

LEFT TO THEIR OWN DEVICES

Growing Up Digital Australia

AARE Conference

Adelaide

November 2022

 [pasi_sahlberg](#)

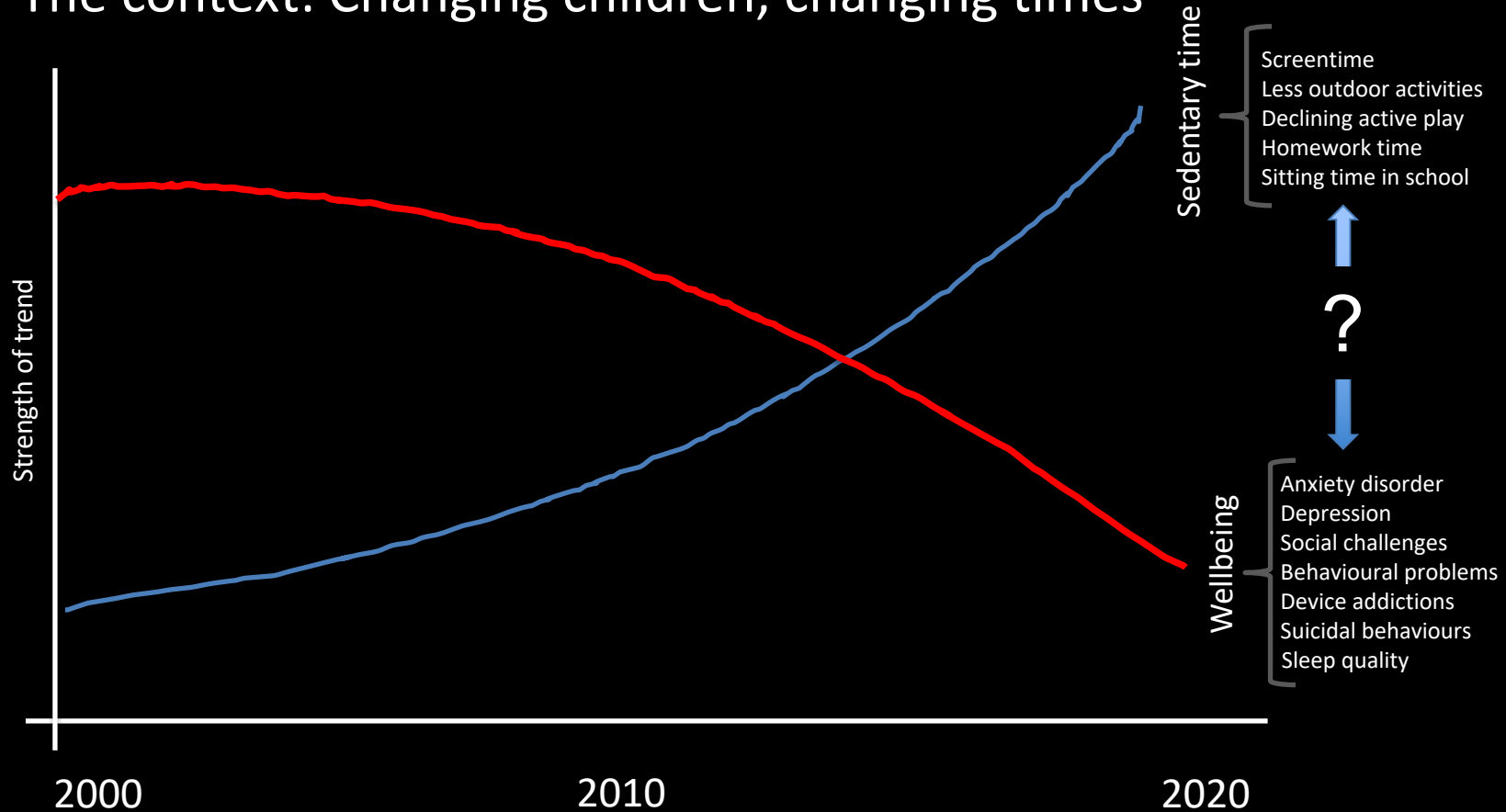


Southern Cross
University

Our paper aims to:

1. Provide evidence-based view to the role of digital media and technologies among school-aged children in Australia;
2. Understand possible consequences of digital lifestyle for student wellbeing and learning;
3. Suggest practical ways to improve digital wellness in and out of school.

