

Sharenting, Children and Privacy

The fine line between 'cute' and 'concerning'



Image credit: <https://theconversation.com/posting-a-childs-life-for-the-world-to-see-is-a-privacy-issue-20887>

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Privacy Week: May 13-17, 2024

Sharenting

“Sharenting”—when parents habitually share news, images and videos of their children on social media...

- grandparents, other family and friends also share.
- “creates a traceable digital footprint ... attached to children without their consent”
- Parents are the protectors; however, their disclosures (and that of others) could be harmful
- No ‘opt-out’ link for children; split-second decision could result in a permanent footprint

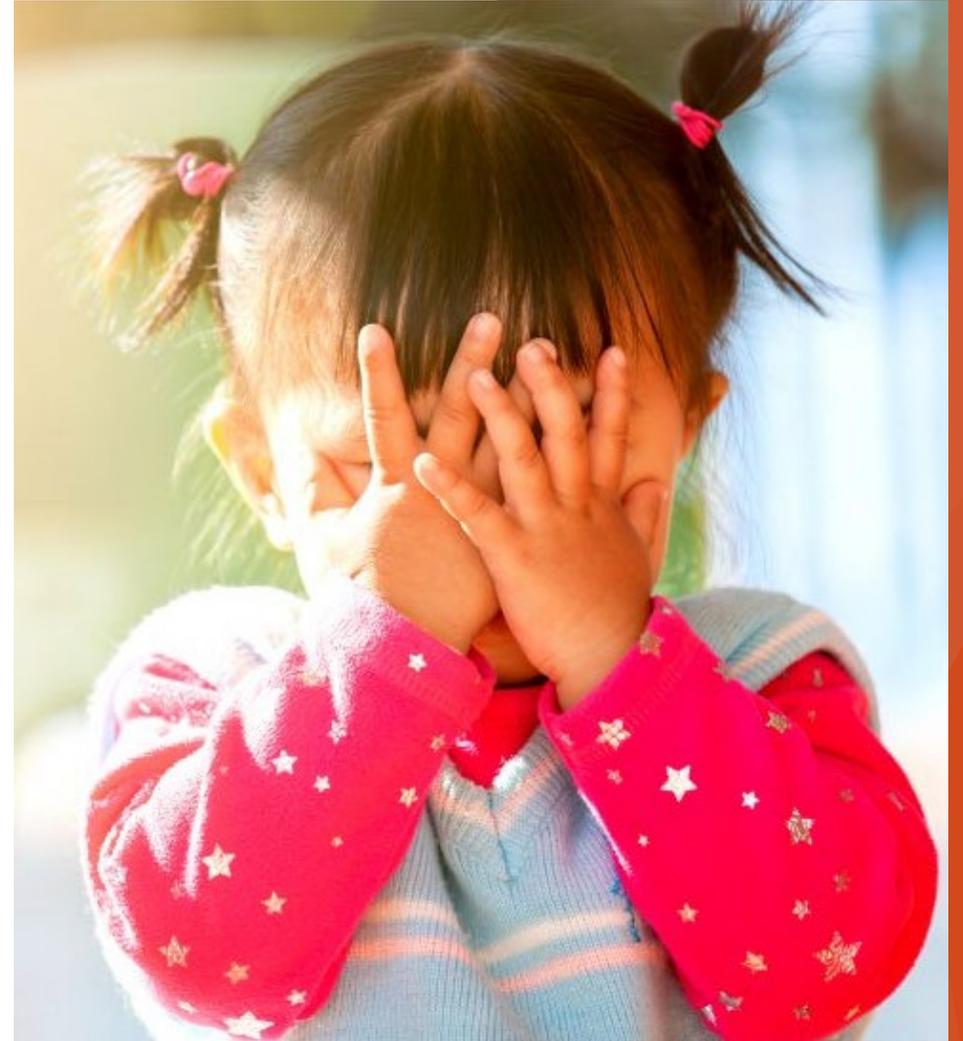


Image Credit: <https://www.humanium.org/en/understanding-the-ramifications-of-sharenting-childrens-right-to-be-forgotten/>

‘Must-knows’ about the Digital Footprint

Your digital footprint is...

