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Half of NZ high school students unsupervised online outside of school

New findings from the University of Auckland show more than half of high school students are never supervised online outside of school, and only two in 10 primary schoolers are “usually” supervised.

Online safety organisation, Netsafe, say the findings highlight the need for parents to take a more active role in helping children to have a positive online experience.

Netsafe Chief Executive, Martin Cocker says young people adopt new technologies easily, but are not always prepared emotionally or mentally to deal with situations like online bullying, abuse or exposure to inappropriate content.

“We don’t give our kids the keys to the car and say “teach yourself how to drive”, says Cocker.

“We give them a lot of guidance at first and then slowly let go of the reins as they become more experienced - and we should be doing the same when our kids start going online.”

“We need to teach and model appropriate online behaviours, how to keep safe and where to get help if it’s needed. That means knowing what your kids are doing online.”

The findings show that 49% of high school aged girls and 31% of high school aged boys use their mobile phones most often for social media.

“Some parents don’t think they know enough about social media to help,” says Martin. “The important thing to remember is that although kids might be the experts in technology, most adults can contribute to managing challenges. A lot of the issues young people face today aren’t new, they just play out in a different environment.”

The CensusAtSchool survey also reveals that eight in 10 teens and six in 10 primary school children have no screen-time limits outside of school, a statistic that Cocker says is not in and of itself a bad thing.

“All screen-time isn’t created equal and there’s no magic time frame for kids to be online,” says Cocker. “Reading, learning and creating online can be very beneficial for young people. When screen time is impairing other important areas of development then that’s a problem.”

The new findings have emerged from the second data release from CensusAtSchool TaurangaKiTeKura, a national, biennial project run by the University of Auckland’s Department of Statistics. In class, Year 5 to Year 13 students (aged 9 to 18) use digital devices to answer 35 online questions in English or te reo Maori.

For online safety advice and guidance visit netsafe.org.nz or call 0508 NETSAFE toll-free seven days a week.

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About CensusAtSchool

CensusAtSchool is part of an international effort to boost statistical capability among young people, and is carried out in Australia, the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States, Japan and South Africa. In New Zealand, CensusAtSchool started 2003, and is run by the University of Auckland's Department of Statistics with support from Statistics NZ and the Ministry of Education.

About Netsafe

Netsafe is an independent non-profit organisation with an unrelenting focus on online safety. We're committed to helping everyone take advantage of digital opportunities and resolve online safety challenges. You can call 0508 NETSAFE for free and confidential advice seven days a week, follow our latest advice on social media or visit [netsafe.org.nz](https://www.netsafe.org.nz) for handy tips and information.