



**Vilnius  
universitetas**

# **Internet use in preadolescence: whether and how it has changed during quarantine due to Covid-19 pandemic**

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- **School-aged children's Internet use in relation to socioemotional development and parenting practices in Latvia, Lithuania and Taiwan: a longitudinal study**
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- [www.mediavaikai.lt](http://www.mediavaikai.lt)

„No one is free who has not obtained the empire of himself“ *Pythagoras*

The most powerful control we can ever attain is to be in control of ourselves.

Are we still in control of ourselves when online?

Or are we controlled by Internet?

Powerful and Inclusive Technologies?

Are children in control of themselves?



# Internet use in preadolescence

- The more and the younger children spend more time online
- Need to recognize the early risks for excessive / compulsive / problematic Internet use
- Compulsive Internet Use (CIU) - marked by difficulty in controlling one's use of the Internet, the need for increasingly time spent using the Internet, and withdrawal symptoms such as irritability when one is not using the Internet (Meerkerk et al., 2007; 2009)
- (Inter)related to mental health problems and Internet use (time spent online)
- ...and here comes the pandemic due to Covid-19...
- Quarantine and distant education in March-May, 2020

## SCREENS DON'T QUARANTINE:

HOW THE PANDEMIC IS CHANGING  
OUR MEDIA CONSUMPTION



# Research questions

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How much time elementary school / preadolescent children (aged 10 to 11 years old) spend online?

Whether and how Internet use changed during quarantine?

What about compulsivity of Internet use?

What are the risks for compulsive Internet use in preadolescence?

# Methods

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## Participants

**Sample 1:** 293 parents of children aged 9 to 11 years old, in Autumn 2019.

Part of project funded by LMTLT (co.no. S-LLT-18-3) in collaboration with LA and TW; children from four elementary school in Vilnius

**Sample 2:** 97 parents of children 10-11 years old, in late Spring, 2020.

Part of project funded by LMTLT (co.no. S-COV-20-11) and part of longitudinal study; children mainly from Kaunas, 2nd largest city of LT

## Procedure

Parental reports, mostly mothers (Sample 1: 87%; Sample 2: 97%)

Informed consents; collaboration with schools (Sample 1) and agreement to take part in longitudinal study from year 2009 (Sample 2)

## Measures

Compulsive Internet Use Scale, CIUS, very good reliability and validity (Meerkerk et al., 2008; Jusienė, Laurinaitytė, Pakalniškienė, 2020)

Screen time on schooldays and weekends; Activities when online

Behavioral and emotional problems, and Prosocial behavior; Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman, 2005)



# Results: Time online

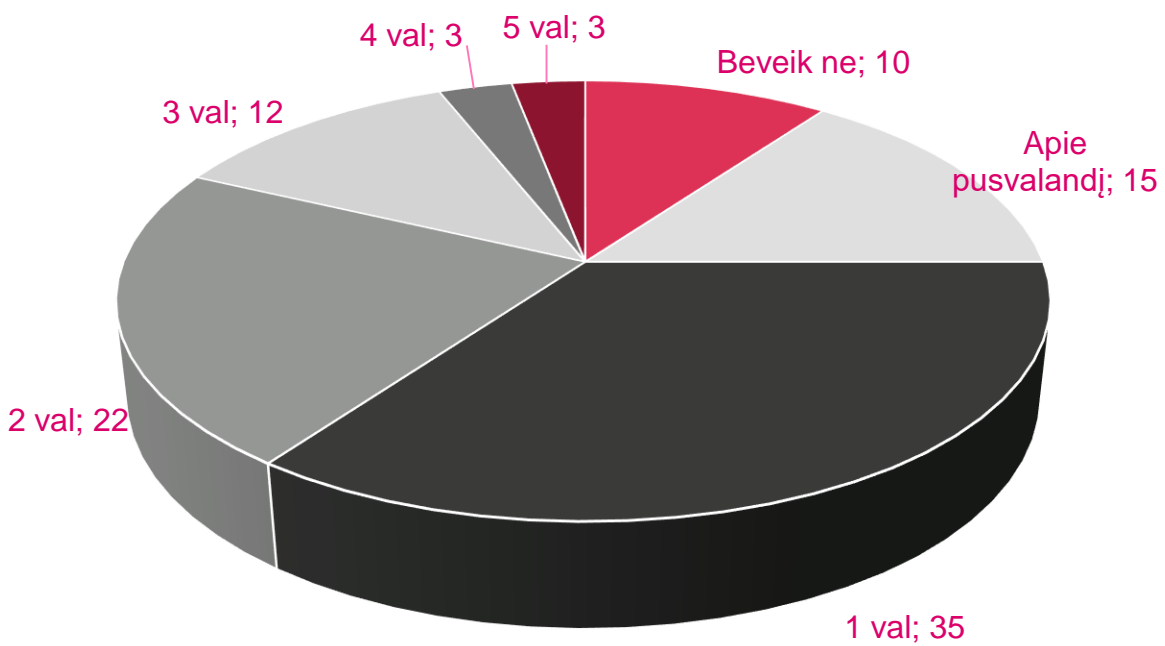
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**In year 2019 as compared to 2020  
(quarantine)**

