

Use of electronic media and communications: Early childhood to teenage years

Findings from *Growing Up in Australia;
The Longitudinal Study of Australian
Children* (3 to 4 and 7 to 8-year-olds),
and *Media and Communications in Australian
Families* (8 to 17-year-olds), 2007

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Snapshot of findings

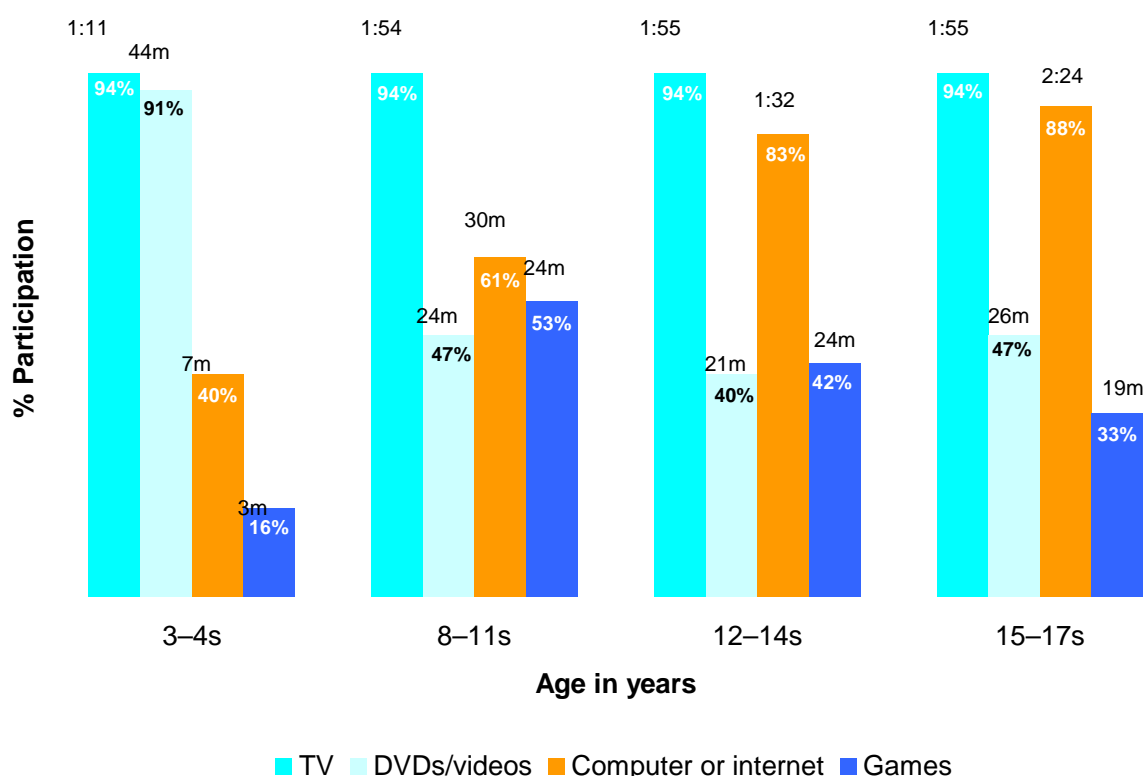
This report provides a comprehensive snapshot of young people’s use of electronic media from early childhood through to teenage years, and parents’ views about that media use. New findings from 2007 are included for 3 to 4 and 7 to 8-year-olds from the Australian Institute of Family Studies’ *Growing Up in Australia; The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children* to complement ACMA research findings for 8 to 17-year-olds.

Throughout this report spans of ages of children and young people are shown in the form ‘3–4s’.

EARLY CHILDHOOD TO TEENS OVERVIEW

Patterns of electronic media and communications use change as children move from early childhood to teenage years, as illustrated below. The one constant is television, with the same average participation of 94 per cent for children and young people across all age groups.

Figure 1: Participation and average time spent on electronic media per day (hrs:mins) by young people, 2007



Source:

LSAC: Parent survey
MCAF: Three-day time use diaries

MEDIA AND EARLY CHILDHOOD (3 TO 8-YEAR-OLDS)

Television and DVDs play a substantial role in the lives of young children: 94 per cent of 3 to 4-year-olds watched television for an average one hour and 11 minutes per day, and 91 per cent watched DVDs or videos for an average 44 minutes per day.

A sizeable proportion of 3–4s also used a computer at home (40 per cent, averaging seven minutes per day), and a minority (16 per cent) had played games using an electronic games system (averaging three minutes per day).

Most 7–8s had used the internet at home at least some of the time (84 per cent), mainly for playing games. Two per cent of 7–8s used a mobile phone to make or receive calls and 11 per cent used a fixed-line phone.

