



ACMAsphere

Australia's regulator for broadcasting, the internet,
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ACMA report provides real insight into how Australian families use media

ACMA recently released comprehensive research that provides an up-to-date picture of how Australian families use electronic media and communications in everyday life.

The *Media and Communications in Australian Families 2007* report describes the day-to-day media and communications experiences of young people—what devices they use, when, where and for how long—illustrating the importance of these activities to Australian families, regardless of income, education and location

The research shows that the internet has grown in its importance to families, with nine in 10 Australian families surveyed having an internet connection, and three-quarters of these having broadband—a large increase from the seven per cent of homes with internet in 1995. Almost all parents surveyed saw the internet as beneficial for their children, mainly as providing learning or educational opportunities.

Australian families live in media-rich households. In addition to high internet penetration, most families have three or more televisions and three or more mobile phones. Almost every family has a computer and a DVD player.

The research also shows that, overall, families have found a reasonable balance between media and non-media activities. Electronic media and communication activities overall take up around half of children and young people's aggregate discretionary time, and this proportion hasn't changed since 1995. In considering their child's television viewing, gaming, internet use and mobile phone use, the vast majority of parents (80–90 per cent) indicated that each is fairly easy or very easy to manage.

This detailed picture of everyday life is informed by an overview of the current state of academic knowledge about the influences of media and communications activities on children and families.

The research project comprised two major studies—community research and a review of academic research literature.

The community research was conducted by social research consultant Urbis and involved a national survey of 751 Australian families, including time-use diaries for 1,003 children aged 8–17 years. The survey identifies the electronic media and communications devices in family homes, the time children spend using them, parental attitudes to that use, and the way families negotiate children's use of media and communications. Comparisons with findings of a similar study in 1995 are also included.

The review of the academic literature relating to the influences of electronic media and communications devices on children and families was conducted by the Centre for Applied Research in Social Science at the University of New England. The review examined the academic literature about long-term effects and influences, and research traditions in communication and cultural studies, sociology, education and public health to help consider the psychological effects and influences of media and communication activities on family and society more broadly.

The *Media and Communications in Australian Families 2007* report is on the ACMA website at www.acma.gov.au (About ACMA: Publications & research).



KEY FINDINGS

The key findings of the community research include:

- most Australian families in the study have three or more televisions, three or more mobile phones, a computer and a DVD player
- nine in 10 Australian families surveyed have an internet connection and three-quarters of families have broadband
- family households are more connected than households generally
- family households in the study with internet connections have increased from seven per cent in 1995 to 91 per cent in 2007
- children spend on average about an hour and a quarter a day online
- electronic media and communication activities take up around half of the discretionary time of children and young people, which has not changed since 1995
- watching television remains the electronic media or communication activity that takes up the largest amount of time—an average of just under two hours per day.

A report on
research into
internet use
in Australia
is featured
on page 5.