Living and learning in a digital world

The complete snapshot of how children are living and growing with technology.

A full view of digital trends and usage in 2021 globally and across three major markets, including screen time, social media, and gaming, paired with how children are learning and developing in a rapidly changing environment.
Three years ago, we released our first annual report looking into children’s digital habits, offering insights into their app activity across 2019. Shortly after, when the coronavirus pandemic began to alter technology habits across the globe, we released the direct, immediate effects it was having on children’s app habits across the first few months of 2020.

Our 2021 report follows in the footsteps of our second annual report, where we analyzed children’s habits globally, and in three major markets (the US, the United Kingdom, and Spain) across 2020. These reports investigate children’s use of technology across five popular categories—online video, social media, gaming, education, and communication apps. In each category, we present graphs and information detailing the most popular apps based on the percentage of children using them, the time spent on kids’ most popular apps, the time spent per app category overall, and the apps that parents most frequently blocked in 2021.

In this year’s report, we have directly involved children and families in our research, through surveys and interviews that allow them to share their unique perspective on technology and family life. These insights, combined with our own app research, allow us a window into how families are facing the rapid development of technology and how it fits into many aspects of their lives, from hobbies to education.

This report offers a snapshot of the digital world, through younger, fresher eyes. In addition to children’s daily habits, we’ll explore how technology is becoming an indispensable tool in education, bringing the classroom online and ever-present, even when school’s out for the day. Through the insights gained, we’ll develop a further understanding of what it means to grow up with technology, so we can reap its benefits and enjoy the true positives for many years to come.

About Qustodio

Founded in 2012 by cyber–security experts Eduardo Cruz, Josep Gaspar, and Josh Gabel, Qustodio is the world leader in online safety and digital wellbeing for families. We believe everyone has the right to a safe and secure digital experience, and provide a cross-platform solution for families and schools, helping parents and educators protect their children from online harm, while promoting healthy digital habits and awareness. As technology lovers, we’ve made it our mission to help families and schools live and navigate smarter in an increasingly connected world.
Introduction

If 2020 was a year of change, then 2021 was the year the world accepted, and adapted as a result. We adapted to meetings held over Zoom. We adapted to dance classes, cooking courses and gardening tips through a screen. We adapted to the constant buzz of an update in our pockets, and as time passed, we adapted to ignoring them, beginning to understand the toll that being constantly connected was taking on our daily lives.

Screen time, which global trends were already showing to be on the rise during 2019, suddenly hit an all-time high, skyrocketing to unprecedented levels as we lived and breathed the online world: work, studying, classes and lectures, checking on our families and friends, and even exercise went digital for months at a time. With many parents working from home, screens became the only way to keep children entertained for hours at a time. But with lockdowns easing over the world, the words “new normal” began to creep into our daily lives.

WHAT DID THE “NEW NORMAL” MEAN FOR 2021?

For some, it was back to school, back to work - with a few small changes. But for many others, the extended time in front of screens stuck. Children could be back in school for one week, then distance learning the next. Companies around the world went fully remote, or switched to hybrid approaches, with employees working from home much of the time. Children and adults alike hopped from screen to screen, closing the laptop at 3pm to be met with a space once filled with after-school activities or the daily commute, and instead switching on the video game console, scrolling social media, or turning on the TV simply because there was nothing else to do.

The long-term effects of our reliance on technology and screens are still unknown, and the pandemic’s influence on Generation Z and Alpha, the youngest generations during coronavirus times, will not fully be seen for years to come. However, through the millions of families using Qustodio, we are able to see first-hand the effect this new fully digital lifestyle is having, and the risks that children are being exposed to as a result of excessive screen time. Throughout this report, we’ve brought these voices to life by including select insights from our interviews with children around the world, which serve to help us understand how kids use technology in 2021, and their true feelings surrounding it.

“When they tell me to get off, I think it’s not fair because they’re on their electronics more than us.”
- Boy, 10, US
Methodology

This report is based on anonymous information provided by 400,000 families with children aged 4–18 years old from around the world, along with deeper insights from children in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Spain. It reveals their online app habits from January 1, 2021, to December 31, 2021, compared with information from the same period across 2020. This year we have included additional insights from applications used on desktop computers, the use of which becomes more relevant as children mature and the need for more productivity-based devices increases. When analyzing time spent online during school hours, we based our exploration on the typical school day in each country: 8am to 3pm in the US, 9am to 3pm in the UK, and 9am to 5pm in Spain.

In order to better understand how families view and use technology in their daily lives, we surveyed 1200 parents across the US, UK, and Spain. In addition, our report includes individual insights from 121 children aged 10–13 representing the same three countries, who we interviewed to share their unique understanding of their digital lives and online experiences. We would like to extend our gratitude to the many families and children who helped contribute to this report.

To further explore children’s online habits, we have divided the insights across five popular app categories: online video, social media, gaming, education, and communication. Some types of application are frequent multi-taskers, easily fitting into more than one category. For the sake of simplicity, we have chosen just one category per app. For example, while YouTube allows users to comment and encourages social sharing, we have classified it as online video, along with other live video streaming services such as Twitch. For education apps, in terms of popularity, we divided the category into two sub-categories: classroom management apps like Google Classroom and Show My Homework, and learning apps, such as Duolingo and Khan Academy.

To provide a better picture of the specific apps and websites kids are using, our research also excludes “game launchers” such as Epic Games Launcher and Steam, email platforms like Gmail or native phone apps like Phone. In addition, our insights exclude gambling apps as a whole.
As a reflection of our increasingly connected world, most households now make use of multiple devices. In our survey, which investigated how technology forms a part of children’s daily lives in the US, UK, and Spain, along with their parents’ viewpoints on tech usage, we found that 47% of children are regularly using 3 or more devices, and 75% use at least 2 different digital devices on a daily basis. Parents report that their children spend most time connected to their cell phones, with 62% of kids aged between 5 and 15 having their own phone. 58% of children regularly use a tablet, closely followed by gaming consoles, with 56% of parents responding that their children used one on a daily basis.
Globally, children are frequently spending time online outside of school hours, with 38% of kids aged 5–15 spending between 1–2 hours a day connected, and 31% spending over 2 hours online every day. Unsurprisingly, time spent online rises over the weekend, with 53% of children connecting for over 2 hours a day. Children in the UK and US spend more time online than their Spanish counterparts - 58% of UK kids and 57% of children in the US spend over 2 hours online at the weekend, compared to just 44% of kids in Spain.