For parents of 3 to 4-year-olds, managing television viewing by their child was very important: 94 per cent of these parents had rules specifically about television content, and 64 per cent had timing rules.

Managing television and DVD viewing, and video gaming were considered easy to manage by the majority of parents of 3–4s and 7–8s (between 90 and 95 per cent).

However just over a quarter of parents of 3–4s (27 per cent) and a fifth of parents of 7–8s (22 per cent) still wished their child spent less time using electronic media.

More families with 3–4s (19 per cent) reported that the television was always or often on at home, than families with older children aged 8 to 17 (9–13 per cent).

MEDIA FOR OLDER CHILDREN AND TEENS (8-17 YEAR OLDS)

As for young children, watching television remains a substantial activity for 8 to 17-year-olds with the same average participation of 94 per cent, and a higher viewing average of one hour and 54 minutes per day.

Internet use becomes increasingly important for a significant proportion of high-school aged children (83 per cent of 12–14s and 88 per cent of 15–17s), particularly for doing homework and chatting online. Average time spent per day online increased from 30 minutes for 8–11s to one hour and 32 minutes for 12–14s and two hours and 24 minutes for 15–17s.

The popularity of console and handheld games peaks with 8–11s (53 per cent, for an average 27 minutes per day).

Mobile phones are also very important for teenagers, being used by 75 per cent of 12–14s and increasing to 90 per cent of 15–17s. The use of fixed-line phones were the least preferred means of communication for teens, behind SMS, mobile voice, instant messaging on a mobile or computer, and email on a computer.

In contrast to younger families, fewer parents of 8–17s had rules about television content, from 55 per cent for 8–11s to 25 per cent for 15–17s (compared with 94 per cent for 3–4s). Parents of older children were generally more likely to have rules about the amount of television watched.

While the use of electronic media was considered to be easy to manage by the majority of families, fewer parents of 8–17s found the internet and mobile phone use easy to manage (22 per cent for 12–14s and 24 per cent for 15–17s). Managing television, DVD viewing and gaming were also more difficult than for younger children.

Similar to the younger children, more than a quarter of parents of 12–17s wished their child spent less time with electronic media (27 per cent for 12–14s and 29 per cent for 15–17s). Fewer parents of 8–11s said this (16 per cent).

Introduction

In 2007, the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) published comprehensive research on the day-to-day electronic media and communications activities of young people aged 8–17 in its report *Media and Communications in Australian Families 2007* (MCAF). Now, new research from the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) *Growing Up in Australia; The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children* (LSAC - Wave 2.5 module) contributes important information on media use by younger children aged 3–4 and 7–8.

Together these two studies provide valuable information on the use of electronic media and communications technologies by 3 to 17-year-olds, and their parents' attitudes to that use.

Information is presented on:

- media equipment in family homes, and the level of access to electronic media and communications devices in children and young people's bedrooms
- the extent to which children and young people participate in media activities, including television and DVD viewing, computer and internet use, video/computer gaming, and using mobile phones
- the average amount of time children and young people spend doing those media activities
- how parents mediate their children's use of electronic media and communications.

This information expands ACMA's understanding of the role of media and communications in the lives of children, young people and families, and assists in undertaking its regulatory responsibilities.

The *Longitudinal Study of Australian Children* (LSAC) project was initiated and is funded by the Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) and is managed by the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS). The findings and views reported in this paper should not be attributed to either FaHCSIA or AIFS.

ACMA acknowledges and thanks FaHCSIA and the AIFS for use of and assistance provided in using the LSAC dataset.

The research

Both the LSAC and MCAF studies were conducted during 2007, with the LSAC Wave 2.5 data collection being conducted between August and December 2007, and the MCAF study between March and June 2007.

The LSAC methodology involved:

- A mail-out survey completed by parents (n=3,116 parents of cohort B children aged 3–4 at the time of the survey, and n=3,166 parents of cohort K children aged 7–8),

conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). There were separate questionnaires for each cohort.¹

The MCAF research methodology involved:

- a nationally representative telephone survey of parents of children aged 8–17 (n=751 households)
- a self-complete time-use diary among children living in these households (n=1,003), and a short self-complete survey completed by children on the day after finishing the time-use diary (Day 4 diary questionnaire: n=1,055).

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The confidence interval for the LSAC samples of 3,116 parents with 3–4s and 3,166 parents with 7–8s, is ± 2 per cent at $p < 0.05$.

The MCAF sample of 751 parents from households across Australia gives a confidence interval of ± 3.6 per cent at $p < 0.05$. The sample of 1,003 children gives a confidence interval of ± 3.1 per cent at $p < 0.05$.

