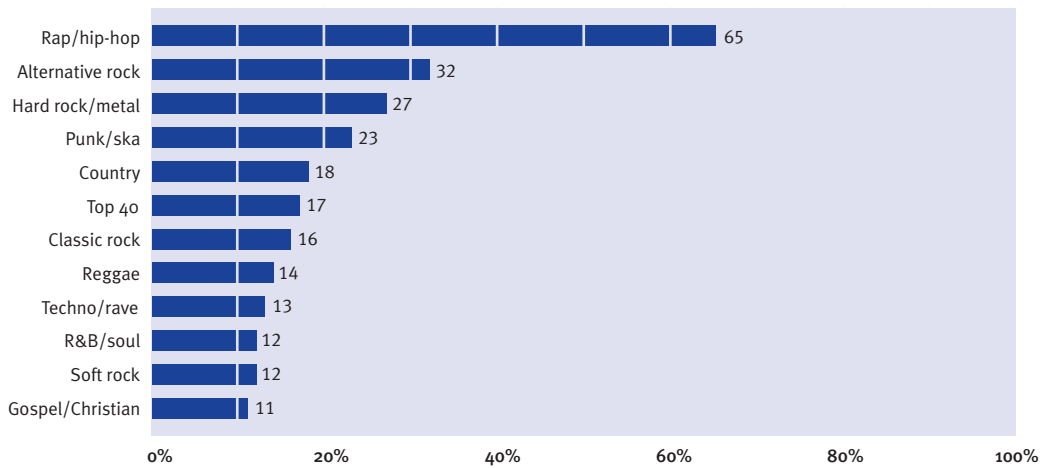
Almost all young people (98%) have a radio and a CD or tape player at home, and the vast majority have one in their bedroom as well (84% and 86%, respectively). Nearly two-thirds (61%) have a portable CD or tape player, and nearly one in five (18%) have an MP3 player. Nearly half (48%) have listened to the radio through the Internet.

Young people's taste in musical styles ranges from gospel and country to techno, heavy metal and rap. Rap and hip-hop are the most popular genres by far, with 65% listening on any given day; alternative rock comes in

second at 32%. There were stark differences in musical tastes based on race and ethnicity. For example, although rap and hip-hop were the top choice for all races, 81% of African American youth listened, compared to 60% of Whites. Latin and salsa music were listened to almost exclusively by Hispanic youth (33% listened, compared to 2% of Whites or African Americans). And the various forms of rock music—alternative, hard rock, and classic—were listened to far more by Whites than by African American or Hispanic kids.

Music Genres

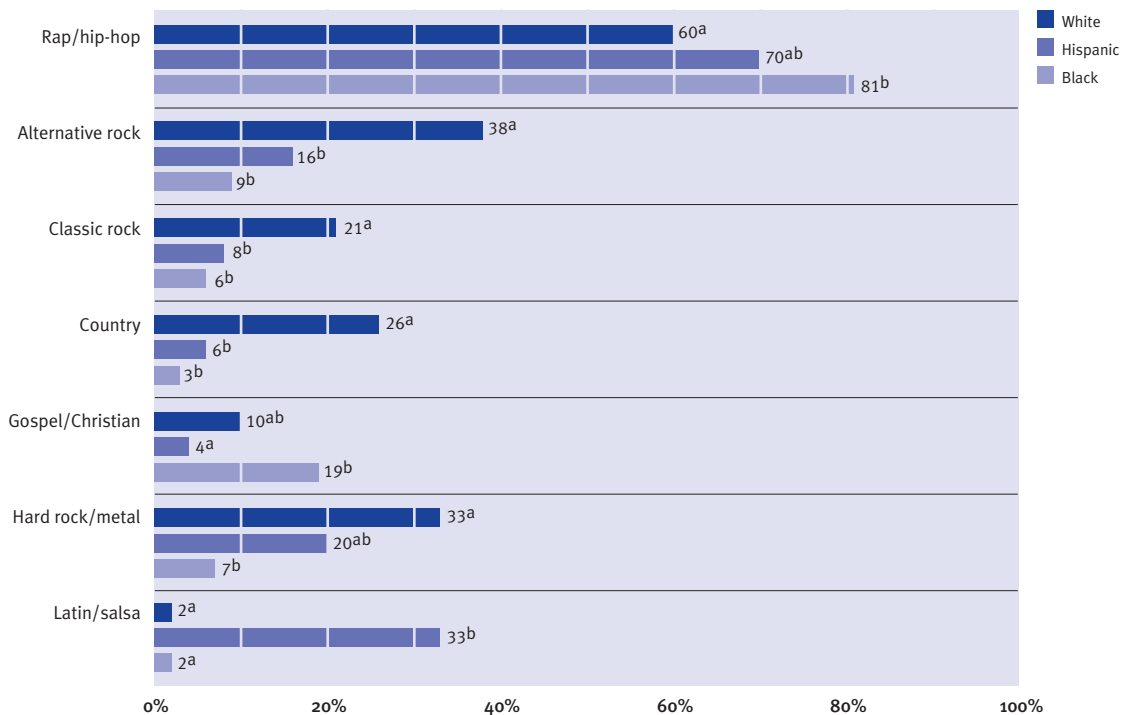
Among 7th- to 12th-graders who listen to recorded music in a typical day, percentage who listen to...



