

The Common Sense Census: Media Use by Kids Age Zero to Eight, 2020

Exploring the Digital Divide

What is the digital divide?

The digital divide refers to the inequities between people of different backgrounds in terms of their access to media and technology, particularly the internet and modern devices at home.

The digital divide in 2020 (by income)

In 2020, before the coronavirus pandemic, there were significant gaps by household income in access to devices and technology such as:

- Computers at home
- Internet
- Tablets
- Internet-connected televisions
- Subscription services (e.g., Netflix, Hulu)

There was about equal access to:

- Smartphones
- TV sets
- Cable

Device and technology access in the home, by household income, 2020

Among 0- to 8-year-olds, percent who have each item in their home:

Device	All children (age 0–8)	Lower income (<\$30,000)	Middle income (\$30,000 to \$75,000)	Higher income (>\$75,000)	Percentage gap between lower and higher income
Computer	88%	63% ^a	85% ^b	95% ^c	32
Tablet	75%	59% ^a	67% ^a	83% ^b	24
Internet access	89%	74% ^a	85% ^b	94% ^c	20
Internet-connected TV	84%	70% ^a	83% ^b	89% ^c	19
Subscription service (e.g., Netflix, Hulu)	87%	79% ^a	83% ^a	91% ^b	12
Smartphone	97%	95% ^a	96% ^a	99% ^b	4
Cable or satellite TV	45%	45%	38% ^a	49% ^b	4
TV set	97%	98%	96%	98%	0

Note: *Internet access* is defined as anything other than dial-up or a data-only plan. Items with different superscripts differ significantly ($p < .05$). Items with no superscript, or those with the same superscript, do not differ significantly. Significance should be read across rows (across income groups).

Changes in the digital divide from 2011 to 2020 (by income)

- From 2011 to 2020, there was significant closure of the digital divide by household income for almost all devices (with the exception of tablets).
- From 2017 to 2020, there was:
 - Little progress closing the divide between internet access and tablet ownership divide.
 - A wider divide in access to a home computer.
- In 2020, there was virtually no digital divide for smartphone ownership by income.

Digital access among lower-income families with children 8 and under, 2011 to 2020

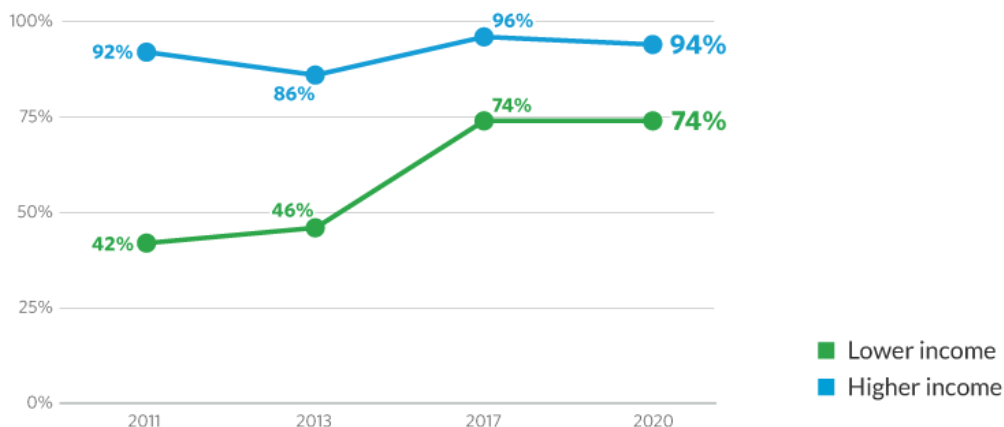
Among 0- to 8-year-olds in lower-income families, percent whose family has each of the following at home:

	2011	2013	2017	2020
Computer	48% ^a	53% ^{ac}	72% ^b	63% ^{bc}
Internet access	42% ^a	46% ^a	74% ^b	74% ^b
Any mobile device in home	34% ^a	61% ^b	96% ^c	97% ^c
Smartphone	27% ^a	51% ^b	89% ^c	95% ^d
Tablet	2% ^a	20% ^b	61% ^c	59% ^c

