# LEFT TO THEIR OWN DEVICES

*Equity issues in growing up digital in New Zealand*

PPTA Conference
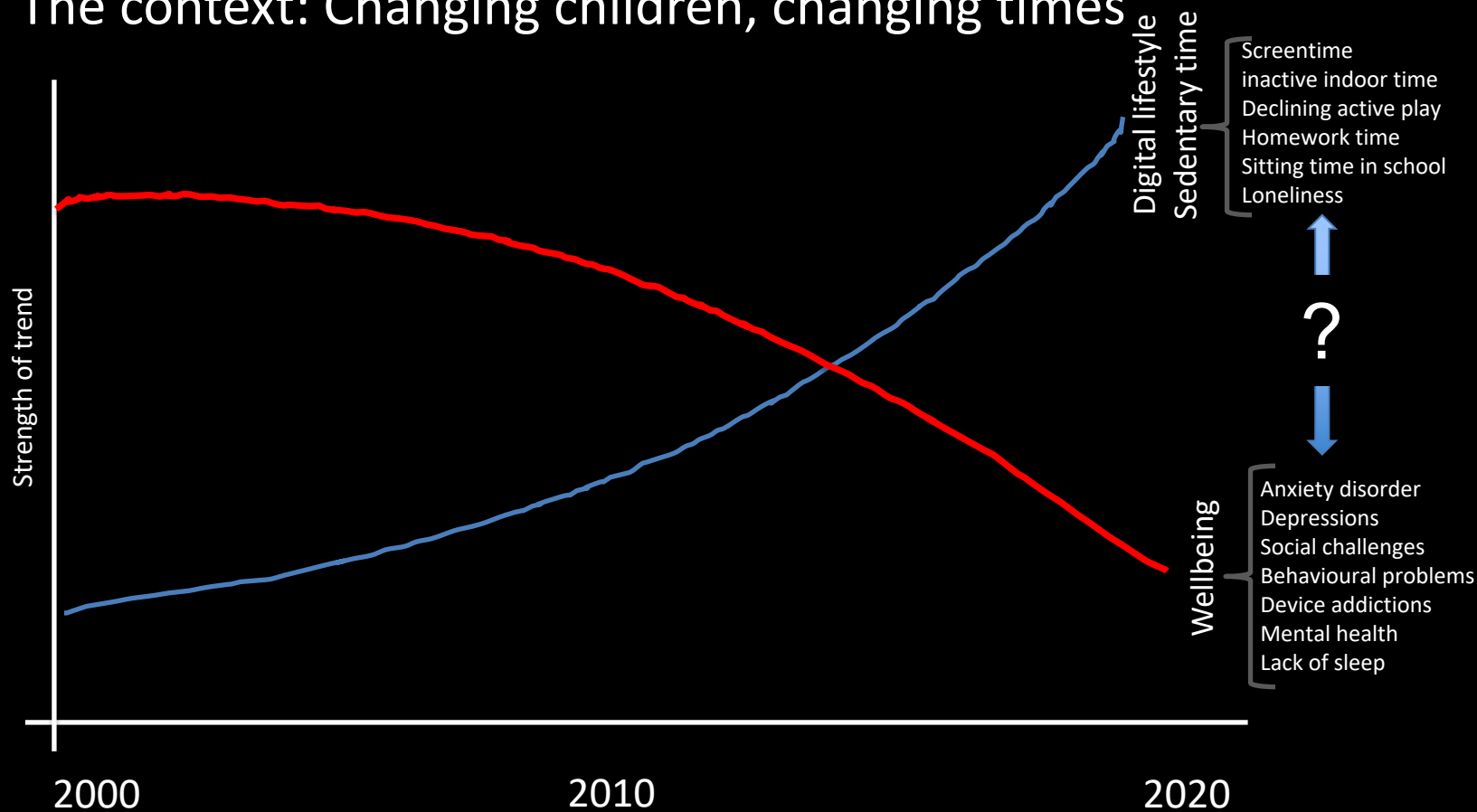Auckland, NZ
April 17, 2023

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Workshop aims:

1. Provide evidence-based view to the role of digital media and technologies among school-aged children;

2. Identify possible consequences of current digital lifestyle for equity of both wellbeing and learning;

3. Discover easy ways to enhance digital wellness in practice

# Question 1:

Should governments ban smartphones in secondary schools?

