

# ABCD Study Newsletter



Happy 2022 to all of our ABCD Families! We hope you are having a good start to the new year and are staying healthy. We are so appreciative of your enthusiastic commitment to the ABCD Study®. It's hard to believe that we began this study together more than 5 years ago. We are immensely grateful for your continued participation as we seek to understand the many life experiences that influence adolescent development. To show our gratitude, we have sent each ABCD participant and a parent/guardian a special thank you appreciation, so please check your email inboxes! Reach out to your ABCD site with any questions.

As the Omicron variant continues to impact many communities throughout the country, we encourage you to stay abreast of local COVID-19 guidelines and recommendations by visiting the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at <https://bit.ly/3C0urO3>.

## ABCD Science

The fourth annual ABCD Data Release was made available in late 2021. It contains data from participants' baseline visits as well as early longitudinal data from the 2-year follow-up visits. Also included are data from COVID-related survey responses from ABCD families about the impact of the pandemic on their lives. Surveys were sent electronically to all ABCD families from spring 2020 through spring 2021. Youth and parents/guardians were asked separately about school attendance and activities, sleep, daily routines, physical activity, mental health, screen time, racism/discrimination in relation to COVID-19, COVID attitudes and practices, and coping behaviors. Having access to pre-pandemic data, as well as information about experiences during the pandemic, and long-term data after the pandemic, will allow us to have unique insight into its impact on adolescent development. The data are private and cannot be linked back to participants or their families. Visit the ABCD Study website at <https://abcdstudy.org> for more information about data releases, publications and news items featuring ABCD Study science.



## Families Place

### The Power of Art

Teens nationwide have turned to the healing power of art. Creating art has many benefits (see <https://clinic/3IwAgFE>) – it can instill hope and give meaning, ease stress, help people process strong emotions, and strengthen connections with others. Art comes in many forms – from painting and drawing, to playing an instrument or singing, to dance, theater, sculpture, photography, digital media, creative writing, and poetry. Even stacking rocks during a hike can be a form of art!

The benefits are apparent in almost any situation. Students in New Hampshire (<https://bit.ly/3ht75aB>)

## The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Adolescent Health



Dr. Orsolya Kiss from SRI International, along with several other researchers, published a scientific article at <https://bit.ly/3M6GBcZ> about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

on adolescent mental health. The data summarized in the article were collected from ABCD Study participants at all 21 sites. The researchers identified risk factors for adolescent experiences of depression, stress and anxiety during the pandemic. They found that having a pre-existing mental health condition and witnessing COVID-related racism or discrimination significantly predicted all three types of psychological distress. Several other risk factors were unique to type of distress. For example, reading news stories about COVID-19 and parental worry about the pandemic specifically predicted teen stress, whereas social isolation predicted depression, and shorter sleep and sleep problems predicted anxiety. The researchers note that since many of the behaviors associated with psychological distress are things we can change (like getting more sleep), it may be possible to lessen some of the distressing symptoms. They also looked at emotional wellbeing and found that maintaining healthy routines and having quality relationships were associated with positive mental health.

## Student Space



Credit: Computer Simulations in Service of Biology, *Frontiers for Young Minds* at <https://bit.ly/3pq1x7v>

that makes sense to young minds. Scientists collaborate with students to answer questions that interest them and to make

Are you interested in reading about scientific discoveries that are written especially for students? *Frontiers for Young Minds* (<https://bit.ly/3vnbWCK>) is a science magazine that presents big discoveries in a way

write poetry and play guitar to relax, cope with anxiety, and create something positive during the COVID-19 pandemic. Boston teens, as part of Artists for Humanity, painted a mural called "Facing the Future" (<https://bit.ly/3tiWCDY>) to represent their pandemic experience. Drawing has given a teen with autism (<https://bit.ly/3M2Crm>) – who hosted his first solo art exhibit in Lancaster County, PA – "meaning and focus" in his life – and hope for the future.

Other teens are using art as self-expression and to make a social statement. In a program called Art for Social Change, teens in Charlotte, NC, explore art as a way of promoting racial and social equity and inclusion. Similarly, four teenage girls in Los Angeles, CA, have formed a band called The Linda Lindas (<https://bit.ly/3td4Z49>), where they sing about anti-Asian American bias and prejudice against women (and have landed a record deal in the process!).

Art is also a great way to unite people and express joy. Now that the country is slowly opening up from COVID-19 restrictions, students are using art to beautify their schools

their articles relevant and accessible to other student readers. In the latest collection at <https://bit.ly/3poJIDp> about Nobel prize winning science, recent Nobel laureates write about the discoveries that earned them the world's highest honor in science achievement. Did you know that the first Nobel prize was awarded 120 years ago to Wilhelm Röntgen, a German engineer, for his discovery of X-rays?

Want to learn how proteins degrade? Or how about the meaning of life? Ever wonder how cells in your brain help you get from one place to another? You can read about all that and more in the latest issue of *Frontiers*.

## Student Q & A



A number of ABCD participants and their parents/guardians have asked about how time spent on screens impacts their health and development. A student asked this question:

***"Is too much screen time bad for me and my brain?"***

This is an excellent question, and it turns out the answer is not simple! Over the last couple of years, scientific articles have addressed this question in a variety of ways to understand the relationship between screen use and mental health. A recent study using ABCD data found only modest associations between increased screen time and poorer mental health. You can read about that research and related studies at <https://bit.ly/3MlvxsP>, <https://bit.ly/3hF0nOR>, and <https://bit.ly/3M5TNii>.

Time spent on screens may not be the only factor to consider, though it shouldn't be discounted. How you interact with them, whether it's streaming videos, reading the news, doing schoolwork, making plans with friends, using social media, or playing video games is also important. Research will likely continue on this topic as the ABCD participant cohort ages through adolescence into young adulthood, so stay tuned!

If you have questions and would like to reach someone on your ABCD Study team, please visit <https://abcdstudy.org/contact/>.

(<https://bit.ly/36QCLoj>)! See how ABCD Study participants have expressed themselves through art, in a special issue of *ChildArt Magazine* (<https://www.icafo.org/ABCDDStudy/>)!



*The Linda Lindas band performing at the LA Public Library, NPR, 5/24/21 (<https://bit.ly/33Z7bAp>)*

**For More Information,  
Please Visit:**

**[ABCDDStudy.org](https://abcdstudy.org)**

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