Factsheet: The digital parenting strategies and behaviours of New Zealand parents

Evidence from Ngā taiohi matihiko o Aotearoa – New Zealand Kids Online

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This factsheet presents findings from a study looking at the strategies New Zealand parents, caregivers and whānau use to mediate their children's experiences of online risk and harm.

Parents play a critical role in their child's personal development and day-to-day experiences. However, as digital technologies are increasingly embedded in most New Zealand children's everyday life activities (Pacheco & Melhuish, 2018b, 2019) parents face the task of ensuring their child's online safety. To do so, they need to understand the way their child engages with and through these tools and make sense of the rapidly changing, and more technically complex, nature of digital devices (Livingstone & Byrne, 2018). This presents a digital parenting dilemma: maximising children's online opportunities while minimising online risks and potential harm.

Meanwhile, since the mid-2000s, research on parenting in the digital age has been conducted overseas (see Eastin et al., 2006; Lee & Chae, 2007) with quantitative data collected more recently at a national level in several countries in Europe and other parts of the world (see Livingstone et al., 2019; Smahel et al., 2020). However, in New Zealand, little is known about the parental strategies being used to mediate children's digital experiences. Understanding this is critical as Netsafe's research consistently shows that in New Zealand parents are not only the first port of call for children bothered by something experienced online (Pacheco & Melhuish, 2018c, 2020), but also they are significantly concerned about online risks, particularly children sharing nudes of themselves, being treated in a hurtful way, and seeing sexually explicit content (Pacheco & Melhuish, 2018a).

This factsheet presents research evidence about digital parenting in New Zealand based on nationally representative data collected from parents, caregivers and whānau and their children aged 9-17 (for details, see Methodology section). It uses measures from the Global Kids Online project to explore the prevalence of different practices used by New Zealand parents to influence or mediate children's internet use. As Table 1 explains, these practices can be distinguished as either aiming to enable children's positive use of the internet or to restrict their engagement in online activities (Livingstone & Byrne, 2018).

Table 1. Types of Parental Mediation

Enabling mediation	Restrictive mediation
Parents undertaking active strategies such as talking to a child about what they do online or encouraging their activities as well as giving safety advice, using technical controls (e.g., blocking access to some websites), and/or parental monitoring (e.g., checking a child's online activities). Parental practices that might seem restrictive (use of technical controls and parental monitoring) that are better interpreted as building a safe framework to encourage children's positive internet use.	Parents restricting or banning or insisting on supervising any of a long list of online activities.

Adapted from Livingstone & Byrne (2018, p. 23)

The results of the study highlight that while New Zealand parents engage, to different extents, in the full range of digital parenting strategies, those who have younger children are more likely to apply these behaviours. The study also reveals some differences in the digital parenting styles of children of different genders and ethnicities. The implications of these insights for policymakers, educators and parents are described in the Concluding remarks section below.

By releasing this factsheet, Netsafe seeks to help close the gap for much-needed research-based evidence on digital parenting in New Zealand and provide policy and education stakeholders and the industry with evidence to inform the development of relevant parent-oriented interventions. By doing so, parents will be better equipped to support their children to navigate the online environment safely while encouraging them to benefit from online opportunities such as learning, creativity and socialising.

Highlights

Enabling mediation
Active mediation

- Over three quarters of New Zealand parents, caregivers and whānau said they at least sometimes engaged in most of the active mediation activities measured. The most prevalent parenting behaviour was talking to children about what they do online, and the least was sharing online activities with children, with 91% and 64% respectively doing these activities at least sometimes.

- Parents of younger children were generally more likely to say they often or very often engaged in active mediation behaviours, particularly those aged 9-11 years old.

- In contrast, only one difference was found regarding gender, with girls' parents being more likely to often talk to their child about what to do if something bothers or upsets them online.

- Similarly, in regard to children's ethnicity only a few differences were found. E.g., it was more common for parents of Asian children to frequently share activities with their child on the internet (30%), while those of NZ European/Pākehā children were least likely to do this (21%).

- According to parents, children are more likely start a discussion about what they do on the internet than to ask for advice on how to act online or help with challenging or upsetting online experiences.

- Meanwhile, around half of children said their parents often talk to them about ways to use the internet safely, which is consistent with their parents' responses. However, fewer (around four in ten) said their parents often encouraged them to explore and learn things online.

- Children 9-11 years old were more likely to say their parent often suggested ways to use the internet safely. Conversely, this age group was less likely than older children to say their parents encouraged them to explore and learn things online.

Technical mediation

- Parents use some types of technical control more than others to prevent their child experiencing risks online. E.g., around 7 in 10 parents set rules about how long or when their child can go online, while only 2 in 10 use software to limit the people their child can be in touch with.

- Parents of children aged 9-11 were more likely to use four of the seven different technical mediations measured. These were using rules about how long or when their child is allowed online, blocking, or filtering websites, controlling app downloads and tracking websites visited.

- Meanwhile, there was only one significant difference regarding children's gender, with boys' parents being more likely to use solutions to limit when or how long they spent online.

- Regarding ethnicity, there were some differences between groups in five of the seven technical mediations measured. E.g., parents of NZ European/Pākehā children were least likely to use a service or contract to limit the time spent online while those of Pacific children were most likely.

Parental monitoring

- Overall, parents engage consistently in the different behaviours that monitor their child's online activities, with around six in ten doing each of these at least sometimes. However, parents were slightly more likely to check which websites their child visited and which apps they downloaded than the other behaviours measured.