Despite the fact that their children are the least “connected” of the three countries, parents in Spain are more concerned about the amount of time their children are spending on devices: up to two-thirds of Spanish parents (66%) affirmed that they are very or extremely concerned, compared to just 18% of British parents, and 29% in the US. Children themselves are also recognizing the increased time they are spending online: 23% of the children we interviewed, the majority of them Spanish, felt that they now spent too much time using technology.

Most parents notice the effect of technology on their children and their behavior, but acknowledge that along with the bad, comes the good: 64% of parents assert that technology has both positive and negative impacts on their children, compared to just 12% observing only negative effects, and a slightly higher 15% of parents noticing only positive.

![Level of parent concern surrounding device usage](image-url)
Faced with hyper-connectivity, and little downtime away from screens, parents use many different strategies to help their children create the appropriate on-offline balance. 80% of the families surveyed asserted that they used some form of supervision or limitation over their child’s technology use. Again, Spanish parents displayed an increased level of concern, with 87% reporting that they supervise or limit their child’s time online. Most families choose to limit the time their kids spend surfing the internet (46%), or playing video games (52%). However, a significant amount of families (46%) use a parental control tool or content filter to help their children manage their device use, with an additional 39% choosing to review their child’s browsing history, and 31% accessing their child’s accounts and messages.

“I think it’s really good my parents supervise me because then I won’t be on my phone all day. You’ve got to do other things, like school stuff or playing with your friends. You shouldn’t be on it all day.”

- Girl, 10, Spain
Most children also assert that their parents supervise them in some way when they use technology. In our interviews with children from the US, UK, and Spain, **82% of kids stated that their parents supervised or limited their use of technology.** In response to how this made them feel, most children in the UK and US were reluctant about being supervised, feeling that their privacy was being invaded in some form. In contrast, most Spanish children felt that supervision was a positive reaction to screen time: helping them navigate and manage their time online better.

“\[I don’t really like being supervised much because I’m old enough now, I should be able to go on what I want, when I want. But I get that it’s worrying for parents, I understand how it would be scary being a parent, because there’s so much stuff on the internet.\]”

- Girl, 13, UK
The rapid, unanticipated switch to remote learning for many children around the world changed the face of education forever. Educators had to quickly adapt to new methods that would help them reach students, keep them engaged, and promote learning, even while they were no longer physically in the classroom. While in 2021, children were largely back to their desks, this varied both from country to country, and school to school, with many still opting for distance learning.

Technology has now become associated with “virtual” in the learning environment, but as children return to the classroom, technology is securing its position as an integral tool for educators, students, and parents at home. Artificial intelligence, big data, analytics and data processing, and digital wellbeing tools are just some of the ways in which educators are becoming increasingly tech-centered. However, this transformation is dependent on many factors: the availability of technology, a fast internet connection, and educator training, to name but a few.

In the countries we analyzed in our report, this gap in technology use in education was apparent: in Spain, over 40% of parents shared that their children did not use electronic devices in class, as part of their education, compared to 29% of kids in the UK, and just 14% of children in the US. The majority of children in the US were provided with their own school device (60%), while in Spain and the UK, under 50% of children were given access to a device they could take home from school.
As our world becomes increasingly reliant on technology, the classroom will have to adapt in order to help children enhance their learning and encourage them to become model digital citizens. While technology played less of a role in the classroom in Spain and the UK across 2021 than it did in the US, parents showed an overwhelmingly positive approach to the role of technology in learning, with 75% of Spanish parents and 82% of UK parents asserting that technology helps their child learn better.

"Everything is easily accessible. I can search for certain topics and go into different screens to help me understand and learn more about it. I don’t need to go somewhere like my mother did, to a library or school to use theirs."
- Girl, 13, US

"Technology and the internet helps me with my schoolwork. It saves money, it saves my time, I can get effective learning, it is interactive, I get quality education, and I can reach global knowledge."
- Boy, 13, UK
For decades, from the Sega Megadrive to AOL Messenger, technology has played a huge part in kids’ lives around the world, with each new development providing its very own set of never-before-faced dangers for adults and children alike. Generation Z and Alpha, in contrast, are the first generations to be born into a time where technology isn’t limited to the invention of a new video game console: most families have access to multiple devices, an ultra-fast internet connection, and a smartphone that places the whole world at their fingertips.

It may be a while before we see the true effects of increased screen time, exacerbated all the more by the global pandemic and lockdowns that forced us to rely on screens and technology more than we normally would have done. However, some of the associated risks are already becoming apparent in children: mental health is being affected, with a decrease in psychological wellbeing, including increased anxiety and depression, and children’s physical health is also a concern, with issues raised over eye strain and lack of physical activity. Among the families who contributed to this report, 76% acknowledged that regular device use negatively affected their child in some way.

Reports are beginning to show that increased time spent on devices, particularly when children are allowed to spend unsupervised time online, puts kids at higher risk of being exposed to harmful and inappropriate content, increases the risk of cyberbullying, and leaves children more vulnerable to online predation. In turn, children themselves are increasingly becoming more aware of the risks associated with the time they spend online.

“I don’t like that people can hurt others online, bullying or just getting children to get out of their homes and into danger. I don’t like that everybody is easily accessed online.”

- Girl, 13, US
When asked about their likes and dislikes surrounding technology, and the risks that the internet could pose, the children aged 10-13 we included in our interviews spoke about a range of problems they could come across, from fake news to spending too much money on in-app purchases. The most common worries children expressed are outlined in the table below.

**HOW CHILDREN PERCEIVE ONLINE RISK**

Some risks kids like me have are creepers, inappropriate videos, and predators. There are good things like games and stuff. But there's a lot of bad things on the internet. That's why mom keeps an eye on me when I'm playing or watching stuff.

— Boy, 10, US
As the world becomes more aware of the risks and dangers technology can bring, the benefits it offers are being pushed further and further to the side in the discussion. Generation Z and Alpha are now reaping the benefits of better and improved communication, increased access to knowledge and learning, and development of new skills associated with technology and the internet. Of the 121 children we interviewed, the most popular interests they spoke about did not vary from country to country, with watching videos, socializing, and playing video games making every top 3.

While many parents are worried about the long-term effects of technology, they are also able to recognize its varied benefits for their children: 79% of parents reported that they had seen positive effects related to regular device and internet usage. Largely, parents welcomed the use of technology in the classroom, with 73% asserting that they felt their child’s current device use at school was appropriate, compared to just 16% who believed technology should be restricted more. An additional 11% of parents noted that they would prefer their children to use devices more frequently as part of their education. Overall, response to technology as a learning tool was positive, with 79% of parents stating that technology helped their child with their learning.