- **is everything**
 - we are increasingly defined by our digital ‘self’
- **Is permanent** – every action positive or negative, deliberate or unintentional is stored
- **its meaning relative to other footprints** – everything is compared to others

You, yourself only make part of your digital footprint - the rest is done by others!



Image Credit <https://ar.inspiredpencil.com/pictures/2023/digital-footprint-png>

Sharing Children's' Data

- ▶ Many children growing up today will discover that **their digital footprint began in utero** and didn't stop there.
- ▶ This phenomenon has come to be known as “**sharenting**”—when parents share pictures and videos of their kids on social media, creating an indelible trail of digital bread crumbs.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dpirtXdzkII>

Agenda

Introduction

Sharenting

- ▶ Why do parents share
- ▶ Benefits & Harms

Children's Privacy & the Law

- ▶ The Privacy Act
- ▶ Privacy Protections elsewhere
- ▶ Some suggestions

Recommendations & Tips for Parents etc

Concluding Comments

A new report presented to the Human Rights Council says that maximising children's privacy in the digital age means acting in their best interests, actively seeking children's views and treating those views seriously.

Press release

More than 175,000 children go online for the first time every day, tapping into great opportunities, but facing grave risks

On Safer Internet Day, UNICEF calls for urgent action to protect children and their digital footprint

CONSUMER TECH

Posting About Your Kids Online Could Damage Their Futures

TECHNOLOGY

Parental oversharing jeopardises Kiwi kids' privacy

Annette M Mills, Privacy Week May 13-17, 2024



Image Credit: <https://newsroom.co.nz/2022/06/21/parental-oversharing-risks-nz-kids-privacy/>

Sharenting

- ▶ On average, parents post over 1,000 images of their children online before they're old enough to have their own social media accounts.
- ▶ In the US, 92% of 2-year olds have an online presence (*Digital Birth*)

TECHNOLOGY

Parental oversharing jeopardises Kiwi kids' privacy

With the ever-increasing presence of social media in people's lives, a privacy law expert says New Zealand has a long way to go in getting child privacy protections up to par



by Matthew Scott 21/06/2022

Share



One of the key concerns around child privacy is third parties who use social media to gather data on, and/or use the data to manipulate, child internet users, said privacy law expert Nikki Chamberlain. Photo: Getty Images

Source: <https://newsroom.co.nz/2022/06/21/parental-oversharing-risks-nz-kids-privacy/>

Why do Parents Share?

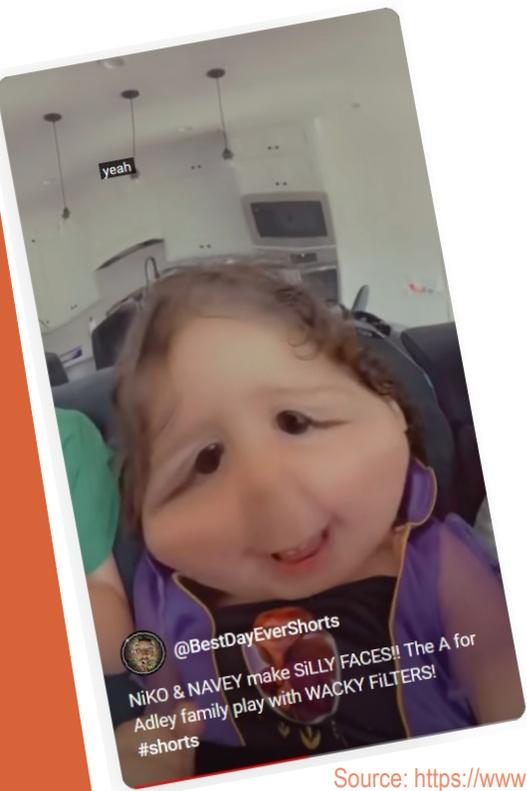
- Keep family, friends updated
- Build a positive social media presence
- Positive networks
- Exercise the 'right' to share their life story *which often includes their children*
- Receive emotional support
 - Feel less alone when dealing with issues
 - Communicate with 'like-minded' people
- Showcase parental competencies
 - Sharenting is a form of impression management
- Commercial Sharenting – economic gain



Image credit: <https://www.humanium.org/en/childrens-rights-and-digital-technologies-childrens-privacy-in-the-age-of-social-media-the-perils-of-sharenting/>

The Dark Side of Sharenting: Why do some parents share? (and what do they share?)