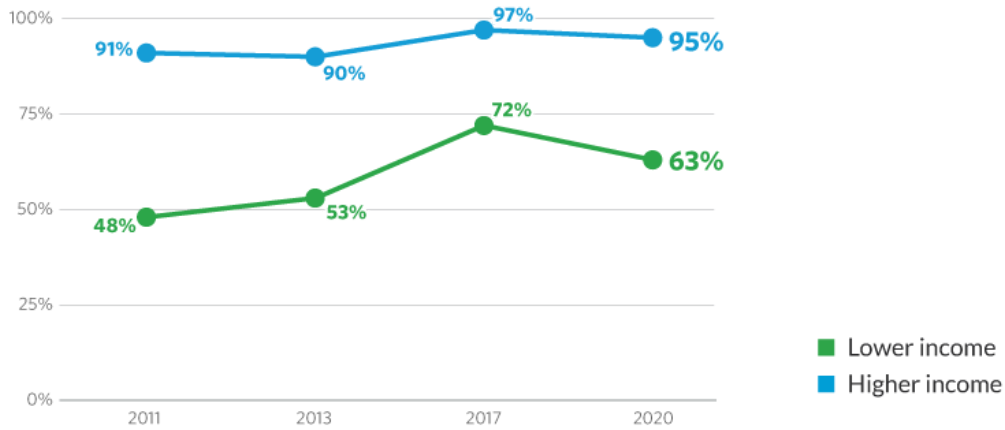
Note: Items with different superscripts differ significantly ($p < .05$); items that share a common superscript do not differ significantly. Significance should be read across rows (over time).

Internet access at home, by household income, 2011 to 2020

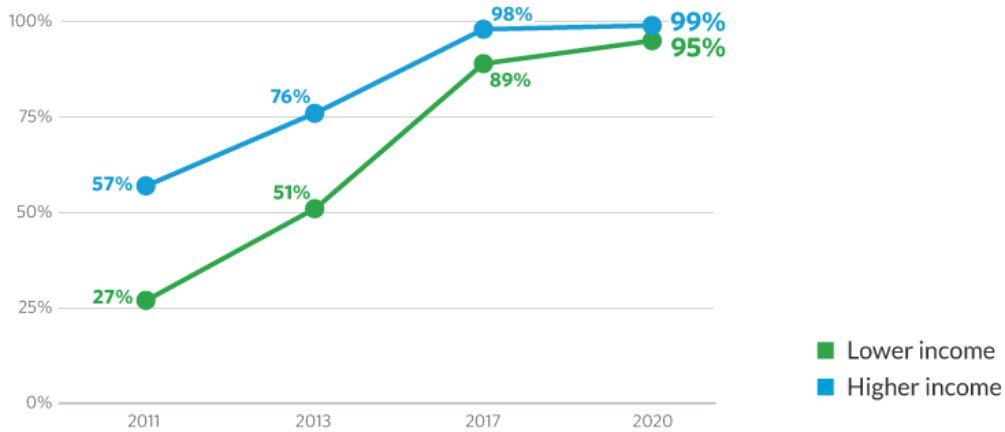
Percent of 0- to 8-year-olds with internet access at home



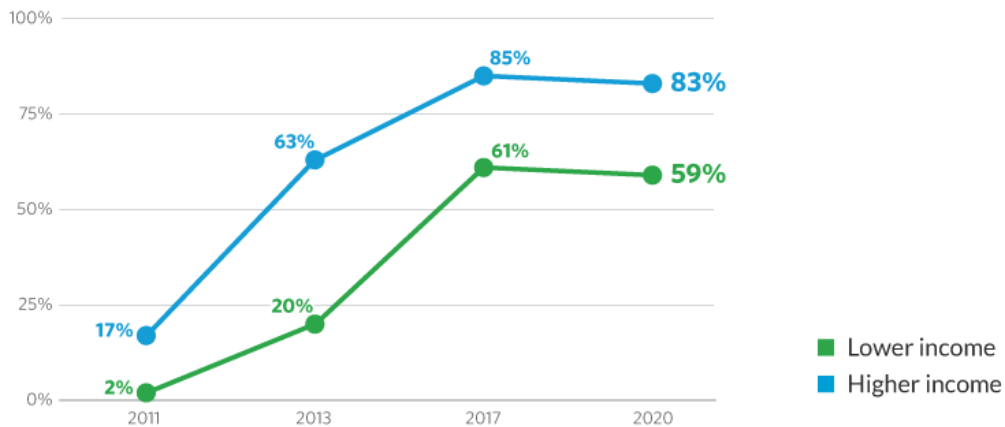
Computer access at home, by household income, 2011 to 2020
 Percent of 0- to 8-year-olds with a laptop or desktop computer at home