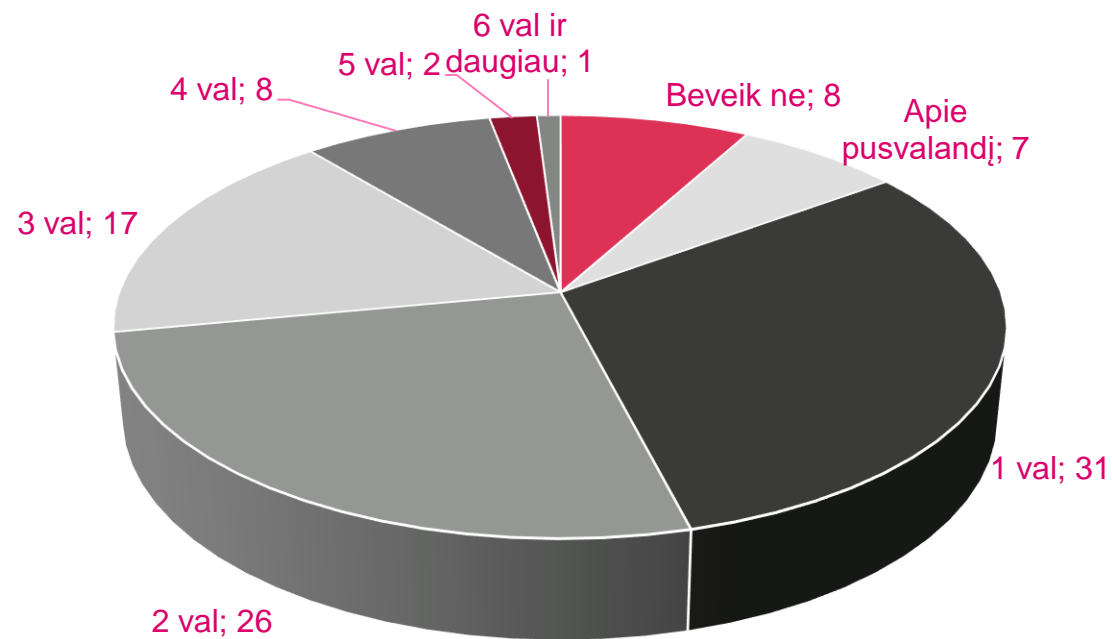
# TIME ONLINE in 2019; %



## Regular school days

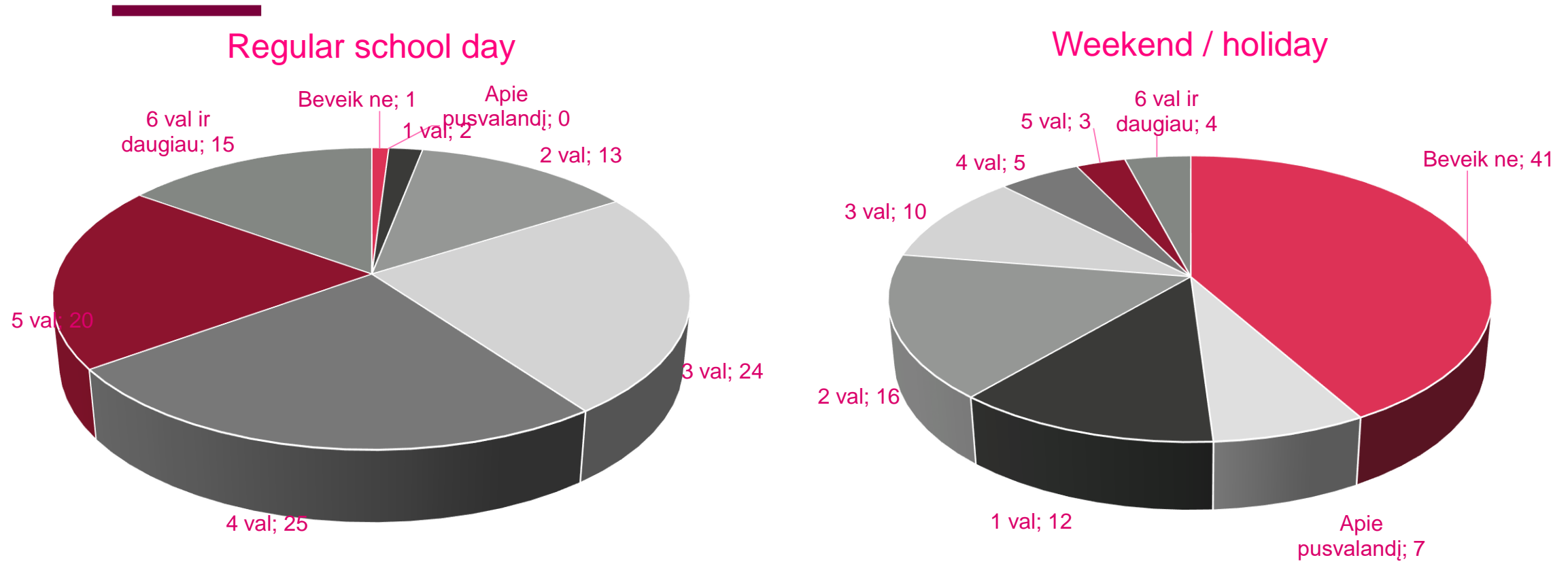


