

The State of the Youth:

To infinity... and autoplay

The childhood summer is changing. Today, **75% of kids (ages 7–11) say they’d rather watch videos than play with toys***, and Aura Parents’ data shows the impact: as screen time rises over the summer, wellbeing drops. **One in three children (ages 8–17) falls from a healthy range during the school year into “low” digital wellbeing**, linked to changes in mood, stress, and sleep.

*Data Source–Talker | Data Source–Aura Device Data, Wellbeing Index

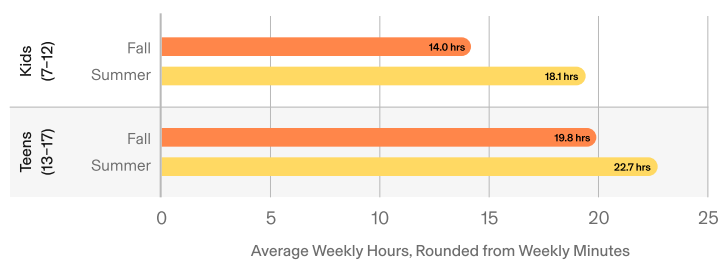


School’s out, screens are in

The screen time climb

On average, younger kids (7–12) log over four more hours of screen time per week during the summer — **a 30% jump compared to fall**. Teens (13–17) add nearly three hours, a **15% increase**.

Average weekly hours on a device: summer vs. fall



Every day becomes Saturday

Without the structure of the school day, weekday device usage no longer dips — it stays at weekend levels.



The endless summer scroll

Throughout the summer, this pattern shows up clearly in kids’ on-screen behaviors:



Approximately **70%** of teens (13–17) are on their devices by mid-afternoon.



More than **1 in 10** kids (7–17) are still on their devices at midnight.

2X

Nighttime messaging activity **more than doubles** across age groups, compared to the school year.

Data Source–Aura Device Data

The summer top 5

Come summer, on-screen activity clusters around a familiar set of platforms. These are the top five by time spent:

Kids 7-12

Teens 13-17



YouTube



YouTube



Roblox



TikTok



TikTok



Instagram



Netflix



Snapchat



Spotify



Roblox



Data Source-Aura Device Data

Where the time goes



For younger kids, most of their time is concentrated in just a couple of places: YouTube and Roblox together make up about **86% of total time spent** across the top five platforms.



Roblox really stands out, with younger kids spending more than **4x as much time** there as on the next most-used app, TikTok.



For teens, it's a different story: Social Media usage **makes up more than 50%** of total time spent on devices.

Data Source-Aura Device Data

Lazy and hazy, by design

This always-on pattern isn't accidental, it's built into how these platforms work. The result: stopping takes more effort than continuing. When surveyed:

Parents are seeing it:

63%

of parents say infinite scroll makes it harder to set boundaries.

41%

of parents say they have to frequently physically intervene or call out to get their child to stop.

Kids (7-11) feel that pull, too:

38%

say they're looking for something and want to keep watching until they find it.

33%

say they want to watch their favorite videos again and again.

25%

say their brain feels quiet and they don't have to think.

Autoplay adds momentum:

47%

Nearly half of kids say they had a device start playing a video they didn't pick that made them feel worried or confused.

57%

More than half of them kept watching anyway, even when it made them feel confused or yucky.

Data Source-Talker



A childhood culture shift

For kids and parents, screen time is hard to stop — and even harder to replace, as childhood and technology become increasingly intertwined.

Displacement:

57% of parents say they've noticed infinite scrolling replace a hobby their child once loved, like reading or drawing.

Dependence:

61% of kids (7-11) say it's easier to get bored without a screen, and **79%** say watching the same content as their friends helps them feel closer to them.

Distraction:

73% of parents say their child is less patient with slower-paced content, and **71%** say their child can't make it through a 90-minute movie without reaching for a second device.

When kids' tech time is interrupted, fights follow:

56% of parents report irritability or "tech-rage" when devices are taken away.

Data Source—Talker



The new social companion

AI adds a new dimension to this shift:

About 1 in 3 parents say their child is unsure what AI is, sees it as a mix of human and machine, or believes it's human-like or real.

Nearly half (46%) say their child at least sometimes seems to believe AI has thoughts or feelings.

Nearly half (45%) of kids (7-11) say talking to a digital companion feels like talking to a character or a friend.

Today, screens aren't just delivering content — they're responding, blurring the line between tool, companion, and trusted voice.

Data Source—Talker

90s kids at heart

Even as childhood shifts online, kids (7-11) still want bikes, backyards, and being with friends.

More than half (52%) recognize that too much screen time isn't good for them.

That shows up in what they're looking forward to this summer: kids prefer real-world play, with **36%** choosing time with friends and **24%** opting to go outside — compared to just **20%** who say using their tablet.

Parents see it too, with the **majority (60%)** saying their kids would stay outside longer with simple offline options.

The bottom line: The appetite for a more present, offline childhood is still there, but in an environment built on infinite scroll and constant engagement, stepping away takes more than intention.

Data Source-Talker



52% of kids recognize that too much screen time isn't good for them.

Methodology

Data for this report derives from three primary sources. The first is Aura's commercial data from 29,868 children aged 7-17, representing more than 1,584,665 days of activity from summer (6/16-8/8/2025) relative to fall (9/15-11/7/2025), respectively. Data was analyzed to examine device and platform engagement for children of different age groups (younger=7-12; older=13-17) over the different seasons. The second source is Aura's Digital Wellbeing Index (DWI), a composite score examining 17 dimensions of digital life, anchored in real-world evidence stemming from Aura's TECHWISE study that aggregates sleep health, self-regulation, and engagement quality to derive a score that best predicts psychological well-being and digital stress. The third source comes from Talker Research findings, surveying 2,000 American parents of kids aged 7-11 and their kids ages 7-11, who have access to the internet; the survey was commissioned by Aura and administered and conducted online by Talker Research between Apr 28, 2026, and May 1, 2026. Visit the Talker Research Process and Methodology page [here](#) and read the full questionnaire [here](#).