

# Scrolling our jobs away

**EXCLUSIVE**

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AUSTRALIAN workers are costing the economy and their employers billions of dollars each year in lost productivity due to an addiction to smartphones and social media.

The Sunday Telegraph can reveal the first research that shows the extent to which adults say they are checking their social media and smartphones during working hours.

A third of Aussies say they “regularly get distracted by their smartphone or social media at work” with 42 per cent checking it up to seven times a day during working hours.

A further 5.2 per cent admit to

being distracted by their device more than 15 times a day. Of those checking their phone or social media at work, 92 per cent are spending up to 90 minutes of work time scrolling their feed or replying to messages.

Research has shown for every period of distraction, it takes a further 23 minutes to return to the same level of concentration. So 90 minutes of self-reported social media scrolling could actually amount to more than that in lost productivity.

A total of 52 per cent of all employees who admitted to checking their phone during work hours said if they were happier in their jobs they’d be less likely to be digitally distracted.

More than 1000 Australians aged 18 and over in all

states and territories were surveyed for the research, conducted last month.

The findings coincide with digital media experts being called in to conduct seminars at many major workplaces to try to combat this worrying trend of the digital drain.

One expert, Dr Kristy Goodwin, said her business in this area has increased 80 per cent on this time last year. She said the findings were shocking, but given they relied on self-reporting the figures and time wasted on smartphones or social media during the day was likely to be higher in reality.

“People definitely may be conservative in estimating how much time they’re actually being

digitally distracted during work hours,” Dr Goodwin said.

“I would be terrified if we quantified the loss. It would be in the billions. Not just to the time lost and the resumption lag of 23 minutes to regain to full concentration but also the cost in terms of employee well-being on smart devices being integrated into work.

“Many employees are not getting quality of sleep because they are sleeping with their phones near or adjacent to bed and they are never switched off from work to an extent.”

Ross Reekie, CEO of Rise Consulting, an employee happiness firm, said smartphones and social media were designed to be addictive, but instead of banning sites or smartphones from

workplaces the key was unlocking employee job satisfaction. “This problem is only going to get worse and I would say we need to reframe it from being anti-smart devices or social media to thinking about how we can integrate employee motivation along with the use of devices and social media at work,” Mr Reekie said.

“Employers have a big responsibility to get this right. We are asking people to be connected to work 24/7 yet not allowing them to have some down time so it’s a complex problem.”

Julie Inman Grant, eSafety Commissioner, said: “As adults, we need to be mindful about using technology in a healthy and balanced way and to be modelling this behaviour to our children.”