

Children who have two hours or less of screen time per day have better outcomes: Stats Canada

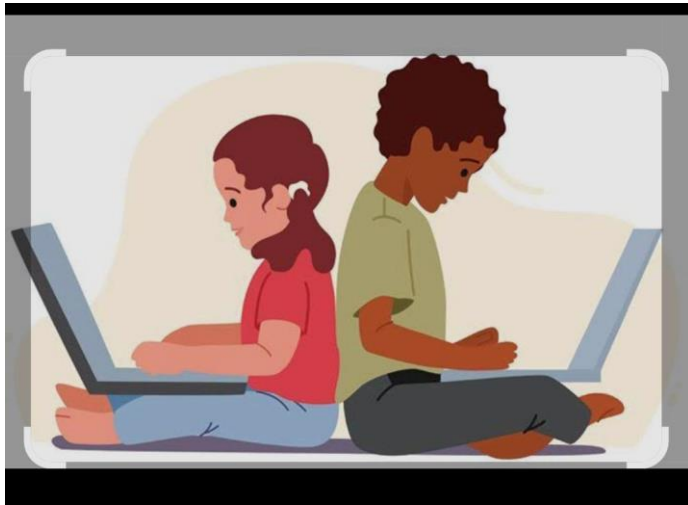


Illustration-focusmalaysia.my

New findings from Statistics Canada have shed light on the effect of screen time on children if they follow the Canadian Paediatric Society screen time guidelines.

The guidelines recommend children aged five to 17 years old be limited to two hours a day.

In 2019 and 2023, the Canadian Health Survey on Children and Youth followed the same cohort of Canadian children and youth to assess changes in their health and well-being.

The children and youth were aged 3 to 11 in 2019 and aged 7 to 15 in 2023. Of those children, 44 per cent followed the screen time guidelines in both years while 12 per cent did not follow them in either year.

Overall, it found that children who followed the guidelines were more likely to have better well-being outcomes than children who did not.

Nine out of 10 children who followed the guidelines reported excellent or very good health while eight of 10 who did not report excellent or very good health.

When it came to mental health, 80 per cent of those who kept their screen time to two hours reported excellent or good mental health compared to 66 per cent of those who did not.

Notably, nearly 70 per cent of children who followed the guidelines reported no headaches in the previous six months compared with just over 52 per cent who spent more than two hours on their phones.

Well-being outcome	Followed guidelines in 2019 and 2023	Did not follow guideline and 2023
Excellent or very good health	91.3 per cent	81.9 per cent
Excellent or very good mental health	80.0 per cent	66.9 per cent
Never appeared anxious or nervous in the previous year	21.9 per cent	17.8 per cent
Never appeared sad or depressed in the previous year	45.4 per cent	37.7 per cent
No headaches in the previous six months	69.3 per cent	52.6 per cent
No difficulties falling asleep in the previous six months	65.6 per cent	52.8 per cent
Overall mark of 70 per cent or higher in school	90.6 per cent	86.2 per cent

Children who kept their screen time to two hours were also less likely to experience certain challenges than children who did not.

Functional difficulty	Followed guidelines in 2019 and 2023	Did not follow guidelines in 2019 and 2023
Anxiety disorder	3.2 per cent	6.6 per cent
Wear glasses or contact lenses	25.4 per cent	32.1 per cent
Difficulty learning things	4.8 per cent	5.4 per cent
Difficulty remembering things	7.2 per cent	9.8 per cent
Difficulty accepting change	6.8 per cent	9.4 per cent
Difficulty controlling behaviour	5.3 per cent	10.9 per cent

Difficulty making friends	4.8 per cent	8.2 per cent
---------------------------	--------------	--------------

The survey also found nearly forty per cent more children who did not follow the guidelines used their electronic device in their bedroom before bed, but they were also more likely to talk to their parents about online privacy or safety.

Well-being outcome	Followed guidelines in 2019 and 2023	Did not follow guidelines in 2019 and 2023
Used an electronic device in their bedroom before falling asleep in the 7 days preceding the survey	23.8 per cent	63.9 per cent
Talked with a parent or guardian about online safety at least sometimes	82.6 per cent	88.1 per cent
Talked with a parent or guardian about online privacy at least sometimes	76.9 per cent	83.2 per cent
Their parent or guardian often or always knew what the child was doing online	88.1 per cent	72.5 per cent

-<https://toronto.citynews.com/March 19, 2026>