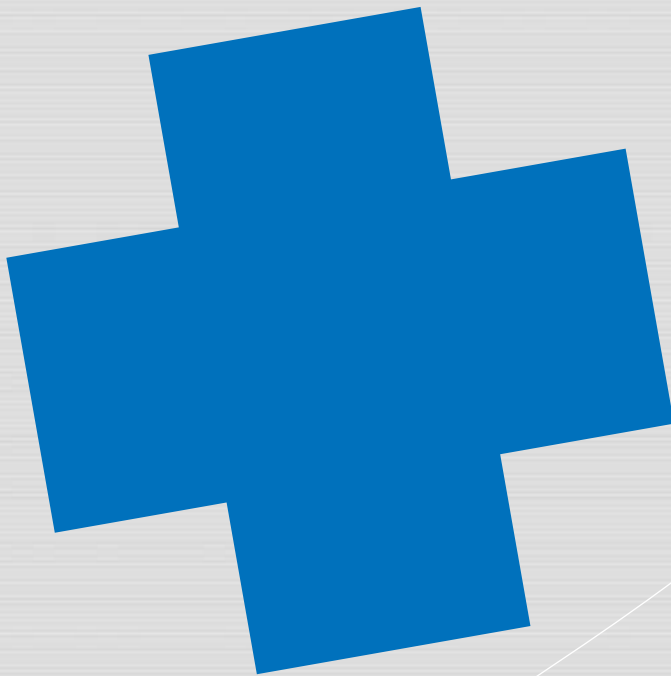


# The text generation

## Mobile phones and New Zealand youth

*A report of results from the Internet Safety Group's survey of teenage mobile phone use*

January 2005



Mobile phones are now an integral part of everyday life for most young people in New Zealand. It is important to understand the applications and affects of mobile phone usage amongst teenagers, to better develop effective cybersafety education for young people as well as for parents and caregivers.

The following is a summary of the research findings of this NetSafe<sup>®</sup> survey. NetSafe's<sup>®</sup> research is generously sponsored in part by the Ministry of Education, and the Department of Internal Affairs.

The following results are presented in point form, and those that are particularly relevant to parents and caregivers are summarised at the end of this document.

These results offer valuable insights into the use (and misuse) of mobile phones, and highlight areas of concern, which will become directives for further, more focused research in the future. In particular, this research emphasises the need for more in-depth investigations into:

- online interpersonal relationships between teenagers
- the potential impact of parental/ caregiver involvement in the management of their teenager's mobile phone usage
- the incidence, influences and prevention of online abuse
- the affects and dynamics of covert phone usage and ownership.

The results of this current research will now be assimilated into the educational materials and training that NetSafe<sup>®</sup> offers as part of its cybersafety education to the community. We would like to sincerely thank the school staff and students who so generously gave of their time to assist with this survey.

#### Demographics:

1528 students from a metropolitan decile 4 high school were surveyed. The sample was comprised of 52% males and 48 % females, whose ages ranged between 12 and 19 years. The average overall and for both genders was 15 years old.

- 73% use mobile phones
  - 66% of this group had a phone with them at the time of filling out the survey during class time.
- Of those who do not currently use a mobile phone, 31% previously used a mobile phone, and 69% had not.
  - Of those who previously used a mobile phone, the most common reason for no longer using one was because the mobile phone was

- not wanted or needed (43%). Other reasons included; 16% having had the phone taken off them, and 16% having had the phone stolen, 11% reporting the phone was broken, and 9% that it was too expensive to keep (the remaining 5% was for other reasons).
- Of those who had never used a mobile phone, the most common reason was not wanting one (54%), with 23% not being allowed to use one, and 19% not being able to afford one (the remaining 4% was for other reasons).
  - 69% of those who don't have a phone to use reported that they use other's mobile phones.
- 76% use only one mobile phone, 16% use two phones, 5% use three phones and 3% use four or more phones. The highest reported number of phones used by an individual was 11.
  - 75% of those who use phones with SIM cards have an equal number of phones and SIM cards (i.e. one card per phone). 12.5% had more SIM cards than they did phones (numbers of SIM cards ranged from 1-20), and 12.5% had more phones than they did SIM cards.
  - The primary (most important) reason for using a mobile phone was 'To talk and text with friends' (56%), 'For safety' (23%), and 'To talk and text with family' (17%) – 4% had other reasons (such as 'looking cool' etc).
  - The primary (most important) reason for those who use others' phones, were 'To talk and text with friends' and 'Safety' (both 33%), and 'To talk and text with family' and 'Other' (both 17%).
  - 26% of the sample 'always' lock their phone with a PIN number, while 14% did so 'often', 21% 'rarely' and 39% 'never' lock their phone.
  - 19% of phone users bought the phone themselves, 42% were given the phone by their parents/ caregivers, and 25% received the phone as a gift (but also possibly from the parents/ caregivers). 3% reported having stolen their phone (77% of whom were male). 7% had a 'hand me down' phone, and the remainder of the sample, borrowed or found their phone.
  - 13% report having taken "pinched" money to spend on their phone bill (62% of these were males). Of those who took or pinched money, 70% reported their primary reason for using a mobile phone is 'To talk and text with friends'.
  - 41% pay for their entire phone usage costs (this group being 56% male and 44% female), 32% report that their parents/ caregivers pay for all

