

Like this meta-analysis: Screen media and mental health



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The question of whether screen time, particularly time spent with social media and smartphones, influences mental health outcomes remains a topic of considerable debate among policy makers, the public, and scholars. Some scholars have argued passionately that screen media may be contributing to an increase in poor psychosocial functioning and risk of suicide, particularly among teens. Other scholars contend that the evidence is not yet sufficient to support such a dramatic conclusion. The current meta-analysis included 37 effect sizes from 33 separate studies. To consider the most recent research, all studies analyzed were published between 2015 and 2019. Across studies, evidence suggests that screen media plays little role in mental health concerns. In particular, there was no evidence that screen media contribute to suicidal ideation or other mental health outcomes. This result was also true when investigating smartphones or social media specifically. Overall, as has been the case for previous media such as video games, concerns about screen time and mental health are not based in reliable data.

Public Significance Statement—Considerable debate has examined whether exposure to screen media including smartphones and social media is associated with reduced mental health. This analysis suggests that, at present, the data are unable to support such a belief.