**Kids’ most popular online activities**

- Watching videos
- Socializing with friends
- Playing video games
- Listening to music
- Using social media
- Learning and exploring interests

*US, UK, Spain

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“**What I like most is chatting to my friends, looking for information, playing video games, and watching videos that help me learn to cook and learn languages.**”

- Girl, 11, Spain
I like that you can talk and connect with people who are far away. I have a friend who’s like a brother to me, and I talk to him every day.

- Boy, 12, Spain

Technology helps me with homework. I learned my times tables with a super cool video and I got great grades.

- Boy, 10, Spain
On average, children totalled 4 hours of screen time a day on the apps they used.

Kids spent 62% more time on TikTok than YouTube, watching TikTok for 35 mins/day longer on average.

Roblox rose by over 20% in popularity, with 56% of kids playing the game worldwide.

Children increased their time on Snapchat by 82%, closing the year at an average of 71 mins/day spent on the app.

Kids invested extra time in more diverse online video apps, spending 46 mins/day on anime streaming platform Crunchyroll.

Children spent 28% more time on communication apps than in 2020 - the biggest increase over all app categories.

Time kids spent on subscription-based learning app IXL rose by 46% across 2021.

Time on online video decreased by 16%, dropping even further in Spain, where kids spent 26% less time streaming.

In the UK, children spent an extra 32 minutes on TikTok this year, increasing their time on the app by 46%.

In both the US and UK, children increased the time they spent on educational apps by 14%.
As online video platforms pushed content spending to record heights of $220 billion globally, 2021 was yet another year where the streaming wars were in full swing, as both key players and niche subscription platforms invested heavily in original content to satisfy an ever-hungry audience. For the ever-competitive streaming sector, one of the many secrets to growth lies behind capturing young eyes: Disney Plus, launched only two years ago, experienced astronomical growth across 2021, finishing the year with 118.1 million subscribers worldwide.

In 2021, the time kids spent streaming online video content dipped by 16%, with the 60-minute highs of the 2020 lockdowns vanishing from view. While children spent less time on old favorites YouTube and Twitch, they were happy to invest extra minutes elsewhere. For children in a world more connected than ever before, another key factor in securing loyal viewers and subscribers is investing in a diverse content library. This interest in global content is reflected in some of the once-niche streaming services children are now using: time spent using anime streaming platform Crunchyroll (46 mins/day) and Asian drama platform Rakuten Viki (48 mins/day) increased across 2021.
In terms of global and regional popularity, YouTube remains the go-to online video platform for children, claiming the top spot internationally, with 60% of kids using the service—down from 67% in 2020. Netflix remained relatively stable in terms of popularity, keeping its second place position with 32% of kids using the service. Reflecting its meteoric rise in subscribers worldwide, Disney Plus increased in popularity this year to claim third place position (20%).

While Twitch fell from third position to fourth in 2021 globally, more children used the platform to tune in to their favorite livestreamers, as the app increased in popularity by 2%, up to 16%. Children in Spain proved to be Twitch’s biggest fans (24% of kids), while also being the most devoted users of both YouTube and Netflix, with 73% and 37% of kids consuming content on the platforms respectively.
On a global level, YouTube was the monarch of online content for yet another year, engaging kids worldwide for 61 mins/day. Despite claiming the top spot, overall kids spent 13% less time on YouTube than they did in 2020, while in Spain, viewership fell by 26%, down 10 mins/day from 38 to 28.

Despite climbing to new heights in 2021, with 2.84 million global users and 9 million livestreamers worldwide, our analysis showed that children spent less time on Twitch throughout the year, with children spending 7 mins/day less using the service than they did in 2020. Amazon Prime Video also experienced a slight decline globally, down 9% in 2021 from 44 mins/day to 40 mins/day.

The only streaming platforms in the top 5 to experience global growth were Disney Plus, up 2% from 46 mins/day to 47 mins/day, and Netflix, up 18% overall from 38 mins/day to 45 mins/day. In the US, this increase in numbers for Netflix intensified, with children spending 32% longer on Netflix (37 mins/day to 49). Conversely, in Spain, the upward trend reversed for Disney Plus, with streaming on the platform decreasing by 15%, down 7 mins/day from 48 to 41.

Compared to 2020, where children spent a large chunk of their day streaming content in the earlier months of the year due to stay-at-home orders and lockdowns, daily time spent on online video largely stabilized across 2021. Average daily levels decreased overall, with the biggest changes in the US and Spain, where children reduced their streaming screen time by 13% and 26% respectively. Daily streaming levels rose gradually during the summer months in the countries we explored, but peaked at the end of the year, with children in the US tuning in for 51 mins/day in December.
Time kids spent on the most popular online video apps (avg. mins/day)

**Global**
1. YouTube 56 64 48
2. YouTube 47 46 28
3. Netflix 45 38 35
4. Amazon Prime 40 44 NA
5. Hulu 38 36 15
6. Twitch 20 27 35

**US**
1. YouTube 61 71 63
2. Netflix 49 37 50
3. Disney Plus 48 48 NA
4. Hulu 38 36 42
5. Amazon Prime 42 45 NA
6. Twitch 20 24 16

**UK**
1. YouTube 53 59 58
2. Disney Plus 46 44 NA
3. Netflix 41 40 27
4. Netflix 41 40 27
5. Amazon Prime 38 46 NA
6. Twitch 16 28 12

**Spain**
1. Amazon Prime 47 59 33
2. YouTube 41 54 46
3. Netflix 41 41 42
4. Disney Plus 41 48 NA
5. Movistar+ 21 33 31
6. Twitch 20 35 16

Time kids spent on online video apps in general (avg. mins/day)

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**2021**

**2020**
The most blocked streaming services in 2021 remained largely the same as those blocked by parents in 2020, with only one newcomer, Hulu, replacing Amazon Prime Video. YouTube remained the most popular blocking option for families, both globally and in every country analyzed, reflecting its top position in the popularity charts for kids.

As in the global rankings for 2020, Netflix and Twitch were the second and third most blocked services, with parents in every country making the same decision for 2021. Despite not appearing in the popularity charts, YouTube Kids remained on the block list, perhaps as a result of children spending 79 mins/day on the platform.
What we expect

The age of streaming has arrived, and with it, access to on-demand content has quickly become the norm. We expect the hunger for global content to grow, for adults and children alike, encouraging streaming platforms to continue diversifying their international libraries.

Tricks to capture these young eyes are already being employed across some of the streaming platform apps. In 2021, Netflix tested a TikTok style feed for kids, displaying child-friendly content in a short clip format, which allows users to save the featured show to their watch list. Kidoodle.TV and Sling TV are just two of the many streaming services now publishing only kid-friendly content in an attempt to attract new subscribers.

