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New insight into Kiwi kids' online interaction with people they don't know

Netsafe's latest research reveals the prevalence of Kiwi kids' online interactions with people they haven't previously met.

Nearly four in 10 New Zealand kids have had contact online with someone they didn't know, and one in 10 have met someone they first knew online.

Netsafe's research also revealed older kids were more likely to have had contact online with someone they have not met in person rather than young children. Only 23 percent of 9 to 11-year olds and 38 percent of 12 to 14-year olds had interacted with someone new online, while 54 percent of 15 to 17-year olds had made contact.

The data reflects different experiences rangatahi have online including gaming, using social media and uploading videos.

"As kids are heading into the school holidays and more likely to be spending time online, it's a good time to check-in with your children about what they are doing online and who they are interacting with", said Martin Cocker, Netsafe CEO.

The research also revealed some kids met people face-to-face that they first got to know online. Those aged 9-11 were less likely to have met someone (3 percent), the rate increased for 12-14-year olds and was highest among those aged 15-17 years (18 percent).

Most respondents reported feeling happy (63 percent) after meeting an online contact and 25 percent were ambivalent about the meeting. Interestingly more boys reported having had online contact with someone they didn't know compared to girls.

"Fortunately, for most kids connecting with people online is a positive experience, but that can also create a false sense of security", says Cocker. "Kids are growing up with the internet as just another part of life so they need to know early on that what they do online may have consequences.

"It's important parents explain how easy it is for someone to pretend to be someone else online, how to work out if the person is who they say they are, the need to protect personal information and what they should do if they start to feel uncomfortable."

This research is part of Netsafe's second report as a member of the Global Kids Online network, which will be released early next year.

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

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

Global Kids Online's purpose is to generate rigorous cross-national research-based evidence regarding the way children access and use the internet and to understand the risks and opportunities of their interaction with digital tools.

In the coming months, Netsafe will publish more findings from Ngā taiohi matihiko o Aotearoa - New Zealand Kids Online addressing topics such as children's experiences of online risk and parents efforts to support their child to navigate the online environment.

About Netsafe

Netsafe is an independent non-profit organisation with an unrelenting focus on online safety. We keep people of all ages safe online by providing free support, advice and education. Visit netsafe.org.nz for useful resources or call 0508 638 723 seven days a week for help with an online incident.

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