- In general, younger children's parents were more likely to adopt monitoring behaviours. E.g., parents of 9-11-year-olds were more than twice as likely as those of 15-17-year-olds to often check the websites they visited.

- Regarding children's gender, there were no significant differences across the monitoring behaviours except that boys' parents were more likely to sometimes check which websites their child visited than girls' parents (36% and 31% respectively).

- Similarly, with children's ethnicity, there were only a few differences found between groups. E.g., parents of NZ European/Pākehā children were most likely to say they never or hardly ever monitored their child's profile on a social network site or online community.

Restrictive mediation

- Parents engage, to different degrees, in a range of restrictive mediation behaviours. E.g., parents are most likely to allow their child to use the internet for schoolwork without restrictions (76%), allow them with restrictions to play online games with other people (46%), and to fully restrict their visits to online chatrooms (61%).

- Overall, parents of younger children are more likely to adopt restrictive mediation behaviours than those of older children, particularly those of 9-11-year-olds.

- Parents are more likely to fully restrict some online activities depending on the gender of their child. E.g., boys' parents were more likely to entirely restrict instant messaging tool use, while girls' parents were more likely to entirely limit online gameplay with other people.

- In relation to ethnicity, some differences were found in parents' preferences. E.g., NZ European/Pākehā children were least likely to be allowed to do things online in six out of the ten different online activities measured in this study.

- Meanwhile, children's perceptions of their parents' engagement in the five restrictive mediation behaviours that we asked them about were broadly consistent with their parents' responses.

Findings
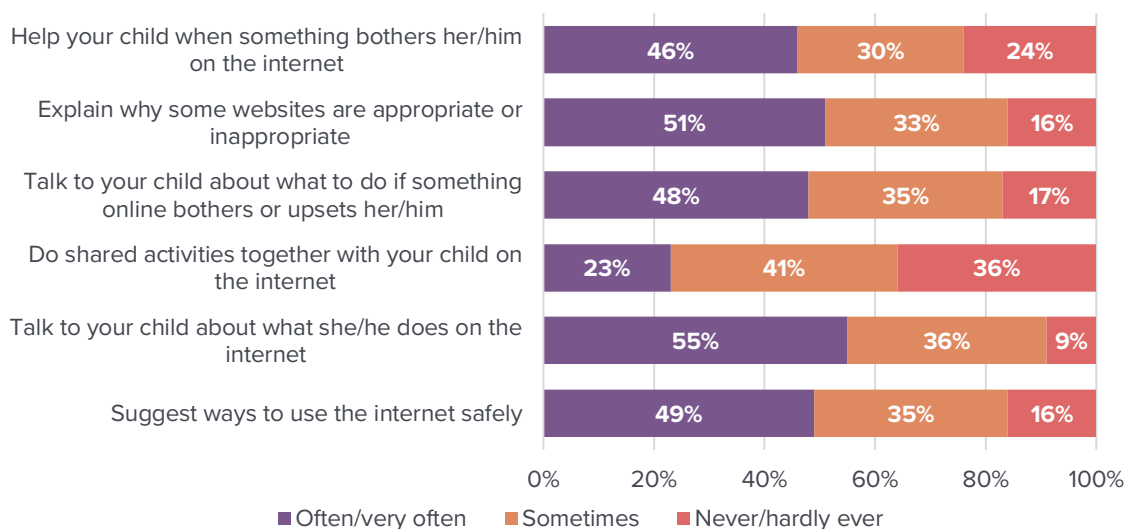
Enabling mediation

Active mediation

Active mediation involves parents discussing with their child what they do online, giving safety advice, and suggesting and/or sharing online activities. It is considered the most desirable form of parental mediation as it is positively associated with children's higher digital skills, enhanced understanding of the internet, and their preparedness to deal with media content and bothering online experiences (Smahel et al., 2020).

To measure parental engagement in active mediation behaviours, we asked participating parents (n=2,061) how often they took different actions to support their child while they are using the internet. To this end, we used a five-point scale (never, hardly ever, sometimes, often, very often) to measure six types of parenting approaches:

- Suggest ways to use the internet safely.
- Talk to your child about what they do on the internet.
- Do shared activities together with your child on the internet.
- Talk to your child about what to do if something online bothers or upsets them.
- Explain why some websites are appropriate or inappropriate.
- Help your child when something bothers them on the internet.

As Figure 1 shows, the most common action parents, caregivers and whānau said they take is to talk to their child about what they do on the internet. In this respect, 55% of surveyed parents said they did this often or very often. This was followed by other actions such as explaining to their child why some websites are appropriate or inappropriate (51%), suggesting ways to use the internet safely (49%), and talking with their child about what to do if something online bothers or upsets them (48%). In contrast, sharing activities with their child on the internet was the least common active mediation behaviour (23%) often performed by New Zealand parents. What is more, over a third of parents (36%) indicated that they never or hardly ever engage in this type of activity with their child.