As a result of the rising demand for family entertainment, we expect to see more shows aimed at kids - particularly younger children - become more accessible across all streaming services.

With parents reporting that their children more frequently tune in to streaming services rather than conventional TV, the online video giants will no doubt begin to focus heavily on family-friendly content. After all, the family that's entertained together, subscribes together.

In the future of streaming services, capturing kids’ attention and their loyalties before they’re directed elsewhere will be the first foot over the finish line. As online streaming and live streaming become more geared towards younger subscribers, time spent on streaming services will continue to replace time in front of more “conventional” TV as we know it. While kids’ content was once a bonus for adult subscribers, as a means to keep their children entertained, it’s now a key driver for streaming services to gain new users of all ages.
As time spent on streaming services becomes more prevalent, as opposed to watching TV in the more “traditional” sense, it’s important for parents to pay attention to the quality of content being consumed, rather than the quantity. Through increased access to unlimited, on-demand content, kids may be exposed to violent or sexual content, which can cause harm to developing minds.

There’s no magic answer for how long children should spend streaming series and movies, as so much depends on how old the child is, their emotional maturity, and how they are able to balance school life with their personal use of technology. For children of all ages, co-watching is an essential tool for families, allowing parents to understand the type of content their kids enjoy, and to bond as a family through shared interests. Co-watching is the ideal, but it isn’t always possible – and for parents of older children, they may value a certain level of freedom to consume the series and movies they choose.

To help limit exposure to inappropriate, inaccurate, and dangerous content, many streaming services now offer native parental control features. These features can often be minimal and vary heavily from service to service, making it hard for parents to use them correctly – and making it easier for harmful content to slip through the cracks. For restrictions that help keep children safe and entertained, we recommend **teaming native parental controls with some co-watching, and an independent parental control tool**, to help manage overall screen time and block access to inappropriate apps.

> Everything is at your fingertips, you can watch videos, learn to cook, watch movies, you can travel the world, read books, and you can do everything on technology.
> - Girl, 11, US

> What I like about technology is social media, and Netflix and Disney Plus. Because basically, you disconnect from everything – you sit and watch videos or watch a movie on Netflix, and that’s it.
> - Girl, 13, Spain
When it comes to livestream video apps, such as Twitch, there is little limit as to what children can come across when engaging on the platform.

### Risks livestreaming can expose children to
- Bad language
- Inappropriate comments
- Hackers
- Scammers

Blocking apps and streaming services where little control can be administered over the content is one option parents have to help keep children away from risky livestreams.

Finally, working to encourage intentional viewing is something that both adults and children should strive for. Parents can disable autoplay and set limits on streaming apps to discourage the endless scroll and the automatic transition from one video to the next.

The ideal setup varies from family to family, but overall, promoting video and movie time as a family activity can be a great way to help kids manage the time they spend streaming.
If TikTok rose in popularity across 2019 and 2020, through dance routines that kept us entertained during lockdown, and endless duets of sea shanties, then 2021 was the year it soared. Climbing to 1 billion monthly users worldwide by September, it secured itself as the third most popular social media platform worldwide, beaten only by the new “metaverse” of Facebook and Instagram. For children, however, TikTok was champion: it topped the global charts in our research in terms of both popularity and time spent on the app, with TikTok alone experiencing a 139% increase in screen time from 2019.

Of all the app categories we examined, social media experienced the second highest growth, with time spent on social media apps increasing by 11% in 2021. Due to the notification-fuelled nature of social media, it also proved to be one of the most difficult categories for children to switch off from. Across the day, over 50% of the time they devoted to social media was spent during school hours.
TikTok reigned supreme as children’s most popular social media platform in all the countries we explored in our report: 41% of kids used the app globally, while country-by-country, Spanish children were the biggest fans of TikTok, at 57%, followed by the UK at 48%, and finally the US, at 40%.

Last year’s global second place, Facebook, held its position for another year in 2021, with just a slight dip in popularity, from 39% to 37%. Snapchat, on the other hand, rose in popularity across 2021, claiming the bronze medal with 33% of kids using the platform. Largely, the social media giants of the Metaverse – Instagram and Facebook – along with TikTok, Snapchat, and Pinterest, dominated the top 5 in every country, with only subtle changes in popularity.

Sometimes kids can get too addicted to technology and it takes away from our personal and social life. There are also people that look to be toxic online and ruin your experience.

– Boy, 13, US

People can say offensive things about you and you wouldn’t even know about it. Also people can lie about their age and trick you to do things.

– Boy, 11, UK

THE MOST POPULAR SOCIAL MEDIA APPS
Just as TikTok was the most popular social media app for kids around the world, it was also where they devoted the most time, spending 21% more time on the app (91 mins/day) than they did in 2020. Despite TikTok’s popularity in Spain, where 57% of kids used the platform, Spanish children spent the least amount of time connected, at 80 mins/day, compared to 102 mins/day in the UK and 98 mins/day in the US. Kids in the UK devoted the most time to TikTok, increasing their scroll time by a full 32 mins/day, up 46% from 2020. Of all the social media platforms, Snapchat experienced the biggest growth, with children spending an extra 32 mins/day on the app, up 82% from 2020. Once again, children in the UK stood at the forefront, spending 110% more time on Snapchat, from 39 mins/day in 2020 to 82 mins/day in 2021. While Instagram and Facebook showed little change in terms of popularity, children spent slightly less time scrolling their Instagram feed in 2021 (41 mins/day compared to 44 in 2020), and nearly halved their time on Facebook, spending 42% less time overall on the platform.

Despite not making the popularity rankings, kids spent the second-longest amount of time on fandom app Amino, connecting for 68 mins/day. Children also spent a significant amount of time on other community-based networks, including 28 mins/day on child-friendly app PopJam, and 15 mins/day on social news platform Reddit.
While other categories displayed higher peaks and lower points, social media use largely held firm across the year. Smaller ebbs and flows, which largely corresponded to more time connected over school vacation, could be seen in July and December.

Social media was also the category where children chose to spend most of their time connected, averaging out their daily use at 50 mins/day globally. Children in the UK were the heaviest daily users of social media platforms, spending 55 mins/day checking in on their feeds.
The social media apps that parents blocked the most in 2021 remained the same both on a global level, and in each country we analyzed, with the most popular apps for kids making the top of the block list too. The only new entry to this year’s most-blocked social media was in Spain, where attention shifted from now-defunct video chat app Houseparty to Pinterest. Reflecting both its popularity and the time kids spent on TikTok, it remained the most-blocked app for families everywhere.