usage costs (this group being 40% male and 60% female), 14% reported that their parents/ caregivers pay for part of their usage costs (41% male, 59% female), and the remaining 13% either get their funding from other sources in whole or part with the afore mentioned sources.

- 41% of the students had 'no idea' of how much they spend on their phone bills per month.
- Of those who estimated their monthly bills, 96% spent between 1\$ and \$100. The remaining 4% spending more than \$100 (the maximum reported being \$1900).
- 26% of phone users reported being threatened with the phone being taken off them as a form of punishment.
- 29% of phone users use a phone at least once a day during school hours when they are not allowed to (e.g., during class). Students who reported carrying a phone with them at the time of the survey reported higher levels of illicit use in school hours (38% at least once a day). One respondent wrote on their survey that they made calls at least once every class period during the day.
- 11% of phone users reported being woken every night by a text message or call. 31% of those students whose parents/ caregivers are unaware of them using a mobile phone, and 49% of those who stole their phones, get woken every night.
- 46% of phone users report that a text message via a phone has been used in starting a relationship. This figure was 53% for those who use a phone that their parents/ caregivers are unaware of.
- 39% of phone users report that a text message via a phone has been used in a fight or argument. This figure was 50% for those who use a phone that their parents/ caregivers are unaware of.
- 23% of phone users report that a text message via a phone has been used in the ending of a relationship. This figure was 34% for those who use a phone that their parents/ caregivers are unaware of.
- 39% of phone users reported that all of their friends have mobile phones (56% of this group being female). Of those who stole their phones 64% reported that all their friends had mobile phones (68% of this group being male).

- 23% of phone users reported that they have received an offensive, pornographic, abusive or threatening text or picture on a phone (62% of this group being male)
  - 34% of this group (32% of males, 36% of females) did not tell anyone about receiving such abuse.
  - Of those who had received such abuse, and who also report that their parents/ caregivers are unaware of them using a mobile phone, 60% of the females did not tell anyone about the abuse (40% of the males).
  - Of those who have received abuse on their phones, 46% admit to also sending abuse. Of those who have NOT received abuse on their phones, only 4% admit to sending abuse.
  
- 14% of phone users report having sent an offensive, pornographic, abusive or threatening text or picture from a phone (21.0 % of males, and 7.7% of females). Therefore 73% of those sending such messages are male in this group.
  - Of those who stole their phone, 54% have sent abuse.
  - For those students who reported paying for their entire usage costs, 18% report having sent abuse.
  - For the students who reported that their parents paid for their entire usage costs, 8% have sent abuse.

## Parents and Caregivers

- 90% of students reported that their parents/caregivers have a mobile phone.
- 2% of phone users reported that their parents were unaware of them having the use of a phone, compared to 12% of those who use other's mobile phones.
- Of those who had more than one SIM card for a phone, 22% reported that their parents/ caregivers were unaware of the extra cards (59% of this group was male).
- 50% of the students who reported that the primary (and most) important reason they use a mobile phone was "for safety", were given the phone by their parents/ caregivers.
- 34% of the students reported that their parents/caregivers do not know how much money they spend on their phone bills.
- 31% of those students whose parents/caregivers are unaware of them using a mobile phone get woken every night by a text message or call (compared to 11% of students whose parents/caregivers do know).
- Students who had parents/ caregivers who are unaware of them using a mobile phone (in comparison to those with aware parents) report higher rates of;
  - a text message being used in a fight or argument (71% to 39%)
  - a text message being used in the ending of a relationship (34% to 23%)
  - receiving an offensive, pornographic, abusive or threatening text or picture (41% to 23%)
  - sending an offensive, pornographic, abusive or threatening text or picture (25% to 14%)
  - using the phone for texting or calls at least once a day during school hours when they are not allowed to, e.g., during class time (42% to 28%)
- Of those students who reported receiving abuse (an offensive, pornographic, abusive or threatening text or picture) on a phone, and whose parents/caregivers pay for the entire usage costs, 24% of the males and 42% of the females did not report the abuse.

- For the students who reported that their parents paid for their entire usage costs, 8% have sent abuse, compared to 18% of those who pay for their own usage costs.

*End*

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