Smartphone access at home, by household income, 2011 to 2020
 Percent of 0- to 8-year-olds with a smartphone at home



Tablet access at home, by household income, 2011 to 2020
 Percent of 0- to 8-year-olds with a tablet at home

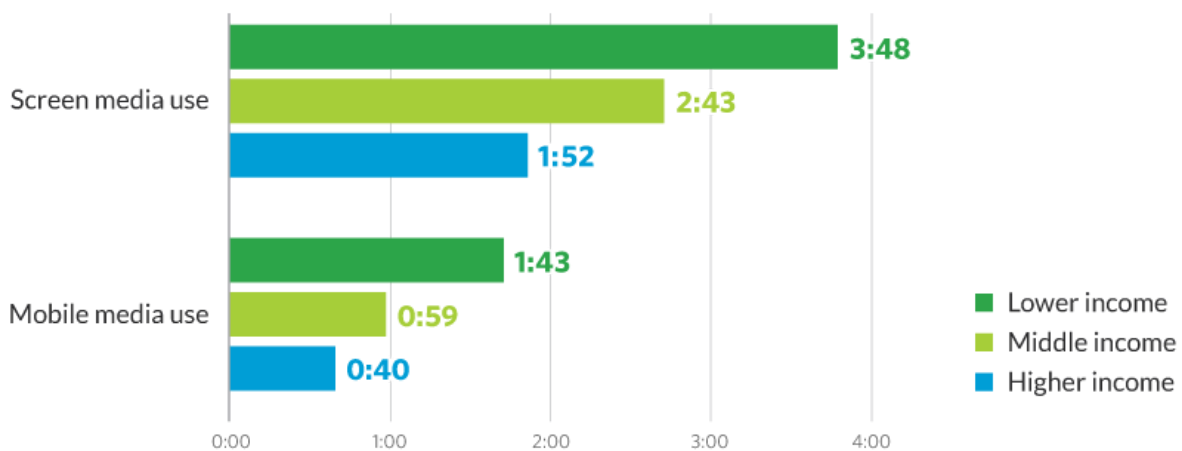


What does this mean for overall screen time?

- Despite the lack of access to some key media and technology, children from lower-income homes spend more time on average with screen media (including mobile media) each day than those from higher-income homes (3:48 vs. 1:52).
- The gap in screen time (including with mobile media) has widened since 2011.
- The most common use of mobile devices (at least pre-pandemic) was to watch television and videos, and this does not differ by income.