### The Most Blocked Social Media Apps in 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>App</th>
<th>Global</th>
<th>US</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>Spain</th>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
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<td>Facebook</td>
<td>🇹🇷 Facebook</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Pinterest</td>
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<td>6.</td>
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### The Most Blocked Social Media Apps in 2020

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<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
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<td>🇬🇧 Twitter</td>
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What we expect

While development of Instagram Kids, Instagram’s supposed “child-friendly” version of the social media app, was paused in 2021 amid parent outcries, social media has now become such a large part of normality that we believe it will not be long before the social media giants follow in their footsteps.

Following the success of YouTube Kids and Messenger Kids, we expect key players such as Instagram and TikTok to work on releasing versions of their app designed with kids in mind.

Despite most children returning to school across 2021, we expect time on social media to increase in 2022 overall, as the online-streaming-meets-social hybrid grows in popularity. With social networks beginning to promote video content more heavily, as seen with Instagram’s preference for content creators to upload reels, and Snapchat’s Snap Originals, which lets Snapchat users watch free, made-for-mobile video episodes, time spent on social media apps will naturally begin to rise, while engagement numbers hold firm.
What we recommend

While it’s now becoming more and more difficult to keep children away from the temptations of social media, especially as more and more of their peers gain access to their very own profiles, we’d recommend only allowing kids to create a social media account when they demonstrate the appropriate level of emotional maturity.

Social media can be difficult even for adults to navigate: the constant pressure to be “perfect”, distinguishing real life from “fake” social media lives, mean comments and cyberbullying, and the void of the bottomless scroll.

Many parents now resort to banning children completely from social media, but most tech-savvy kids will still find a way to use the apps. Instead of sending children unequipped to face the risks social media poses, it’s much more valuable for them as a life skill to understand how social networks work and how to navigate their more problematic aspects.

It’s important to acknowledge that children will look to adults as models of how to properly engage with social media. One of the negative aspects of social media, as addressed by the children we interviewed, is the “ideal” version of life it puts forward and the negative self-image it often causes, something which can be difficult for teenagers to fully process. Parents can help to place less importance on the appearance-focused aspect of social media by not drawing attention to other people’s looks (both on and off screen), avoiding self-deprecating observations on their own photos, and keeping comments about other people’s lives as positive as possible.

Before allowing children to use social media, parents should become more familiar with the platforms themselves, and be heavily involved in the setup process of the initial profile to ensure the correct privacy settings are applied (private profile, friend and family requests only, location settings off). They can also help their child find and follow individuals and content that tie in with their family’s values. To help establish healthier digital relationships, parents can also set time limits on social media apps, limiting scroll time on apps with bottomless content such as TikTok and Instagram.

Families should demonstrate ideal behavior, both on and offline. Teaching children how to become good digital citizens is key in helping them navigate the social aspect of the internet. Families can encourage their children to be kind in the comments they make online, respect other people’s digital property, and help them understand that there are real people behind the profiles on social media. Just as the real world poses dangers that parents prepare their children for, the same applies for the digital environment: families need to open up the conversation surrounding the many real risks that social media exposes them to.

“What I don’t like is bullying and other people being mean to other people and people pretending to live perfect lives. It really upsets me with my anxiety.”

- Girl, 10, UK
“Something I hate is the fake life that people try to portray on social media, I hate feeling like I’m less or inferior to them.”

- Girl, 11, US
The time kids invested in their favorite games held firm in 2021, with their newly acquired pandemic screen time habits proving difficult to shake. On a global level, and in the US and UK, children matched their 2020 gaming time minute for minute. In Spain, where limiting video game time was the most popular supervision strategy in our family survey, children managed to bring their video game screen time down by 15%.

While game-time stabilized, kids invested extra minutes in online strategy and first-person shooter style games, such as Defense of the Ancients 2, Destiny 2, and Fortnite, along with classic favorite World of Warcraft, increasing their time on these games by an average of 18%.

In terms of time spent, World of Warcraft took the crown in the US, with kids spending 185 minutes, or just over 3 hours daily, absorbed in the fantasy universe. In all other countries analyzed, Roblox was the clear frontrunner. Despite Roblox’s longest ever downtime in October of 2021, where the game was offline for 73 hours, children still managed to increase their time on Roblox by 80% during 2021, spending 173 minutes a day on the hit platform.
In all countries analyzed, Roblox was the most popular game, with 56% of kids playing it around the world, rising to 62% of children in the UK, and 61% in the US. For the first time in our analysis of children’s app habits, Roblox took the top spot in Spain, with 38% of children diving into the 3D experience.

Long-term favorite Minecraft took the global silver medal for gaming (26% of kids), holding firm in its position in the US and UK along with a slight increase in popularity. While Minecraft failed to make 2021’s top 5 in Spain, it came in sixth position for the first time at 13%, showing growth in popularity in the region.

Globally, Among Us and Clash Royale also gained popularity in 2021, increasing by 7% and 8% respectively. Conversely, party-style this or that game What Would You Choose? Rather lost popularity points, falling to fifth position overall globally, from third to fourth in the US, and from second to third in the UK. In Spain, where children have never featured What Would You Choose? Rather in their top 5, Brawl Stars was the game of choice, with 33% of kids teaming up with friends in the online battle arena game.
HOW MUCH TIME DID CHILDREN SPEND ON VIDEO GAMES IN 2021?

Globally, kids of all ages spent the most time playing Roblox for the first time in our research since 2019, on average using the game for 173 minutes a day - almost 3 hours - across 2021. The only game to beat this time record was World of Warcraft, where kids worldwide spent 185 mins/day, despite it not making even the top 10 in terms of popularity.

While time on Roblox and Among Us largely boomed, number two most popular favorite Minecraft lost out on multiple minutes of gameplay worldwide. Despite its global community of players rising to over 141 million in 2021, children played Minecraft 14 mins/day less than they did in 2020, falling from 49 mins/day to 35 mins/day.

Time on the third most popular video game, Among Us, also increased in 2021, rising to just over an hour in the US and UK (61 mins/day). Children in Spain spent less time overall on nearly all of the country’s most popular games, reducing their time on Among Us by 8 mins/day, and long-term favorite Brawl Stars by 10 mins/day.

**Time kids spent on the most popular video game apps (avg. mins/day)**

### Global

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<th></th>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clash of Clans</td>
<td>17</td>
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</table>

*What Would You Choose?*
Time spent on video games remained relatively stable year-round in all countries except the UK, with kids spending an average of 38 mins/day on all types of game. A bigger dip could be seen in October and November, most likely due to parents restricting time on video games in countries where September back-to-school routines came into force.

