

# Increased Screen Time for Children and Teens Is Likely Here to Stay

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**T**he screen-time wars are over in many households, with parents having surrendered en masse. In a period when large numbers of parents and school kids are stuck at home with one another, this is one battle many parents choose to forego, at least for now.

Many parents feel incapable of doing otherwise. That came across in August–September polling fielded by OnePoll for Smith Micro Software. About seven in 10 parents of school-age kids declared themselves “helpless” to keep screen time in check “since they need to be online for school and their other options for entertainment and socialization are more limited than usual.” That dovetails with a Harris Poll survey in August for NortonLifeLock where nearly seven in 10 parents of 5-to-17s said their kids’ screen time had increased, and 60% felt they “have no choice but to allow it.”

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**Coronavirus Impact: Attitudes of US Parents About Their Child's/Teen's Screen Time, Aug 2020**

*% of respondents*

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**69%** of parents agree their child's screen time has increased during the pandemic

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**60%** feel they have no choice but to allow it

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**58%** feel guilty about the time their child spends online

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**49%** have had to abandon rules for screen time

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*Note: parents of children ages 5-17*

*Source: NortonLifeLock as cited in press release, Aug 31, 2020*

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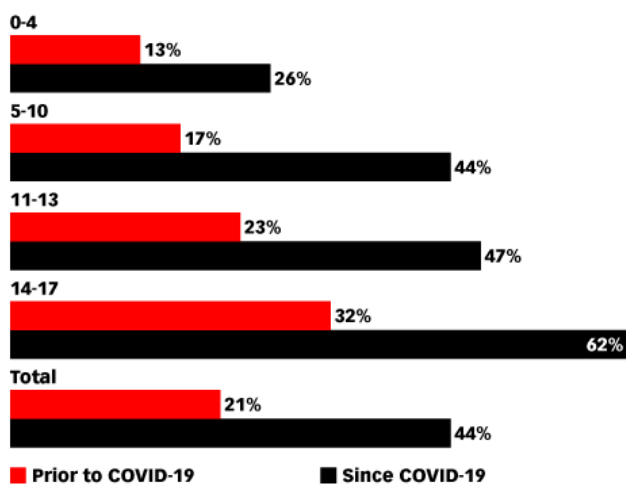
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Kids have taken full advantage of the new dispensation, and their increase in screen time has continued along with the pandemic. In a May survey by Roblox among 13-to-18s who followed the gaming platform on Twitter, 44% said they “get more screen time because my parents don’t care as much.” NortonLifeLock’s polling found 5-to-17s averaging an extra 1.5 hours of screen time a day on school days, not counting usage for school. A May survey for the 4-H Council by Harris Poll found 13-to-19s confessing (or boasting) that they spent three-quarters of their waking hours using screens.

Indeed, one effect of the pandemic has been to make common what would previously have stood out as extreme amounts of screen time. Morning Consult’s polling gives a telling example. Pre-pandemic, 60% of parents said their kids spent 3 hours or less per day with screens. In the August polling, by contrast, 70% said their kids were spending at least 4 hours a day at it. May–June polling of parents by Ipsos for the Global Myopia Awareness Coalition (GMAC) traced a roughly similar pattern. The proportion of 5-to-10s and 11-to-13s using electronic devices for more than 4 hours a day had more than doubled. Among 14-to-17s, the figure had nearly doubled and encompassed a large majority.

**US Children/Teens Who Have Spent More than Four Hours Daily Using Electronics Devices Before vs. During the Coronavirus Pandemic, by Age, June 2020**

% of respondents in each group



Note: devices such as tablet, smartphones, etc.; according to their parents  
Source: Ipsos and The Global Myopia Awareness Coalition (GMAC), July 8, 2020

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Will screen time recede post-pandemic? Unlikely. For better or worse, many parents have made their peace with a larger amount of screen usage by their kids. Asked in Morning Consult’s August polling whether they planned to adjust screen-time rules after the pandemic “is under control and stay-at-home orders have ended,” far fewer than half of parents said they planned to allow less screen time—38% of those with 5-to-12s and 29% of those with 13-to-17s. For many parents, this reflects a shift in attitude due to what they’ve seen during the pandemic. Forty percent agreed that they have come to view their kids’ usage of technology and devices more positively, while just 10% said they viewed it more negatively.

To learn more about how children and teens—and their parents—are experiencing the benefits and shortcomings of this digital surge, eMarketer PRO subscribers can read our recent report:

**Report** by Mark Dolliver Oct 28, 2020

## US School Kids 2020

### US SCHOOL KIDS 2020

How These Digital Natives Experience the Benefits and Shortcomings of Digital in a Period of Pandemic

October 2020  
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