Note: Results are among those who listened to CDs, tapes, or MP3 players.

Race and Music Genres

Among 7th- to 12th-graders who listen to recorded music in a typical day, percentage who listen to each genre, by race



Note: Results in any cluster with a different superscript differ significantly.

12

Key Finding

COMPUTERS AND THE INTERNET

COMPUTERS AND THE INTERNET ARE RAPIDLY BECOMING A NEARLY UNIVERSAL PRESENCE IN YOUNG PEOPLE'S LIVES, ALTHOUGH THE AMOUNT OF TIME SPENT USING A COMPUTER OUTSIDE OF SCHOOLWORK STILL PALES IN COMPARISON TO WATCHING TV AND LISTENING TO MUSIC.

NEARLY ALL YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE USED A COMPUTER (98%) AND GONE ONLINE (96%). THEY SPEND an average of just over one hour each day using a computer outside of schoolwork (1:02), including about 0:48 online. In a typical day, just over half (54%) of all young people use a computer for recreation (compared to 85% who listen to music and 81% who watch TV).

While schools were the first place to bring computers into young people's lives, most now go online primarily from home.² More than eight in ten (86%) have a computer at home, and three in four (74%) have a home Internet connection (31% have high-speed access). Nearly one-third (31%) have a computer in their bedroom, and one in five (20%) have an Internet connection there. In a typical day, about half of young people (48%) go online from home, 20% from school, and 16% from someplace else. Among the 96% who have ever gone online, 65% say they go online most often from home, 14% from school, 7% from a friend's house, and 2% from a library or other location. One in ten

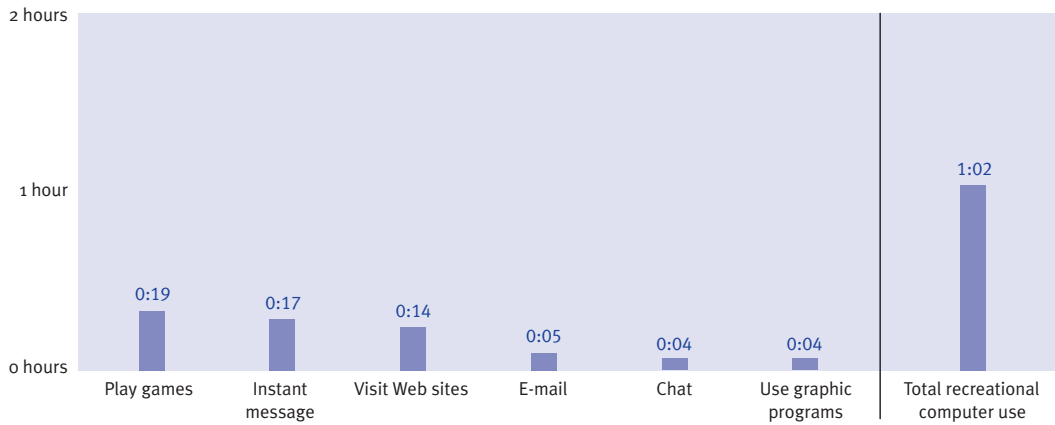
young people (13%) reports having a handheld device that connects to the Internet.