## Weekend / holiday



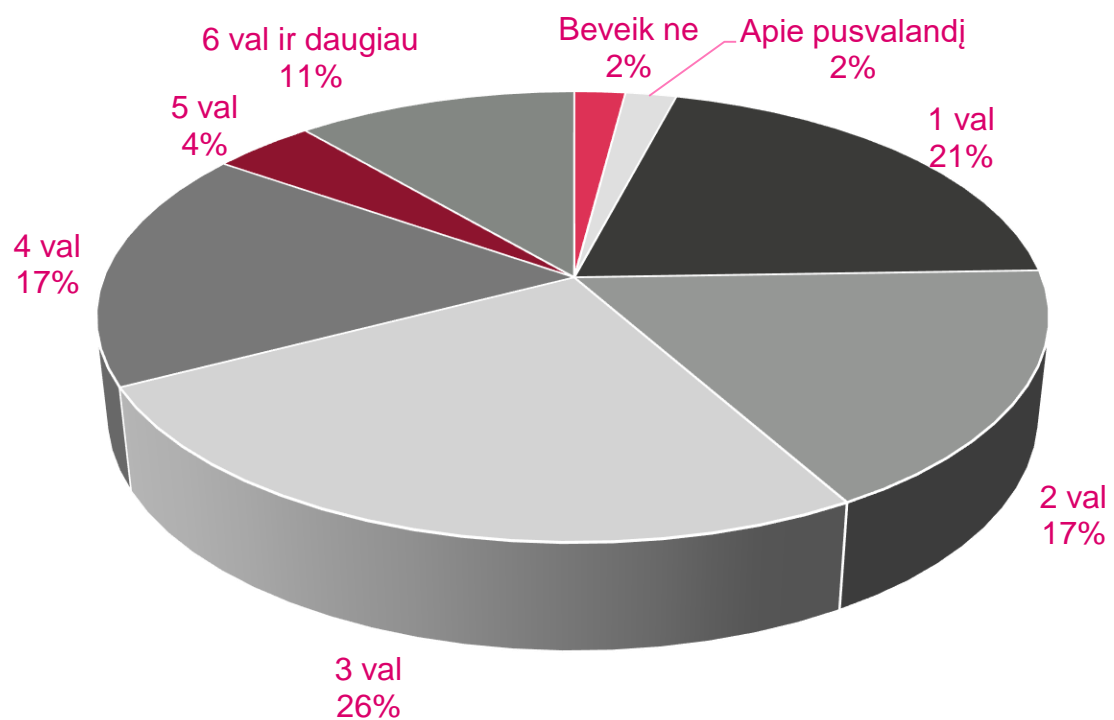


# TIME ONLINE in 2020 (quarantine; note: