

# ACMA media release 88/2009 – 15 July

15 July 2009



## Computers and DVDs an increasing part of young Australians' lives

A new report highlights the way that digital media is embedded in the lives of young children, commencing in pre-school years. In 2007, 94 per cent of 3 to 4 year olds watched television and 91 per cent watched DVDs or videos, while a sizeable proportion also used a computer at home (40 per cent) and a minority (16 per cent) had played games using an electronic games system.

Children in this age group spent an average one hour and 11 minutes watching television per day, 44 minutes watching DVDs and videos, seven minutes using computers and three minutes playing electronic games.

*Use of electronic media and communications: Early childhood to teenage years*, a report released today by the Australian Communications and Media Authority, brings together the ACMA's research on media use by 8-17 year olds and new findings about 3-4 and 7-8 year olds from the Australian Institute of Family Studies study *Growing Up in Australia; The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children*.

'The report is an excellent example of how the ACMA can enhance existing research through comparative analysis to provide something new: a generational snapshot, not previously available, about a very topical subject, said Chris Chapman, Chairman of the ACMA. 'The figures confirm everyday observations about pre-schoolers' increasing use of computers in addition to television and DVD watching. The report is sure to inform further debate about the importance of digital media literacy as Australian parents mediate their children's evolving relationship with digital media and communications.'

Some key findings in the report include:

- Patterns of media use change considerably as children move from early childhood to teenage years and as more media tools become available - however, the one constant is watching television, with the same average participation of 94 per cent for children and young people of all age groups.
- For parents of 3-4s managing television viewing by their child was very important: 94 per cent of these parents had rules specifically about television content, and 64 per cent had timing rules. In contrast to younger families, fewer parents of 8-17s had rules about television content, from 55 per cent for 8-11s to 25 per cent for 15-17s.
- Children and young people in both studies were more likely to have a television rather than a computer or internet access in their bedrooms.

The [report](#) is available on the ACMA's website.

Media contact: Donald Robertson, Media Manager, on (02) 9334 7980.

---

Backgrounder

In 2007, the ACMA published comprehensive research on the day-to-day electronic media and communications activities of young people aged 8–17 in its report *Media and Communications in Australian Families 2007 Now*, new research from AIFS, *Longitudinal Study of Australian Children* (LSAC - Wave 2.5 module) contributes important information on media use by younger children aged 3–4 and 7–8.

The LSAC study is conducted in partnership with the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA), the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS), and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), with advice provided by a consortium of leading researchers.

Together these two studies provide valuable information on the use of electronic media and communications technologies by 3 to 17-year-olds, and their parents' attitudes to that use.

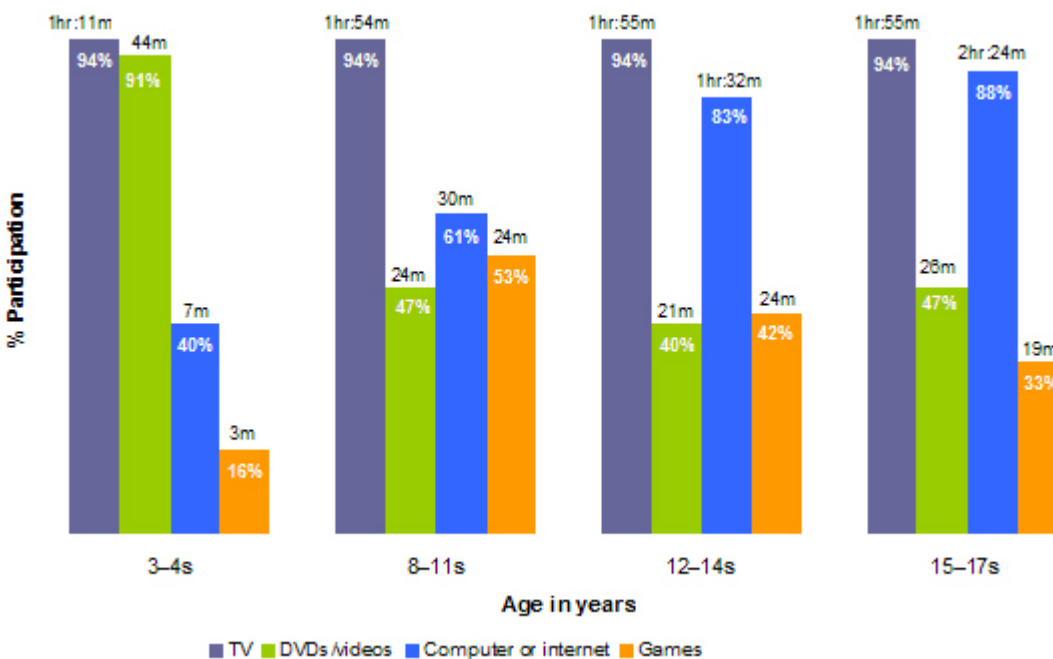
Information is presented on:

