

# Study introduces new internet addiction spectrum. Where are you on the scale?

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Young people (24 years and younger) spend an average of six hours a day online, primarily using their smartphones, according to research from the University of Surrey. Older people (those 24 years and older)

spend 4.6 hours online.

Surrey's study, which involved 796 participants, introduces a new internet [addiction](#) spectrum, categorizing [internet users](#) into five groups:

- Casual Users (14.86%): This group mainly goes online for [specific tasks](#) and logs off without lingering. They show no signs of addiction and are generally older, with an average age of 33.4 years. They are the least interested in exploring new apps.
- Initial Users (22.86%): These individuals often find themselves online longer than they initially planned and are somewhat neglectful of [household chores](#) but don't consider themselves addicted. They are moderately interested in apps and have an average age of 26.1 years.
- Experimenters (21.98%): This group feels uneasy or anxious when not connected to the internet. Once they go online, they feel better. Experimenters are more willing to try out new apps and technology, and their average age is between 22.8 and 24.3 years.
- Addicts-in-Denial (17.96%): These users display addictive behaviors like forming new relationships online and neglecting real-world responsibilities to be online. However, they won't admit to feeling uneasy when they're not connected. They are also quite confident in using [mobile technology](#).
- Addicts (22.36%): This group openly acknowledges their internet addiction and recognizes its negative impact on their lives. They are the most confident in using new apps and technology. Their time online is significantly greater than that of the Casual Users.

Dr. Brigitte Stangl, the lead author of the study at the University of Surrey, said, "Our main aim was to clarify the difference between using the internet in a problematic way and being addicted to it. We found that the younger you are, the more likely you are to be addicted to the

internet, and this tendency decreases with age.

"We also wanted to explore how the severity of internet addiction affects users' experience with new, high-tech applications like augmented reality."

[The study](#) has been published in the *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*.

The researchers found no link between gender and online behavior. Additionally, higher levels of addiction correlated with more confidence in using mobile technology, particularly a greater willingness to try out new apps.

The study also discovered that emotional experiences (the emotions felt while using an app) strongly predicted future behavior for all groups when interacting with augmented reality. In contrast, action experiences (navigating a website or playing a game) were mostly irrelevant for addicts.

Dr. Stangl concluded, "Our study underscores the need for tailored interventions and support for individuals at various stages of [internet](#) addiction. The findings will certainly influence the design and development of digital services and AR applications, ensuring they cater to the diverse needs of users in the current digital environment."

**More information:** Brigitte Stangl et al, Internet addiction continuum and its moderating effect on augmented reality application experiences: digital natives versus older users, *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing* (2023). [DOI: 10.1080/10548408.2023.2199776](https://doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2023.2199776)

Provided by University of Surrey

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