The most common recreational activities young people engage in on the computer are playing games (0:19) and communicating through instant messaging (0:17). For some young people, the Internet is a way to expand their access to music: two out of three (64%) have downloaded music online, and almost half (48%) have listened to the radio through the Internet. Half (50%) of all 8- to 18-year-olds say they have looked for health information online, and just under one-third (31%) say they have pretended to be older than they are to get onto a Web site.

² For a discussion of trends regarding computers and the Internet, see the section titled *Changes From 1999* on page 37.

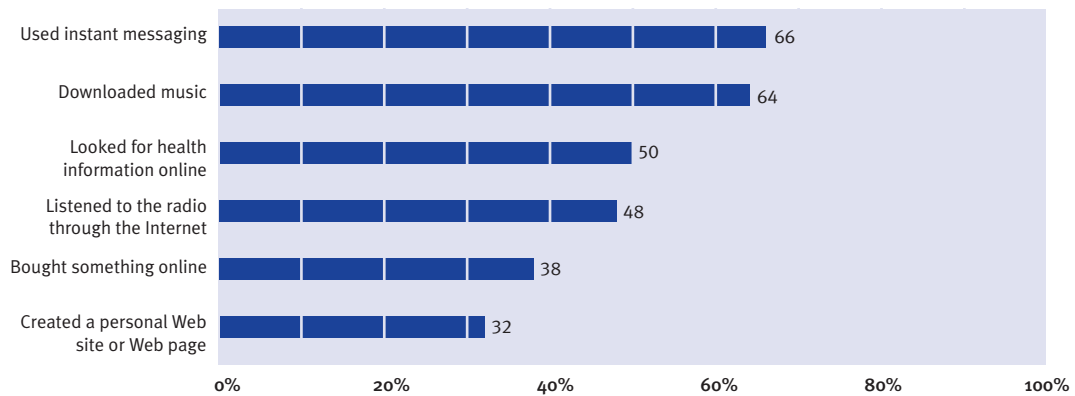
Time With Computer Activities

Average amount of time 8- to 18-year-olds spend using a computer per day to...



Computer Activities

Percentage of 8- to 18-year-olds who have ever...



13

Key Finding

THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

ACCESS TO AND FREQUENT USE OF THE INTERNET HAS BECOME COMMONPLACE AMONG MAJORITIES OF CHILDREN FROM THE MAJOR RACIAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC GROUPS, BUT A SIGNIFICANT DIVIDE IN THE QUALITY AND NATURE OF THAT ACCESS PERSISTS.