- Those cute pictures
- Those embarrassing moments
- Frustrations
- Location?
- Personal information? name, date of birth, address (Really?)
- To boost following
e.g. Social influencers
- Punishment?



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/6qNnuyYzNZA>

Mom Goes Viral With 'Ugly Baby' Video



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LfVYZBL4vJQ>

Potential Dangers

- Oversharing and violating children's privacy
- Shaping children's digital identities and impacting identity development
- Overexposure to data brokers, unwanted surveillance, etc.
- Digital Kidnapping (or physical stalking)
- Identity Theft
- Cyberbullying
- Emotional harms & online abuse

TECHNOLOGY

The Impact of 'Sharenting': How Much Info Is Too Much?

By [Cynthia Vinney, PhD](#) | Updated on November 01, 2022

✓ [Medically reviewed by Rachel Goldman, PhD, FTOS](#)



d3sign/Moment/Getty

Image credit: <https://www.verywellmind.com/the-impact-of-sharenting-6361714>

What next?

SHOULD WE BAN 'SHARENTING' AND PROTECT CHILDREN'S PRIVACY?



TECHNOLOGY

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Legislative - The Privacy Act

- ▶ **Privacy Act** does not apply where information has been disclosed in a personal capacity
 - ▶ Privacy Act 2020 (s28) could be used to address some content (limited)
 - ▶ Harmful Digital Communications Act 2015

Recommendations

- ▶ Appoint a Children's Privacy Commissioner
- ▶ Children's Privacy Code to address gaps in Privacy Act, etc
- ▶ Establish a Right to Erasure (applies more broadly)
- ▶ Establish a 'right to object'
- ▶ Look at developments overseas (France, Denmark, UK, etc)

Next Steps ... Parents, Guardians, etc

- ▶ Before you post
 - ▶ Remember – **your child has a right to privacy.**
 - ▶ Look ahead – think about **digital footprint.**
Are you affecting your child's identity?
 - ▶ Consider who is in your network?
 - ▶ Ask permission (esp. for older or more mature children)
- ▶ Check privacy settings (and monitor – DO NOT 'set and forget').
- ▶ Always read the privacy policy before your share
- ▶ Don't disclose details that are not needed
- ▶ Have open conversations with others about what is appropriate share/post

Some Tips

- ▶ **Set up alerts** for when your children's names appear in a Google search result.
- ▶ **Check your follower list.**
- ▶ If you are going to share, consider doing it **anonymously**.
- ▶ Careful when sharing your **child's location**; ideally don't do it.
- ▶ Once your child is old enough, **allow them to veto** and have a say in what you can and cannot post.

More Tips...

- ▶ **Do not share** pictures of your child in any state of undress, with their mouths open, in their underwear or a swimsuit. Do not post photos of your child in a suggestive position, even if you think it's cute or funny.
 - Think - anything you share has the **potential to go viral** and affect your child and your whole family.
- ▶ **Be careful when posting pictures or information about other children.**

Always pause and think before you post.

**Always pause and
think before you
post.**

Meet Mariana

(not her real name)



Credit: Andy K

Somewhere out there, there is an old photograph of a very young child standing completely naked, showing the marked signs of a most unusual medical condition.

Mariana's photograph was originally taken without her consent in the course of a medical examination, years before the internet existed. Soon after, it was published in a French medical journal, along with her full name and medical details. Her story then appeared in newspapers and magazines around the world. Decades later, when it was posted online, the photograph quickly went viral, taking on a life of its own. It has now been viewed millions of times, making it impossible for her to be left in peace.

'God knows whether that man is even a doctor! Are you a friend of his? Did he send you here? Why on earth should I give a damn about your research?' she shouted, veins throbbing at her temples. 'I am *not* a guinea pig!'

'I recognize you!' she snapped, jabbing a finger at my face. 'You have been following me'.

'Please forget me,' she then said, her voice cracking.

'I just want to be left alone'.

Mariana's story is a cautionary tale of the consequences of failing to remove harmful content from search engines and the internet. **Privacy matters.** To protect it, regulation is essential.

***Children have
a right to privacy,
and a “right to be
protected”***

Thank you

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