

## Internet use among high school students in Novi Sad, Serbia, 2017

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### Background:

Internet use in Serbia is growing. In 2016, 67.1% of population in Serbia was using Internet. Adolescents are population at risk of excessive Internet use because their boundary setting skills are low and peer influence is high. The objective of our study was assessment of the prevalence of Internet use among first grade high school students and gender differences in Internet use.

### Methods:

This cross-sectional study was conducted among first grade high school students in Novi Sad in December 2017. The final sample included 1067 participants. The survey followed method of the European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs (ESPAD) and used their last questionnaire translated from English to Serbian. For testing gender differences Chi-square and t-test were used.

### Results:

Out of 1067 participants 55.0% were females and all of them were born in 2002. Majority of them (90.7%) use the Internet for leisure activities almost everyday. During the last 7 days they usually spent 2-3 hours on the Internet on a typical weekday and 6 or more hours on a typical weekend day. During the last 30 days 29.9% of them spent 6 hours or more on social media. Students that reported playing online games usually spent 2-3 hours per typical day. Boys have spent significantly more time on the Internet playing online games than girls ( $p < 0.05$ ). Majority of the participants that reported using the Internet for reading, surfing and searching for

information only used it for this activity for 1 hour on a typical day (25.5%).

**Conclusions:**

Results show that main purpose of the Internet use was for entertainment and that boys are using the Internet for playing online games significantly more than girls. High school students should spend less time on the Internet or use it for studying and information search. Further research is needed in order to enable us to create preventive programs that will be usefull in our country.

**Key messages:**

- Accessibility and availability of the Internet is growing therefore it is important to estimate the prevalence of use and time spent on the Internet by adolescents.
- Better understanding of the Internet use by adolescents can give us opportunity for implementation of more effective preventive programs.