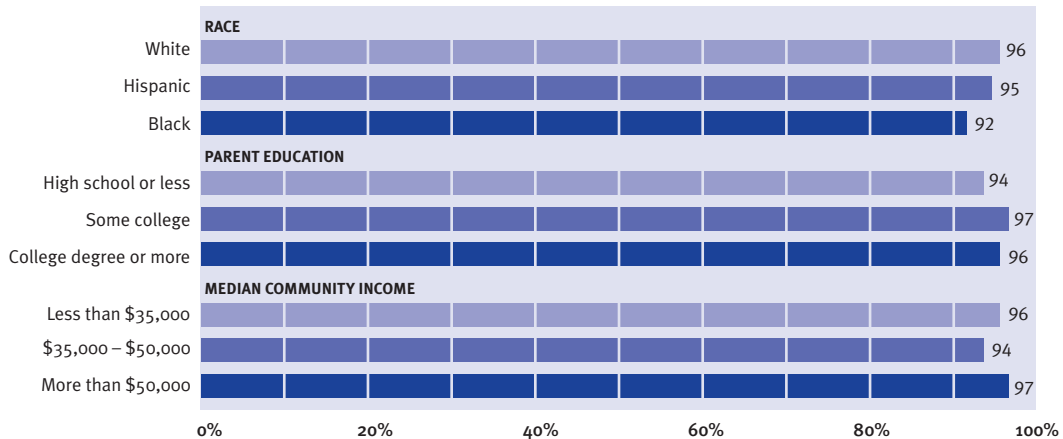
THE MAJORITY OF YOUNG PEOPLE FROM EACH OF THE MAJOR ETHNIC AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC GROUPS now have Internet access at home, and the increase from 1999 has been higher among children and adolescents of color and those from lower socio-economic levels. For example, over the past five years there has been an increase of nearly 40 percentage points in home access among children whose parents have a high school education or less (from 29% to 68%), compared to an increase of just under 20 percentage points among those whose parents have a college or graduate degree (from 63% to 82%).

However, the gaps between young people of different races and different socio-economic groups remain significant. For example, while 80% of White youth have Internet access at home, 61% of African American youth do; and

while 54% of kids going to school in communities where the median income is less than \$35,000 a year go online in a typical day, 71% of those from communities where the median income is greater than \$50,000 a year do.

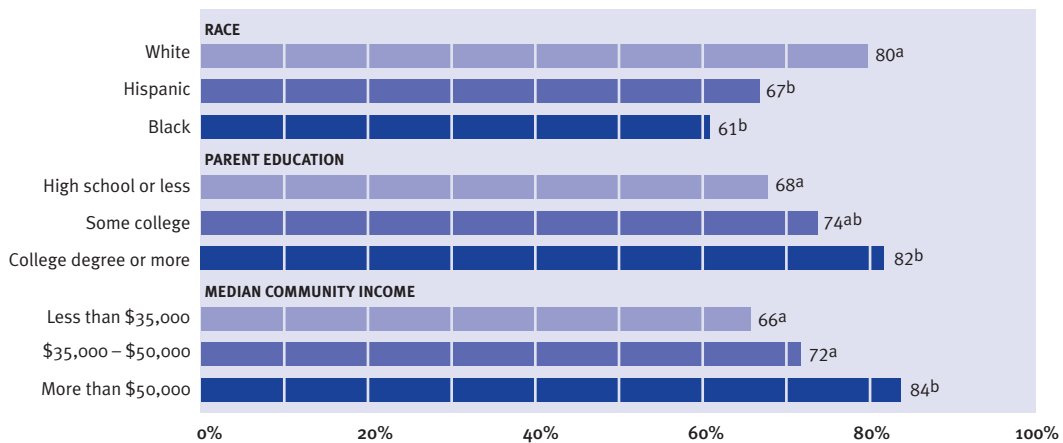
Internet Use, Race, and Socio-economic Group

Percentage of 8- to 18-year-olds who have ever gone online, by race and socio-economic group



Home Internet Access, Race, and Socio-economic Group

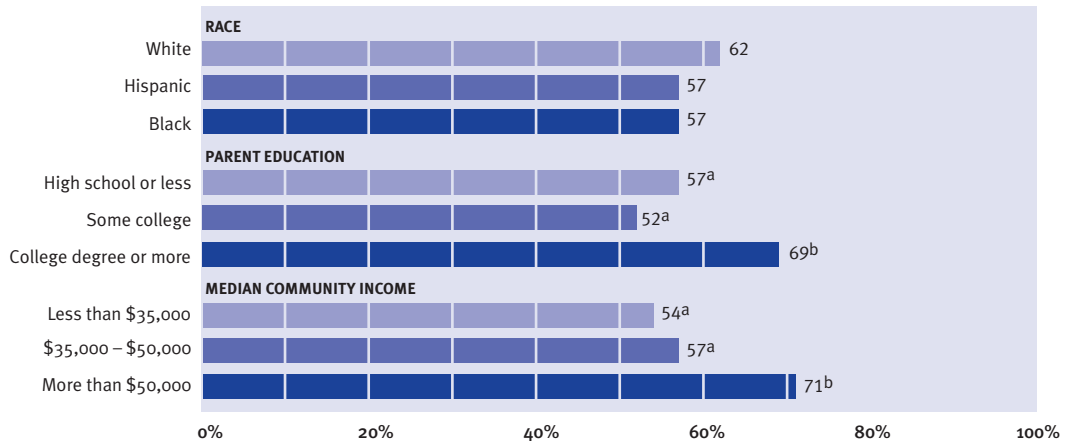
Percentage of 8- to 18-year-olds who have Internet access at home, by race and socio-economic group



