

# THE DIGITAL WELL-BEING OF CANADIAN FAMILIES



## METHODOLOGY:

800 parents of children birth to fifteen years old across Canada were surveyed in spring 2018.



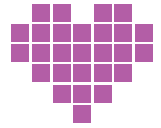
### Age Breakdown:

0–4 year olds 17%    10–13 year olds 27%  
5–9 year olds 26%    14–15 year olds 30%

## DIGITAL WELL-BEING:

Integrating digital technology into family life in a *meaningful* and *balanced* way that promotes family values.

Unique for different families and also *within* families depending on children's age, cognitive/emotional development, and digital skills.



## WHAT PARENTS DO

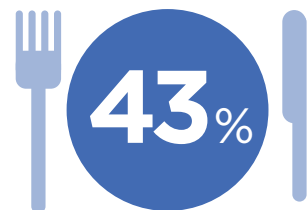
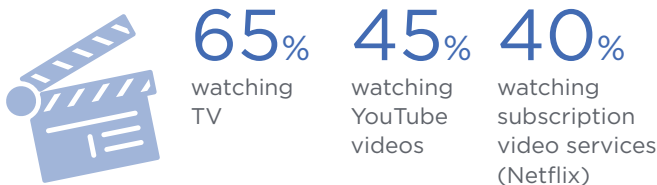
### Parents Engage:

Parents are actively involved in their children's digital lives by mindfully curating and minimizing their child's screen time as well as co-viewing.



**49%** of parents agree "my child needs me to check on what they do online"

The top digital activities for families are:



of parents reported that their children never use a digital device during family meals.

### Over 2/3rds

of parents indicated that their families talk together about things that are important to them, their families, and their children.

### Parents Manage:

Parents set limits.

The top two rules parents set for their children (across all age categories) are:



How much time their child spends on digital devices (**43%**)



and talking to strangers online (**40%**).

The older the child the greater the likelihood that they will have their own digital device. Younger children are more likely to have access to only shared "family" devices.

The most frequently reported device that children have their own access to is a smartphone (**53%** of all children) followed by a tablet, and computer (desktop or laptop).

**42%** **birth to 4 years old** have their own smartphone

**41%** **5 to 9 years old** have their own smartphone

**55%** **10 to 13 year olds** have their own smartphone

**77%** **14 to 15 year olds** have their own smartphone

### Parents Use Their Digital Skills:

Parents reported in almost all instances higher levels of confidence in their own digital skills than in their children's.



Parents' **digital skills are transferred** to their children:

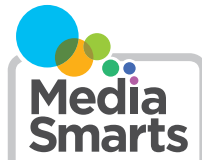
The stronger the parents' confidence in their digital skills the more likely they are to implement rules.

Parents are more likely to implement rules for children with fewer digital skills.

Greater digital literacy levels in children = less rule implementation on the part of parents.



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## WHAT PARENTS ARE CONCERNED ABOUT

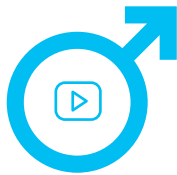
The top parental concerns across all age categories are:

- 1 Misinformation** (80%)
- 2 Sexual content** (79%)
- 3 Violent content** (79%)
- 4 Cyberbullying and online harassment** (79%)

Parents are more likely to set rules about online behaviour and access to particular online content for male children



while rules about who they contact are more likely for female children.



### Balancing Risks and Opportunities:

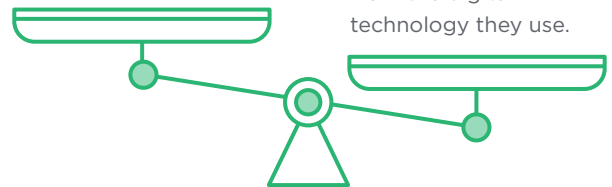
Parents are concerned with managing their child's screen time while ensuring their child has access to digital technology and its opportunities.

### OVER HALF

of all parents felt that the less time their child spends with digital technology the better off they are, while

### ALMOST TWO THIRDS

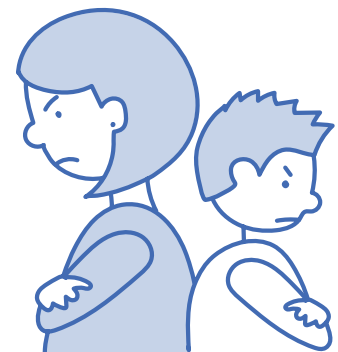
of all parents agreed that their child benefits from the digital technology they use.



### Sources of Conflict:

Parents told us that the biggest sources of conflict across all age categories are:

- 1) Excessive use of digital devices** (screen time) 43%
- 2) Rules on how children use their devices** (for schoolwork, to play games) 28%
- 3) What children are doing on their devices** (sites they can and cannot access on the internet) 19%

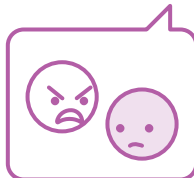


### Difficult Conversations:

Parents told us that the most frequent subjects of difficult conversation with their children are:

- 1) Cyberbullying** (22%)
- 2) Violent content** (19%)
- 3) Racist content** (16%)

Parents speak about cyberbullying and racist content more often with female children and violent content and pornography with male children.



### Excessive Use:

Almost half of all parents (49%) said it was difficult to get their child to stop using digital technology when they asked them to.

HOWEVER:

### OVER HALF

(67%) of all parents do not use a digital device to monitor their children's online activities.

### OVER HALF

(59%) of all parents do not use parental controls to limit or restrict their child's access to the internet.

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## PARENTS WANT SUPPORT

### Parenting Style:

A majority of parents (43%) identified with an authoritarian parenting style: characterized by restrictive strategies of rule setting and enforcement.

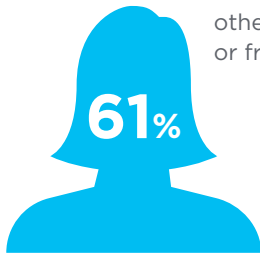


HOWEVER, in practice parents drew on a variety of strategies to meaningfully engage with their children as they use digital technology.



Parents feel social pressure to appear more strict.

Where parents are turning for digital parenting advice:



other parents or friends



their child's school and teachers



media resources (columns, magazines, websites and blogs).

**SUPPORTS:** parenting supports should emphasize that **there is not a one-size-fits-all prescription** for digital well-being.



### Role Modelling:

More parents agreed (36%) than disagreed (33%) that they are **poor role models** when it comes to digital technology habits for their child.



**SUPPORTS:** Parenting supports should emphasize a greater self-awareness when it comes to their own digital technology uses and habits.

### Digital Literacy:

PARENTS see learning and creativity as the major benefits of digital technology.



81%

of PARENTS agree "it's important for my child's future that they think critically about how they use digital technology".

**SUPPORTS:** Parenting supports should emphasize greater digital literacy supports for families.