# The context: Changing children, changing times



Strength of trend

Digital lifestyle / Sedentary time
- Screentime
- inactive indoor time
- Declining active play
- Homework time
- Sitting time in school
- Loneliness

?

Wellbeing
- Anxiety disorder
- Depressions
- Social challenges
- Behavioural problems
- Device addictions
- Mental health
- Lack of sleep

2000          2010          2020

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*.
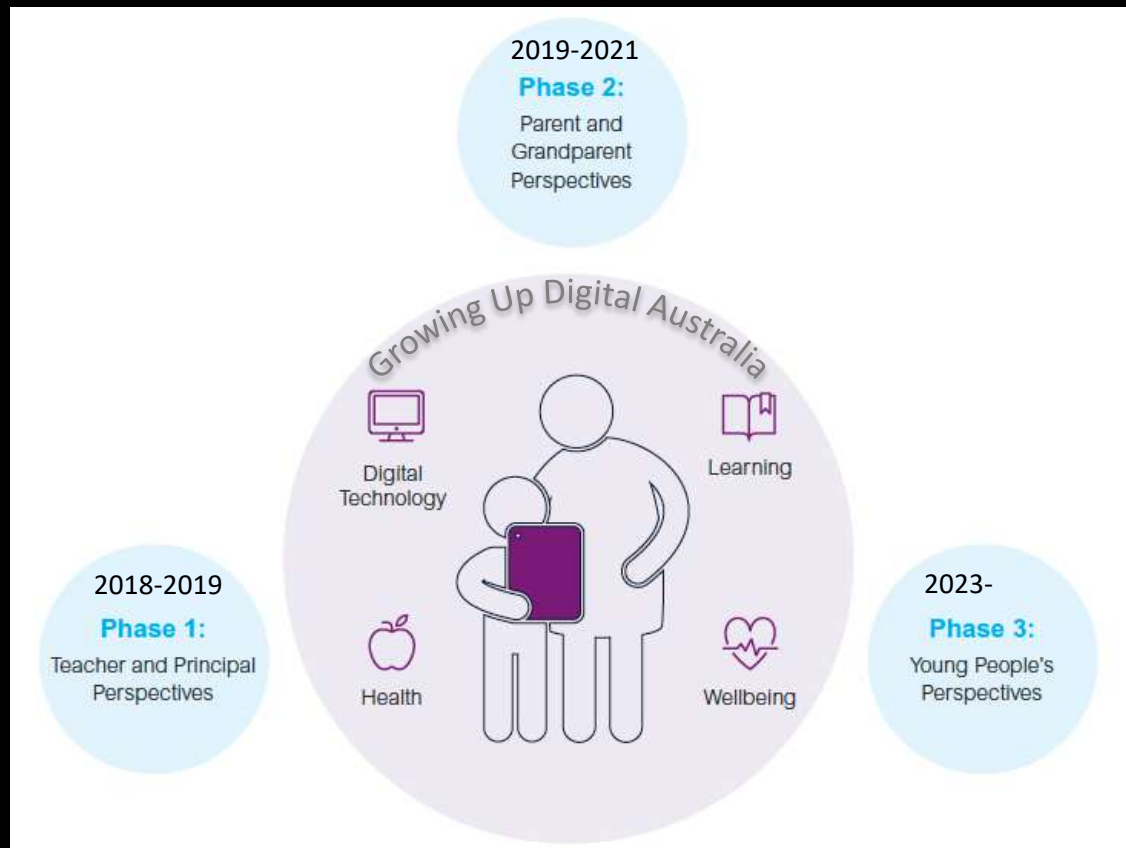
# Growing Up Digital Global Project

