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## **Excessive social media use harms children's mental health**

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Children who go on social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram for more than three hours a day are more likely to have mental health problems, a study has shown



*By Sophie Jamieson*

*Photo: Alamy*

Children who spend more than three hours each school day on social media sites like Facebook and Twitter are more than twice as likely to suffer poor mental health, official figures have shown.

While 12 percent of children who spend no time on social networking websites have symptoms of mental ill-health, the figure rises to 27 percent for those who are glued to the sites for three hours or more a day, a report from the Office for National Statistics showed.

Experts say such children risk delays in their emotional and social development because they spend so much time in the virtual world.

Around eight percent of young people aged between 10 and 15 spend over three hours every day using social media sites and apps like Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and Snapchat. The majority of young people (56 percent) reported spending up to three hours a day on social media. Only 11 percent of those children suffered mental health problems.

Girls are far more likely than boys to spend excessive amounts of time on social sites. One in ten girls (11 percent) were found to be in the top category for time spent on the websites, compared to only one in twenty (5 percent) of boys.

The report said that social media “may provide an additional way to connect with others and form relationships”, they are also potentially “a source of social comparison, cyber bullying and isolation”.