only for education)

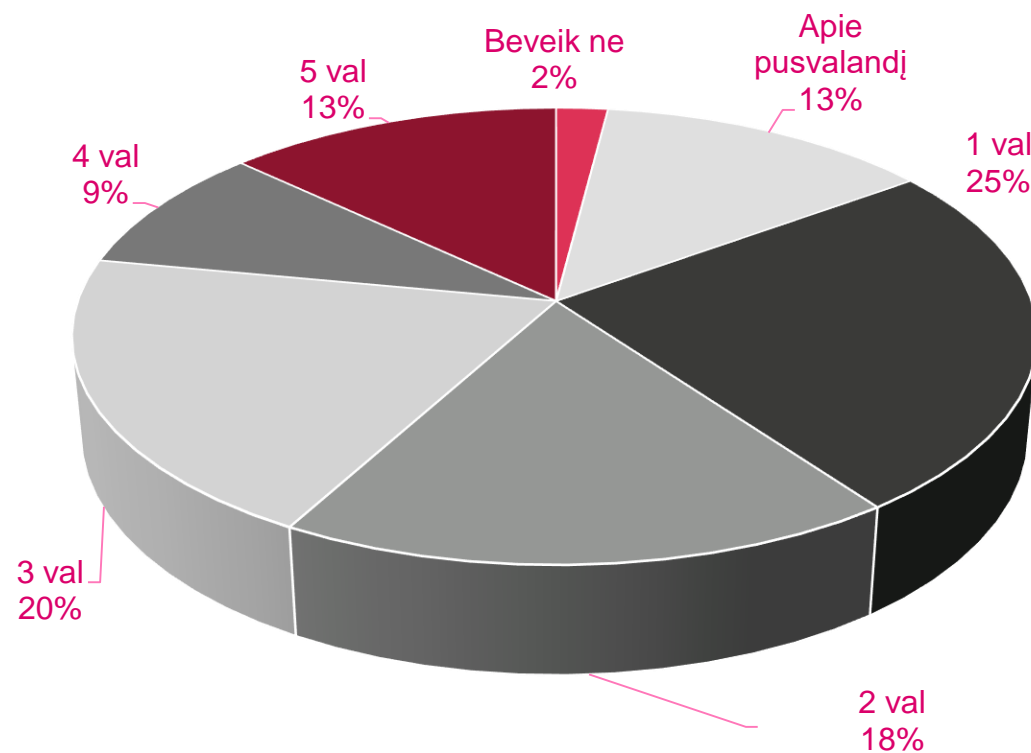


# TIME ONLINE in 2020 (quarantine; note: only for