



**MEDIA RELEASE | 22 OCTOBER 2020**

## **Gaps in parents' knowledge of kids' online lives: new research**

**Netsafe's latest research reveals a mismatch between parents' awareness and their children's experiences of upsetting online content.**

This report comes off the back of previous research conducted by New Zealand's online safety organisation which shared insights into children's lives. It is the first report of its kind focused on children and their parents in Aotearoa and joins an international body of work.

The research identified that 19 percent of parents were aware their child had been bothered or upset by something online in the last 12 months whereas 25 percent of children aged between 9 and 17 years said that this happened to them.

Only a quarter of parents thought their child could cope with upsetting internet experiences, although the findings reveal parental awareness about the emotional impact their child has is consistent with their child's experiences.

"Many parents did not grow up with the internet so it can be hard to imagine how their children may use it," says Martin Cocker, Netsafe CEO. "These findings suggest parents are in tune with their children's online lives despite barriers such as different technological knowledge."

There is not a significant difference between parents' knowledge of their children being treated in a nasty way online and their child treating someone else in a hurtful way. Parents of girls (19 percent) were more likely to report their child was treated in a harmful way online compared to parents of boys (15percent), and Māori parents also reported a higher rate (22 percent).

Netsafe's research also identified that parents were unaware about their children meeting a person face-to-face that they first knew online (26 percent of parents versus 38 percent of children). Parents of boys (29 percent) reported a higher occurrence of their child interacting online with people they didn't know.

According to the research it is more common for parents of boys (23 percent) and Pacific parents (33 percent) to report that their child had been exposed to gory or violent images. Parents of girls (16 percent) and children under 15 (18 percent) reported higher rates of exposure to hateful content online. Awareness of exposure to drug taking was higher among

parents of girls (13 percent), children aged 15-17 (15 percent) and Māori and Pacific parents (both 15 percent).

Interestingly parents of adolescents aged 13 to 17 seem to underestimate their children's exposure to potentially harmful online content to things such as violent images, hate speech, self-harm, drug taking.

"Kids in New Zealand are largely following the trends we see overseas in terms of their confidence in digital skills and preferred online activities", says Cocker. "This is helpful as it reinforces that parents are trusted sources of support and that the pre-teen age bracket is an important intervention period to teach children online safety skills."

This is good news as Netsafe's research shows that nearly half of parents surveyed believe they have the skills to help their child deal with risks and harm online. Parents of girls and children under 13 were more likely to feel confident, whereas Asian parents felt less confident in their abilities to support their child.

"Netsafe has assembled in one easy to use Online Safety Parent Toolkit all the things parents consistently say they want to know about", says Cocker. "From online bullying to grooming to social media to sexting and screen time, Netsafe's Toolkit is the guide everyone needs to keep tamariki safe online."

For parents, whānau and caregivers needing extra support there is advice to help you tackle some of the challenges and opportunities that exist online at [netsafe.org.nz/digitalparenting](https://netsafe.org.nz/digitalparenting).

This research is part of Netsafe's third report as a member of the Global Kids Online network.

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### **About Netsafe**

Netsafe is an independent non-profit organisation with an unrelenting focus on online safety. We keep people safe online by providing free support, advice, and education - whether it's scams, online bullying or advice on digital parenting, we can help. Visit [netsafe.org.nz](https://netsafe.org.nz) for useful resources or call 0508 638 723 seven days a week for help with an online incident.

### **About the Ngā taiohi matihiko o Aotearoa – New Zealand Kids Online study**

In September 2018, Netsafe, with the support of UNICEF NZ, joined the Global Kids Online Network. This is an international network of academics, social researchers, and experts dedicated to the study of children's rights, risks and opportunities in the digital age.

A total of 2,061 New Zealand children aged 9-17 years of age and 2,061 parents participated in this research. The research sample of parents and children is broadly representative by age, gender, and ethnicity of the population of New Zealand. You can read the full report at [netsafe.org.nz/parent-awareness-child-online-risk-harm](https://netsafe.org.nz/parent-awareness-child-online-risk-harm).

Netsafe has published reports from Ngā taiohi matihiko o Aotearoa - New Zealand Kids Online addressing topics such as children's exposure to concerning online material, excessive internet use and kids' online interaction with people they don't know.

### **Digital Parenting**

Netsafe created the Online Safety Parent Toolkit to make it easier for parents and whānau to teach their kids how to access digital opportunities and reduce harm. The Toolkit is a practical seven step framework designed to help parents overcome any perceived or real technology gap between what parents know and what their child knows – or thinks they know.

It explains the online challenges young people are likely to encounter, how to best support them and what whānau can do. There's advice in English, Te Reo, Simplified Chinese, Tongan and Samoan. Find it at [netsafe.org.nz/digitalparenting](https://netsafe.org.nz/digitalparenting).