

Media release of 15 December 2020

ZHAW Department of Applied Psychology in cooperation with Swisscom

## JAMES study: Internet use is increasingly shifting to smartphones

Young people in Switzerland are using their mobile phones during the week and especially at weekends for longer than they did two years ago, the JAMES 2020 study by ZHAW and Swisscom shows. Mobile phones are most often used for chatting, surfing or social networking. The most popular social networks are *Instagram*, *Snapchat* and now *TikTok*. The problem is that more and more young people are being sexually harassed online.

In 2020, mobile phone and Internet use is a major part of the everyday media experience of young people in Switzerland. Meanwhile, the self-estimated usage time of mobile phones has increased significantly over the past two years: on a weekend day, it is almost two hours higher at around five hours compared with 2018. During the week, young people use their mobile phones more than three hours a day, 40 minutes longer than in 2018. Internet use, on the other hand, has decreased. Taken together, weekday Internet and mobile phone time remains stable. At the weekend, there is a significant increase of one hour. These are the findings of the most recent JAMES study, which asks about 1000 young people between the ages of 12 and 19 about their media usage. According to the ZHAW researchers, the fact that part of this year's survey took place during the coronavirus lockdown may have influenced the results on media use. "Young people had to stay at home more often during the lockdown and so used their mobile phones all the more intensively", says ZHAW researcher and co-study leader Daniel Süss, who conducted the JAMES study with co-project leader Gregor Waller and his team. In addition, use of the Internet is increasingly shifting to mobile phones.

### Girls communicate, boys prefer gaming

Mobile phones are most often used for messenger services, social networking or for surfing. As all this takes place on the Internet, mobile phone and Internet use are almost impossible to separate. Young people also watched TV or series on their mobile phones more often than before. Usage reveals clear gender differences: girls use their mobile phones more for communication in social networks or via voice messages. They also listen to music more often and take more photos. For boys, games and online videos are more important. The favourite games have hardly changed: *Call of Duty*, *FIFA* and *Grand Theft Auto* have been popular ever since 2010; *Minecraft* and *Fortnite* were added later. The problem is that almost a quarter of younger gamers claim to regularly play games that are not approved for their age. The researchers recommend that adults take a closer look at video games and indeed try playing them themselves. This would help them to better understand what their fascination is, and so better protect minors and guide them in using the games responsibly.

### *TikTok* top, *Facebook* a flop

In addition to mobile phones, music and social networks play a similarly central role in the lives of young people. 90% of the adolescents surveyed have a profile on *Instagram* and *Snapchat*. *TikTok* has become



**Applied  
Psychology**

increasingly popular over the past two years: three quarters of all young people today have a *TikTok* account (2018: 37 per cent). There was a big change on *Facebook*: while the social network was still the most popular in 2014 (79%), in 2020 it is only used regularly by 14% of 12 to 19-year-olds. About a quarter of young people are registered on *Tinder*, but only a few of them are regular users. In the social networks, young people most often view or like contributions from others. Chatting is also popular, i.e. writing personal messages on these platforms.

However, young people are less likely to change settings to protect their privacy on social networks than before. While 81% did so in 2014, the figure is 66% today. The ZHAW researchers suspect that the type of social network plays a role here. "With platforms like *Instagram* and *Snapchat*, collecting likes is important", says Gregor Waller. "If young people protect their privacy, they are less visible and have less reach. This limits opportunities to get likes".

### **Newspapers less and less read**

Over the last ten years, conventional media offerings have steadily lost importance. Young people are reading fewer and fewer newspapers and magazines – either online or in print. They get their information via search engines, social media and video portals. These platforms are also frequently used for entertainment.

Radio or television, too, are becoming decreasingly popular (TV 2010: 83%; 2020: 64%). Playing video games and reading books have stayed level however: 34% and 23% of young people respectively do these daily or several times a week (2010: 32% and 26% respectively). Photos and videos are becoming increasingly important in the everyday lives of young people. "Image content is an important part of self-expression in messenger services and social networks", says Waller. This is particularly evident in the case of girls: 86% often create digital images, compared with 62% of boys. "These images are then distributed in social networks and evaluated by the peer group in the form of comments and likes. "This is an important aspect of the development of gender identity", says Waller. Boys, on the other hand, much more often go in for video games. Two thirds of all boys say they play games regularly, while only one in ten girls does so. The researchers suspect that, in so doing, boys can express their competitive orientation or identify with male role models.

### **Streaming services continue to grow**

There is a significant change in the use of entertainment-oriented streaming services: three quarters of households with teenagers now have a subscription such as *Netflix* to stream movies and series (2016: 38 per cent). Music streaming, too, (2016: 29%; 2020: 59%) and flat-rate gaming subscriptions (2016: 12%; 2020: 38%) have increased significantly, continuing a trend that was already apparent in 2016. Here, too, coronavirus-related restrictions may have contributed to their greater prevalence. "The corona pandemic lockdown was stressful for young people", says Süss. "They probably increasingly used streaming services to take their minds off things or to escape from their stressful reality".