The context: Changing children, changing times



The aim of the Growing Up Digital Project *is to better understand the scope of physical, mental and social consequences of digital media and technologies on children and youth.*





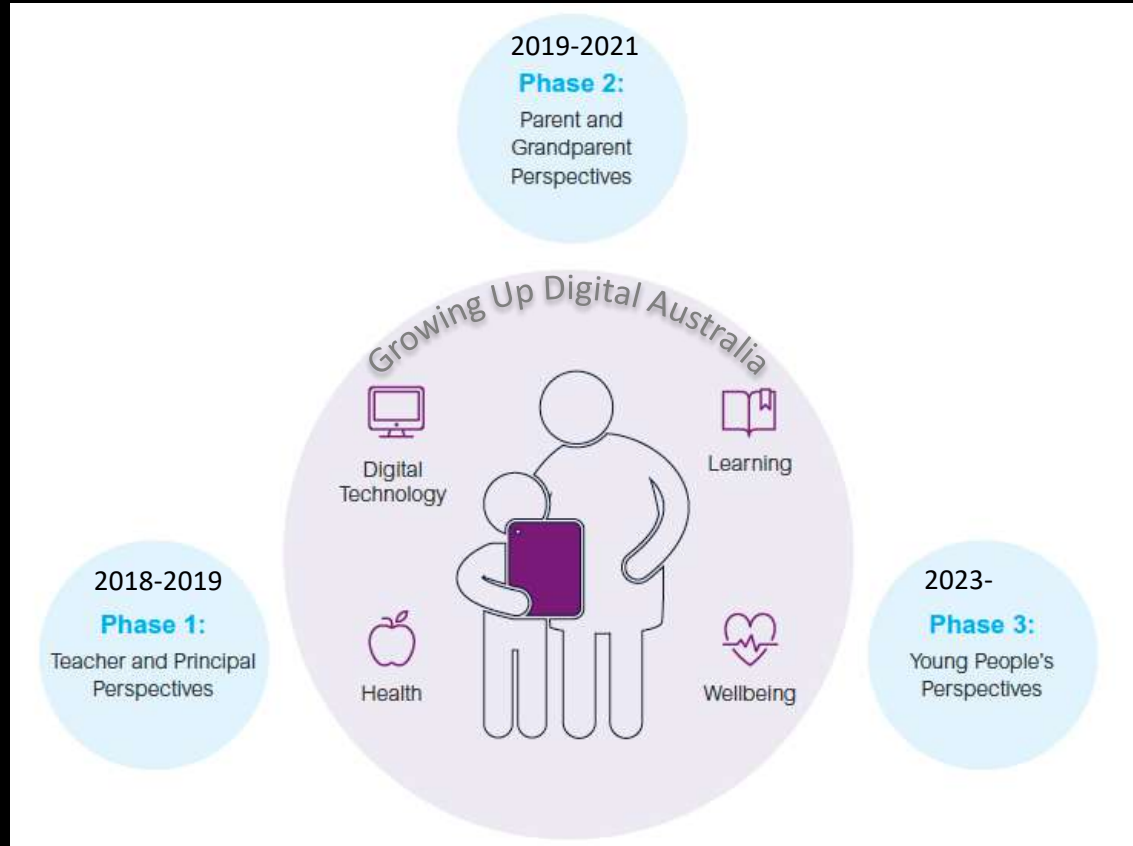
Boston Children's Hospital | Digital Wellness Lab