Note: Results in any cluster with a different superscript differ significantly.

Daily Internet Access by Race and Socio-economic Group

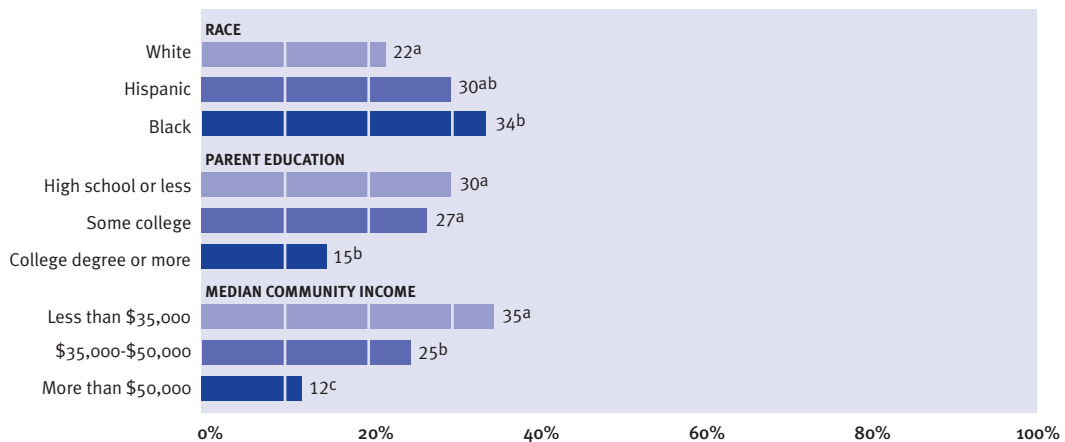
Percentage of 8- to 18-year-olds who use the Internet on a typical day, by race and socio-economic group



Note: Results in any cluster with a different superscript differ significantly.

Internet Use Outside of the Home by Race and Socio-economic Group

Percentage of 8- to 18-year-olds who go online most often from school or other non-home location, by race and socio-economic group



Note: Results in any cluster with a different superscript differ significantly.

14

Key Finding

READING

CHILDREN CONTINUE TO READ REGULARLY FOR PLEASURE, BUT THE MEDIA ENVIRONMENT IN THE HOME AFFECTS THE AMOUNT OF TIME THEY SPEND READING.

IN A TYPICAL DAY, NEARLY THREE OUT OF FOUR (73%) YOUNG PEOPLE REPORT READING FOR PLEASURE. On average, 8- to 18-year-olds spend about three-quarters of an hour a day reading (0:43).