KEY METHODOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO STUDIES

It should be noted that there are some key methodological differences between the LSAC and MCAF studies which mean that they are not directly comparable.

In particular, measures of time-use in the LSAC study were obtained from parents, whereas MCAF data were gathered primarily from young people via a three-day time-use diary. Some MCAF media use data were collected from their parent's reports.

The most comparable data is between the parent surveys used in both studies for attitudes about media use and equipment in households, i.e. a self-complete mail-out survey in LSAC and a telephone survey in MCAF.

It is also important to note that many of the questions and response categories used in each of the studies varied. These are identified in the tables of this report.

¹ In 2003/4 when the LSAC study commenced cohort B children were aged 0–1 and cohort K children were aged 4–5. For more information see the *Growing Up in Australia; The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children* website: <http://www.aifs.gov.au/growingup/>

Media equipment in family homes

ACCESS TO COMPUTERS, THE INTERNET AND PORTABLE TECHNOLOGIES

Access to computers and the internet in family households increased where there were older children. Children and young people’s access to mobile phones and MP3/4 players also increased with age, with teenagers far more likely to have these technologies than younger children (Table 1).

Table 1: Media equipment in family households, 2007

	LSAC		MCAF		
	3–4s (n=3,116 parents)	7–8s (n=2,599 - 3,166 parents)	8–11s (n= 334 parents)	12–14s (n= 219 parents)	15–17s (n= 198 parents)
Computer	>71%	> 90%	97%	99%	99%
Internet access	>65%	>72%	87% (71% <i>broadband</i>)	93% (77% <i>broadband</i>)	95% (85% <i>broadband</i>)
Mobile phone	N/A	3%	18%	75%	90%
iPod or similar (LSAC)	N/A	15%	46%	72%	79%
MP3/4 player (MCAF)	N/A	15%	46%	72%	79%
Electronic games system (e.g. Gameboy, Nintendo, Playstation, X-box) (LSAC)	23%	65%	81%	74%	60%
Games console (MCAF)					

Source: LSAC and MCAF parent surveys

N/A: comparable data was not collected. LSAC did not collect data on access to mobile phones and iPods for 3–4s

Note: Base samples for LSAC are the number of parent respondents per question.

Due to non-response by parents to questions about media in family homes in the LSAC study, internet penetration is likely to be greater than 65 per cent in family homes with 3–4s, and greater than 72 per cent in homes with 7–8s. Access to computers at home is likely to be greater than 71 per cent for 3–4s and greater than 90 per cent for 7–8s.

- Computers were available in more than 71 per cent of households with 3–4s, increasing to more than 90 per cent of homes with 7–8s, and in almost all households with 8–17s (98 per cent).
- Internet access was available in more than 65 per cent of households with 3–4s, increasing to more than 72 per cent of homes with 7–8s, 87 per cent of homes with 8–11s, and more than 90 per cent of households with 12–17s. Access to broadband internet increased from 71 per cent of homes with 8–11s, to 77 per cent with 12–14s, and 85 per cent with 15–17s.²
- Three per cent of 7–8s and 18 per cent of 8–11s had a mobile phone, increasing to 75 per cent of 12–14s and 90 per cent of 15–17s.

² The Australian Bureau of Statistics (2007) reported that 64 per cent of occupied private dwellings in Australia had the internet, while 43 per cent had a broadband connection.

- Fifteen per cent of 7–8s had an iPod or similar, increasing to 46 per cent of 8–11s, 72 per cent of 12–14s, and 79 per cent of 15–17s with an MP3/4 player.
- Access to electronic games systems (including games consoles and handheld games) was greatest among 8–11s (81 per cent).

MEDIA EQUIPMENT IN CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE’S BEDROOMS

Most young people did not have a television, computer or internet access in their bedrooms. Children and young people in both studies were more likely to have a television rather than a computer or internet access in their bedrooms (Table 2).

Table 2: Televisions, computers and internet access in child’s bedroom, 2007

	LSAC		MCAF		
	3–4s (n=3,062 parents)	7–8s (n=3,123 parents)	8–11s (n= 334 parents)	12–14s (n= 219 parents)	15–17s (n= 198 parents)
Television	13%	20%	16%	20%	30%
Computer	3%	11%	17%	17%	20%
Internet access	1%	3%	9%	11%	13%

Source: LSAC and MCAF parent surveys

- In general, having a television, computer and/or internet access in the bedroom increased with age.
- Thirty per cent of 15–17s had a television in their bedroom and 20 per cent had a computer, including 13 per cent with internet access.
- Thirteen per cent of 3–4s had a television in their room. They were less likely to have a computer (three per cent) or internet access (one per cent).