Where the world comes for answers



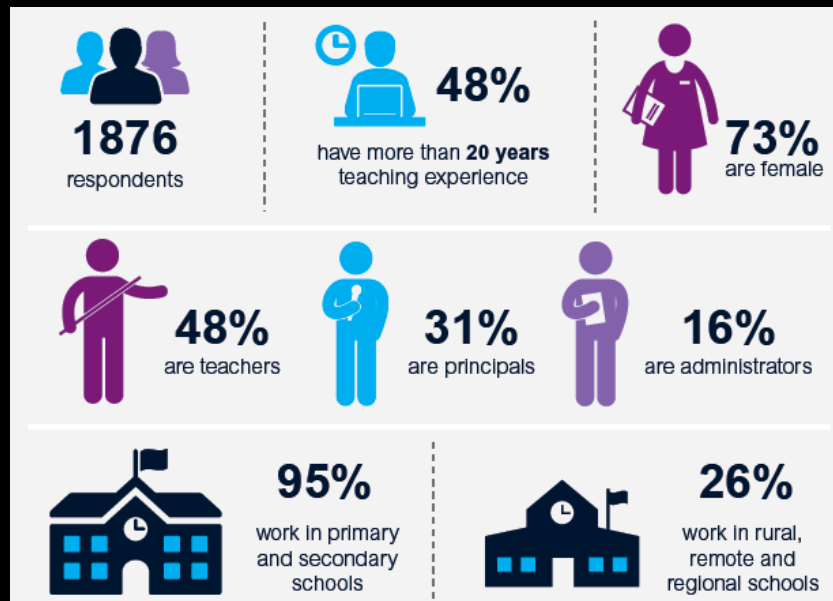
HARVARD
MEDICAL SCHOOL

Growing Up Digital Global Project

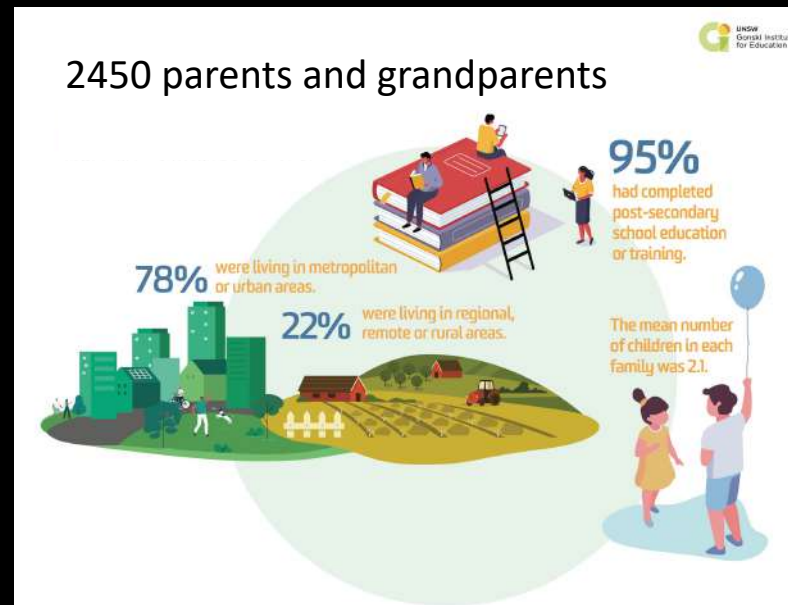


Growing Up Digital Australia 2019-2022

2020: Teachers and principals



2021: Parents and grandparents





1

WHAT DO WE KNOW?

43%

believe that digital technologies **enhance their teaching and learning activities**, rather than detract.



68%

believe that opportunities to facilitate inquiry-based learning are **enhanced by technology**.



78% say that students' abilities to focus on educational tasks has decreased.



have noticed a **decrease in student empathy**.



60% have noted declining levels of **physical activity**.

2 in 3

say technology is a growing distraction in their life.