Boston Children's Hospital | Digital Wellness Lab
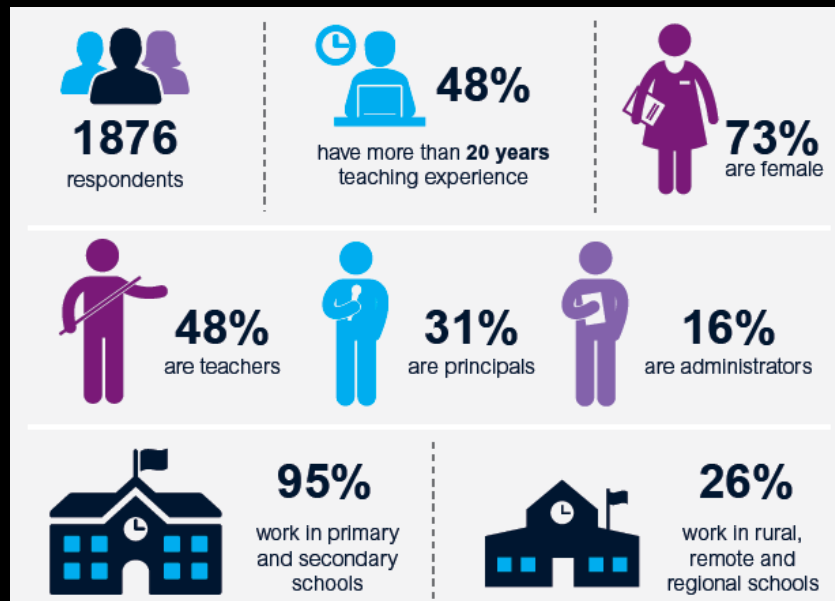Where the world comes for answers

HARVARD
MEDICAL SCHOOL
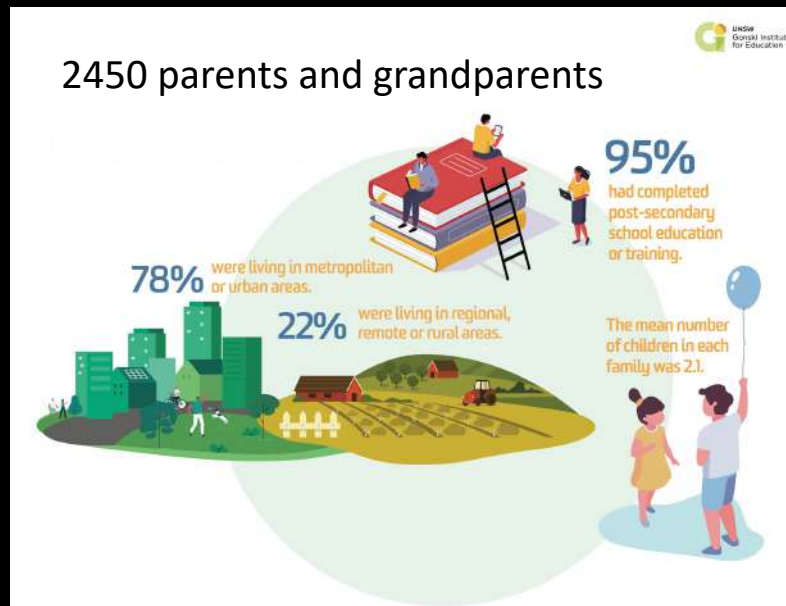
*Growing Up Digital Australia*

Digital Technology

Learning

Health

Wellbeing

2019-2021
**Phase 2:**
Parent and Grandparent Perspectives

2018-2019
**Phase 1:**
Teacher and Principal Perspectives

2023-
**Phase 3:**
Young People's Perspectives

# Who took part in Growing Up Digital Australia 2019-2022?

## 2020: Teachers and principals



**1876** respondents

**48%** have more than **20 years** teaching experience

**73%** are female

**48%** are teachers

**31%** are principals

**16%** are administrators

**95%** work in primary and secondary schools

**26%** work in rural, remote and regional schools

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

## 2021: Parents and grandparents



2450 parents and grandparents

**95%** had completed post-secondary school education or training.

**78%** were living in metropolitan or urban areas.

**22%** were living in regional, remote or rural areas.

The mean number of children in each family was 2.1.

