

Online Behaviour in young adolescents

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Screens and the internet are an integral part of adolescents' lives, whether for communication, entertainment, learning or information. While they have many advantages, they also have their downsides. Prolonged use, for example, can lead to eye or musculoskeletal problems, and the time spent in front of the screen can contribute to a sedentary lifestyle. Adolescents can be exposed to content that is not appropriate for their age or that puts them at risk (e.g. violence, pornography, cyber-bullying), and images of idealized bodies posted online can have an impact on their own body image. There is also a risk of losing control of the time spent on certain online activities, such as gaming and social media, with significant negative impacts on everyday life.

This factsheet presents a selection of results from the HBSC 2022 survey on online behaviour among 11-, 13- and 15-year-olds in Switzerland. In particular, it includes the first national results on problematic gaming behaviour.

Key figures 2022



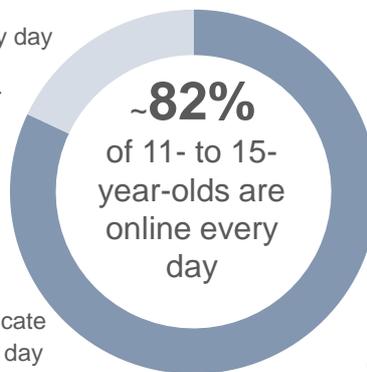
~**61%** of boys and ~**68%** of girls aged 11 to 15 are on social media every day



~**32%** of boys and ~**8%** of girls aged 11 to 15 game every day



~**17%** of 11- to 15-year-olds communicate online almost all the time throughout the day (all people considered together)



~**7%** of 11- to 15-year-olds have a **problematic social media use**



~**45%** of 11- to 15-year-olds used social media to escape from negative feelings

~**40%** of 11- to 15-year-olds tried to spend less time on social media, but failed

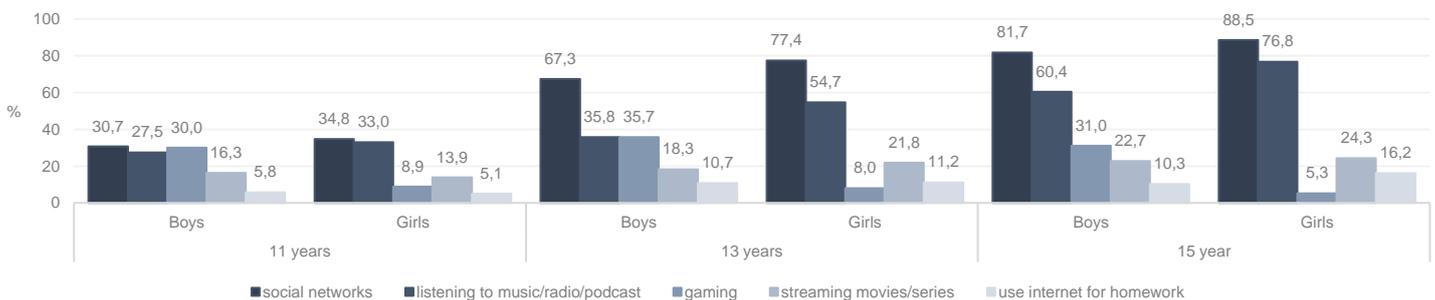
~**3%** of 14- and 15-year-olds who game have a **problematic gaming behaviour**



~**18%** of 14- and 15-year-olds who game do it often to relieve a negative mood

Entertainment, communication and learning

Proportions of 11- to 15-year-olds who are online every day (HBSC 2022)

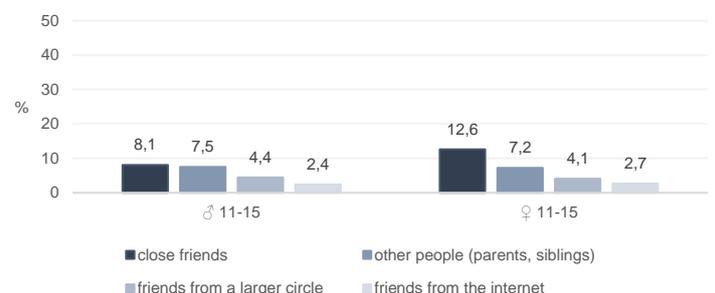


In 2022, ~82% of 11- to 15-year-olds were online every day (B: ~81%; G: ~84%). ~65% used **social media** every day and ~48% **listened to music/radio/podcasts** every day. ~20% **gamed** daily, ~20% **streamed films/series** every day and ~10% used the **Internet to do homework** every day.

Going on social daily every day and listening to music/radio/podcasts every day are more common among girls, while gaming every day is more common among boys.

The frequency of being online increases between the 11-year-olds and the 15-year-olds. This is the case for these online services except for gaming.

With whom do 11- to 15-year-olds communicate online almost all the time throughout the day¹ (HBSC 2022) ?



¹ This means intensive use whenever it is possible.

In the HBSC study, **problematic use** is defined as a loss of control over the time invested in gaming or using social media, with a significant negative impact on relationships with close friends and family and on essential everyday activities. Problematic use can sometimes lead to addiction. The International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) includes the diagnosis 'gaming (addictive) disorder' (but no specific diagnosis for social media). However, such a diagnosis cannot be made solely on the basis of the answers given by the students in this study.