Children and young people’s use of electronic media and communications

TELEVISION AND DVD VIEWING

Participation

Almost all children and young people watch television. Ninety-four per cent of parents reported that their child aged 3–4 watched television, and 94 per cent of 8–17s reported watching either free-to-air or subscription television in their three-day time-use diaries.

Parents also reported that the majority of 3–4s (91 per cent) watched DVDs/videos on weekdays and weekends, considerably more than the 45 per cent of 8–17s who reported watching DVDs/videos over three diary days.

Table 3: Participation in television and DVD/video viewing by young people, 2007

	LSAC	MCAF		
	3–4s (n=3116 parents)	8–11s (n=431 children)	12–14s (n=337 children)	15–17s (n=225 children)
Watching TV	94%	89% (free-to-air TV) 33% (subscription TV)	89% (free-to-air TV) 29% (subscription TV)	87% (free-to-air TV) 28% (subscription TV)
Watching DVDs/videos	91%	47%	40%	47%
Watching TV and DVDs/videos	N/A	98%	97%	95%

Source:

LSAC: Parent survey

MCAF: Three-day time use diaries

N/A: comparable data was not collected.

Time spent watching

Three to four-year-olds watched television for an average of one hour and 11 minutes per day, less than 8–17s with an average of one hour and 54 minutes.

A study of infants and television in the early nineties found that 30-month-olds were ‘exposed’ to one hour and 24 minutes of television per day, but did not include video watching. In 2007, 3–4s spent an average 44 minutes per day watching DVDs/videos, considerably more than older children (an average 24 minutes per day). See the box below for details of the earlier *Infants and Television* study.

Time spent watching television was consistent across each age group within the 8–17 age range.

Table 4: Average time spent watching television and DVDs/videos by young people, 2007

	LSAC	MCAF		
	3–4s (n=3116 parents) hours:mins per day	8–11s (n=431 children) hours:mins per day	12–14s (n=337 children) hours:mins per day	15–17s (n=225 children) hours:mins per day
Watching TV	1:11	1:54	1:55	1:55
Watching DVDs/videos	0:44	0:24	0:21	0:26
Watching TV and DVDs/videos	1:55	2:18	2:16	2:21

Source: LSAC: Parent survey (Q). *How much time in total does your child spend doing each of the following at home? Watching television programs (do not include watching DVDs or videos or playing games on TV) Watching DVDs or videos?*

MCAF: Three-day time use diaries

Note: Average time per day is calculated across the whole sample, including users and non-users of each technology

INFANTS AND TELEVISION

In 1998 one of ACMA’s predecessors, the Australian Broadcasting Authority, published *Infants and Television*, a research report about the television experiences of young infants during the first two and a half years of their lives.

The research, which was undertaken by Dr Judy Ungerer, Dr Brent Waters, and Associate Professor Bryanne Barnett, involved a longitudinal study of families in the Sydney metropolitan area from April 1988 – August 1994. Data was obtained from parent reports (n=145) and from a 7-day time-use diary completed by mothers when their child was aged four, 12 and 30 months.

The research found that there was a clear distinction between the amount of television that infants are ‘exposed’ to and the amount they ‘watched’. The average daily amount of television increased significantly as the children grew older. The intensity with which infants ‘watched’ or attended to television programs also increased with age. In the study ‘exposure’ referred to the child’s presence in a room while the television was switched on.

Key findings from the research are summarised below.

- *At four months:* 63 per cent of infants were exposed to an average 44 minutes per day of television. During most of this time they were in the company of their parents and were exposed to family or adult-oriented programming. Thirty-seven per cent of infants aged four months were not exposed to television during the 7-day sample period.
- *By 12 months:* 79 per cent of infants were exposed to television for an average one hour and 2 minutes per day. While the programs they were exposed to were still dominated by family or adult-oriented programs, the amount of exposure to preschool programs had increased from 5 per cent (at four months) to 26 per cent. These children were perceived by their parents to attend to television more of the time when preschool programs were on than during news and current affairs or light entertainment programs.
- *At 30 months:* 97 per cent of children were exposed to an average one hour and 24 minutes of television per day. At this age a little more than half of television time was now spent with preschool, children’s, or hosted cartoon programs. The trend towards greater levels of attention to programs continued, and these children were perceived by their parents to spend the majority of television time ‘watching half the time’, ‘mostly watching’, or ‘watching with great concentration’.

Data on infants’ exposure to video content was not collected in this study.

COMPUTERS AND THE INTERNET

Participation in internet activities

Parents reported that 16 per cent of 7 to 8-year-olds never used the internet at home for any of the purposes listed in the LSAC questionnaire (i.e. 84 per cent sometimes used the internet at home to find information for school, send emails, chat online, surf the internet, play games, or to access/download music or movies).