leisure)

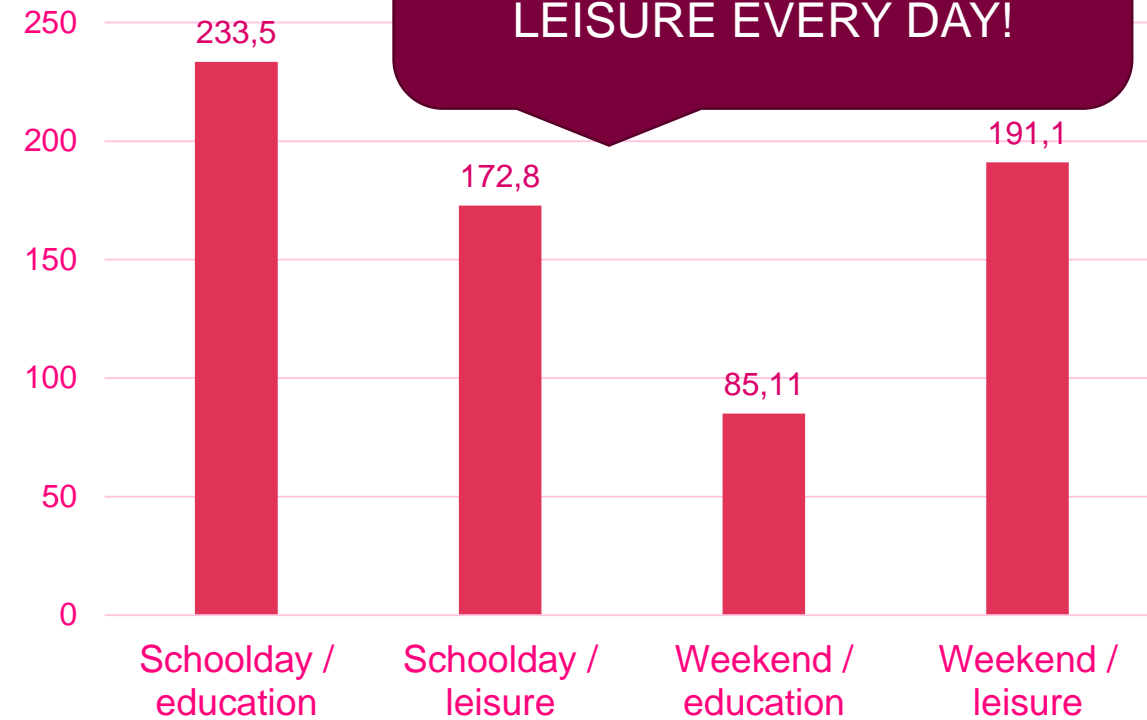
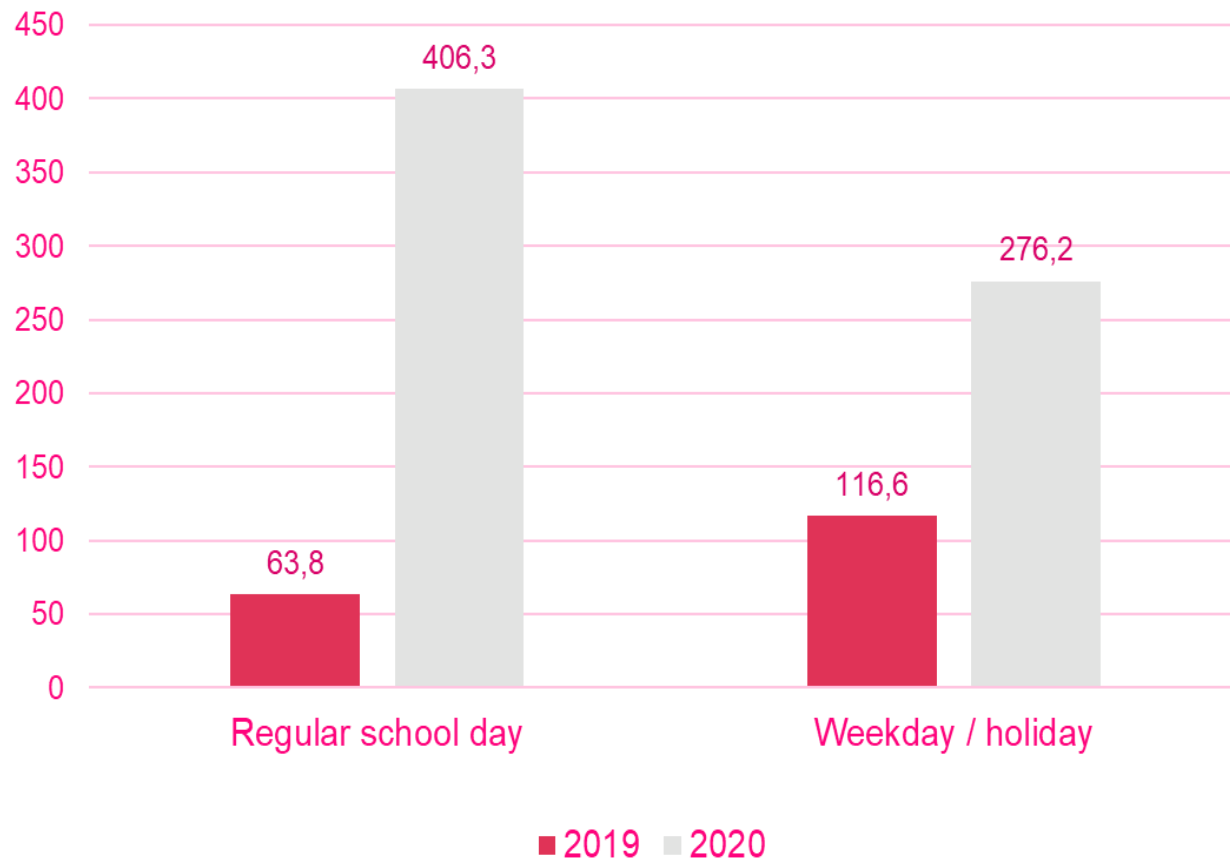
## Regular school days



