Parental influences on excessive internet use among Irish adolescents

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INTRODUCTION
What is excessive internet use?

• High engagement with internet ≠ excessive use (Charlton and Danforth, 2007)

• Excessive internet use (EIU): “poorly controlled preoccupations, urges or behaviours regarding internet use that lead to impairment or distress” (Weinstein and Lejoyeux, 2010)

• “Problematic internet use”, “internet addiction”, “compulsive internet use”, “pathological internet use”
Motivation

• Internet dependency = Public health concern
  ➔ Internet Gaming Disorder included in ICD-11 (WHO, 2018) and DSM-V (APA, 2013)
    – Varied levels of urgency in policy response: South Korea (Koh, 2015) vs UK (NHS, 2019) vs Ireland (HSE, 2019)

• Public health concern ➔ psychological comorbidities (WHO, 2015)

• Adolescents especially at risk (Borca et al., 2015)
  – Developmental psychological needs (Beard, 2011; Douglas et al., 2008)

• Understanding parental influence important for prevention and resolution of EIU (Worthman et al., 2017; Livingstone and Ólafsson, 2018)
Prevalence rates vary widely

- Est. 3.8% in European adolescents (Blinka et al., 2015)
- Male preponderance

Etiological models of EIU → conceptualised as a coping mechanism / compensatory behaviour arising from poor psychosocial wellbeing (Brand et al., 2014; Kardefelt-Winther, 2014; Douglas et al., 2008)

Parental profile

- Difficulties in relationships & negative parental behaviour (Li, Lei and Tian, 2018)
- No consistent association between parental mediation and EIU (Nielsen, 2019)
Research questions

1. What parental influences at 13 years old are associated with more EIU symptoms at 17/18 years old?

2. What parental influences at 13 years old are associated with severe forms of EIU at 17/18 years old?
METHODS
Data

- Two waves of *Growing Up in Ireland (GUI) “Child Cohort”* born in (‘98)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wave 2</th>
<th>Wave 3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sample size</td>
<td>Sample size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7,525</td>
<td>6,216</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data collected</td>
<td>Data collected</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011/12</td>
<td>2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>17/18</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- Final analytical sample after dropping individuals with missing observations for variables of interest: \(N=5,084\) from both waves
Outcome variable (age 17/18)

- 6 components of addictive behaviour (Griffiths, 2005):
  1. Felt bothered when I cannot be on the internet *(withdrawal symptoms)*
  2. Caught myself surfing when I am not really interested *(tolerance)*
  3. Spent less time than I should with family, friends or doing coursework because of the internet *(conflict)*
  4. Tried unsuccessfully to spend less time on the internet *(relapse)*
  5. Been annoyed or reluctant when a parent or other adult has asked me to stop using the internet or playing a digital game *(mood modification)*
  6. Gone without eating or sleeping because of the internet *(salience)*

- EIU variable counts answers of “fairly or very often”
  - Adapted from scale used in EU Kids Online project (Smahel, Helsper and Green, 2012)
Outcome variable (age 17/18)

Distribution of EIU scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
<th>Cronbach’s alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-6</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.72</td>
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</table>

5 or 6 symptoms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>127 (4.4% of all males)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>281 (9.2% of all females)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Explanatory variables (age 13)

• Child and family controls
  – Child gender
  – Only child
  – Household social class
  – Log household income

• Parent characteristics
  – Single-parent
  – Education
  – Age
  – Employment status
  – Depression status

• Parent-child relationship
  – Closeness
  – Conflict

• Parenting style
  – Demandingness
  – Responsiveness
  – Autonomy-granting

• Parental knowledge
  – Monitoring
  – Disclosure
  – Control

• Disciplinary techniques
  – Strongly power assertive
  – Mildly power assertive
  – Non-power assertive

• Time together and apart
  – Games together
  – Household activities together
  – Outings together
  – Home alone

• Internet-specific mediation
  – Supervision
  – Filter system
Discipline (age 13)

- **Strong power assertive**
  - Never: 14%
  - Sometimes: 26%
  - Always: 60%

- **Mild power assertive**
  - Never: 7.9%
  - Sometimes: 49%
  - Always: 43%

- **Non power assertive**
  - Never: 8.3%
  - Sometimes: 40%
  - Always: 52%
1. What parental influences at 13 years old are associated with more EIU behaviours at 17/18 years old?
   – Negative binomial regression: outcome var = count of symptoms