Among 8 to 17-year-olds, use of the internet for homework and leisure activities increased with age from 61 per cent of 8–11s, to 83 per cent of 12–14s, and 88 per cent of 15–17s using the internet over three diary days.

Participation by children and young people in the individual internet activities shown in Table 5 increases with age.

Table 5: Participation in internet activities by young people, 2007

	LSAC	MCAF		
	7–8s (n=2,740-2,852 parents) Children who do each activity at least weekly	8–11s (n=431 children) Young people who did each activity at all over the 3 diary days	12–14s (n=337 children) Young people who did each activity at all over the 3 diary days	15–17s (n=225 children) Young people who did each activity at all over the 3 diary days
Play games (LSAC)	35%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Video/computer games online against other players (MCAF)	N/A	24%	27%	37%
Find information for school (e.g. homework, or projects) (LSAC) Homework on the computer/internet (MCAF)	16%	23%	45%	48%
Surf the internet (LSAC) Other things on the internet (MCAF)	10%	18%	29%	32%
Send or receive email	3%	9%	25%	37%
Access and/or download movies or pictures (LSAC) Watch/listen to music, video clips, movies, cartoons, TV shows etc (MCAF)	3%	8%	21%	32%
Chat online	2%	10%	41%	48%
Visit social website/blogs	N/A	7%	28%	44%

Source

LSAC: Parent survey (Q) *How often does your child use the internet at home to...? (daily, 3-4 times a week, 1-2 times a week, less than once a week, never)*

MCAF: Time-use diary - covers use at home and away from home (not including school-time)

N/A: comparable data was not collected.

Notes: Base samples for LSAC are the number of parent respondents per question. The LSAC study did not collect data on internet use by 3-4 year olds.

- Thirty-five per cent of 7–8s used the internet to play games at least weekly. Parents also reported that 33 per cent of 7–8s used a computer at home to do work for school at least weekly.
- Eight–11s mainly used the internet to play games (24 per cent reported playing games online in their three-day time-use diaries), and do homework (23 per cent).
- 12–14s mainly used the internet to do homework (45 per cent), and chat online (41 per cent).
- 15–17s mainly used the internet to do homework (48 per cent), chat online (48 per cent), and visit social websites (44 per cent).

Time spent using the computer and internet

Just as participation in individual internet activities increased with age, time spent using the computer and/or internet also increased for older children (Table 6).

Table 6: Average time spent using the computer/internet by young people, 2007

	LSAC	MCAF		
	3–4s (n=3,116 parents) Computer use	8–11s (n=431 children) Computer/ internet use	12–14s (n=337 children) Computer/ internet use	15–17s (n=225 children) Computer/ internet use
Participation	40%	61%	83%	88%
Average time per day (hours: mins)	0:07	0:30	1:32	2:24

Source:

LSAC: Parent survey (Q): *How much time in total does you child spend doing each of the following at home...Using a computer?*

MCAF: Three-day time use diaries - covers activities at home and away from home (not including school-time).

Computer/internet activities include: emailing, messaging/chatting, social websites/blogs, watching/listening to music/clips etc, homework on the internet/computer, online gaming vs other players, other things on the internet, other computer – not online/gaming/homework.

Note: Average time per day is calculated across the whole sample, including computer/internet users as well as non-users.

- Parents reported that 40 per cent of 3–4s used the computer at home for an average seven minutes per day.
- Eight–11s spent an average 30 minutes per day using the computer/internet over three diary days. This increased to an average one hour and 32 minutes per day for 12–14s, and an average 2 hours and 24 minutes per day for 15–17s.

VIDEO/COMPUTER GAMING

Use of electronic games

Table 7 shows participation and average time spent per day using electronic games by 3 to 4 and 8 to 17-year-olds.

Table 7: Use of electronic games by young people, 2007

	LSAC	MCAF		
	3–4s (n=3,116 parents)	8–11s (n=431-449 children)	12–14s (n=337-357 children)	15–17s (n=225-249 children)
Participation				
Electronic games systems (LSAC)	16%	53%	42%	33%
Console and handheld gaming (MCAF)				
Average time spent per day (hours: mins)	0:03	0:27	0:24	0:19

Source:

LSAC: Parent survey (Q): *How much time in total does your child spend doing each of the following at home? Playing with an electronic game system (such as Gameboy, Nintendo, Playstation, X-box)*

MCAF: Participation: Day 4 diary questionnaire; Average time spent: Three-day time-use diary

For MCAF average time spent per day includes time spent playing handheld + console + PC/computer games + mobile phone games + arcade games, and excludes time spent playing online games.

Note: Average time spent per day is calculated across the whole sample, including children and young people who did not participate in gaming activities.