## Weekend / holiday



# TIME ONLINE (In minutes, 2019 vs. 2020 quarantine)



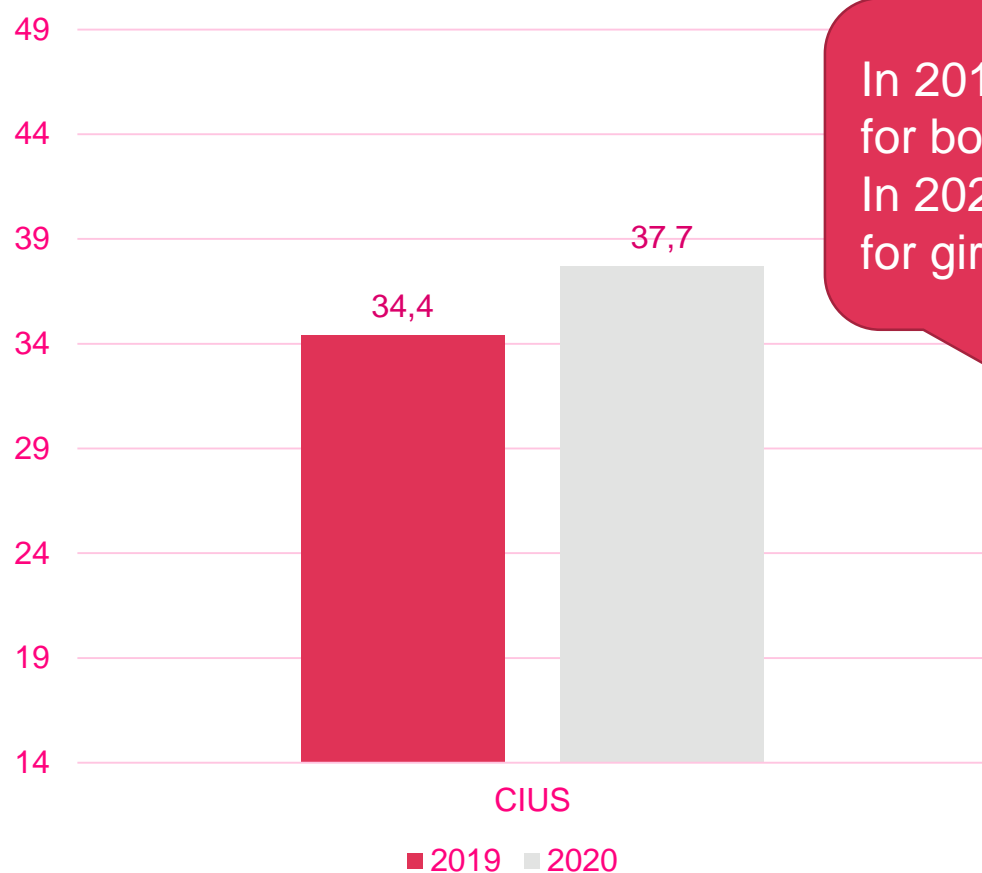


# Results: CIU

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**In year 2019 as compared to 2020  
(quarantine)**