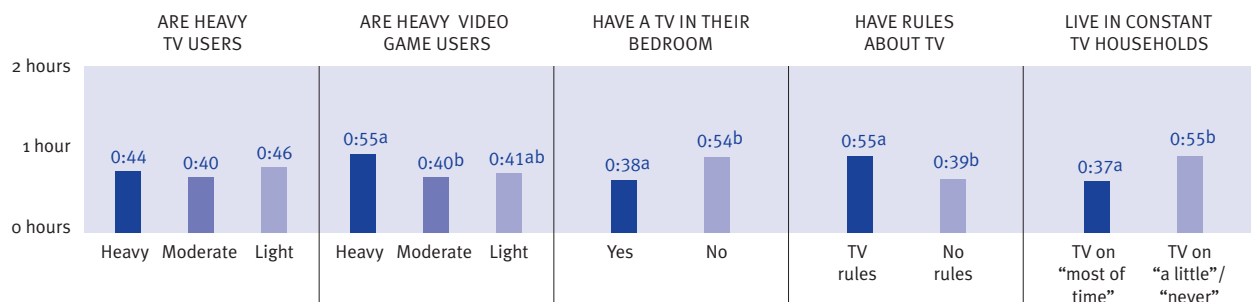
Interestingly, those young people who spend the most time watching TV (the 20% who watch more than five hours a day) don't report spending any less time reading than other young people do; and those who spend the most time playing console video games (the 13% who play for more than one hour a day) spend *more* time reading than those who play fewer video games

(0:55 vs. 0:41 for those who don't play video games at all, and 0:40 for those who play one hour or less).

On the other hand, some kids do read less than others. For example, those with TVs in their rooms, those in homes where the TV is left on all the time, and those whose parents don't have rules about TV watching all tend to spend less time reading than others do.

Media Use and Reading

Average amount of time spent reading per day by 8- to 18-year-olds who...



Note: Results in any cluster with a different superscript differ significantly.

15

Key Finding

VIDEO GAMES

VIDEO GAMES HAVE BECOME PART OF THE LANDSCAPE FOR CHILDREN, BUT THEY STILL SPEND FAR LESS TIME USING THEM THAN THEY SPEND WATCHING TV.

MORE THAN EIGHT IN TEN (83%) YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE A VIDEO GAME CONSOLE AT HOME, AND A majority (56%) have two or more. About half (49%) have one in their bedroom, and just over half (55%) have a handheld video game player.

On average, 8- to 18-year-olds are now spending just under 50 minutes a day (0:49) playing video games, including a half hour (0:32) on console game players, and 0:17 minutes on handheld players. Game playing varies a lot by age, with younger kids playing a lot more than older teens (an average of 1:05 for 8- to 10-year-olds, compared to 0:33 for 15- to 18-year-olds). Eight- to ten-year-old boys are the biggest game players of all: in any given day, 73% of them will play video games, and they spend an average of 1:33 a day playing.

Most parents don't have rules about which games their kids can play. Among all 8- to 18-year-olds with video games, one in five (21%) says their parents have such rules, ranging from 32% of 8- to 10-year-olds to 5% of 15- to 18-year-olds. Overall, 17% say their parents check the ratings on the video games they buy. Perhaps not surprisingly, then, two-thirds of all 7th- to 12th-graders say they have played the controversial *Grand Theft Auto* game, including 77% of boys in this age group (by comparison, 49% of boys this age have played *Madden Football*, one of the most popular sports games).

Changes From 1999

IN 1999, THE KAISER FAMILY FOUNDATION RELEASED ITS FIRST MAJOR STUDY OF CHILDREN'S media use, titled *Kids & Media @ the New Millennium*. Some of the information collected in the current study replicates that gathered five years ago, so in several instances it is possible to compare media habits then and now, and to note changes. In other cases, questions on this year's survey changed to reflect differing circumstances—for example, asking about DVDs and MP3 players, and about new computer activities such as instant messaging—so that direct comparisons are not possible.

While much has changed over the past five years, much has remained the same. The abundance of media in children's lives has grown, but the total amount of time kids spend with media—and the dominance of TV and music—have remained the same.

One of the more significant trends is, in some ways, a subtle one. Over the past five years, there have been numerous incremental changes that, added together, have substantially expanded the presence of media in young people's lives. Today, there are more young people with cable or satellite TV in their home (up from 74% to 82%), with subscriptions to premium TV channels (from 45% to 55%), with three or more VCRs or DVD players (from 26% to 53%), and with multiple video game consoles (from 49% to 56%) in their homes. And more of these media have migrated to young people's bedrooms: there are more young people with a VCR or DVD player (from 36% to 54%), with cable or satellite TV (from 29% to 37%), with computers (from 21% to 31%), and with Internet access (from 10% to 20%) in their bedrooms.