- Electronic gaming held greatest appeal for 8–11s, and declined as children got older (53 per cent of 8–11s reported playing either handheld or console games over three diary days, compared with 42 per cent of 12–14s and 33 per cent of 15–17s).
- Eight–11s also spent more time playing video/computer games than older children (an average 27 minutes per day for 8–11s, compared with an average 24 minutes for 12–14s, and 19 minutes for 15–17s).
- Parents reported that 16 per cent of 3–4s used an electronic games system for an average of around 20 minutes per week (equating to three minutes per day).

MOBILE PHONES AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGIES

Use of electronic communications technologies including fixed-line and mobile phones, instant messaging, and email increased dramatically once children were of high school age (Table 8).

Table 8: Use of electronic communications by young people, 2007

	LSAC	MCAF		
	7–8s (n=2,987-3,094 parents) Children who did each activity at least weekly	8–11s (n=431 children) Young people who did each activity at all over the three diary days	12–14s (n=337 children) Young people who did each activity at all over the three diary days	15–17s (n=225 children) Young people who did each activity at all over the three diary days
A fixed-line phone (LSAC) Other phone – landline, internet phone etc (MCAF)	11%	15%	23%	31%
A mobile phone to call	2%	11%	42%	66%
A mobile phone to send/receive text messages (SMS)	1%	7%	45%	72%
Instant messaging on a mobile phone or computer (LSAC) IM on the computer (MCAF)	1%	10%	41%	48%
Email on a computer	2%	9%	25%	37%

Source:

LSAC: Parent survey (Q): *To communicate with friends, how often does your child use...? [Never, Less than once a week, 1-2 times a week, 3-4 times a week, Daily]*

MCAF: Three-day time use diaries (includes time spent at home and away from home excluding time spent at school)

Note: Base samples for LSAC are the number of parent respondents per question.

A minority of 7–8s used electronic communications to communicate with friends at least weekly (a high of 11 per cent used a fixed-line phone). Similarly, a small proportion of 8–11s reported using electronic communications over the three diary days (a high of 15 per cent reported using a landline/internet phone).

This compares to around 40 per cent of 12–14s using electronic communications services including mobile phones and instant messaging, and 72 per cent of 15–17s using a mobile phone to send/receive text messages.

There is evidence that young people’s preferences for particular communications services change as they grow older and gain greater access and competency with technologies such as mobile phones and the internet.

- Seven to eight-year-olds were more likely to communicate with friends using a fixed-line phone (11 per cent at least weekly), than using a mobile phone, email, or instant messaging (less than two per cent at least weekly).
- Eight–11s were also most likely to communicate using a landline (15 per cent reported using a landline/internet phone over three diary days).

- 12–14s preferred to SMS using a mobile phone (45 per cent), closely followed by making phone-calls on a mobile (42 per cent), and instant messaging on a computer (41 per cent).
- 15–17s showed a strong preference for using a mobile phone to communicate with others (72 per cent SMS, 66 per cent mobile voice calls). They were least likely to communicate using a landline phone (31 per cent).

Parent’s management of children’s media use

RULES ABOUT TELEVISION VIEWING

Table 9 shows the proportion of family homes with 3 to 4 and 8 to 17-year-olds, with rules about television content and timing.

Table 9: Rules about television viewing – content and timing, 2007

	LSAC	MCAF		
	3–4s (n=3,075-3,083 parents)	8–11s (n=334 parents)	12–14s (n=219 parents)	15–17s (n=198 parents)
Content rules	94%	55%	46%	25%
Timing rules	62%	87%	74%	50%

Source:

LSAC: Parent survey (Q) *Are there any rules about what television programs your child can watch? Are there any rules about how many hours of television your child can watch?*

MCAF: Parent survey (Q) *Are there any rules, understanding or arrangements in your family about WHAT TV programs your child watches, or WHEN he/she watches?*

Note: Base samples for LSAC are the number of parent respondents per question.

Rules about both television content and television timing were more often in place for younger children, and declined with age.

- The majority of parents of 3–4s (94 per cent) had rules about television content. Sixty-two per cent had rules about how much television their child could watch. In contrast, more parents of 8–17s had rules about when their child could watch television rather than rules about television content.

In the early 90s, mothers said they started controlling their child’s viewing from a young age. All mothers said they exercised some form of control over their child’s viewing by 10 months of age and by 30 months could list a range of methods they used. These included knowing what their child liked, switching off or changing channels, monitoring preferences, discouraging random viewing, and talking about the program during viewing.

Three-quarters (75 per cent) of the mothers in that study said they had specific rules about their child’s television or video viewing at 30 months of age (Australian Broadcasting Authority 1998)

MANAGING TELEVISION AND DVD VIEWING

The majority of parents in both studies (86-91 per cent) reported that it was fairly or very easy to manage their child's television and/or DVD viewing (Table 10).