Figure 1. How often parents engage in different types of active mediation behaviours

Behaviour	Often/very often	Sometimes	Never/hardly ever
Help your child when something bothers her/him on the internet	46%	30%	24%
Explain why some websites are appropriate or inappropriate	51%	33%	16%
Talk to your child about what to do if something online bothers or upsets her/him	48%	35%	17%
Do shared activities together with your child on the internet	23%	41%	36%
Talk to your child about what she/he does on the internet	55%	36%	9%
Suggest ways to use the internet safely	49%	35%	16%

QP1. When your child uses the internet, how often do you do these things?
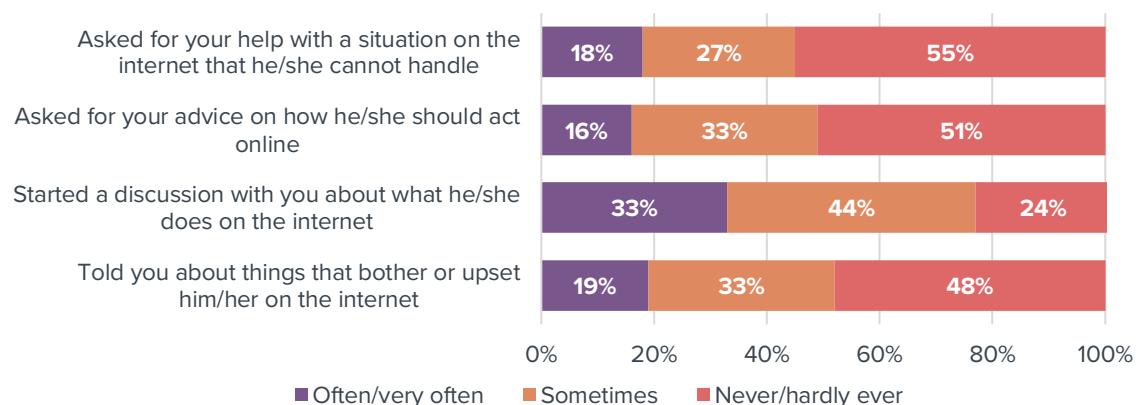*Base: All parents of children aged 9-17 (n=2,061)*

When looking closer at the data, our results suggest that parents of younger children tend to be more likely to often engage in the range of active behaviours measured in this study. For example, our results show that as children get older parents were less likely to talk to them about what they do online (66% of 9-11-year-olds' parents said they often/very often did this compared to 56% and 39% for those of 12-14 and 15-17-year-olds respectively). Regarding children's ethnicity, compared to other groups, it was more common for parents of children who identified as Asian to frequently share activities with their child on the internet (30%), while parents of NZ European/Pākehā children were least likely to do this (21%). Conversely, parents of Asian children were less likely than those of other ethnic groups to say they often talked to their child about what to do if something bothered them online (43%). Regarding children's gender, rates differed significantly in just one of the active mediation behaviours: parents of girls are more likely to often talk to their child about what to do if something bothers or upsets them online (49%) than parents of boys (43%).

The survey also asked participating parents whether their child has ever asked for internet-related support. We used a five-point scale, ranging from never to very often, to measure four types of child-initiated support:

- Asked for your help with a situation on the internet that they cannot handle.
- Asked for your advice on how they should act online.
- Started a discussion with you about what they do on the internet.
- Told you about things that bother or upset him/her on the internet.

Based on parents' responses, the extent of child-initiated support appears to depend on the type of children's needs and experiences online (see Figure 2). According to parents, it was more common for children to start discussing what they do on the internet than to ask for the other types of support measured.

Figure 2. How often parents are asked for internet-related support by their child
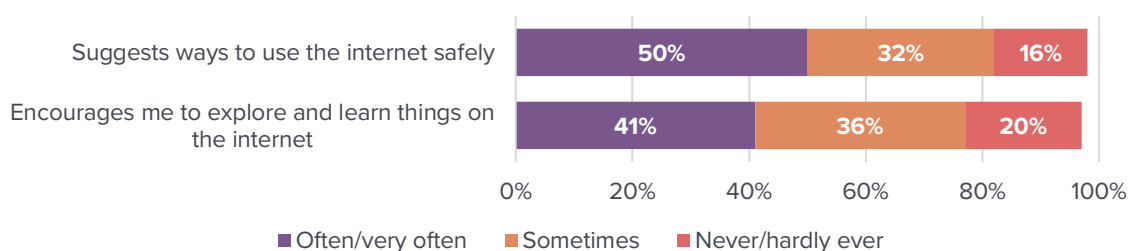

	Often/very often	Sometimes	Never/hardly ever
Asked for your help with a situation on the internet that he/she cannot handle	18%	27%	55%
Asked for your advice on how he/she should act online	16%	33%	51%
Started a discussion with you about what he/she does on the internet	33%	44%	24%
Told you about things that bother or upset him/her on the internet	19%	33%	48%

QP2. Has your child ever done any of these things?
Base: All parents of children aged 9-17 (n=2,061)

The study also looked for children's views regarding the extent of their parent/carer's engagement in active mediation. All participating children aged 9-17 (n=2,061) were asked how often their parent/carer (a) encouraged them to explore and learn things on the internet and (b) suggested ways to use the internet safely. To measure children's responses, we use a six-point scale (very often, often, sometimes, hardly ever, never, and not sure/don't want to answer). See Figure 3 for detail.

Overall, according to children, parents' engagement in these two types of activities is significant, with half of participating children indicating that their parents often suggested to them how to use the internet safely, and 4 in 10 saying they were often encouraged to explore and learn things on the internet by their parents.

