How Aussie kids are using smartphones

Telstra’s research surveyed parents with children aged 3 to 17 with a smartphone and found:

Kids are spending more time on their smartphones and tablets

- On average, children aged 3 to 17 with a smartphone spend 21.8 hours on their mobile each week – 2.9 hours on weekdays and 3.7 hours on weekends.
- 54 per cent of children who own a smartphone also own a tablet, and they spend up to 3 hours a day on their tablets as well, meaning they spend up 5.9 hours a day on devices.

And parents say screen time is on the rise

- 70 per cent of parents think their kids’ time on smartphones has significantly or somewhat increased since they got their first smartphone.
- Smartphone use grows as kids become teens. At 10 kids with smartphones spend on average 14.7 hours on their device each week, while at 17 they spend an average of 26.3 hours a week on their smartphones.

Kids use devices late at night and out of their parents’ sight

- 68 per cent of 10 – 17 year olds with a smartphone use their mobile between 7 – 9 pm, while a quarter (24 per cent) use their phones from 9pm to midnight.
- A staggering 41 per cent of 16 – 17 year olds use their smartphones between 9pm to midnight.
- Kids are most likely to use their smartphone in their bedrooms, with 73 per cent saying they use them there – more than in front of the TV (58 per cent) and in shared family areas (41 per cent).

Parents say smartphones can be distracting

- Parents said 31 per cent of their children are on their phones while they do schoolwork.
- Parents rank Facebook as the most distracting social media platform, followed by Instant Messenger and then Snapchat.

Security and independence top reasons for smartphone ownership

- 65 per cent of parents who bought their child a smartphone did so to provide themselves the peace of mind of knowing they can contact them when they need to.
- 38 per cent of parents cited independence as a primary motivator for buying their child a mobile device, and say mobiles allow their children to play/ travel unsupervised outside the home.
- 29 per cent of parents bought their kids a smartphone so they could contact their friends easily.
Parents’ top concerns

- Unsolicited contact by strangers is the single greatest cyber-safety concern parents have about giving their child a smartphone (with 79 per cent citing it as a concern) – followed by internet scams (77 per cent) and the unsupervised access to all kinds of information (74 per cent).
- Sixty-six per cent of parents said they were concerned about their kid’s sexting on their smartphones.

Agreeing boundaries

Concerns about cyber safety or distractions don’t necessarily motivate parents to set boundaries.

- More than a third of parents (37 per cent) have not agreed time of day guidelines with their kids about when they can use their smartphone.
- 17 per cent of parents said they would have difficulty setting content viewing guidelines with their child.
- A quarter (25 per cent) of parents who set content guidelines find it difficult to get their children to follow them.

*About the research: This research was conducted via online survey by Maidstone Consulting and Empowered Communications on behalf of Telstra in February 2015, uniquely researching Australian parents with smartphone owning children regarding their use of smartphones and tablets. One thousand, three hundred and sixty five Australian parents of children aged 3-17 participated in the study.