

Study: Stark differences in media use between minority and white youth

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Minority youth aged 8 to 18 consume an average of 13 hours of media content a day -- about 4-1/2 hours more than their white counterparts, according to a Northwestern University report, the first national study to focus exclusively on children's media use by race and ethnicity.

"In the past decade, the gap between minority and white youth's daily media use has doubled for blacks and quadrupled for Hispanics," says Northwestern Professor Ellen Wartella, who directed the study and heads the Center on Media and Human Development in the School of Communication. "The big question is what these disparities mean for our children's health and education."

The report finds that [minority children](#) spend one to two additional hours each day watching TV and videos, approximately an hour more listening to music, up to an hour and a half more on computers, and 30 to 40 minutes more [playing video games](#) than their white counterparts.

The only medium for which no difference was found between minority and white [youth](#) was reading print for pleasure. Young people in all groups read for pleasure approximately 30 to 40 minutes a day, the study finds.

"Our study is not meant to blame parents," says Wartella, a longtime Sesame Workshop trustee and Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani Professor in Communication. "We hope to help parents, educators and policymakers better understand how children's media use may influence health and

educational [disparities](#)."

The study, "Children, Media and Race: Media Use Among White, Black, Hispanic and Asian American Children," is based on a new analysis, by race, of data from the Kaiser Family Foundation's previous media use studies. It finds that race-related differences among youth are robust even when controlling for factors including parent education and whether or not children are from single- or two-parent families.

Other report findings:

- Minority youth are especially avid adopters of new media, spending about an hour and a half more each day than White youth using their cell phones, iPods and other mobile devices to watch TV and videos, play games, and listen to music (a total of 3 hours and 7 minutes, or 3:07 in mobile media use among Asians, 2:53 among Hispanics, 2:52 among blacks, and 1:20 among whites).
- Traditional TV viewing remains the most popular of all media -- with black and Hispanic youth consuming an average of more than three hours of live TV daily (3:23 for blacks, 3:08 for Hispanics, 2:28 for Asians and 2:14 for whites).
- TV viewing rates are even higher when data on time-shifting technologies such as TiVo, DVDs, and mobile and online viewing are included. Total daily television consumption then rises to 5:54 for black youth, 5:21 for Hispanics, 4:41 for Asians, and 3:36 for whites.
- Black and Hispanic youth are more likely to have TV sets in their bedrooms (84% of blacks, 77% of Hispanics compared to 64%

of whites and Asians), and to have cable and premium channels available in their bedrooms (42% of blacks and 28% of Hispanics compared to 17% of whites and 14% of Asians).

- Minority youth eat more meals in front of the TV set -- with 78% of black, 67% of Hispanic, 58% of white and 55% of Asian 8- to 18-year-olds reporting that the TV is "usually" on during meals at home.
- Trends such as TV sets in the bedroom and eating meals with the TV on begin at an early age. Black children under 6 are twice as likely to have a TV in their bedroom as whites and more than twice as likely to go to sleep with the TV on. Black children under 6 are almost three times as likely to eat dinner in front of the TV than white children the same age.
- Asian youth spend more time in recreational computer use: nearly 3 hours a day (2:53) compared to just under 2 hours for Hispanics (1:49), nearly 1-1/2 hours for blacks (1:24) and slightly less for whites (1:17).
- Asian youth also are more likely to have computers at home (an average of 2.8 computers per home compared to 2.0 for whites and 1.8 for blacks and Hispanics) and are more likely to have a computer in their bedroom (55%, compared to 39% of Hispanics, 34% of blacks, and 32% of whites).
- No significant differences exist in the time young people spend using a computer for schoolwork, and only modest differences are evident in their tendency to multitask with media while doing homework. White, black and Hispanic youth average 16 minutes a day using a computer for schoolwork while Asians average 20 minutes (not a significant difference). The proportion of young

people who report using entertainment media "most of the time" while doing homework ranges from 28% of whites and 30% of Asians to 35% of blacks and Hispanics.

- There are no significant differences in time spent by youth multi-tasking their media. For example, 37% of white, 44% of black and 41% of Hispanic middle and high school students report using another medium "most of the time" while watching TV.

The report is being released at the June 8 Lambert Family Communication Conference on Children, Media and Race, which will explore the health and educational implications of racial and ethnic differences in young people's media use. The conference begins at 8:30 a.m. at the Pew Charitable Trusts Conference Center, 901 E Street NW, in Washington, D.C.

Participants will include Federal Communications Commission member Mignon Clyburn; National Telecommunications Information Administration Deputy Director Anna Gomez; MTV Tr3s executive Jose Tillan; and experts from the American Academy of Pediatrics, Common Sense Media, the National Hispanic Media Coalition and PBS Kids.

The Northwestern report analyzes by race data from the 2010 Kaiser Family Foundation Generation M2 study on media use among 8- to 18-year-olds and the foundation's 2006 [Media](#) Family study on children from birth to age 6. It is co-authored by Wartella, who also is professor of psychology in Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences; Vicky Rideout, former Kaiser Family Foundation vice president; and Northwestern post-doctoral fellow Alexis Lauricella. The data include a nationally representative sample of 1,858 8- to 18-year-old students and 996 parents of 0- to 6-year-olds. Unless otherwise noted, all findings in this release concern 8- to 18-year-olds.

More information: The report will be available June 8 at http://cmhd.northwestern.edu/?page_id=9

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