Figure 3. Children's perceptions of how often their parents engage in active mediation

	Often/very often	Sometimes	Never/hardly ever
Suggests ways to use the internet safely	50%	32%	16%
Encourages me to explore and learn things on the internet	41%	36%	20%

QK30. When you use the internet, how often does your parent/carer do any of these things?
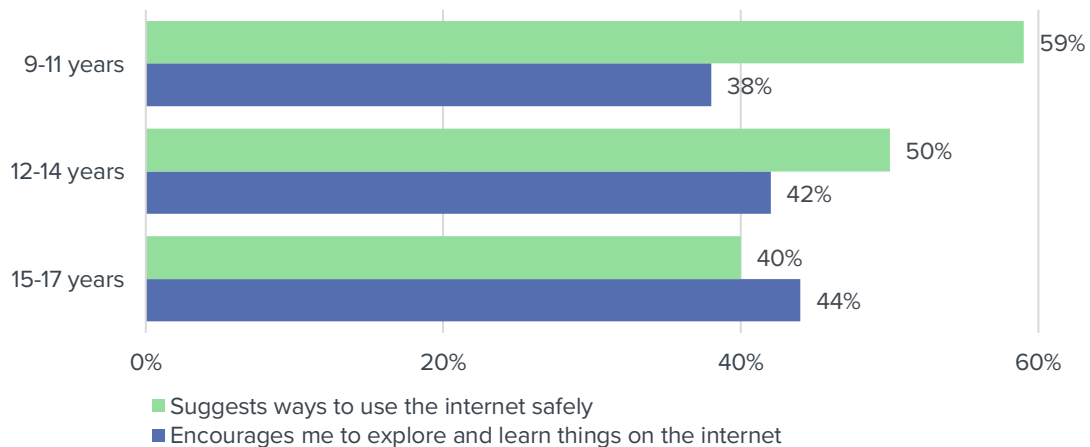*Base: All children aged 9-17 (n=2,061)*

Our data also shows some interesting results related to key demographics. Regarding children's gender, there was no significant difference when they were asked whether their parents, caregivers and whānau suggested ways to use the internet safely. Regarding ethnicity, this type of parental activity was more likely to often or very often be experienced by children who identified as other ethnicity (68%) and Asian (59%). Meanwhile, NZ European/Pākehā children were least likely to say their parents often engage in this behaviour (48%).

When asked if their parents encouraged them to explore and learn things on the internet, girls were more likely to say this never or hardly ever happened to them (23%) compared to the boys in the study

(17%). Regarding ethnicity, NZ European/Pākehā children were most likely and Asian children least likely to give this response (21% and 15%, respectively).

Finally, our data presented in Figure 4 shows interesting results regarding children's age. On one hand, it is much more common for parents of children aged 9-11 years to often or very often suggest ways to use the internet safely compared to older children. The rates in this respect were 59% for parents of 9-11-year-olds, 50% for 12-14-year-olds and 40% for 15-17-year-olds. On the other hand, it is less common for parents of 9-11-year-olds to often encourage them to explore and learn things on the internet (38%) compared to older age groups (42% for 12-14-year-olds and 44% for 15-17-year-olds).

Figure 4. Children's perceptions of parents' engagement often/very often in active mediation by age group

QK30. When you use the internet, how often does your parent/carer do any of these things?
Base: All children aged 9-17 (n=2,061)

Technical mediation

Another form of parental mediation is using technical controls to regulate or block children's exposure to inappropriate or potentially harmful content online (Nikken & Schols, 2015). To this end, parents, caregivers and whānau might purchase, for instance, specific services or use the device's built-in parental control features. To measure technical mediation, we asked participating parents whether they have used any of the following seven approaches:

- Parental controls or other means of blocking or filtering some types of website.
- Parental controls or other means of keeping track of the websites or apps your child visits.
- Rules about how long or when your child is allowed to go online.
- A service or contract that limits the time your child spends on the internet.
- Software to prevent spam or junk mail/viruses.
- Parental controls that filter the apps your child can download.
- Software that limits the people your child can be in touch with through voice calls and messages (SMS, MMS or IM).

Overall, 51% of parents said they used three or more of the technical controls listed above, while 12% used none at all. Specifically, as Table 2 shows, 7 in 10 parents said they set rules about how long or when their child is allowed to go online, while 6 in 10 indicated using software to prevent spam or junk mail/viruses. In contrast, the less common technical controls adopted by parents were to use a service

or contract to limit time spent on the internet (23%) and employ software to limit the people their child can be in touch with through voice calls and messages (21%).

Furthermore, of the seven behaviours listed in the study, rates were higher among parents of children aged 9-11 years regarding the use of rules limiting when and how long their child is allowed to go online (82%), parental control blocking or filtering websites (50%), parental controls on their child's app downloads (47%) and keeping track of the websites their child has visited (50%). On the other hand, there were no significant differences regarding parents' technical mediation based on children's gender, except for two parental actions: it was more common for parents of boys to set rules limiting when and how long their child spends online (75%) and use a service or contract that limits the time their child spends online (25%) compared to girls' parents, 67% and 20%, respectively.

In terms of children's ethnicity, parents of NZ European/Pākehā children were least likely to control or use other means of blocking or filtering some types of website (40%), control or keep track of websites or apps visited (38%) and used a service or contract that limits the time their child spends on the internet (20%), while parents of Asian children were least likely to set rules about how long or when they could go online (64%). Conversely, parents of Pacific children were more likely to use parental controls to keep track of the websites/apps their child visits (53%), use a service or contract that limits the time their child spends on the internet (31%), and use software that limits the people their child can be in touch with through voice calls and messages (30%). Finally, our results did not show significant differences across different ethnic groups regarding the use of software to prevent spam or junk mail/viruses or parental controls that filter the apps that children can download.