- media equipment in family homes, and the level of access to electronic media and communications devices in children and young people's bedrooms
- the extent to which children and young people participate in media activities, including television and DVD viewing, computer and internet use, video/computer gaming, and using mobile phones
- the average amount of time children and young people spend doing those media activities
- how parents mediate their children's use of electronic media and communications.

Other key findings include:

- Most children aged 7-8 years had used the internet at home at least some of the time (84 per cent), mainly for playing games.
- Internet use becomes increasingly important for a significant proportion of high-school aged children (83 per cent of 12-14s and 88 per cent of 15-17s), particularly for doing homework and chatting online. Average time spent per day online increased from 30 minutes for 8-11s to one hour and 32 minutes for 12-14s and two hours and 24 minutes for 15-17s.
- Mobile phones are also very important for teenagers, being used by 75 per cent of 12-14s and increasing to 90 per cent of 15-17s.
- The popularity of console and handheld games peaks with 8-11s (53 per cent, for an average 27 minutes per day).

Participation and average time spent on electronic media per day (hrs: mins) by young people, 2007



**Source:** LSAC: Parent survey and MCAF: Three-day time use diaries

### Media equipment in family homes

- Access to computers and the internet in family households increased where there were older children. Children and young people's access to mobile phones and MP3/4 players also increased with age, with teenagers far more likely to have these technologies than younger children.

#### Media equipment in family households, 2007

	LSAC		MCAF		
	3–4s (n=3,116 parents)	7–8s (n=2,599 - 3,166 parents)	8–11s (n= 334 parents)	12–14s (n= 219 parents)	15–17s (n= 198 parents)
Computer	>71%	> 90%	97%	99%	99%
Internet access	>65%	>72%	87% (71% <i>broadband</i> )	93% (77% <i>broadband</i> )	95% (85% <i>broadband</i> )
Mobile phone	N/A	3%	18%	75%	90%
iPod or similar (LSAC)	N/A	15%	46%	72%	79%
MP3/4 player (MCAF)					
Electronic games system (e.g. Gameboy, Nintendo, Playstation, X-box) (LSAC)	23%	65%	81%	74%	60%
Games console (MCAF)					

**Source:** LSAC and MCAF parent surveys

N/A: comparable data was not collected. LSAC did not collect data on access to mobile phones and iPods for 3–4s

### Media equipment in children and young people's bedrooms

- Most young people did not have a television, computer or internet access in their bedrooms. Children and young people in both studies were more likely to have a television rather than a computer or internet access in their bedrooms.

#### Televisions, computers and internet access in child's bedroom, 2007

	LSAC		MCAF		
	3–4s (n=3,062 parents)	7–8s (n=3,123 parents)	8–11s (n= 334 parents)	12–14s (n= 219 parents)	15–17s (n= 198 parents)
Television	13%	20%	16%	20%	30%
Computer	3%	11%	17%	17%	20%
Internet access	1%	3%	9%	11%	13%

**Source:** LSAC and MCAF parent surveys

### Methodology

The LSAC wave 2.5 survey was conducted between August and December 2007. The methodology involved:

- A mail-out survey completed by parents (n=3,116 parents of cohort B children aged 3-4 at the time of the survey, and n=3,166 parents of cohort K children aged 7-8), conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). There were separate questionnaires for each cohort.

The MCAF research was conducted between March and June 2007. The methodology involved:

- a nationally representative telephone survey of parents of children aged 8-17 (n=751 households)
- a self-complete time-use diary among children living in these households (n=1,003), and a short self-complete survey completed by children on the day after finishing the time-use diary (Day 4 diary questionnaire: n=1,055).