2. What parental influences at 13 years old are associated with severe forms of EIU at 17/18 years old?
   – Logistic regression: outcome var = \[
   \begin{cases} 
   1 & \text{if 5 or 6 symptoms} \\
   0 & \text{if 4 or less symptoms}
   \end{cases}
   \]

• Models also estimated separately by gender

• Robustness checks accounting for child psychological factors
Additional explanatory variables (age 13) included in robustness checks

- **Child personality** from the Ten Item Personality Inventory
  - Openness
  - Conscientiousness
  - Extraversion
  - Agreeableness
  - Emotional stability

- **Child emotional and behavioural difficulties** from the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)
  - Emotional difficulties
  - Conduct problems
  - Hyperactivity
  - Peer relationship problems
  - Prosocial behaviour
Red = risk factor; green = protective factor;  
Statistical significance indicated as * p < 0.10, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01
## Parent (PCG) characteristics and family controls

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
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<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Negative binomial</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(outcome = count of EIU symptoms)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Single parent</td>
<td>0.034 (0.078)</td>
<td>0.110 (0.105)</td>
<td>-0.047 (0.108)</td>
<td>0.002 (0.012)</td>
<td>0.032*** (0.012)</td>
<td>-0.035* (0.021)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ref: two parent)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age: 40-50</td>
<td>0.073 (0.063)</td>
<td>0.106 (0.092)</td>
<td>0.054 (0.094)</td>
<td>0.002 (0.010)</td>
<td>0.009 (0.012)</td>
<td>-0.003 (0.015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ref: &lt;40)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age: &gt;50</td>
<td>0.152* (0.084)</td>
<td>0.257** (0.114)</td>
<td>0.026 (0.122)</td>
<td>-0.016 (0.012)</td>
<td>0.001 (0.017)</td>
<td>-0.036 (0.022)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ref: &lt;40)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edu: Hi-sec</td>
<td>0.116 (0.087)</td>
<td>0.095 (0.145)</td>
<td>0.176 (0.133)</td>
<td>0.000 (0.013)</td>
<td>0.006 (0.018)</td>
<td>-0.005 (0.021)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ref: lower-sec)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edu: Non-degree</td>
<td>0.145 (0.090)</td>
<td>0.107 (0.147)</td>
<td>0.237* (0.138)</td>
<td>0.004 (0.013)</td>
<td>0.005 (0.018)</td>
<td>0.006 (0.022)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ref: lower-sec)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Edu: College</td>
<td>0.316*** (0.093)</td>
<td>0.324** (0.144)</td>
<td>0.327** (0.143)</td>
<td>0.010 (0.014)</td>
<td>0.018 (0.017)</td>
<td>0.002 (0.023)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ref: lower-sec)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>0.017 (0.052)</td>
<td>-0.022 (0.070)</td>
<td>0.059 (0.075)</td>
<td>-0.006 (0.008)</td>
<td>-0.010 (0.009)</td>
<td>-0.001 (0.012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ref: unemployed)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Depressed</td>
<td>-0.003 (0.105)</td>
<td>0.097 (0.136)</td>
<td>-0.141 (0.155)</td>
<td>0.002 (0.016)</td>
<td>0.014 (0.016)</td>
<td>-0.010 (0.026)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ref: not depressed)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>HH SES: high</td>
<td>0.087 (0.055)</td>
<td>0.122 (0.075)</td>
<td>0.055 (0.083)</td>
<td>0.010 (0.008)</td>
<td>0.018 (0.011)</td>
<td>0.007 (0.013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ref: low)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Log HH income</td>
<td>0.106** (0.049)</td>
<td>0.182*** (0.069)</td>
<td>0.029 (0.069)</td>
<td>0.002 (0.007)</td>
<td>-0.003 (0.009)</td>
<td>0.006 (0.012)</td>
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</table>
## Parenting patterns (relationship, style, and knowledge)