Table 10: Ease/difficulty managing child's TV and DVD viewing, 2007

Level of ease or difficulty	LSAC		MCAF		
	3-4s (n=3,085 parents) TV & DVDs	7-8s (n=3,140 parents) TV & DVDs	8-11s (n=334 parents) TV	12-14s (n=218 parents) TV	15-17s (n=193 parents) TV
Very Difficult	1%	1%	2%	4%	4%
Fairly Difficult	9%	8%	12%	8%	10%
<i>Subtotal – Difficult</i>	10%	9%	14%	12%	14%
Fairly Easy	54%	48%	51%	55%	44%
Very Easy	36%	43%	35%	33%	43%
<i>Subtotal – Easy</i>	90%	91%	86%	88%	87%

Source

LSAC: Parent survey (Q): *How easy do you find managing your child's...? TV watching including videos and DVDs [Very easy, Fairly easy, Fairly difficult, Very difficult, Not applicable]*

MCAF: Parent survey (Q): *How easy or difficult do you find managing your child's TV watching? [Very easy, Fairly easy, Fairly difficult, or Very difficult]*

Notes: The LSAC base samples exclude NA and missing responses. Some columns may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding.

- More parents of 7-8s and 15-17s, found it very easy to manage their child's television viewing (43 per cent for both), than parents of 3-4s (36 per cent), 8-11s (35 per cent), and 12-14s (33 per cent).

FAMILY TELEVISION ENVIRONMENT

Table 11 shows television viewing practices in family households as reported by parents of children aged 3-4 and 8-17. Most families switched the television off when no one was watching programs.

Table 11: Television viewing environment in family households, 2007

LSAC: 3–4s (n= 3,099 parents)			MCAF <i>Which of the following statements best describes your household?</i>			
<i>How often is a TV on even if no one is watching?</i>				8–11s (n=334 parents)	12–14s (n=219 parents)	15–17s (n=195 parents)
Always	4%	19%	The TV is <u>usually</u> on whether or not someone is watching	12%	9%	13%
Often	15%					
Sometimes	29%		The TV is <u>sometimes</u> on even when no-one is watching	31%	35%	35%
Rarely	31%	53%	The TV is <u>only</u> on if someone is watching a particular program	57%	56%	51%
Never	22%					

Source:

LSAC: Parent survey

MCAF: Parent survey

- In both studies around half of parents (51–57 per cent) reported that the television is rarely/never or only switched on if someone is watching a particular program.
- Also in both studies around a third of parents reported that the television is sometimes on even when on-one is watching (29 per cent of family households with 3–4s, and 31–35 per cent of family households with 8–17s).
- It appears that the television was more likely to be always or often on in family households with 3–4s (19 per cent), than families with 8–17s (9-13 per cent).

MANAGING VIDEO/COMPUTER GAMING

The majority of parents in both studies (86–95 per cent) found it very or fairly easy to manage their child’s video/computer gaming (Table 12).

Table 12: Ease/difficulty managing child’s video game playing, 2007

Level of ease or difficulty	LSAC		MCAF		
	3–4s (n=1,653 parents)	7–8s (n=2,988 parents)	8–11s (n=315 parents)	12–14s (n=196 parents)	15–17s (n=153 parents)
Very Difficult	1%	1%	2%	2%	3%
Fairly Difficult	4%	6%	11%	12%	12%
<i>Subtotal - Difficult</i>	5%	7%	13%	14%	15%
Fairly Easy	31%	43%	47%	53%	40%
Very Easy	64%	49%	40%	33%	46%
<i>Subtotal - Easy</i>	95%	92%	87%	88%	86%

Source

LSAC: Parent survey (Q): *How easy do you find managing your child’s...? Electronic or computer game playing [Very easy, Fairly easy, Fairly difficult, Very difficult, Not applicable]*

MCAF: Parent survey (Q): *How easy or difficult do you find managing your child’s video/computer game playing? [Very easy, Fairly easy, Fairly difficult, or Very difficult]*

Notes: The LSAC base samples exclude NA and missing responses. Some columns may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding.

- Difficulty with managing gaming increased with the child’s age from 5 per cent of parents with children aged 3–4 and 7 per cent with children aged 7–8, to 13–15 per cent of parents of 8–17s experiencing some difficulty.

MANAGING INTERNET USE

Ease or difficulty for parents in managing their child’s internet use was strongly associated with their child’s age, with more parents having difficulty managing teenager’s internet use.