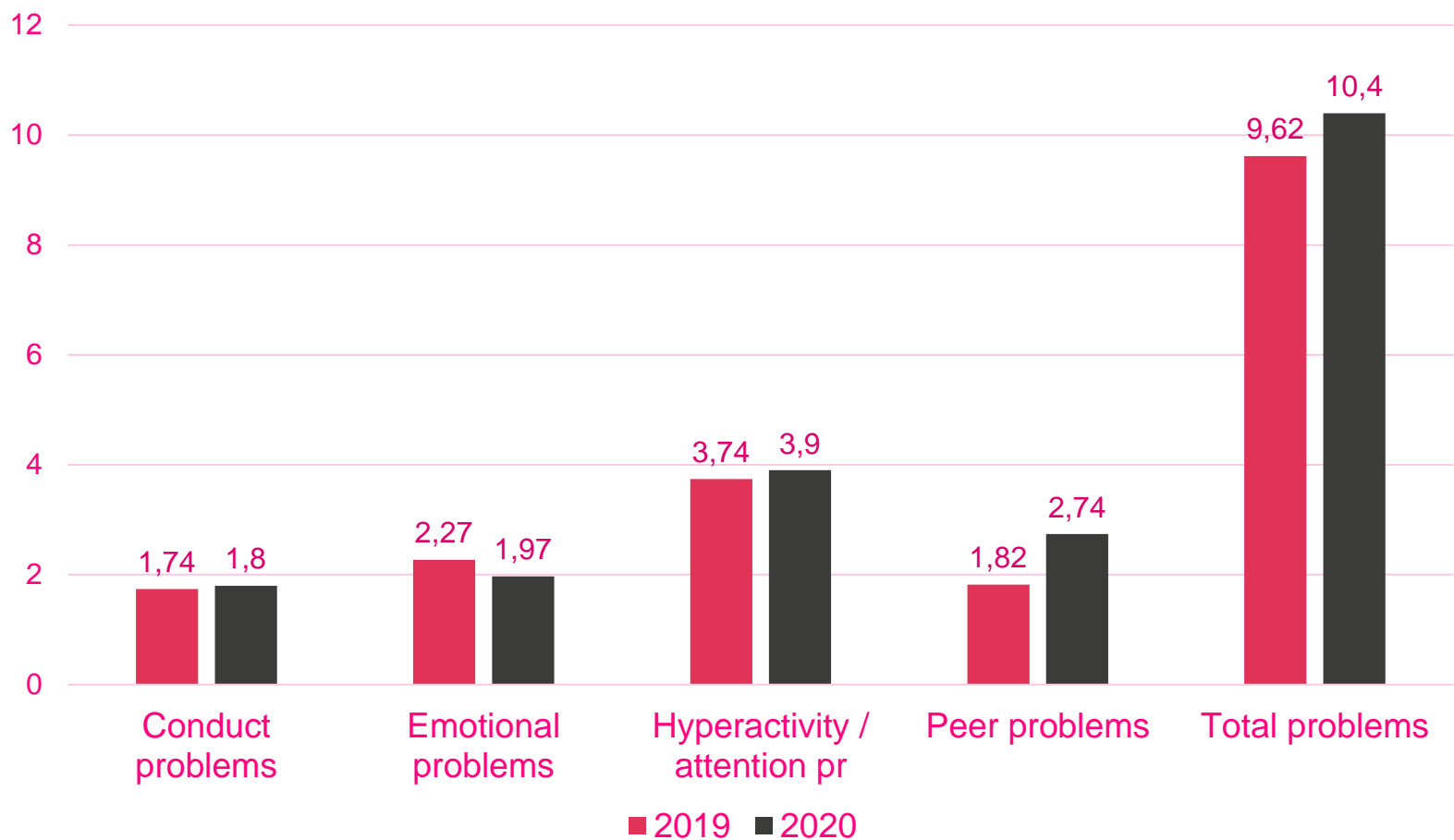
# MEAN SCORES OF CIUS (range 14 – 56)



In 2019 higher scores for boys  
In 2020 higher scores for girls

THE MAIN PROBLEMS REPORTED BY PARENTS DURING QUARANTINE: EXCESSIVE SCREEN TIME, DIFFICULTIES TO CONTROL INTERNET USE, CHILD'S PROBLEMATIC INTERNET USE

# Behavioural and emotional problems (SDQ mean scores)



During quarantine child's emotional wellbeing and behavior: improved – 20%; haven't changed - 59%; worsened - 21%



# Risks for compulsive Internet use in preadolescents

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## Prediction of CIUS scores (2019; regression analysis)



Gender (male) and family SES - additional risk factors (non-significant, although add to model improvement);  $R^2 = 0.39$