Kids in all of the countries analyzed, where remote learning was still an option for many schools in the early months of 2021, spent more time on video games at the beginning of the year - especially in the UK, where game time peaked at 47 mins/day in February. Children in the US spent the most time on video games, averaging 40 mins/day, while Spanish children spent 43% less time connected than their US counterparts, at just 28 mins/day overall.

With my sister I like playing interesting fun games where you’ve got storylines and you can build things, for example Minecraft where you can join other players, build with them, help them survive.”
~ Girl, 10, UK
THE MOST BLOCKED VIDEO GAMES IN 2021

Following in the footsteps of the children’s most popular list, globally, **Roblox remained the number one blocked app** for the second year in a row – and third in the US and UK. For the third year in a row, **Brawl Stars held its position as Spain’s number one blocked app**, despite children there increasing their time on Roblox by 69% across the year, while reducing their time on Brawl Stars by 25%. **Battle-Royale style shooter Fortnite**, which fell from the kids popularity charts on a universal level, still featured in the block list, coming in sixth position overall, and fifth in the US and UK.

> “Whenever I spend too much time my parents tell me to stop, at that time I feel bad. Then I understand that my eyes are more important than my game and I should do something else.”
>
> – Boy, 10, US

![Most blocked video game apps (% of parents)](image)
What we expect

Unlike time spent across the other categories we analyzed, the minutes children devoted to playing video games showed little change. We expect the higher numbers experienced in 2020 and 2021 to peak, with global trends following Spain’s downward turn in the future, likely as a direct result of concerns over how long children are spending in front of screens.

Of the 87% of parents who reported they supervised their child’s use of technology, the number one most popular method was through limiting the amount of time they spent playing video games (at 54%). We expect this method of supervision to remain the most popular for families, meaning that while time devoted to games that increase in popularity will rise, overall game time for children will stabilize for a number of years, rather than returning to the highs experienced during 2020.

As increasing amounts of money are speculated to be spent on in-game purchases, with market value projections of up to 74.4 billion USD for 2025, we expect more value to be placed on “ownership” of items purchased online, as reflected in the louder conversation surrounding non-fungible tokens, or NFTs, in the second half of 2021 - unique sets of data associated with digital files, such as plots of land, or items purchased in a game.

Finally, gaming will slowly become more accessible to all, allowing online multiplayer games to increase in popularity, through cloud services which enable gamers to connect from anywhere in the world. Rather than needing a games console or gaming PC, kids will only need a fast internet connection to allow them to access games on a remote provider – opening the world of gaming up to millions more children worldwide.

“Because we can’t go out so much now, I need distractions. I also learn things through games like Minecraft. I enjoy myself with friends, I feel emotions and things like that.”
- Boy, 12, Spain
What we recommend

With any game, whether on or offline, the first step should always be getting to know it together as a family, allowing everyone to understand if they are comfortable with its content: aside from violence and inappropriate themes, there may also be heavy levels of in-game advertising or in-app purchases which affect children’s gaming experience.

Video games can be a great way for children to bond with friends and family members, and distract themselves from any real-world stresses they might have. Games can also be a way to help children learn and explore, building their own stories through code or creating their own individual worlds in life simulation games. To enjoy these positives, balance, along with an understanding of how children choose to spend their time gaming, is key. 30 minutes spent playing Minecraft with friends after school could be considered more beneficial or purposeful than 30 minutes spent hopping from game to game on a tablet.

As parents understand the need to set limitations on videogaming, the next challenge will be to help them understand how to make more conscious choices surrounding the games they play. The wider risks of gaming, including in-app purchases and loot boxes, access to personal data and information, cyberbullies, and predators, should be part of the conversation from an early stage—always adapting to the child’s age and family situation.

With children spending long periods of time on online multiplayer games, where players can join from around the world, kids are exposed to new people and experiences, but not without risk. Many of the children we interviewed as part of our research spoke about the dangers of online gaming, including hackers, scammers, and predators. If children are considered old enough to engage in online games, they should also be able to understand some of the potentially risky scenarios they might face when playing with others online. Ultimately, any online game is safest when played only with real-world friends or family members.

“...There are lots of people who go on YouTube or on videogames to give “tips” that really are to trick children. There are a lot of bad people. And you reach a point where playing games so much is boring.”
—Girl, 11, Spain

“I don’t like the toxic environment in some gaming communities, which if you like games a lot you have to experience because you come into contact with those people. That’s why I try to play with my own friends, and silence games when I play so I can’t hear what they’re saying.”
—Boy, 12, Spain
What we found

By September 2021, it was estimated that children worldwide had lost 1.8 trillion hours of in-class schooling since the start of the pandemic. The true effect of school closures on education is yet to be truly understood, but one thing is clear: the direct effect the pandemic has had on technology and the importance of EdTech in schools.

As seen with other categories, usage habits in education stabilized across 2021. Unlike in 2020, where education app popularity grew by 54%, global use grew by just 4% in 2021, with the return to the classroom meaning families no longer felt the need to encourage the use of educational apps at home. Globally, while time spent on classroom management apps such as Google Classroom showed little change, the time spent on learning experience apps such as Khan Academy, IXL, and Smartick increased, with kids spending 37% longer on Khan Academy, and 46% longer on IXL in 2021.
In terms of popularity, we have divided educational apps into two categories: classroom management, with apps that children most frequently use to connect with school, and learning apps, which, while not directly related to schooling, offer some form of educational benefit overall.

In 2021, Google Classroom was the most popular classroom management system both on a global level and in every country we analyzed, showing it to be the app of choice for educators everywhere.

Management apps that allow communication between students and educators also proved popular over the year, with Remind: School Communication and Canvas Student coming in second and third place.

Despite the pandemic keeping many people at home worldwide, language-learning platform Duolingo remained the most popular educational app globally, and in all the countries we analyzed. In both Spain and the US, math problem-solving app Photomath claimed second place for 2021, while in the UK, game-based learning platform Kahoot! took the silver medal.