Table 2. Parents' engagement in technical mediation

Technical mediation	Yes	No	Not sure
Parental controls or other means of blocking or filtering some types of website	43%	52%	6%
Parental controls or other means of keeping track of the websites or apps your child visits	42%	52%	6%
Rules about how long or when your child is allowed to go online	**71%**	27%	2%
A service or contract that limits the time your child spends on the internet	23%	**74%**	3%
Software to prevent spam or junk mail/viruses	**61%**	32%	7%
Parental controls that filter the apps your child can download	38%	55%	6%
Software that limits the people your child can be in touch with through voice calls and messages (SMS, MMS or IM)	21%	**70%**	9%

QP4. Do you (or the other parent/carer) make use of any of the following?
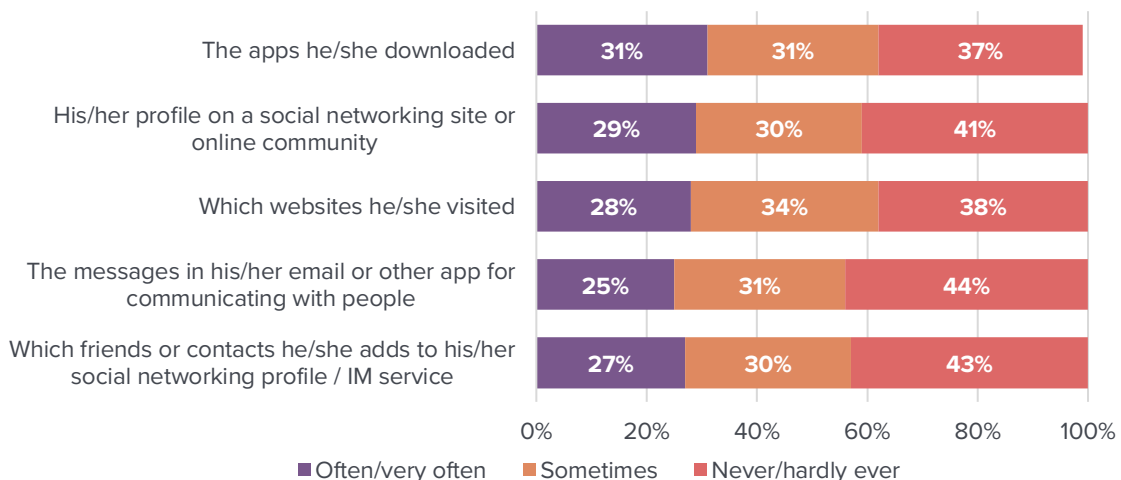*Base: All parents of children aged 9-17 (n=2,061)*

Parental monitoring

Monitoring is a digital parenting strategy which implies parents checking on their child's online activities after they have used their devices or been online (Livingstone et al., 2017). To explore parental monitoring, this study asked all participating parents, caregivers and whānau the following question: When your child uses the internet, how often do you (or the other parent/carer) check the following things afterwards? As we were interested in knowing how frequently parents monitor their child's online activity, we included a five-point scale (never, hardly ever, sometimes, often, very often) to measure the following monitoring behaviours:

- Which friends or contacts they add to his/her social networking profile/IM service.
- The messages in his/her email or another app for communicating with people.
- Which websites they visited.
- His/her profile on a social networking site or online community.
- The apps they downloaded.

As seen in Figure 5, in general, rates of parental monitoring do not differ significantly across most of the behaviours measured. However, the most common (sometimes, often or very often) monitoring activities parents tend to do were to check after their child went online which websites they visited (62%) and the apps they downloaded (62%). Meanwhile, they seem to be less likely to check their child's email or other messages for communicating with people (56% and 57%, respectively). Our data also show that monitoring behaviours were adopted more often by parents of younger children. For example, when asked whether they check which websites their child has visited, 39% of parents of children aged 9-11 responded that they did this often or very often, which was more than twice that of parents of 15-17-year-olds (17%). Regarding children's gender, differences were not significant, except for checking which websites were visited. In this regard, boys' parents (36%) were slightly more likely to say they sometimes check on their child than girls' parents (31%). In relation to children's ethnicity, parents of Māori (31%) and Pacific children (34%) were most likely to check which websites their child often/very often had visited, while this was least likely among parents of NZ European/Pākehā (24%) and Asian (19%) children. Finally, parents of NZ European/Pākehā children were most likely to never/hardly ever monitor their child's profile on a social network site or online community (42%).

Figure 5. Parents' engagement in monitoring behaviours

QP5. When your child uses the internet, how often do you (or the other parent/carer) check the following things afterwards?
Base: All parents of children aged 9-17 (n=2,061)

Restrictive mediation

Restrictive mediation refers to parents restricting or banning, or insisting on supervising a range of online activities and/or access to digital tools and services (Livingstone & Byrne, 2018). While restrictive mediation can help to reduce children's risks and potential harm online (see Chang et al., 2015; Khurana et al., 2015), it can also limit children's digital skills and opportunities (Livingstone et al., 2017).

To measure restrictive mediation, parents, caregivers and whānau were asked the following question: Do you allow your child to do the following things on the internet and, if so, do they need your permission to do them? We used a three-point scale (allowed to do this anytime, allowed to do this with permission or supervision, and not allowed to do this) to measure a total of ten restrictive behaviours:

- Use a web or phone camera (e.g., for Skype or video chat).
- Download/stream music or videos (e.g., from YouTube, Netflix or Spotify).
- Visit a social networking site (e.g., Facebook).
- Play games with other people online.
- Visit a chatroom.
- Use IM (instant messaging) (e.g., WhatsApp, Snapchat).
- Read/watch news online.
- Use the internet for schoolwork.
- Spend time in a virtual world (e.g., Minecraft).
- Share photos, videos or music online with others (including on social networks or IM services)

