



Parental technoference

20% of parents with a child aged 0 to 5 say they are very distracted by their screens when they are with their children (high interference)¹.

Parental technoference occurs when the relationship between a parent and their child is interrupted, however briefly, by the presence of a screen. Since screens accompany us everywhere, parental technoference can happen at any time.

For example :

- > when a parent uses a screen in their child's presence—during meals, while waiting in the doctor's office, while playing at home or at the park
- > when the parent momentarily interrupts their participation in a game with their child to check their smartphone

When parents use screens in the presence of their child, it can alter their attitudes and behaviours, which can have repercussions on the child.

The 2023 Quebec Parenting Survey revealed that among parents of children aged 5 or under:

51 %

found they **used their cell phone too much** when spending time with their children

33 %

found it **difficult not to check their cell phone** when they were with their children

39 %

said that they sometimes were **using their cell phone when they could be playing** or interacting with their children

18 %

think about **what they could be doing on their cell phone**, or about the messages and notifications they might be receiving when they are with their children¹



The effects of screen use by parents in the presence of their young children

Checking a mobile device while in the presence of a young child reduces the quality and quantity of interactions with that child. Parental technoference can therefore affect:

- > the parent's awareness and attention: the screen distracts the parent, making them less attentive to their child's needs and emotions
- > the child's cognitive and language development: the parent talks less, using shorter, simpler sentences
- > the child's safety: the parent may become less vigilant and decrease their supervision, increasing the risk of injury



According to a literature review by the Institut national de santé publique du Québec, parents reported using mobile technology between 14% and 23% of their child's waking hours.

Are parents the only problem?

Parenting practices may be altered by screen use, which can affect children. This observation is an invitation to broaden the scope of interest in screens, and to consider them not only from the angle of their use by parents, but also by the other adults involved in the various environments in which children live. This is particularly important since adults are role models for young children.



To learn more, consult our comprehensive report
Les écrans et les tout-petits at
tout-petits.org/ecrans