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

**1**

## WHAT DID WE FIND OUT?

**Teachers say:**

**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.

**78%** 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.

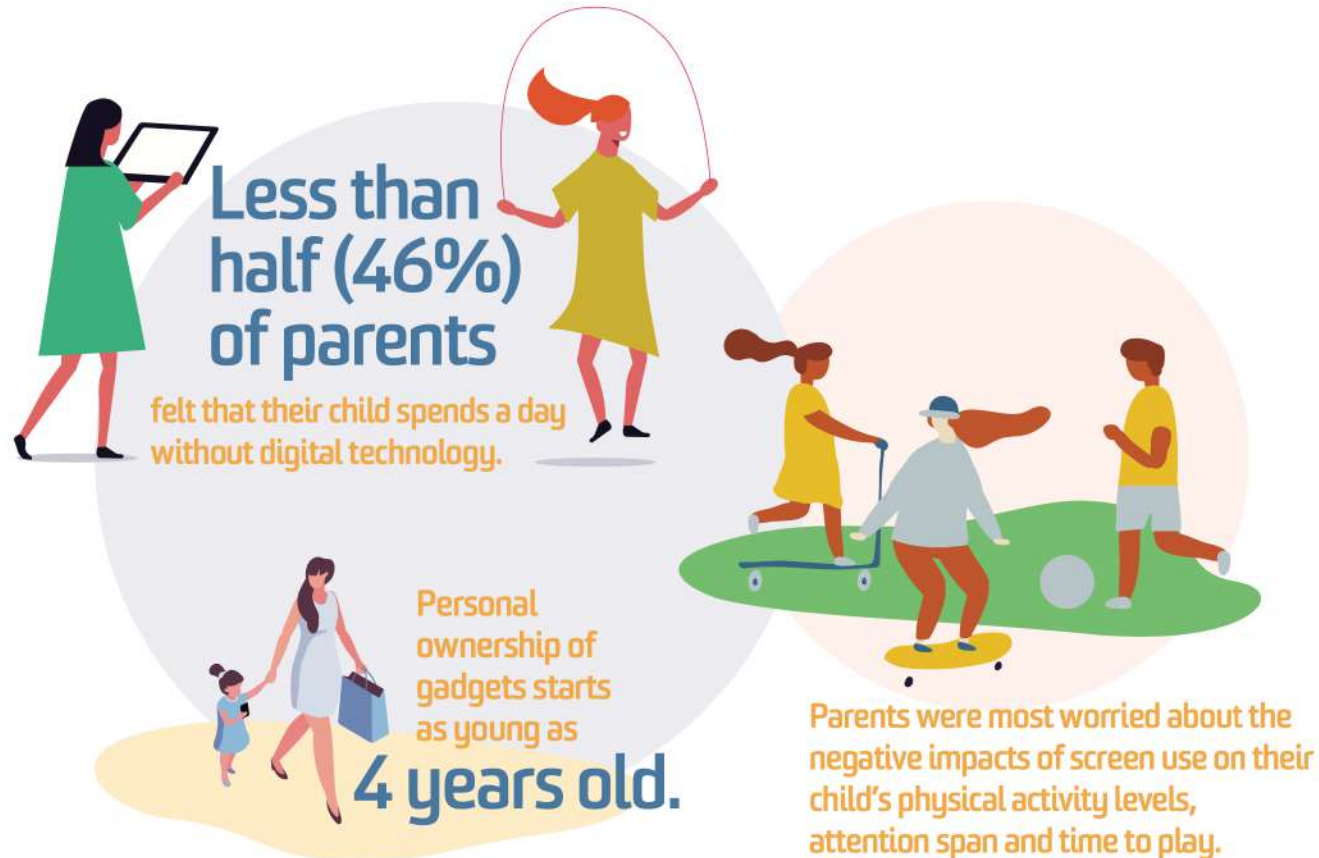**89%** aged 25 or younger agreed that digital **technology poses an increasing distraction.**