*Note:* CIUS was well-predicted also by Internet use and total problems, but not by prosocial behavior, measured one year ago (in 2018);  $R^2 = 0.23$



## Prediction of CIUS (2020; quarantine)



$R^2 = 0.47$

Time online for education – non-significant; child's gender – non-significant

# ACTIVITIES ONLINE!

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## Not related to CIUS

- ✓ Using Internet for school assignments
- ✓ Obtaining information for one's interests
  - ✓ Talking to people (video chats)
- ✓ Uploading something she/he created



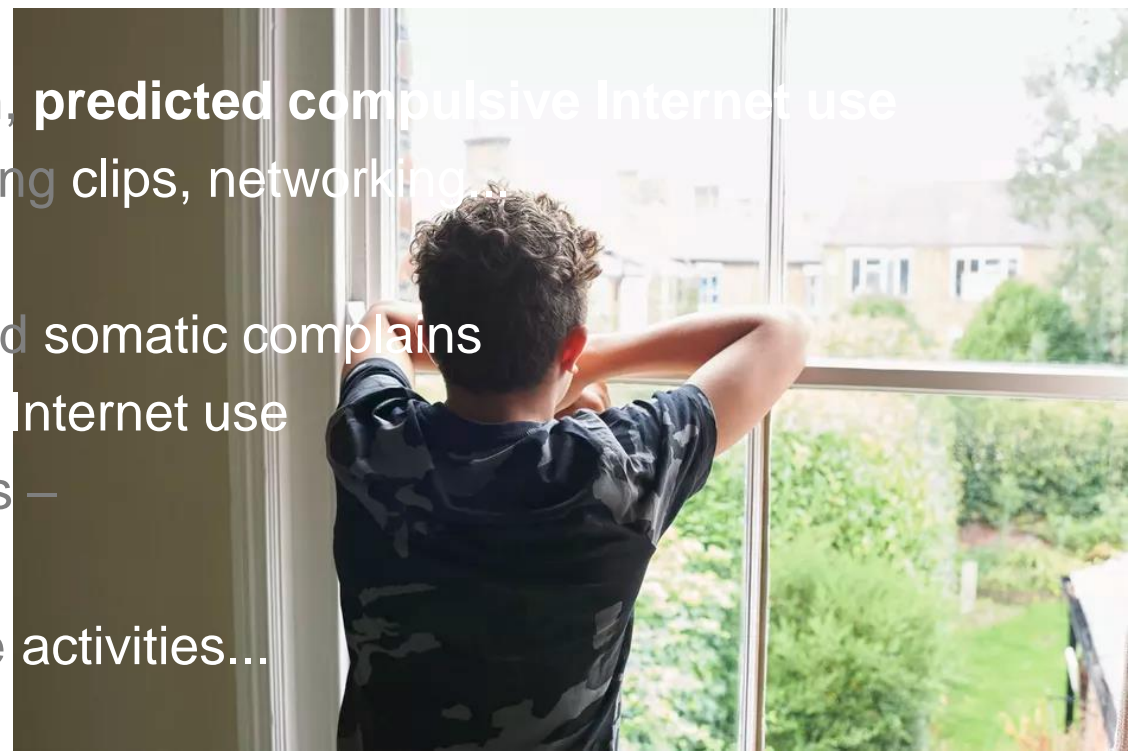
## Related to higher CIUS

- Finding out how much something costs
- Online video gaming
- Visiting social networking sites
- Watching video clips, shows, etc.
- Listening to online music

Similar significant correlations in sample 1 (2019) and sample 2 (2020)

# CONCLUDING REMARKS

- Significant increase of Internet use and the higher compulsivity of Internet use during quarantine in children aged 10 to 11 years old
- „We should worry less about how much teenagers are online, and start asking what exactly they are doing online” (Gamito et al., 2016)
- YES:
  - Time online for leisure activities, not for education, **predicted compulsive Internet use**
  - Compulsivity was related to video gaming, watching clips, networking
- NO – not only:
  - Overall screen time related to health problems and somatic complains
  - It is important to limit time online, to help regulate Internet use
  - Especially when a child has behavioural problems –
  - Less self-control and self-regulation
  - To provide a child with good relationships and live activities...





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