



PARENTS IN CANADA ARE WORRIED THEIR CHILDREN SPEND TOO MUCH TIME WITH DIGITAL DEVICES

Source: eMarketer

Date: 10/30/2019

New research from the Angus Reid Institute shows that parents in Canada are worried about the potential addictiveness of digital devices.

The nature of kids' screen time has change dramatically since the heyday of Sesame Street and Mister Rogers' Neighborhood, and today's screen universe is ever-expanding, presenting parents with new challenges of limiting consumption and monitoring content.

According to the September 2019 study by Angus Reid, a Vancouver-based public opinion research foundation, almost half (46%) of parents polled were concerned their kids spend too much time with screens daily, though most parents (89%) acknowledged that devices can be valuable educational tools for children.

When asked to estimate their child's total screen time on a typical day, only 13% of parents reported less than an hour of daily screen time for their kids on weekdays, of which 3% precluded screen time altogether. On the opposite end of the spectrum, 22% reported more than 4 hours of daily screen time. The poll of parents in Canada was conducted in March 2019.

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How Would Parent Internet Users in Canada Estimate Their Child's Total Screen Time* On a Typical Weekday? (% of respondents, by age, March 2019)

Children's screen time is a heavy focus in Canada. The Canadian Pediatric Society (CPS) issues guidelines relating to screen time for children, and in its latest report from two years ago, it stated that 85% of kids are spending too much time with TV and digital content. It recommended zero screen time for children under 2, a maximum of 1 hour daily for children ages 2 to 5, and a 2-hour daily limit for those older than 5.

Tablets make up a big part of children's digital consumption. February 2019 data from Media Technology Monitor (MTM) suggested that tablets are second only to TV as the preferred device for accessing content: 34% of parents said tablets were preferred by kids ages 2 to 6, and 33% said the same for kids ages 7 to 11.

Which Device Do Children in Canada Prefer to Use When They Have Screen Time for Accessing Content? (% of respondents, by age, Feb 2019)

Smartphones are also an increasing option, especially as kids get access to phones of their own earlier in

life. According to MTM, 24% of kids ages 7 to 11 had their own phone, while 10% of kids ages 2 to 6 had one.

Also worrisome are the ads children are exposed to on various screens. To enhance self-regulation for digital advertisers and publishers, IAB Canada, with assistance from the IAB Tech Lab, developed an ad tech solution in 2018 that lets publishers send signals through the advertising supply chain regarding risk of exposure to younger audiences. The goal is to prevent unhealthy food and beverage advertising from reaching children under 13, which is the focus of Canadian legislation governing ad practices with children.

“We created a framework that would allow publishers to signal whether or not their audience composition was at a certain risk level of having too many children,” said Sonia Carreno, president of IAB Canada. IAB Canada has educated Health Canada on the vagaries of online ads and exposure to kids.

“As a media planner, armed with appropriate industry policy guidelines (like Ad Standards Canada), you could technically flick a switch in your control to prompt a workaround. You can still advertise, but it would be in select places that are not flagged as being high risk for children’s exposure,” she said.