One of the most interesting comparisons between five years ago and today is in the overall amount of time young people devote to using media, and the amount of media content they consume. While the number of hours a day young people spend using media has remained nearly identical (6:21 vs. 6:19), they have increased the amount of time they spend using more than one media at a time (from 16% of the time to 26% of the time), so that the total amount of media content they consume has increased by about one hour (from 7:29 to 8:33).

The fact that there is such a remarkable consistency in the amount of time spent each day with media over this five-year period indicates that young people may well have hit a ceiling in terms of the portion of their day they can afford to devote to media. As new media technologies, content, or activities become available, they don't give up old media, and don't (or can't) increase the number of hours they spend with media—so they are increasingly becoming media multitaskers, instant messaging while doing homework and watching TV.

Changes From 1999 (continued)

One noticeable change over the past five years is the rapid expansion of access to and use of computers and the Internet. The proportion of children with home computers went up from 73% to 86%, with many families having two or more computers at home (39%, compared to 25% in 1999). Home Internet access rocketed from 47% to 74%. Today, as noted above, nearly one-third of young people have a computer in their bedroom (31% vs. 21% five years ago) and the proportion with Internet access in their room has doubled, increasing from 10% to 20%. In 1999, in a typical day about half (51%) of all 8- to 18-year-olds used a computer, compared to 62% today, and the proportion who go online for more than an hour went from 15% to 27%. The average amount of time spent on a computer (outside of schoolwork) more than doubled, from 0:27 to 1:02. The amount of time young people spend looking at Web sites for something other than schoolwork doubled from an average of 0:07 a day to 0:14, and instant messaging—which barely existed five years ago—has become one of the most popular computer activities, averaging 0:17 a day among all 8- to 18-year-olds.

The popularization of DVD players can be seen in our new data as well. By the end of 1999 there had been about 5.5 million DVD players sold in the United States; by the end of 2003 more than 60 million had been sold. What appears to have happened is that as families added DVD players to their home entertainment options, they have kept their VCRs as well, and in many cases the VCRs have migrated into children's bedrooms. As noted above, the proportion of 8- to 18-year-olds living in homes with three or more VCRs/DVD players doubled from 26% to 53%, while the proportion with a VCR or DVD player in their bedroom increased from 36% to 54%.

The big constants, when it comes to kids and media, are TV and music. Over the past five years, there has been virtually no change in the amount of time children spend watching television or listening to music, nor has there been any diminution in those media's dominance over other activities such as computers or video games. On the other hand, there have been some changes in *how* kids watch TV or listen to music. More watch cable than broadcast TV, and they are starting to go online in conjunction with what they're watching as well as to download and listen to music through the Internet.



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VIDEO GAMES

Conclusion

THE SHEER AMOUNT OF TIME YOUNG PEOPLE SPEND USING MEDIA—AN AVERAGE OF NEARLY 6½ hours a day—makes it plain that the potential of media to impact virtually every aspect of young people’s lives cannot be ignored.

Not surprisingly, those with easy access to media spend more time using it. Young people with TVs, computers, or video game consoles in their bedrooms spend more time using them, and those in homes where the TV is left on much of the day spend more time watching it and less time reading.

Contrary to some expectations, the study does not find evidence for the theory that use of computers or video games displaces time spent with television. Indeed, it seems instead that media use begets media use: those young people who spend the most time using computers or playing video games also spend more time watching TV and listening to music. Media multitasking—a growing phenomenon—undoubtedly accounts for some of this. But television clearly remains the dominant medium in young people’s lives by far, with music nipping at its heels, at least where older teens are concerned.