89%

aged 25 or younger agreed that digital **technology poses an increasing distraction.**

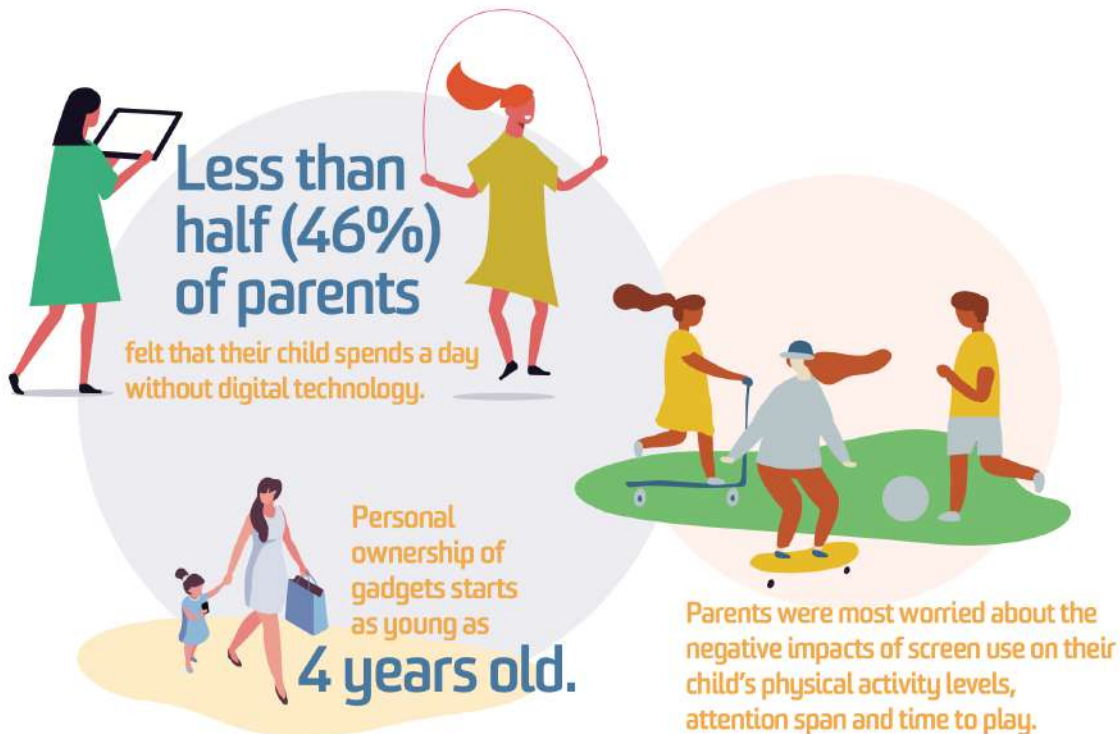


24%

felt they were addicted to digital technology, and this number increased to **61% aged 25 or younger.**

These results indicate that **younger educators** are most at risk of the **negative effects of technology** overuse.

Childhood is not what it used to be





2

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

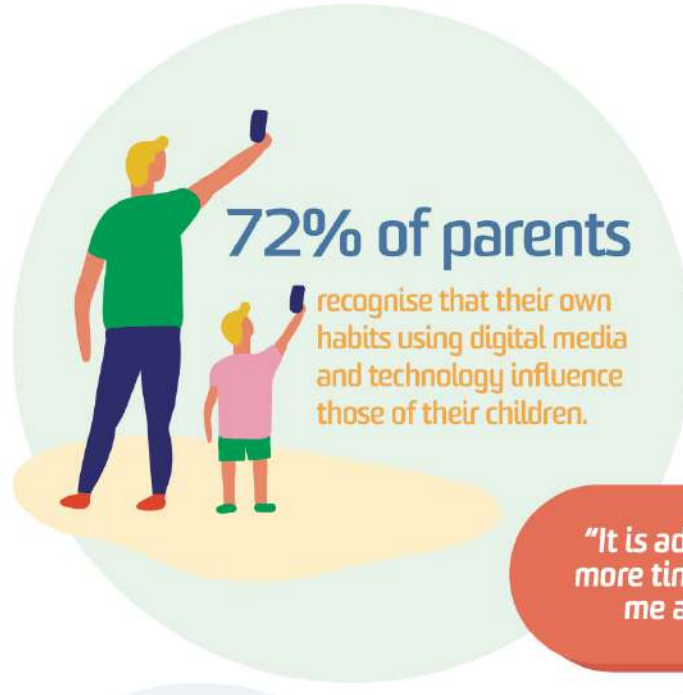
Parenting is not what it used to be



3 of 4 parents

think it is harder to control their child's
digital habits since they have got their
own screen-based device.