### Negative binomial (outcome = count of EIU symptoms)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All</th>
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<th>Female</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>0.012***</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>0.017***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.004)</td>
<td>(0.005)</td>
<td>(0.006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closeness</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>-0.002</td>
<td>0.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.008)</td>
<td>(0.010)</td>
<td>(0.012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demandingness</td>
<td>-0.012</td>
<td>-0.012</td>
<td>-0.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.009)</td>
<td>(0.012)</td>
<td>(0.014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
<td>-0.002</td>
<td>0.010</td>
<td>-0.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.008)</td>
<td>(0.011)</td>
<td>(0.012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy-granting</td>
<td>-0.028***</td>
<td>-0.024**</td>
<td>-0.032**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.009)</td>
<td>(0.011)</td>
<td>(0.013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>0.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.003)</td>
<td>(0.004)</td>
<td>(0.005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
<td>-0.004</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.007)</td>
<td>(0.008)</td>
<td>(0.010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child disclosure</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.006)</td>
<td>(0.008)</td>
<td>(0.009)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Logistic (outcome = 1 if 5/6 symptoms; =0 if less than 5)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>0.002**</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.002**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.001)</td>
<td>(0.001)</td>
<td>(0.001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closeness</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
<td>0.004*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.001)</td>
<td>(0.001)</td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demandingness</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.001)</td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.001)</td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy-granting</td>
<td>-0.002*</td>
<td>-0.002*</td>
<td>-0.005**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.001)</td>
<td>(0.001)</td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.001)</td>
<td>(0.001)</td>
<td>(0.001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring</td>
<td>-0.002</td>
<td>-0.002</td>
<td>-0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.001)</td>
<td>(0.001)</td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child disclosure</td>
<td>0.002**</td>
<td>0.002*</td>
<td>0.003*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.001)</td>
<td>(0.001)</td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
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### Parental disciplinary techniques

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Female</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly power</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assertive: Sometimes</td>
<td>0.237***</td>
<td>0.193**</td>
<td>0.324***</td>
<td>0.019**</td>
<td>0.025**</td>
<td>0.022 (0.015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ref: Never)</td>
<td>(0.053)</td>
<td>(0.078)</td>
<td>(0.088)</td>
<td>(0.008)</td>
<td>(0.012)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly power</td>
<td>0.544***</td>
<td>0.453***</td>
<td>0.636***</td>
<td>0.041***</td>
<td>0.025</td>
<td>0.058*** (0.020)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assertive: Always</td>
<td>(0.085)</td>
<td>(0.104)</td>
<td>(0.120)</td>
<td>(0.014)</td>
<td>(0.016)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ref: Never)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mildly power</td>
<td>0.059</td>
<td>0.044</td>
<td>0.101</td>
<td>0.010</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.018 (0.013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assertive: Sometimes</td>
<td>(0.050)</td>
<td>(0.068)</td>
<td>(0.073)</td>
<td>(0.008)</td>
<td>(0.010)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ref: Never)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mildly power</td>
<td>0.169*</td>
<td>0.243**</td>
<td>0.026</td>
<td>0.031**</td>
<td>0.025*</td>
<td>0.026 (0.022)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assertive: Always</td>
<td>(0.099)</td>
<td>(0.112)</td>
<td>(0.148)</td>
<td>(0.016)</td>
<td>(0.014)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ref: Never)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-power</td>
<td>-0.106</td>
<td>-0.239**</td>
<td>0.024</td>
<td>-0.036**</td>
<td>-0.034**</td>
<td>-0.028 (0.019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assertive: Sometimes</td>
<td>(0.088)</td>
<td>(0.113)</td>
<td>(0.127)</td>
<td>(0.016)</td>
<td>(0.016)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ref: Never)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-power</td>
<td>-0.012</td>
<td>-0.092</td>
<td>0.072</td>
<td>-0.024</td>
<td>-0.015</td>
<td>-0.022 (0.019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assertive: Always</td>
<td>(0.090)</td>
<td>(0.114)</td>
<td>(0.130)</td>
<td>(0.016)</td>
<td>(0.015)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ref: Never)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Time together