### **Family even more important**

A further trend can be seen in non-media leisure activities. Compared to 2010, 12- to 19-year-olds are doing more with their families (2010: 16%; 2020: 29% daily/several times a week), but meet friends less often (2010: 81%; 2020: 62%). The ZHAW researchers suspect that the corona pandemic has further reinforced this societal trend of 'social cocooning'. At the same time, however, this development also



corresponds to a longer-term trend that has already become apparent over the past four years. There is a tendency to an increase in creative activities such as making music or painting and handicrafts, which may also be due to corona-related restrictions. As in previous years, many young people regularly do sport or sometimes do nothing at all.

### **Sexual harassment is on the rise**

One quarter of young people have had experience of cyberbullying. This included one in ten 12- and 13-year-olds. Girls experience cyberbullying slightly more often than boys. Even more frequently than cyberbullying, young people are affected by sexual harassment on the Internet: almost half of all young people (44%) have been contacted on the Internet by a stranger with unwanted sexual intentions. Since 2014, this number has risen significantly (2014: 19%). Girls are more frequently affected than boys (55% vs. 28%). "Of course, teenagers at this age are increasingly interested in sexual content. But it's quite a different matter when young people are unwillingly confronted with it", says Michael In Albon, Swisscom's Youth Media Protection Officer. The significant increase in such harassment is also due to the trivialisation of sexualised content on the Internet. "Our experiences from media courses are in line with these figures and there is a need to raise awareness among young people on the one hand, and parents and teachers on the other", In Albon insists. In addition, boys have to be shown behavioural strategies. "Setting your own boundaries, saying no, blocking the sender and openly discussing the incident with parents or caregivers" are important elements in this context.

The older the young people are, the more experience they have had of pornography and sexting. Among 18-/19-year-olds, a good half have already looked at pornographic content on their mobile phones or computers or have received sexual pictures from others. The interest in erotic, sexual content is part of growing up and developing one's own sexuality. According to the researchers, however, it can also be problematic, as some pornographic content can convey a false or one-sided image of sexuality and can sometimes be disturbing. Erotic and explicit self-portrayal could also be abused and play a role in cyberbullying and sexual harassment.



**Applied  
Psychology**

### **The JAMES study**

The JAMES study maps the way young people in Switzerland use various media. The abbreviation JAMES stands (in German) for Swiss Youth Activities Media Survey. It is conducted every two years. Since 2010, the Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW) has been surveying a representative sample of over a thousand young people aged between 12 and 19 in Switzerland's three main language areas about their media use and leisure activities.

The sixth iteration of the survey in 2020 enables a picture of media use over a whole decade to be drawn. In 2021, an anniversary edition will be published, highlighting the trends and results of the last 10 years. This year's JAMES survey took place during the corona-related lockdown and had to be switched to an online survey due to school closures. The results should be interpreted in this context.

### **The ZHAW School of Applied Psychology**

The ZHAW's School of Applied Psychology is the leading centre of excellence for the teaching and practice of scientifically-based psychology in Switzerland. It comprises the Psychological Institute and the Institute of Applied Psychology (IAP). Through bachelor's and master's degree courses, research and development as well as consultancy and further training, the school makes practical use of sound scientific findings for the benefit of individuals and companies alike in their private lives and at work.

[www.zhaw.ch/psychologie](http://www.zhaw.ch/psychologie)

### **Swisscom as cooperation partner of ZHAW**

Using different electronic devices to access media is part of the everyday lives of young people today. Media literacy and the protection of minors are among the core cultural skills that include reading and arithmetic. Swisscom has been involved in education since 2001. More than 6000 Swiss schools use its Internet for Schools programme, in which media experts visit more than 30,000 pupils, parents and teachers a year to promote media literacy. Within the framework of its entry into the e-sports industry, Swisscom attaches great importance to media support for children and adolescents and providing a variety of information. The JAMES Study is commissioned by Swisscom and conducted by the ZHAW every two years.

### **Further information:**

[www.zhaw.ch/psychologie/james](http://www.zhaw.ch/psychologie/james)

[www.swisscom.ch/james](http://www.swisscom.ch/james)

#jamesstudie2020

### **Contacts:**

ZHAW Applied Psychology, +41 58 934 84 08, [tanja.vonrotz@zhaw.ch](mailto:tanja.vonrotz@zhaw.ch)

Swisscom Ltd, Media Service, 3050 Berne, +41 58 221 98 04, [media@swisscom.com](mailto:media@swisscom.com)