Table 13: Ease/difficulty managing child’s internet use, 2007

Level of ease or difficulty	LSAC		MCAF	
	7–8s (n=2,397 parents)	8–11s (n=291 parents)	12–14s (n=201 parents)	15–17s (n=187 parents)
Very Difficult	<1%	2%	3%	5%
Fairly Difficult	2%	7%	19%	19%
<i>Subtotal - Difficult</i>	3%	9%	22%	24%
Fairly Easy	28%	42%	56%	41%
Very Easy	69%	50%	22%	35%
<i>Subtotal - Easy</i>	97%	92%	78%	76%

Source

LSAC: Parent survey (Q): *How easy do you find managing your child’s...? Use of the internet [Very easy, Fairly easy, Fairly difficult, Very difficult, Not applicable]*

MCAF: Parent survey (Q): *How easy or difficult do you find managing your child’s use of the internet? [Very easy, Fairly easy, Fairly difficult, or Very difficult]*

Notes: The LSAC base sample excludes NA and missing responses. Some columns may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding.

- The majority of parents of younger children found it easy to manage their child's internet use (97 per cent of parents of 7–8s including 69 per cent very easy; 92 per cent of parents of 8–11s including 50 per cent very easy).
- Twenty-two per cent of parents of 12–14s and 24 per cent of parents of 15–17s found it very or fairly difficult to manage their child's internet use.

MANAGING MOBILE PHONE USE

As with the internet, more parents of 12–17s experienced difficulty in managing their child's mobile phone use (Table 14).

Table 14: Ease/difficulty managing child's mobile phone use, 2007

	LSAC	MCAF		
Level of ease or difficulty	7–8s (n=1382 parents)	8–11s (n=89 parents)	12–14s (n=173 parents)	15–17s (n=175 parents)
Very Difficult	<1%	1%	6%	5%
Fairly Difficult	1%	5%	16%	19%
<i>Subtotal - Difficult</i>	2%	6%	22%	24%
Fairly Easy	10%	32%	48%	37%
Very Easy	89%	63%	31%	39%
<i>Subtotal - Easy</i>	99%	95%	79%	76%

Source

LSAC: Parent survey (Q) *How easy do you find managing your child's...? Use of the mobile phone [Very easy, Fairly easy, Fairly difficult, Very difficult, Not applicable]*

MCAF: Parent survey (Q): *How easy or difficult do you find managing your child's use of the mobile phone? [Very easy, Fairly easy, Fairly difficult, or Very difficult]*

Notes: The LSAC base sample excludes NA and missing responses. Some columns may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding.

- Ninety-nine per cent of parents of 7–8s, and 95 per cent of parents of 8–11s found it easy to manage their child's mobile use. This declined to 79 per cent of parents of 12–14s, and 76 per cent of parents of 15–17s finding it easy to manage.

PARENT'S VIEWS ON CHILDREN'S MEDIA ACTIVITIES

Table 15 shows parents' views about their child's level of involvement in media activities.

Table 15: Parents views on balance achieved by children re: media use, 2007

	LSAC		MCAF		
	3-4s (n=3,071 parents)	7-8s (n=3,144 parents)	8-11s (n=334 parents)	12-14s (n=218 parents)	15-17s (n=197 parents)
LSAC: <i>I'd like my child to maintain the current balance he/she has</i> MCAF - I'd like my child to maintain the balance s/he has between media and communications use and other activities	68%	74%	73%	67%	63%
LSAC: <i>It wouldn't bother me if my child spent more time on these</i> MCAF - It wouldn't bother me if my child was more involved in electronic media activities than he/she currently is	4%	4%	12%	7%	8%
LSAC: <i>I wish my child spent less time</i> MCAF: I wish my child was less involved in electronic media and communications activities than he/she currently is	27%	22%	16%	27%	29%

Source:

LSAC: Parent survey: Q: *Which of the following best describes your view about how much time your child spends watching television, videos and DVDs or playing computer games?*

MCAF: Parent survey: Q: *Thinking broadly about your child's use of electronic media and communications in general – which statement best describes your view?*

- The majority of parents in both studies (63–74 per cent) were happy with their child's level of involvement in media activities.
- It appears that more parents of 7–8s (74 per cent) and 8–11s (73 per cent) were happy with their child's media involvement, than parents of 3–4s (69 per cent), 12–14s (67 per cent), and 15–17s (63 per cent).
- More parents of 3–4 year olds (27 per cent) and parents of teenagers (27 per cent of parents of 12–14s, 29 per cent of 15–17s) would prefer their child to be less involved in media activities.
- A small minority of parents in both studies would be happy for their child to be more involved in media activities. Fewer parents of 3–4s and 7–8s (4 per cent) expressed the desire for more involvement, compared with parents of 8–11s (12 per cent), 12–14s (7 per cent) and 15–17s (8 per cent).

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