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>All</th>
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<th>Female</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Home alone</strong> (ref: never)</td>
<td>0.131*** (0.047)</td>
<td>0.052 (0.065)</td>
<td>0.216*** (0.070)</td>
<td>0.010 (0.007)</td>
<td>-0.001 (0.009)</td>
<td>0.020* (0.012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Play games together weekly</strong> (ref: less than weekly)</td>
<td>-0.155*** (0.049)</td>
<td>-0.103 (0.067)</td>
<td>-0.199*** (0.073)</td>
<td>-0.007 (0.008)</td>
<td>-0.003 (0.010)</td>
<td>-0.011 (0.012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Do household activities together weekly</strong> (ref: less than weekly)</td>
<td>-0.069 (0.053)</td>
<td>-0.086 (0.066)</td>
<td>-0.053 (0.080)</td>
<td>-0.001 (0.008)</td>
<td>-0.009 (0.009)</td>
<td>0.006 (0.014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Have outings together weekly</strong> (ref: less than weekly)</td>
<td>0.062 (0.049)</td>
<td>0.081 (0.064)</td>
<td>0.038 (0.073)</td>
<td>0.007 (0.008)</td>
<td>0.016 (0.010)</td>
<td>-0.001 (0.012)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Internet-specific mediation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Negative binomial (outcome = count of EIU symptoms)</th>
<th>Logistic (outcome = 1 if 5/6 symptoms; =0 if less than 5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet supervised: Sometimes (ref: Never)</td>
<td>-0.046 (0.085)</td>
<td>-0.070 (0.119)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet supervised: Sometimes (ref: Never)</td>
<td>0.019 (0.086)</td>
<td>0.015 (0.118)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet filter (ref: No filter)</td>
<td>0.065 (0.046)</td>
<td>0.113* (0.061)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Policy implications

• **Awareness-raising** among parents: non-internet-specific parenting interventions more important than internet-specific parental mediation
  – E.g. UNICEF’s “Parenting is also learned” campaign

• Focus on reducing parent-child conflict and encouraging autonomy-granting parenting in family therapy

• **Provision of alternatives to being home alone** for early adolescents
  – Especially relevant for single-parents and parents with long working hours
Conclusion

• Parents can potentially modify their own behaviour to protect against the development of EIU

➢ No evidence of associations for internet-specific mediation practices...

➢ ...but strong influence of disciplinary techniques

➢ Time spent together, parent-child conflict, and autonomy-granting parenting also influential
Thank you!

Comments, suggestions, questions welcome

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• **Strengths:**
  – Simultaneously evaluates and mutually controls for several aspects of parental influence
  – Explanatory variables measured at 4-year lag from outcome variable
  – GUI: large and representative

• **Limitations:**
  – EIU outcome variable is not clinically validated for discrimination
  – Relies on parent and child self-reports
Time online weekday (age 17)

Graphs by >=5 EIU behaviours

- **Less than 4 EIU**
  - Less than 1hr: 14.75%
  - 1-3hrs: 62.46%
  - More than 3hrs: 22.79%

- **5 or 6 EIU**
  - Less than 1hr: 4.682%
  - 1-3hrs: 45.48%
  - More than 3hrs: 49.83%
Use of internet for social media (age 13)

Graphs by >=5 EIU behaviours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Less than 5 EIU</th>
<th>5 or 6 EIU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>No</strong></td>
<td><strong>Yes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.39%</td>
<td>13.79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81.61%</td>
<td>86.21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Use of internet for movies/music (age 13)

Less than 5 EIU

- Yes: 61.85%
- No: 38.15%

5 or 6 EIU

- Yes: 66.09%
- No: 33.91%

Graphs by >=5 EIU behaviours
Use of internet for games (age 13)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Less than 5 EIU</th>
<th>5 or 6 EIU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No 46.08%</td>
<td>Yes 50.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes 53.92%</td>
<td>No 49.71%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graphs by >=5 EIU behaviours
Use of internet for surfing (age 13)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Less than 5 EIU</th>
<th>5 or 6 EIU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>54.56%</td>
<td>45.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>56.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>43.68%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graphs by >=5 EIU behaviours
Use of internet for school (age 13)

Less than 5 EIU

- Yes: 82.59%
- No: 17.41%

5 or 6 EIU

- Yes: 85.63%
- No: 14.37%

Graphs by >=5 EIU behaviours
Discipline (age 13)

- **Strong power assertive**
  - Never: 14%
  - Sometimes: 26%
  - Always: 60%

- **Mild power assertive**
  - Never: 7.9%
  - Sometimes: 49%
  - Always: 43%

- **Non power assertive**
  - Never: 8.3%
  - Sometimes: 52%
  - Always: 40%
Time together (age 13)

- **Games together**: 61% weekly, 39% less than weekly.
- **Household activities together**: 73% weekly, 27% less than weekly.
- **Outings together**: 62% weekly, 38% less than weekly.
- **Home alone**: 60% sometimes, 40% never.
Internet-specific mediation (age 13)
REFERENCES


References (3)


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• Livingstone, S. and Ólafsson, K. (2018) *When do parents think their child is ready to use the internet independently?*


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References (10)