Gaming

In 2022, out of a list of ten signs that could indicate **problematic gaming behaviour**, ~3% of 14- and 15-year-old gamers² had often experienced at least five of these signs in the previous 12 months³ and would therefore have a problematic gaming behaviour, with no difference according to sex/gender or age.

Hierarchy of the 10 signs often experienced in the previous 12 months

For example⁴, ~18% of 14- and 15-year-old gamers say they often game to relieve a negative mood, and ~13% often have thoughts related to gaming. ~11% have often gamed a lot despite negative consequences.



² Proportion of 14- and 15-year-olds who game at least occasionally: B: ~97% ; G: ~64%;

³ Question asked only to 14- and 15-year-olds

⁴ According to the 'Internet Gaming Disorder Test - 10-items' and cut off from Király et al (2017)

⁵ The 10 signs are further described in the HBSC research report

Gamblification is concerning

Some mechanisms introduced by developers into many video games and social media increase the pressure to be online daily or to spend as much money as possible. These include bonus systems that reward consecutive days of use, as well as loot boxes (virtual boxes containing a prize of unknown value) that adolescents can buy for small amounts of money. These loot boxes display characteristics specific to gambling.

Social media

In 2022, out of a list of nine signs that could indicate **problematic social media use**⁵, ~7% of 11- to 15-year-olds had experienced at least six in the last 12 months and have therefore a problematic use. This rate is higher compared to 2018 (~4%). Girls and 13-year-olds are most affected.

Hierarchy of the 9 signs in the past 12 months



^a often or regularly

For example⁶, ~45% of 11- to 15-year-olds often went on social media to forget about negative feelings, and ~40% tried to spend less time there without succeeding. ~21% regularly found that they couldn't think of anything else.

⁵ According to the 'The Social Media Disorder Scale' and cut off from van den Eijnden et al. (2016)

⁶ The 9 signs are further described in the HBSC research report

Advice for adults It is important to ensure a balance between online and offline leisure time, to set rules together with the adolescents for the time or moments during the day spent being online, to take one's role models seriously and to encourage a positive and creative use of the Internet. As each child develops in a different way, content should be adapted to the age and stage of development. Adults should support children in primary school in their use of the Internet. During adolescence, they can gradually become more independent. It's also important to be interested in their online activities and to talk about them, for example about what games are played, in-game purchases and by setting a small budget for the purchase of paid content in the form of a pre-paid payment card.

More information:

- [Ecrans, en parler aux ados](#) - Guide for parents by Addiction Switzerland (available in DE/FR/IT)
- [Recommendations from Youth and Media for parents of 6- to 13-year-olds and of 12- to 18-year-olds](#)
- [Intervention guide APAN for professionals on media use](#) (available in DE and FR)

More Results

Delgrande Jordan, M. & Schmidhauser, V. (2023). Comportements en ligne des 11 à 15 ans en Suisse – Situation en 2022 et évolution récente. Résultats de l'étude Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) ([rapport de recherche No 154](#)). Lausanne: Addiction Suisse. With summary in English.

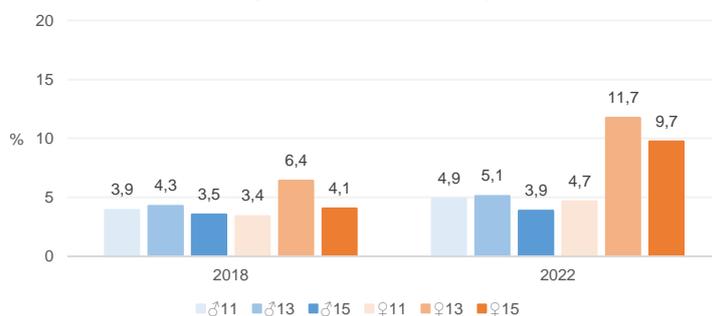
Statistical standard tables on the website www.hbsc.ch

Swiss monitoring system of addiction and NCD's (MonAM): www.obsan.admin.ch/en/MonAM

Acknowledgements

Special thanks go to the schoolchildren (as well as their parents and teachers) who, by agreeing to participate in the survey, contributed to a very important part of this research project.

Problematic social media use, by sex/gender and age (HBSC 2018-2022; %)



The method in short The international study Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) is conducted every four years under the aegis of the World Health Organisation (WHO-Europe). In Switzerland, the study has been conducted by Addiction Switzerland since 1986 and is funded by the Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH) and most of the cantons.

It is a nationally representative monitoring study of health and health behaviours in adolescents aged 11 to 15. In 2022, 857 classes in 5th to 9th grades (7th to 11th year HarmoS) were randomly selected in Switzerland, and 636 classes participated in the survey (9'345 schoolchildren aged 11 to 15), which equals a participation rate of 74.2%.

The survey is based on a standardized self-administered paper questionnaire, completed in the classroom between March and June 2022. Participation was voluntary (with parental consent) and answers were strictly confidential.

The sex/gender analyses are thus based on the international question 'Are you a boy or a girl?'. Therefore, it is not possible to know whether schoolchildren answered the question with reference to their sex assigned at birth or their gender identity.