



For immediate release

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Nearly 1 in 5 NZ teens unable to take part in daily activities due to negative experience online

New research by online safety organisation Netsafe and the Ministry of Women highlights rates of harmful online communications received by young New Zealanders in the last 12 months.

The study reveals that Kiwi teenagers are twice as likely as adults to be negatively affected by harmful communications online. The research also showed that younger teenagers (aged 14 and 15) are at greater risk of harm.

Netsafe's CEO Martin Cocker said he was concerned when he heard the rates of harm were high. "There can be a perception that because teenagers have grown up with technology they know better than adults how to manage things that happen online. What this research shows is that many young people are facing big challenges online and they need our support with managing them."

The research highlighted that girls were at a higher risk of being harmed by online communications than boys were. It also found that teenagers aged 14 or 15 were more likely to say that an unwanted communication online had made it difficult for them to take part in their usual daily activities – this included being unable to go to school or study, not being able to participate online as usual or being unable to eat or sleep properly.

"This research shows that for girls, social media was the most common place for a harmful online communication to occur, while for boys it was on online games. We encourage parents to use this information to start a conversation with their kids about what they've experienced online and if they know what to do if they need help."

The majority of unwanted digital communications were sent by a friend, with just over a quarter of teens saying the online communication was linked to something that was also taking place offline.

Teenagers with disabilities were more negatively impacted by harmful experiences online than teenagers without impairments. The study also highlighted that teenagers' experience of harm online differed by ethnicity, with Māori and Pacific teenagers reporting they were more likely to have received an unwanted digital communication in the last 12 months.

"Preventing online harm is critical to the wellbeing of our young people," says Cocker. "They need effective tools to be able to manage their online experiences and these tools need to reflect the unique experiences and challenges of different teen groups. This research highlights that effective

actions to prevent and reduce digital harm must consider and respond to differences in the ways girls and boys interact online, and we must work to understand how ‘help’ differs for Maori and Pacific youth and for our young people living with disabilities”.

The research has been undertaken in partnership with the Ministry of Women, as part of a joint project aimed at better understanding the online behaviour of young New Zealanders.

Netsafe provides free and confidential advice and support for anyone experiencing online abuse or harm. Netsafe’s helpline is open seven days a week from 8am-8pm Monday to Friday, and 9am-5pm weekends and public holidays. Call 0508 NETSAFE (0508 638 723) or email help@netsafe.org.nz.

The full report is available at <https://www.netsafe.org.nz/youth-population-survey-2018>

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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.

Netsafe.org.nz - 0508 NETSAFE (0508 638 723) - help@netsafe.org.nz