Parents know they are role models but are distracted.



"It is addictive, I yearn for more time away from it for me and my family".

Australian classrooms are becoming more complex places to teach and learn.

In the last 3-5 years, students with:



**Emotional
challenges**
have increased
94%



**Social
challenges**
have increased
93%



**Behaviour
problems**
have increased
93%

**Cognitive
challenges**
have increased
84%

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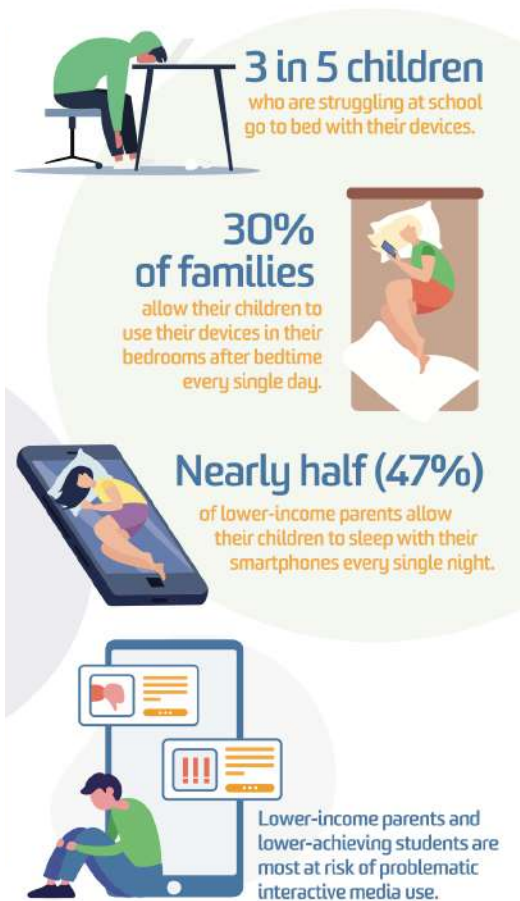
**Cognitive
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84%



59%

observed a **decline**
in students' overall
readiness to learn.

Digital inequity and how it affects young people.



The New Digital Divide

“Make no mistake. The real digital divide in this country is not between children who have access to the Internet and those who don’t. It’s between children whose parents know that they have to restrict screen time and those whose parents have been sold a bill of goods by schools and politicians that more screens are a key to success. It’s time to let everyone in on the secret.”

— Naomi Schaefer Riley, the American Enterprise Institute (2018)



3

WHAT CAN WE DO?

AUDIO: SA bans mobile phones in schools

Posted 17h ago, updated 17h ago



A school student is holding a phone on a desk strewn with pencils.

Share



South Australia has joined other states in banning mobile phones in schools. It comes after fights were filmed on phone at schools in Adelaide, Whyalla and Port Augusta.