“Since covid started I’ve had to do at-home learning, so having my Chromebook and going online has allowed me to do my homework and learn new things. I think it’s okay but I’d rather be in school.”
- Girl, 13, UK

“If I need to search something I just type it. I normally code, I code on Scratch sometimes because it’s fun, and I search up how to code on YouTube or maybe Google.”
- Girl, 10, UK
Most popular classroom management apps (% of kids)

1. Google Classroom
2. Remind: School Communication
3. Canvas Student
4. Edpuzzle
5. PowerSchool Mobile
6. Kids A-Z

Most popular learning apps (% of kids)

1. Duolingo
2. Photomath
3. Kahoot!
4. Quizlet
5. Khan Academy
6. TED
Due to the nature of classroom management apps, time spent on this category was relatively short, with most students using school devices to access management tools via the web, rather than apps on their personal devices. Therefore, for this section, we focused our research on learning apps, where kids divided most of their time in terms of education.

In 2021, children spent the most time on learning apps which integrate aspects of gaming, such as Kahoot!, Duolingo, and Quizlet. Globally, kids spent the most time on Kahoot!, averaging 15 mins/day on the quiz-based app. Children also made sure to get their daily dose of Duolingo, dedicating 12 mins/day to learning a new language. On newcomer to the global popularity charts, TED, kids spent 6 mins/day browsing “ideas worth spreading”. Kids in Spain spent the longest time on their favorite educational app, Smartick, averaging 26 mins/day improving their skills in reading comprehension and math.

While not securing a position in the top 5 most popular learning apps for kids this year, the time spent on free learning app Khan Academy and subscription-based platform IXL increased significantly in 2021. Globally, kids spent an average of 38 mins/day on IXL, up from 26 mins/day, and 26 mins/day on Khan Academy, adding an average of 7 minutes a day to the 19 mins/day they spent in 2020.

### HOW MUCH TIME DID CHILDREN SPEND ON EDUCATIONAL APPS IN 2021?

**Time kids spend on the most popular learning apps (avg. mins/day)**

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<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2. Kahoot!</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. TED</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>5. TED</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>5. Photomath</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**How much time in mins/day**:
Not to be put off by vacation season, globally children spent more time connected to educational apps over the northern-hemisphere summer, particularly in Spain, where school typically is out of session for 10-12 weeks between June and September. Globally, throughout the months of July and August, when children in all countries analyzed were not attending regular schooling, the average time on educational apps increased by 2 mins/day during typical school hours.
Perhaps in an attempt to silence the famously persistent Duolingo owl, the app was the most-blocked app in all regions except Spain, where Google Classroom took the top spot, possibly reflecting safety concerns regarding children’s data privacy on the app. On a global level, Photomath was also a popular blocking choice for families, amidst criticism that the nature of the app amplifies student cheating.
What we expect

Thanks to eLearning apps and classroom management systems, technology kept millions of children in an educational environment, even when there was no school to attend.

Of course, while nothing can replace the importance of learning in the classroom, educational apps have secured their place as a useful tool in both parents’ and educators’ belts, allowing children to both consolidate and expand their knowledge in a way they feel comfortable with.

We expect to see more gamification of learning apps and educational technology, as parents push their children towards games they see as more “productive”, and teachers look for new ways to involve technology in more traditional learning environments.

The world of educational apps, when it comes to how our kids are using them, is more intentional and purposeful than other categories such as social media or video games. With children turning to learning apps to explore their hobbies and interests, check their homework, or revise educational concepts, we anticipate that in the future, the time children will devote to this particular category will remain stable – despite the diversification in EdTech and learning apps the future holds.

“The internet helps me learn and teaches me how to solve questions. In the future I won’t need its help and I’ll be able to do it by myself.”

– Boy, 10, US
While, on the surface, time spent on educational apps can be seen as a positive, productive application of energy and time for children, we’d still recommend they use these apps with some form of balance in mind. Screen time is, after all, the sum of a whole, rather than individual parts. With children spending increased time on screens at school, and as a form of escape and entertainment, it’s important to ensure that the time they spend using technology is intentional, in order for them to truly enjoy its benefits.

The digitization of schoolwork also comes with its downfalls: as more and more homework requirements and classwork move online, children’s dependence on technology also increases. Once the WiFi connection goes down, so does their access to the tools they “need” in order to be able to complete schoolwork. To decrease this reliance on technology, encourage “hands-on” learning wherever possible. Turn to books instead of ebooks, get out the pen and paper for study time, or take a trip to the library for some old-school style research.

I don’t like the fact that technology is dependent on power and WiFi. If for some reason these things go down there’s nothing we can do to complete our work and there’s no way to retrieve it.”

- Boy, 13, US

“in school I don’t understand anything that’s going on, so I have to look on Wikipedia for everything I need, because it’s all on there.”

- Boy, 11, Spain
With the UK entering their third national lockdown on January 6, and schools remaining closed until March, it should come as no surprise that 2021 was, once again, a year for communication to shine. Across all five categories analyzed in our report, children increased their time most on communication apps, using these tools not just as a way to stay in touch with friends and family, but as a way to keep up with their schooling, messaging classmates about homework, and using video communications apps as part of their remote learning schedule. Overall, kids in 2021 spent 28% longer using communications apps to make video calls, send messages, and socialize with friends and family online.

For the third year in a row, Discord, once home to gamers and the alt-right, experienced a rise in popularity in 2021. From just 13% of kids using the app in 2019, 31% of children now choose Discord to connect online in many different ways, from chatting with friends and video messaging to forming study groups and sharing school notes.
While WhatsApp topped the popularity charts globally (34% of kids), and in the UK (56%) and Spain (60%), it only just made an appearance in the top 5 in the US, coming in fifth place with 15% of kids using the app. Kids in the US preferred to use Google’s Messages, with 22% of children choosing it to send and receive SMS. In the US, Discord was the leader of the pack for the very first time since our annual analysis began, with 32% of children in the country using the app.

Video conferencing apps Zoom and Skype also experienced an increase in popularity this year, on a global basis and in every country analyzed except Spain. Globally, Skype increased in popularity by 7% across 2021 (27%), and Zoom claimed joint second position in the rankings, tying with Discord at 31%. In Spain, children turned to messaging apps rather than video conferencing tools as their preferred method of communication: both WhatsApp (60%) and Messages (32%) increased in popularity over 2021.

“I like] being able to talk to my friends, because most of my friends use Discord and with technology I’m able to talk to them and make videos and work on my art, and be able to show off all that stuff because that’s important to me.”

- Boy, 12, US
Video conferencing app Zoom, propelled to new heights in 2020 by the pandemic, showed no signs of stopping in 2021. Globally, and in each of the 3 countries we explored in our report, children spent more time on Zoom than on any other communications app, averaging 63 mins/day worldwide, up 26% from 2020.