Despite the concerns parents express about the impact of media on their children, this study does not find much evidence of major efforts on their part to curb or monitor their children’s media consumption. The number of TVs, video game devices, VCRs, and the like in families’ homes and children’s bedrooms, the number of personal media players kids are permitted to own, the amount of time the TV is left on in the home and during dinner, the proportion of kids who say their parents haven’t set any rules regarding their use of TV, computers, or video games, and the infrequency with which kids say their

parents check the ratings or advisories offered to them—all indicate that the vast majority of parents either don’t feel their children *are* spending too much time with media, or have simply given up. Since this study also indicates that the children who spend the most time with media also report spending time pursuing hobbies, hanging out with their parents, and in physical activity, it may be that parents don’t feel overly concerned about the amount of time their children devote to media.

To the extent that parents *are* concerned about the amount of time their children spend with media, the survey indicates that they can have an impact if they choose to. Children whose parents have kept media out of their kids’ bedrooms, who turn the TV off during dinner, who don’t leave the TV on in the home unattended, and who set media rules and then enforce them, spend substantially less time using electronic media and more time reading than children whose parents don’t take these steps.

Without question, this generation truly *is* the media generation, devoting more than a quarter of each day to media. As media devices become increasingly portable, and as they spread even further through young people’s environments—from their schools to their cars—media messages will become an even more ubiquitous presence in an already media-saturated world. Anything that takes up this much space in young people’s lives deserves our full attention.



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Methodology

THIS STUDY IS BASED ON A NATIONALLY REPRESENTATIVE SURVEY OF 2,032 3RD- TO 12TH-GRADE students age 8–18, including an oversample of African American and Hispanic students.

The sample includes students from public, private and parochial schools. Data from the survey are weighted to ensure a nationally representative sample of students. The margin of sampling error for the total sample is +/-3.8%, higher for subgroups.

Respondents completed a self-administered written questionnaire in the classroom. Trained interviewers were present in each classroom to provide assistance if needed. The survey instrument was completely anonymous. Older children (7th- to 12th-grade) were able to complete longer questionnaires than their younger counterparts (3rd- to 6th- grade). Thus, some questions were asked of the older sample only. All results presented in this report are for the full sample of 8- to 18-year-olds unless otherwise noted.

The media covered in the survey include television, videos, movies, computers, the Internet, video games, books, magazines, newspapers, DVDs, radio, CDs, tapes, and MP3s. The survey focuses exclusively on recreational (non-school-related) use of media; for example, books read for a school assignment, or Internet research related to a class project, are not included. Video game use includes both console and handheld video game players, unless otherwise noted.

In addition to the school-based questionnaires, a self-selected sample of 694 respondents also completed seven-day media use diaries, which were used to help guide the survey analyses (primarily to develop a proportion of time spent multitasking with various forms of media). The findings in this report are based on the nationally representative sample, except where noted.

All findings in the report have been tested for statistical significance. Standard levels of significance are applied at the $p < .05$ level (i.e., differences as great as those noted would occur by chance no more than five times in 100). In tables, superscripts are used to denote whether or not various data points differ reliably. Proportions or means with no superscript, or that share any superscripted letter, do not differ significantly. Those with no superscripted letters in common differ reliably. This system is explained in notes accompanying each table, and a further explanation can be found in Chapter Two and Appendix Two of the full report.

The survey was designed and analyzed by staff at the Kaiser Family Foundation, in collaboration with Donald F. Roberts and Ulla G. Foehr of Stanford University, and Dana Markow and Jordan Fein of Harris Interactive, Inc. Harris Interactive was responsible for sampling and data collection while data analyses and reporting of results were the primary responsibility of the Kaiser Family Foundation and Stanford researchers. At the Foundation, the project was directed by Victoria Rideout, and received substantial input from Mollyann Brodie. The current study updates the Kaiser Family Foundation's 1999 study, *Kids & Media @ the new Millennium*, which was conducted by the same team.

A copy of the questionnaires and the diary, along with a more detailed description of the study's methodology, are available in the full report on which this executive summary is based.



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Additional copies of this publication (#7250) and the full report (#7251) on which it is based are available on the Kaiser Family Foundation's website at www.kff.org.

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