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Risks related to children sharing nudes and seeing sexually explicit content among parents' top online concerns

New research on New Zealand parents' views and experiences of digital parenting reveals their concerns about risks related to online sexual content and behaviour.

Netsafe's study of the parents of 9 to 17-year-olds has found that while they have a range of concerns about the potential online risks their children face, two of the top three relate to sexual content: their child sharing nudes of themselves and seeing sexually explicit content.

The study also learned from parents that 1 in 5 of them were aware their child had been exposed to sexually explicit content online in the last 12 months. Parents also indicated that the main reasons for their child's exposure to this content were: it popped up on the screen/device, curiosity, and accidental access.

Netsafe's study closely follows the release of the Office of the Film and Literature Classification's study on young people's use of online pornography. Although the two studies were conducted independently, "the results suggest that while parents are really quite switched on to what is happening for their child, they probably aren't aware of everything going on for them" says Netsafe CEO, Martin Cocker.

Also, the rates of exposure to sexually explicit content, as reported by parents, increased with age, and was also more common among boys. "One of the interesting things about this study is that it gives us a snapshot of exposure for children aged 9 to 13" says Cocker.

. The Netsafe study found that 1 in 10 parents of 9-year-olds said their child had seen some kind of sexually explicit material, and it steadily rises to 1 in 4 of 17-year-olds.

The study, which is one of the first to collect data about parental awareness and attitudes regarding the topic, also found that most parents talked with their children about sexually explicit content on the internet. "This is really encouraging as we know that technical fixes such as monitoring and filtering on their own have a limited effect" says Cocker.

While parents in general felt comfortable talking with their children about pornography and sex education, a significant number were still embarrassed to do so. "Our study also suggests that more needs to be done to support parents in New Zealand. Some of them struggle having an open conversation with their child and said they need information about these topics," says Cocker.

Resources

- <https://netsafe.org.nz/porn-advice-parents/>

- <https://netsafe.org.nz/online-porn/>

About the study

The full report will be available from 5am Monday 10 December 2018 from <https://www.netsafe.org.nz/advice/research/>

The report is based on the results from an online survey of a nationally representative sample (in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, and location) of New Zealand parents with children aged 9 to 17 years old. The size of the sample was 2061 parents and the margin of error was $\pm 2.2\%$ at 95% confidence for the whole population.

This research also forms part of a comparative study with Australia and the UK that highlights how experiences of NZ parents are similar to those in these other countries. The joint report from this study will be available from 10am Monday 10 December from <https://www.netsafe.org.nz/advice/research/>

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Media Contacts

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About Netsafe

Netsafe is New Zealand's independent, non-profit online safety organisation. Netsafe provides online safety education, advice and support for people in New Zealand. Taking a technology-positive approach to the opportunities and challenges digital tech presents, Netsafe works to help people in New Zealand make the most of technology by providing practical tools, support and advice for managing online challenges.

Netsafe's helpline is open 8am-8pm Monday to Friday, and 9am-5pm weekends and public holidays.

Netsafe was appointed as the approved agency to receive, assess and investigate complaints of harm caused by digital communications under the Harmful Digital Communications Act in 2015. The free service is available to all New Zealand internet users experiencing online harassment, offering help and advice to resolve complaints.

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