**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

Parents say:

Less than half (46%) of parents felt that their child spends a day without digital technology.

Personal ownership of gadgets starts as young as 4 years old.

Parents were most worried about the negative impacts of screen use on their child's physical activity levels, attention span and time to play.

# Question 2:

What does this mean?

**2**

**IT IS COMPLICATED**

# 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.
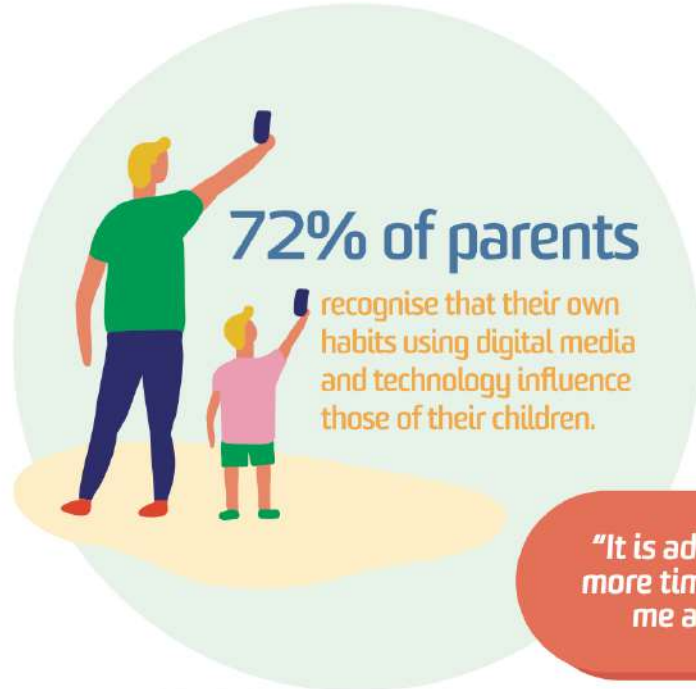
Teachers say:

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%**

**59%** observed a **decline** in students' overall **readiness to learn.**

# Digital inequity and how it affects young people.

UNSW Gonski Institute for Education

**3 in 5 children**
who are struggling at school go to bed with their devices.

**30% of families**
allow their children to use their devices in their bedrooms after bedtime every single day.

**Nearly half (47%)**
of lower-income parents allow their children to sleep with their smartphones every single night.

Lower-income parents and lower-achieving students are most at risk of problematic interactive media use.

# 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)

## Left to their own devices



**More than half**
of parents primarily allow their children to use digital media and technology for entertainment value. Comparatively, only one in five predominantly use it for learning purposes.

**About half of parents**
agreed that they would welcome more support from their child's school to help them and their child to manage digital media and technologies use at home.

UNSW Gonski Institute for Education

# Conclusions:

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.

**3**

**WHAT CAN WE DO?**

# Question 3:

What can you do to enhance students' (and your own) digital wellness?

# What can we do?

**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 HEALTHY DIGITAL HABITS.

SET SIMPLE FIRST STEPS TO GET STARTED.

DISCUSS THE IMPACT WITH OTHERS.

**Be a role model for good life**

UNDERSTAND YOUR OWN DIGITAL HABITS.

MONITOR PROGRESS AND CELEBRATE IT.

LEAD THE CHANGE BY EXAMPLE.

# 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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