

Mobile devices don't reduce shared family time, study finds

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The first study of the impact of digital mobile devices on different aspects of family time in the UK has found that children are spending more time at home with their parents rather than less—but not in shared activities such as watching tv and eating. The increase is in what is called 'alone-together' time, when children are at home with their parents but say they are alone.

Researchers from Oxford University and the University of Warwick found alone-together time has increased by nearly 30 minutes a day between 2000 and 2015, a period which saw the rapid diffusion of high-quality home internet and personal [mobile devices](#) such as smartphones and tablets.

While mobile devices were used at all times families were together in 2015, their use was particularly concentrated during alone-together time.

However, the study, by Dr. Killian Mullan and Dr. Stella Chatzitheochari, also found no evidence that

device use had displaced traditional shared activities like family meals and watching television. Despite widespread concerns about the influence of mobile device use on [family life](#), the amount of time UK families with [children](#) between 8 and 16 spend on shared activities remained largely unchanged at around 90 minutes per day.

The full results of the study, which draws on a nationally [representative sample](#) of close to 5,000 daily diaries from around 2,500 children and their parents, are published today in the *Journal of Marriage and Family*.

- In 2000, on average, children and parents spent 347 minutes per day in the same location. Of this, 95 minutes was alone-together time and 84 minutes were spent in shared activities such as eating or watching TV
- By 2015, on average, children and parents spent 379 minutes per day in the same location, an increase of 32 minutes. Of this, 136 minutes was alone-together time and 87 minutes were spent in shared activities such as eating or watching TV
- In 2015, children and parents used mobile devices used for 38 per cent of total family time, 47 per cent of alone-together time, and 27 per cent of shared [activity](#) time
- Older children (14 – 16) spent less time in shared activities with their parents and more time using devices, which was concentrated during alone-together [time](#).

More information: Killian Mullan et al. Changing Times Together? A Time-Diary Analysis of Family Time in the Digital Age in the United Kingdom, *Journal of Marriage and Family* (2019). [DOI: 10.1111/jomf.12564](https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12564)

Provided by University of Warwick

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