Screen-Time and Non-Verbal Reasoning in Early Childhood: Evidence from the Growing Up in Ireland Study

Engl. transl.: Screen-Time and Non-Verbal Reasoning in Early Childhood: Evidence from the Growing Up in Ireland Study

# Keywords

* screen time
* early childhood
* development

# Details

## Year

2020

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## Language

English

## Authors

Beatty C.;Egan S.M.

## Type

Report and working paper

## Topics

* Learning
* Wellbeing
* Internet usage, practices and engagement

## Sample

9001 children 5 year-olds and their families from Growing up Ireland study sample (wave 3)

# Abstract

" With screen use becoming more prevalent at a younger age, it is important to research the possible impact screen use has on early cognitive development. The current study examines the screen use of 9001 5-year-olds and their reasoning abilities, using data from the Growing Up in Ireland study. Results show that both the amount of daily screen time, along with the type of screen activity children mostly engage in (video games, educational games, TV/video watching, or a mix of all of these activities), have an impact on 5-year-olds’ reasoning ability. Children who mostly engaged in a mix of activities for under three hours a day scored higher on a reasoning ability task than those who engaged in more than three hours of screen time, or those who engaged in an individual screen activity (e.g., television watching) rather than a mix of activities. However, the results also show screen use plays a very minor role in the development of reasoning ability. Consequently, other factors (e.g., home learning environment, parental education levels) should also be investigated when examining the role of screen use in cognitive development. The implications of these findings may therefore be of interest to parent, educators and policy-makers"

# Outcome

"The findings from this study indicate that both screen time and screen activities have an effect on non-verbal reasoning scores in five-year-old children. Children who engaged in a mix of screen activities had significantly higher scores than those who engaged mainly in educational games or TV/video watching. However, children who engaged in over three hours of screen time per day, regardless of the type of screen activity, had significantly lower non-verbal reasoning scores than those who had less than three hours per day of screen time. However, it is worth noting that the majority of 5-year-olds engaged in under two hours of daily screen time (55%), with the most popular screen activity being a mix of all activities (56%). These findings indicate that many Irish children already engage in screen use associated with the highest reasoning ability scores in this study.
The findings in this study highlight the importance of considering the impact of both the amount of screen time and the type of activity when investigating the impact of screens on cognitive development. Using a nationally representative sample, this is the first study to investigate this topic. Future research should continue to explore screen use in large child cohort studies to provide a nuanced understanding of the impact, or lack thereof, that screens have on well-being and development in early childhood. These findings may also have implications for both parents and policymakers when considering the amount and type of appropriate screen use to support healthy development in young children"