

## MEDIA RELEASE

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# New study uncovers link between doom scrolling and suicide

An international study has identified a link between screen time, suicide and self-harm in adolescents.

The research team, led by Mater Research Institute's Dr Kerri Gillespie, Dr Matthew Morgan from Australian Catholic University and QUT's Professor Selena Bartlett, found frequent screen use – particularly evening doom scrolling – was significantly associated with increased risk of suicidal behaviour and self-injury.

Publication of the findings in the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry* came as Meta chief executive Mark Zuckerberg appeared in a landmark trial to answer questions over whether the social media giant intentionally addicted children to its platforms.

Analysis of 61 eligible studies comprising more than 338,472 participants aged up to 18, from 16 countries, highlighted the dangers of digital addiction.

One study found 13.6 per cent of those who reported frequent smartphone use had nearly three times the rate of non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI) as rare users.

Another project found almost one-in-10 of participants whose daily screen time – including television, gaming and online chat – exceeded 10 hours had reported a suicide attempt.

“The odds of young people attempting suicide or self-harm are horrifyingly common,” Dr Morgan said of the project which also included researchers from the University of Queensland, Griffith University and Blacktown Hospital.

“It could be some one in your football or cricket team.”

Key factors in many of the studies included insomnia, depression, anxiety and loneliness.

Some gender disparities emerged, with females reporting higher NSSI and suicidality, and males showing higher rates of digital addiction.

The systematic review raised further questions about the intersection of screen use and mental health.

“We know nothing good comes from scrolling until 2am,” said Dr Morgan, a senior lecturer in criminology at ACU's Thomas More Law School.

“The next step will be to investigate causality: does excessive screen use feed suicidality or does poor mental health drive lonely people to reach for a smartphone?”

If you or anyone you know needs immediate support, contact Lifeline on 13 11 14 or via [lifeline.org.au](http://lifeline.org.au).

**Dr Matthew Morgan ([matthew.morgan@acu.edu.au](mailto:matthew.morgan@acu.edu.au), [+61 411 556 870](tel:+61411556870)) is based in Brisbane, Australia, and is available for interview.**

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