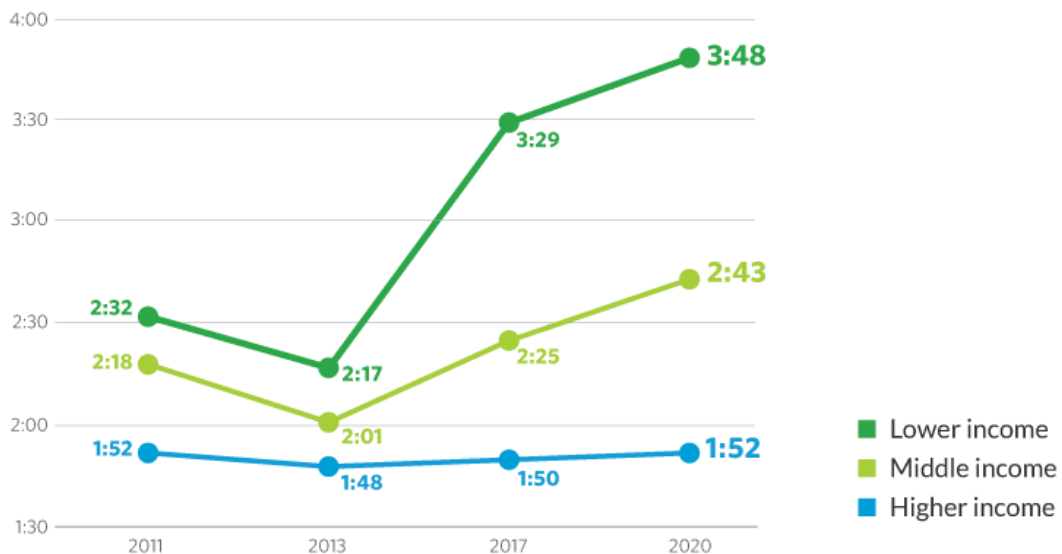
Screen media use, by household income, 2020

Among 0- to 8-year-olds, average amount of screen media used per day



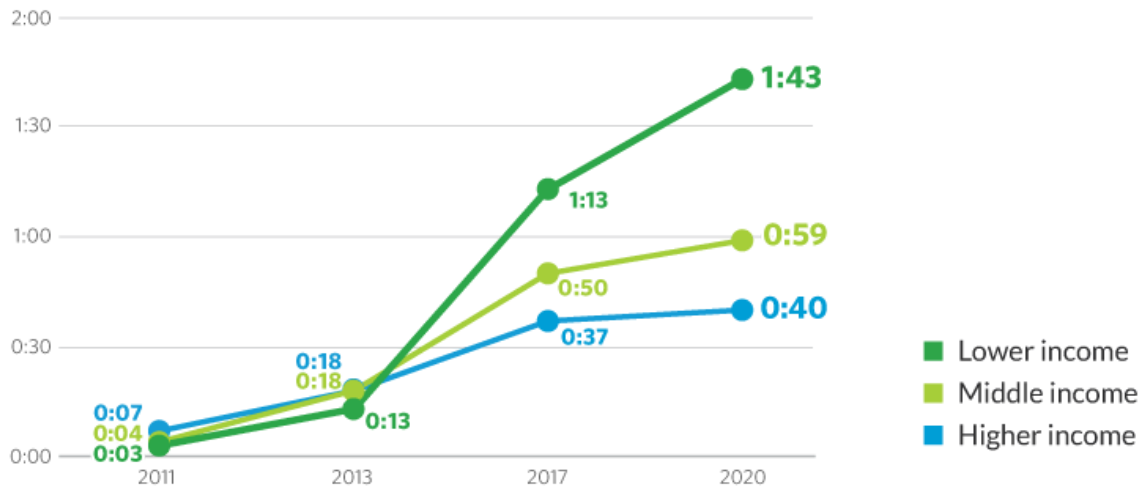
Screen media use, by household income, 2011 to 2020

Average time 0- to 8-year-olds spend daily with screen media



Mobile media use, by household income, 2011 to 2020

Average time 0- to 8-year-olds spend daily with mobile media



Time spent with mobile media, by household income, 2020

Among 0- to 8-year-olds, average daily time spent using a mobile device to:

Activity	Lower income (<\$30,000)	Middle income (\$30,000 to \$75,000)	Higher income (>\$75,000)
Watch TV/videos	:50 ^a	:28 ^b	:22 ^b
Play mobile games	:19 ^a	:16 ^a	:10 ^b
Video-chat	:02	:01	*
Read	:10 ^a	:04 ^b	:03 ^b
Do homework on a tablet	:03	:01	:01
Anything else	:19 ^a	:09 ^b	:04 ^c
Total mobile media	1:43^a	:59^b	:40^c

Note: Items with different superscripts differ significantly ($p < .05$). Items with no superscript, or those with the same superscript, do not differ significantly. Significance should be read across rows (across income groups).

* Indicates that the number is between 0.5 and 1 minute.