



Fact Sheet:

DIGITAL EQUITY GAPS

The Common Sense Census: Media Use by Tweens and Teens

There are substantial differences in media use among children from lower-, middle-, and higher-income homes. Children from lower-income homes tend to have less access to devices but spend far more time with media—especially screen media—when they do have access, compared with children from middle- and higher-income homes. Understanding digital equity gaps is important for informing public policies on issues including affordable Internet access and media literacy education. Below is a snapshot of media use among tweens and teens from different socioeconomic groups.

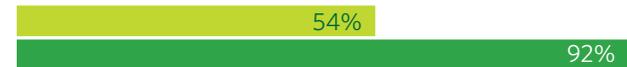
Ownership and Access

- Children in lower-income families are significantly less likely than their wealthier peers to live in homes with digital technologies. For example, 54 percent of lower-income teens (whose families make less than \$35,000 a year) have a laptop in the home, compared with 92 percent of higher-income teens (\$100,000 a year or more).
- One in 10 lower-income teens has only dial-up Internet at home, compared with none of the higher-income teens. Lower-income teens are much less likely to have their own smartphones as well (51 percent, compared with 78 percent of higher-income teens).
- Lower-income tweens and teens are significantly more likely to have a TV in their bedrooms (66 percent and 69 percent, respectively) than higher-income tweens (29 percent) and teens (46 percent). This could be because they are more likely to share rooms with older siblings or to sleep in a multipurpose room that is used as a living room and bedroom; or it could be due to differences in family preferences or the lack of availability of other entertainment options.

OWNERSHIP OF DEVICES, BY INCOME

- Lower-income (less than \$35,000 a year)
- Higher-income (\$100,000 a year or more)

Laptop in home (teens)



Has own laptop (teens)



Has own smartphone (teens)



Tablet in home (tweens)



Use of Media

- Tweens and teens from lower-income families spend more time with media than those from higher-income homes. Among teens, it's a difference of two hours and 45 minutes a day on average (10:35 vs. 7:50 of total media use).
- Generally, it's not that lower-income youth are more likely to engage in media-related activities; it's that those who do use media spend more time doing so. For example, 80 percent of lower-income teens and 82 percent of higher-income teens watch TV or videos on any given day, but the lower-income teens who watch do so for an hour and a half more than the higher-income teens who watch (4:14 vs. 2:41).
- Almost half (47 percent) of lower-income teens use smartphones on any given day, and those who do spend an average of 6:18 doing so. This is well above the 4:50 spent by middle-income teens who use smartphones (57 percent do so on any given day) and far more than the 3:03 average among the 69 percent of higher-income teens who use smartphones on any given day.

- Lower-income teens who use social media do so for an hour and a half more (2:56) than children in higher-income homes (1:26).
- Among tweens who listen to music, tweens from lower-income families average 54 minutes more per day than higher-income tweens. On average among all tweens, lower-income tweens listen up to 33 minutes more per day than higher-income tweens.

AVERAGE TIME SPENT USING MEDIA PER DAY, BY INCOME

- Lower-income (less than \$35,000 a year)
- Middle-income (between \$35,000 and \$99,999 a year)
- Higher-income (\$100,000 a year or more)

TWEENS

Total screen media time



Total media time



TEENS

Total screen media time



Total media time



Computers and Homework

- The frequency with which teens use computers for homework varies significantly by income.
- Under a quarter (22 percent) of lower-income teens use computers for homework "every day," compared with 39 percent of higher-income teens.
- Computers are used more frequently for homework by higher-income teens (83 percent use it weekly or more often) compared to lower-income teens (61 percent use it weekly or more often).

FREQUENCY OF COMPUTER USE FOR HOMEWORK AMONG TEENS, BY FAMILY INCOME

- Weekly or more often
- Monthly or less often

Income Level	Weekly or more often	Monthly or less often
Lower-income	61%	39%
Middle-income	74%	26%
Higher-income	83%	17%

Tablet Ownership and Use

- Even among lower-income tweens, a large majority (71 percent) have tablets in the home, and nearly half (48 percent) have their own tablets.
- Higher-income tweens have greater access to tablets than lower-income tweens: Eighty-nine percent have one in the home, 56 percent have their own, and 71 percent use one at least weekly.

TABLET OWNERSHIP AND USE BY INCOME, AMONG TWEENS

	All 8- to 12-year-olds	Lower Income	Middle Income	Higher Income
Percent who have a tablet in the home	80	71a	80b	89c
Percent who have their own tablets	53	48a	53ab	56b
Percent who use a tablet at least weekly	63	55a	64b	71c

Superscripts (a, b, c) are used to denote whether differences between groups are statistically significant ($p < .05$). Items with different superscripts differ significantly. Items that do not have a superscript, or that share a common superscript, do not differ significantly.