In general, most parents allow their child to use the internet unsupervised for schoolwork (76%) or keeping up with news (60%), while around 4 in 10 prefer to supervise their child when they are playing online games with others (46%), spending time in a virtual world (41%) or using a web or phone camera for activities such as video chat (41%). On the other hand, 6 in 10 parents do not allow their child to visit a chatroom (61%). See Figure 6 for details.
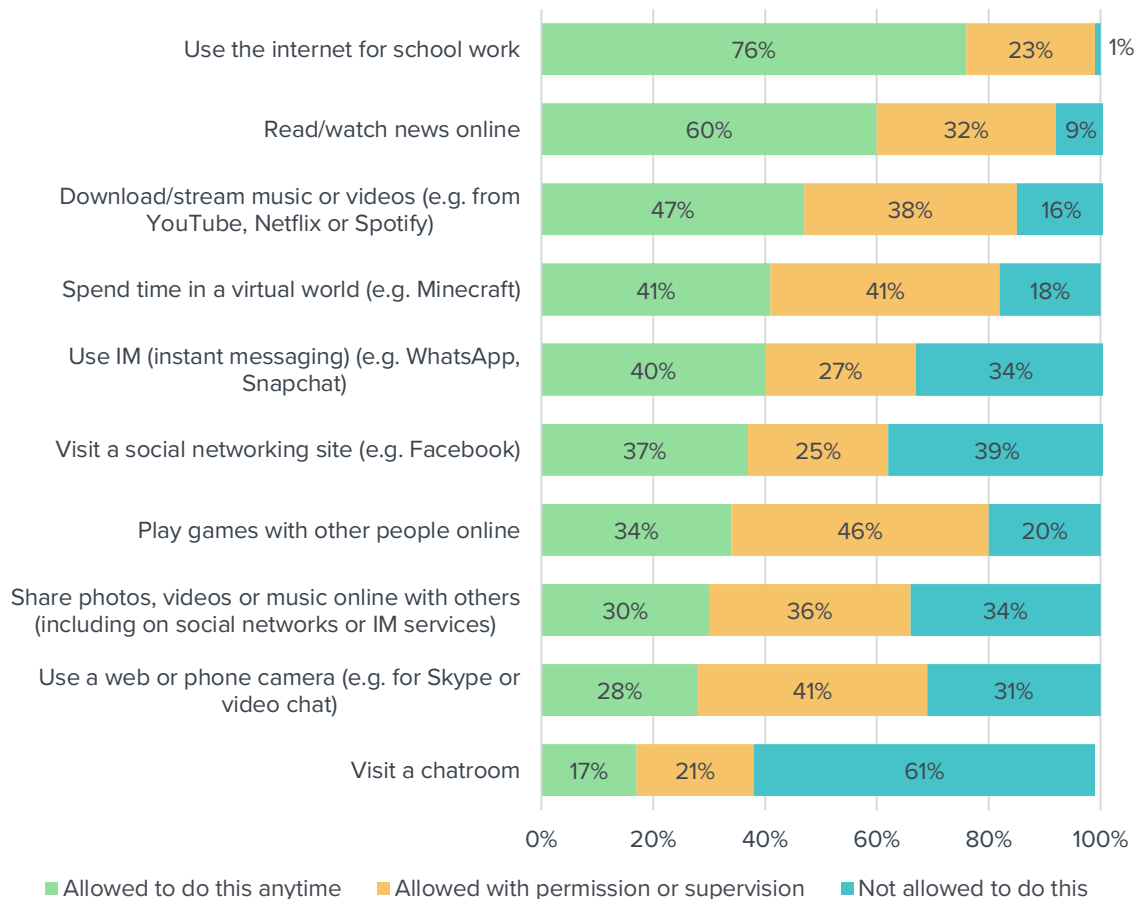
In relation to children's age, children aged 9-11 were more likely to be fully restricted from engaging in most of the online activities measured in this study, with some rates significantly higher than those for 12-14 and 15-17-year-olds. For example, 75% of 9-11-year-olds were not allowed to visit a social networking site compared to 34% of 12-14 and just 4% of 15-17-year-olds. The exception was using the internet for schoolwork, which was an activity near-universally allowed by parents, albeit with greater levels of permission or supervision for the 9-11 age group than was required of older children.

In terms of gender, our data suggest that parents tend to fully restrict some activities depending on the gender of their child. For example, parents of boys were more likely not to allow their child to use a web or phone camera (35%), share photos, videos or music online (38%) and use instant messaging tools (38%) compared to girls: 28%, 31%, and 29%, respectively. On the other hand, girls' parents were more likely not to allow their child to spend time in a virtual world such as Minecraft (23%) and play games with other people online (26%) compared to parents of boys: 14% and 15%, respectively.

Regarding ethnicity, parents of NZ European/Pākehā children were least likely to allow (either with permission or supervision or at any time) their child to use a web or phone camera (e.g., for Skype or video chat) (66%), visit a social networking site (e.g., Facebook) (57%), visit a chatroom (36%), or use instant messaging (64%). Meanwhile, parents of Asian children were most likely to allow their children to do these things on the internet (75%, 73%, 52% and 75%, respectively). Parents of NZ European/

Pākehā children were also least likely to allow them to play games with other people online (78%) and to share photos, video or music online with others (64%), with parents of children identifying as other ethnicity (95%) and Māori (73%), being most likely to allow, respectively, their children to do these two online activities. Parents of Asian children were least and Māori most likely to allow music or videos to be downloaded or streamed (80%, 89% respectively). Finally, our results did not show significant differences across different ethnic groups regarding parents restricting the use of the internet to read or watch the news, for school work, or spend time in a virtual world.