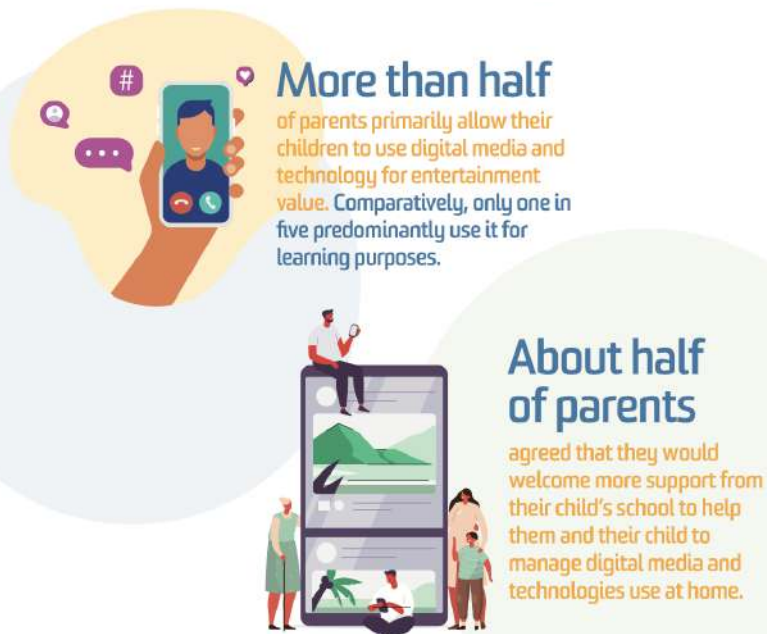
State Education Minister Blair Boyer says the phones were used to bring the incidents to light, but they can also encourage acts of violence.

Mobile bans already apply in schools in Western Australia, Tasmania and Victoria.

So what impact could mobile bans have schools?

Jocelyn Brewer is a Psychologist and former teacher and she spoke to ABC NewsRadio's Mandy Presland.

Left to their own devices



1. Conditions for productive teaching and learning in schools are declining.
2. Parenting is more complicated due to parents' and children's digital lifestyles.
3. Most people seek digital wellness, but we don't know what to do.
4. The New Digital Divide leaves many children on their own with digital gadgets.
5. Lower-income parents and lower achieving students are most at risk of negative consequences.

Growing Up Digital Australia has received funding from:

Victorian Government

NSW Government

ACT Government

NSW Teachers Federation

NSW Independent Schools Association

P&C Federation

Plus from private philanthropy

UNSW

More information:

Growing Up Digital Australia: Phase 1 Technical Report. UNSW Gonski Institute, 2020.

<https://www.gie.unsw.edu.au/sites/default/files/documents/UNSW%20GIE%20GUD%20Phase%201%20Technical%20Report%20MAR20%20v2.pdf>

Growing Up Digital Australia: Phase 2 Technical Report. UNSW Gonski Institute, 2021.

https://www.gie.unsw.edu.au/sites/default/files/documents/GONS5000%20Growing%20Up%20Digital%20Report_FINAL.pdf

Graham, A. & Sahlberg, P. (2020). Schools are moving online, but not all children start out digitally equal. The Conversation, March 27. <https://theconversation.com/schools-are-moving-online-but-not-all-children-start-out-digitally-equal-134650>

Sahlberg, P. & Graham, A. (2020). Teaching changing children in the changing times. Journal of Professional Learning, Semester 2. <https://cpl.asn.au/journal/semester-2-2020/teaching-changing-children-in-the-changing-times>

Sahlberg, P. & Graham, A. (2021). Children own around 3 digital devices on average, and few can spend a day without them. The Conversation, April 28. <https://theconversation.com/children-own-around-3-digital-devices-on-average-and-few-can-spend-a-day-without-them-159546>

PLUS: eSafety Commissioner's website: <https://www.esafety.gov.au>

THANK YOU!



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Post scriptum

Avoid simple binary solutions to complex challenges

PUT LIMITS, NO BANS!

ASK THE KIDS.

SAME RULES FOR YOU AND ME.

Talk about the benefits and risks of digital lifestyles

FOCUS ON BENEFITS FIRST.

THEN BECOME AWARE OF RISKS.

USE BEST AVAILABLE EVIDENCE.

Set digital wellness as a common goal

FIND GOOD DIGITAL HABITS.

SET SIMPLE FIRST STEPS TO GET STARTED.

DISCUSS THE IMPACT WITH OTHERS.

Be a role model for good life

KNOW YOUR OWN DIGITAL HABITS.

MONITOR PROGRESS AND CELEBRATE IT.

LEAD THE CHANGE BY EXAMPLE.