

Social media regularly used by 48% of primary age children in Wales, report shows

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Credit: Cardiff University

Nearly half (48%) of Welsh children aged 7 to 11 are regularly using social media, according to [a survey](#) led by academics at Cardiff University.

The School Health Research Network's (SHRN) Primary School Student Health and Wellbeing Survey is delivered in partnership with Public

Health Wales and funded by the Welsh Government.

Its survey of young people aged 11 to 16 in [secondary schools](#) is long-established and internationally recognized for its impact on policy and practice. This latest round of data is the first to investigate the views of younger children aged 7 to 11. In total, 354 [primary schools](#) and 32,606 pupils in Wales took part in the anonymous survey.

Key findings show:

- Nearly half (48%) of all [learners](#) reported using [social media](#) sites or apps a few times a week or every day.
- Overall, most learners (63%) reported having a smartphone. While a minority of Year 3 learners (43%) had their own smartphone, there is a steep increase in ownership by age, with 5 in 6 Year 6 learners (83%) owning one.
- Nearly half (46%) of all learners reported having been bullied at school in the past couple of months, while 28% of Year 6 learners reported having been cyberbullied in the past couple of months.
- Less than half of learners reported exercising four or more times a week.
- The majority (90%) of learners agreed that their teachers care about them, with 89% agreeing that their teachers accept them as they are.
- Nearly two thirds (62%) of learners reported having problems sleeping sometimes or always.

Professor Simon Murphy, director of the Center for the Development, Evaluation, Complexity and Implementation in Public Health Improvement (DECIPHer), which is based at Cardiff University said, "SHRN has been a highly successful research model with all mainstream secondary schools in Wales working with us as partners. This includes

learner and school-level surveys every two years, capturing a regular snapshot of 11 to 16 year olds' health behaviors and well-being.

"However, a focus solely on adolescence is too late for many young people. Expanding SHRN into primary schools offers an opportunity for joined up working across childhood and adolescence, and an avenue to better understand and support events such as transition to secondary school."

Dr. Kelly Morgan senior research fellow at DECIPHer, said, "These findings provide new insights into various aspects of children's health and well-being. The figures demonstrate that technology plays a huge role in children's lives today and more research is needed to fully understand the impact it is having on learning as well as connectedness and mental health. What's also clear from many of the issues we covered is that young people from less affluent families are having less [positive outcomes](#) and that is something that needs to be investigated further to understand how it impacts children as they grow into adults.

"We are grateful to all schools, pupils and parents for working with us on this important new research."

Emily van de Venter, Consultant in Public Health at Public Health Wales, said, "The introduction of the Primary School Student Health and Wellbeing Survey is an important development for Wales, providing valuable insights into factors influencing health and well-being in young children.

"The findings regarding [social media use](#) among primary school children are concerning and highlight the importance of the recent introduction of the UK Online Safety Bill. While social media companies set age restrictions these are not well enforced or regulated. The Online Safety Bill aims to address this. It is also important for adults (parents,

caregivers, and teachers) to be aware of social media use among younger children and to talk to them about potential harms. Early education about appropriate use and action to tackle cyber-bullying is key to enabling positive rather than harmful use of social media."

Provided by Cardiff University

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