Figure 6. Parents' engagement in restrictive mediation

|	Allowed to do this anytime	Allowed with permission or supervision	Not allowed to do this
Use the internet for school work	76%	23%	1%
Read/watch news online	60%	32%	9%
Download/stream music or videos (e.g. from YouTube, Netflix or Spotify)	47%	38%	16%
Spend time in a virtual world (e.g. Minecraft)	41%	41%	18%
Use IM (instant messaging) (e.g. WhatsApp, Snapchat)	40%	27%	34%
Visit a social networking site (e.g. Facebook)	37%	25%	39%
Play games with other people online	34%	46%	20%
Share photos, videos or music online with others (including on social networks or IM services)	30%	36%	34%
Use a web or phone camera (e.g. for Skype or video chat)	28%	41%	31%
Visit a chatroom	17%	21%	61%

QP3. Do you allow your child to do the following things on the internet and, if so, do they need your permission to do them?
Base: All parents of children aged 9-17 (n=2,061)

The survey also explored restrictive mediation from the perspective of participating children (n=2,061). Specifically, children were asked about five listed activities and whether they were allowed to do them and whether they needed permission.

- Use a web or phone camera (for example, for Skype or video chat).
- Download music or films.
- Visit a social networking site (for example, Facebook).
- Play games with other people online.
- Share photos, videos, or music with others through online tools/apps (for example, Snapchat, Instagram).

The findings for this question are presented in Figure 7. Around 4 in 10 children said their parent/carer allows them to do the following things on the internet unsupervised: play games with other people online (41%), visit a social networking site (40%), download music or films (40%), and share photos, videos, music through online tools (38%). Meanwhile, the activity that children were least likely to be allowed to do at any time was use a web or phone camera for video chat (34%).

Figure 7. Children's perceptions of their parent/carer's engagement in restrictive mediation
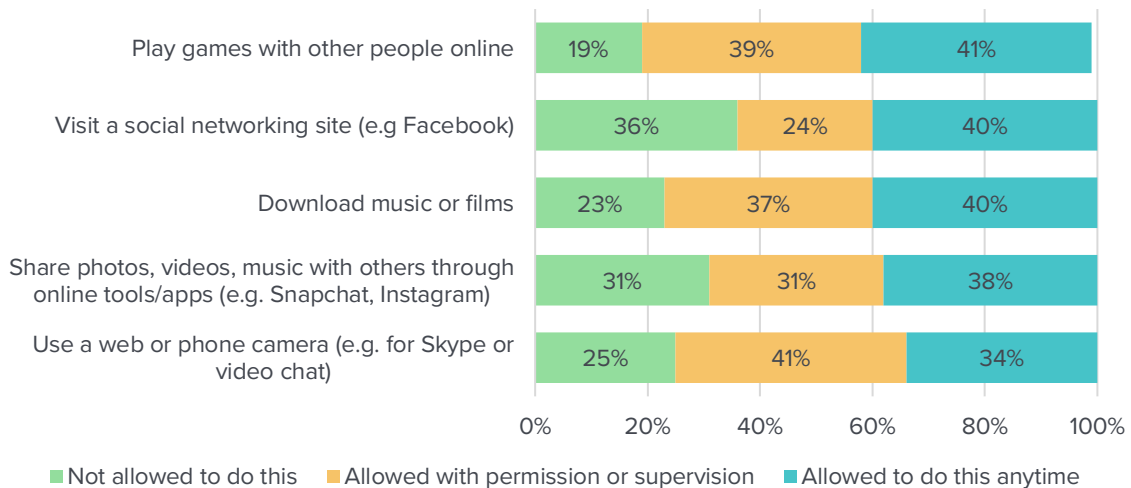
QK32 - Does your parent/carer allow you to do the following things on the internet and if so, do you need their permission to do them?
Base: All children aged 9-17 (n=2,061)

Concluding remarks

This factsheet aimed to present research-based evidence about the strategies parents, caregivers and whānau in New Zealand use to mediate their children's digital experiences and manage risk and harm online. Our findings have several important implications for policies and practices aimed at supporting parents in their role.

Provide resources that support parents to develop their understanding of different digital parenting strategies and their potential impact.

There is a need for adequate and timely information and resources for parents, caregivers and whānau. These should increase awareness of the different digital parenting strategies, and perhaps more importantly, how applying them may affect their children's online experiences. For example, as previously mentioned, restrictive parenting behaviours may help manage risks but can limit children's online opportunities such as learning and socialising. On the other hand, enabling parenting practices can encourage children's access to these and other opportunities but may be less effective in avoiding risk. However, research suggests that enabling behaviours seem to help children build resilience to harm, and that some exposure to risk is a part of this process (Livingstone & Byrne, 2018).

In New Zealand, resources and support directed to parents tend to focus on managing risk and preventing harm online, meaning there is an opportunity to increase attention on the opportunities that digital tools also present to children. Thus, independently of the digital parental behaviours New Zealand parents use or combine (whether enabling or restrictive), providing suitable information and resources will help them to make informed decisions about their digital parenting strategies and the potential implications for their child.

Develop resources that encourage uptake of enabling digital parenting strategies, including actively sharing online experiences, to increase online safety outcomes and relationship building.

In our study most parents said they talk with their children at least sometimes about their experiences and activities online, but they are less likely to share these activities with them. Having open conversations with their children is an important digital parenting strategy and a behaviour Netsafe has advocated for many years. However, it will also be helpful for parents to explore with their children what they do online (e.g., the games they play and/or the apps they use). This must be guided by parents' curiosity rather than alarm or fear about the digital environment. In doing so, parents will benefit from understanding the potential safety risk and, equally important, from learning how their kids engage with and through digital tools.