In the US and UK, Discord held the second place title, with kids spending 38 mins/day and 32 mins/day on the app respectively. While children in Europe preferred to dedicate their messaging time to WhatsApp, with Spanish children spending 41 mins/day and UK kids devoting 29 mins/day overall, Messages was the app of choice in the US, where kids spent 24 mins a day sending and receiving messages.

HOW MUCH TIME DID CHILDREN SPEND ON COMMUNICATION APPS IN 2021?

Global
1. Zoom 63 50 32
2. WhatsApp 37 32 20
3. Discord 35 32 25
4. Google Duo 22 24 11
5. Messages 19 12 NA
6. Skype 16 18 17

US
1. Zoom 55 46 32
2. Discord 38 35 28
3. WhatsApp 28 25 15
4. Google Duo 25 26 12
5. Messages 24 17 10
6. Skype 13 19 19

UK
1. Zoom 52 43 37
2. Discord 32 32 21
3. WhatsApp 29 25 15
4. Skype 16 16 16
5. Google Duo 16 16 5
6. Messages 9 8 4

Spain
1. Zoom 51 47 33
2. WhatsApp 41 38 24
3. Discord 21 26 18
4. Skype 15 17 16
5. Hangouts 12 17 7
6. Messages 2 2 1
Time on communication apps was overall higher in the first half of the year in the US and UK. In the UK, the downward curve during spring reflects many children’s return to school, while in the US, the decline in use was steadier over the year. In Spain, where children remained in school – with the exception of occasional class quarantines – for the majority of the year, communication levels remained relatively stable. Children in all countries analyzed increased their time on communication over 2021, from just a 3% increase in Spain, up to 26% in the US, where kids spent 10 extra minutes on communications apps over the year, compared to 2020.
Reflecting Skype’s slight rise in the kids popularity charts, it rose to number 3 on the block list worldwide. Globally and in the US, families primarily chose to block Discord, connected to online predation and sexual exploitation in the past. In the UK and Spain, WhatsApp, under scrutiny for its data privacy policies, remained the number one blocked app for the second year in a row.
What we expect

The line separating messaging apps from social media networks will grow smaller, with more and more users turning to messaging apps as a way to spread and share content.

In turn, as messaging and communication apps become more general multitaskers, they may, just as with social networks, become less of a safe space for children online, giving rise to the development of more child-friendly communication apps, as seen with Facebook's Messenger Kids.

With communications apps now playing a huge role in education, due to the rise in popularity of video conferencing as a tool in remote learning, we anticipate that these tools will begin to focus on enhancements that boost productivity and engage users. Video conferencing tools will become much more than a space to make calls, encouraging file sharing, note taking, and other collaborative tasks to both enhance the business experience in the workplace, and the learning experience for educators and students.
What we recommend

Whether for school, for quick check-ins from mom and dad throughout the day, or for chatting with close friends, communication is necessary. As social beings, it’s important for kids to also be able to keep in touch with family and friends. While for many, communication apps were a wellbeing lifeline during the pandemic, helping us connect with the people we love, for some children with geographic or mobility restrictions, technology is the only means they have to keep in touch with those closest to them.

In addition, communication apps are now an integral part of distance learning, and while for elementary, middle and high school students, remote learning may become less prevalent after 2021, online forms of communication will form a key part of life when it comes to college, the workplace, and beyond. Communication tools can also be a lifeline when working on collaborative projects, or checking in with other students for help and advice.

As communications apps rise in popularity, and children spend increased time talking to others online, keeping them safe and secure in the process should also be a priority. Just as with online gaming and social media, children should be careful not to reveal too much information about themselves online, limiting contacts to friends and family members.

While the importance of communication apps is undeniable, balance is key. Notifications and calls throughout the day can be a distraction, preventing kids from focusing on schoolwork or studying. To help kids keep their minds on the important tasks, we’d recommend scheduling screen-free, or cell phone-free hours, where they can’t be interrupted by the background noise of group chats and video calls. In addition to helping them focus, a break from connectivity can be beneficial for all members of the family – giving everyone time to connect through disconnection, getting outdoors and enjoying the fresh air.

“If I don’t understand something about an exercise, I can message a classmate on WhatsApp about it.”
- Girl, 11, Spain

“I love the buzz of being able to contact my friends and talk to them because I do not leave the house as I have an illness.”
- Boy, 13, UK
Tips for family safety and security in the digital world

**Tips for family safety and security in the digital world**

1. **Schedule Screen Downtime**
   - Setting daily or weekly times free from the constant connectivity of the digital world helps children know what to expect, while also offering a break from the pressures that technology can bring.

2. **Promote Intentional Technology Use**
   - Encourages family members to be more conscious of why they reach for screens, bringing total screen time down as a result, too.

3. **Bring Learning into the Real World**
   - Technology helps children learn, but they also need the skills to develop and explore their thinking without screens. Opportunities to learn in an offline environment should be encouraged both in and out of the classroom.

4. **Encourage Involvement**
   - Screen time shouldn’t be solitary, wherever possible. Co-watching, playing video games together, and setting up social media accounts as a family are just some of the tools parents can use to become more involved in their children’s online activities.

5. **Keep Communication Open**
   - Concerns about our digital world now play a huge role in family life. Screen time and its implications should be part of the conversation for parents and educators, checking in regularly on how children are using technology, and its impact on their wellbeing.
Conclusions

Most of us around the world are still reeling from the effects of days, weeks, and months trapped behind screens in the earlier half of 2020: but we are slowly beginning to regain the “normality” we knew and understood from before the fact. For some of Generation Z and Generation Alpha, the fully digital world, complete with screens, notifications, endless on-demand content, and a brand new way of learning, crashed down on them all at once, where it hasn’t left since.

While the long-term effects of the increased screen time experienced during the pandemic are yet to be seen, in the short term, there is now a heightened awareness surrounding the 24/7 connectivity we now share. Discussions surrounding technology and its effects on mental health are becoming more prevalent, reflecting the rise of mental health problems seen in children since the beginning of the pandemic.

We are now all learning to strike a balance. While time spent on many of the individual, most popular apps we analyzed increased, for three of the categories we examined this year, overall time spent engaged on apps leveled out or fell. Parents, children and educators alike are all very much aware of the time they spend in front of screens, and now only need the tools to help nurture the ideal balance, and care for their digital wellbeing.

The levels of screen time we witnessed over 2021 in this report are high, but through our interviews with children and surveys with parents, we also noted that the need to regain control over technology was just as elevated.

We hope that this report provides families with the insights and information they need, to help identify risks and build healthier online habits in the months and years ahead. We are sure that the coming year will continue to bring change and adaptation once again for all of us, from children to adults, and parents to educators.
Contact us

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