Recently, Netsafe released a Parent Toolkit (https://www.netsafe.org.nz/parenttoolkit) that includes ideas for parents on how to talk and share activities with their children in a constructive manner. Other stakeholders, such as government agencies, educators, the tech industry, and news media outlets, who also play a role in children's online safety outcomes, may take similar steps to promote parents' involvement in children's digital activities.

As children develop towards adulthood, new approaches that engage the increasing influence of peer support can complement digital parenting strategies.

Our findings also show that digital parenting behaviours tend to be less prevalent as children become older. Ideally, parents of older children should remain involved in their kids' engagement with the digital environment. However, this may be impractical as adolescents navigate a series of challenging developmental changes (e.g., identity formation, search for autonomy). Also, and typically, teenagers spend more time with their peers, and, as our past research shows, they tend to rely more on their close friends when they have a negative experience online.

This broad panorama suggests that in addition to interventions to support effective digital parenting strategies, there is an opportunity to work with teenagers on youth-led peer-to-peer programmes to complement the support provided to parents. Informed by research evidence and extensive practice, Netsafe's Youth Action Squad (YAS) is an initiative that nurtures a group of young people as role models in their schools and communities by equipping them with the knowledge and skills to spark discussion, plan initiatives, lead activities and enact positive change around the online safety issues that affect them (https://www.netsafe.org.nz/the-kit/youth-action-squad).

Methodology

As previously mentioned, for this study Netsafe adopted the Global Kids Online project's quantitative research toolkit which provides researchers with guidance to carry out reliable and standardised national research on the opportunities, risks and challenges in the digital age. This study's findings are based on data gathered through two quantitative surveys of parents and their children conducted online between 20 July 2018 and 30 September 2018 – see Table 3 for more information. The sample of parents and children is broadly representative by age, gender, and ethnicity. Respondents were recruited from online research panels in New Zealand (with recruitment criteria based upon Census data for gender, age, location, and ethnicity). Fieldwork was administered by Colmar Brunton. The contact rate with adults aged between 27 and 59 years old was deliberately increased as these adults are more likely to have a child aged 9 to 17.

Comparisons between Statistics New Zealand demographic data and the survey data suggested that some post-survey weighting was required to ensure a balanced age-gender profile of children and correct for an under-representation of Māori and Pacific respondents. Post-survey weights adjusting for demographic variables such as age, gender, and ethnicity profile is a common approach used in social surveys, which helps ensure that the final sample represents the overall population.

The final weighted sample is representative of the population of children and parents by ethnicity, age, gender, and location. The overall sample size of n=2,061 provides robust nationwide analysis (with maximum margins of error of +/- 2.2%), and also allows a degree of analysis by age-group (for example, analysis of 9-11-year-olds is subject to a maximum margin of error of +/- 3.6%). Results for various demographic groups were compared for significance against the average (total) result using a two-tailed T-test. The maximum margin of error when comparing parents and children is 3.1% when the result is based on all respondents from both samples (at 50% agreement). Note that percentages in figures/tables may not total exactly 100% due to rounding or because survey participants were allowed to choose multiple answers to some questions.

Table 3. Overview of parent and child surveys.

Child	Parent
- Involved a representative survey of children aged 9-17. - Parental permission obtained for each participating child. - In households containing more than one child in the relevant age-group, a random child was selected for interview. - The child survey was around 20 minutes in length. 2,061 children completed the survey. - The child questionnaire largely focused on their internet use, including their attitudes and experiences online. 1,110 children aged 13-17 completed a further 5-minute questionnaire about their exposure to and sharing of harmful content online (children younger than 13 were excluded from these questions).	- For every child completing the survey, one of their parents or guardians also completed a survey. - The sample of parents was broadly representative of parents of children aged 9 to 17. - The parent survey was around 15 minutes in length. 2,061 parents completed the survey. - The parent questionnaire had a strong focus on internet mediation and rules in the home and perceptions of their child's experiences online.

About Netsafe Research

Netsafe conducts research as a wider part of its statutory role as Approved Agency under the Harmful Digital Communications Act 2015 to inform the design and delivery of its resources and services and provide research-based evidence for others working to address online safety issues. The topic of this report sits within the scope of the Act's ten communications principles that together describe a range of potentially harmful types of online communications, and it adds to the range of research-based publications released by Netsafe: netsafe.org.nz/advice/research/

To contact Netsafe for more information about its research programme or how you can contribute contact: research@netsafe.org.nz

For more information about New Zealand's Harmful Digital Communications Act 2015 and Netsafe's Approved Agency role visit: netsafe.org.nz/hdc-act

About Global Kids Online

This report is part of Netsafe's research project Ngā taiohi matihiko o Aotearoa – New Zealand Kids Online, and our fourth publication as a member of Global Kids Online.

Global Kids Online is an international network of academics, social researchers, and experts dedicated to studying children's rights, risks and opportunities in the digital age. Its purpose is to generate rigorous cross-national research-based evidence regarding how children access and use the internet and understand the risks and opportunities of their interaction with digital tools. Netsafe has implemented the project's quantitative research toolkit in New Zealand, enabling it to carry out reliable and standardised national research with children and their parents on the opportunities, risks and protective factors of children's internet use.

Global Kids Online is an initiative of UNICEF's Office of Research – Innocenti, the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), and EU Kids Online. Find out more at: globalkidsonline.net/

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