The Online Generation Gap
Contrasting attitudes and behaviors of parents and teens
Methodology

- Two surveys were conducted online October 2 – 10, 2012, among:
  
  - 511 teens age 13 to 17 who access the Internet at least occasionally
  
  - 500 parents of teens age 13 to 17 who access the Internet at least occasionally
    
    - To simplify administration of the parents’ survey, respondents were asked to think about their child who had the most recent birthday in answering the survey’s questions.
A gap exists between parents’ and teens’ perceptions of parents’ monitoring.

**How closely do [your parents/you] follow or monitor what [you do/your child does] online or on a cell phone?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Teens</th>
<th>Parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>My parents monitor very/somewhat closely:</strong></td>
<td>39% 61% 24% 31%</td>
<td>84% 16% 11% 24% 31% 16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls age 13 to 15</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>39% age 13 to 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All age 13 to 15</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>Parents of younger teens (age 13 to 15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teens w/younger</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>siblings</td>
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</table>

45-point gap
Parents feel better informed about teens’ online activity than teens think parents are.

How well informed do you think [your parents/you] are about what [you do/your child does] online and on a cell phone?

- Very well informed
- Somewhat informed
- Not that well informed
- Not at all informed

**Teens**
- Very well informed: 62%
- Somewhat informed: 38%
- Not that well informed: 21%
- Not at all informed: 14%

**Parents**
- Very well informed: 91%
- Somewhat informed: 37%
- Not that well informed: 9%

29-point gap
Teens and parents are largely in sync on teens’ use of online and mobile platforms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Teens (%)</th>
<th>Parents (%)</th>
<th>Teens (%)</th>
<th>Parents (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sent an e-mail</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Used online social networking site (Facebook/Google Plus)</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sent/received text message</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Used online instant messenger like Facebook chat or Google chat</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>75%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collaborated on homework or a school project online</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicated by text or headset with other players while playing a game online</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sent or received messages on Twitter</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posted a comment on a blog post or news article</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posted a video on YouTube</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posted a photograph on Instagram</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posted or received comments on Instagram</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post or blog on Tumblr</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinned something or commented on something on Pinterest</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used a service on cell phone like Foursquare or Loopt to “check in” to locations or share location with friends</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Notable gaps exist in perceptions of how well informed parents are.

*How well informed do you think [your parents/you] are about what [you do/your child does] online on each of the following?*

- **Social networking sites like Facebook or Google Plus**
  - Teens who say their parents are very well informed: 36%
  - Parents who say they are very well informed: 54%

- **Pinterest**
  - Teens who say their parents are very well informed: 23%
  - Parents who say they are very well informed: 37%

- **Twitter**
  - Teens who say their parents are very well informed: 14%
  - Parents who say they are very well informed: 38%

- **Tumblr**
  - Teens who say their parents are very well informed: 14%
  - Parents who say they are very well informed: 29%

*Each item asked of teens/parents who say they have/their child has used it in the past 30 days*
For other online platforms, perceptions are more aligned.

*Each item asked of teens/parents who say they have/their child has used it in the past 30 days*
Teens and parents report similar perceptions about how safe teens feel online.

By how informed teens say parents are about their online activities:
- Parents very well informed: 41%
- Parents somewhat well informed: 37%
- Parents not well informed: 34%

By how informed parents feel about their child’s online activities:
- Very well informed: 48%
- Somewhat/less well informed: 28%
For **teens**, being “safe” online means privacy is protected.

Secure, not scared

Privacy

Free from hackers

No one has my personal information

No predators

No stalkers

No one can harm me

No Viruses
For parents, safety involves privacy and avoiding “stranger danger” scenarios.

Don’t visit dangerous sites

Only talk to people he/she knows

Safe from predators

Tracking/monitoring teens’ use

No conversations with strangers

Don’t reveal personal information

No porn sites
Privacy tops teens’ and parents’ concerns about teens’ online activity.

This concerns me most about [my/my child’s] online activity:

- **Privacy of [my/my child’s] personal information**:
  - Teens: 67%
  - Parents: 51%

- **[My/my child’s] image or reputation**:
  - Teens: 18%
  - Parents: 14%

- **[My/my child’s] physical safety**:
  - Teens: 15%
  - Parents: 35%
Parents’ and teens’ attitudes differ on “stranger danger” and content.

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I am VERY concerned about this happening as a result of [my/my child’s] online activity:

- A stranger learning something about [me/my child] from an online posting:
  - Teens: 32%
  - Parents: 48%
  - 16-point gap

- [My/child’s] seeing inappropriate or harmful content:
  - Teens: 27%
  - Parents: 43%
  - 16-point gap
Other online hazards elicit similar levels of concern among teens and parents.

*I am VERY concerned about this happening as a result of [my/child’s] online activity:*

- **Identity theft**: 43% (Teens) 44% (Parents)
- **Problems getting job**: 31% (Teens) 29% (Parents)
- **Problems applying to college**: 31% (Teens) 26% (Parents)
- **Company tracking online behavior for marketing**: 27% (Teens) 26% (Parents)
- **Problems with teachers**: 24% (Teens) 24% (Parents)
- **Being bullied**: 23% (Teens) 29% (Parents)
- **Ugly or unflattering picture posted**: 23% (Teens) 20% (Parents)
- **Friends making fun**: 19% (Teens) 18% (Parents)
Notable proportions of teens report risky online behaviors.

- Nearly half of teens say they have done each of these things online with someone they don’t know personally:
  - Friended them on a social networking site (49%)
  - Shared movie/TV/game recommendations (49%)
  - Chatted online (44%)

- Half have shared at least one of the following types of personal information online with someone they don’t know:
  - The city/town where they live (35%)
  - Their first and last names (31%)
  - The school they attend (25%)
  - Their phone number (21%)

- Fewer have done the following online with someone they don’t know:
  - Made plans to meet in person (11%)
  - Shared their address (6%)
  - Shared their password (3%)
**Teens rely on parents and other adults for information about protecting themselves online, while parents look to the media.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teens</th>
<th>I have gotten info from this source about protecting myself online:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School or teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other adults (coaches, relatives, parents of friends)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General news media</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social media, such as Facebook or Twitter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>I have gotten info from this source about protecting my child online:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General news media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other parents</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Other adults I know (coaches, relatives)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Child’s school or teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social media, such as Facebook or Twitter</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Haven’t gotten information about this from any source</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teens report taking many steps to protect their privacy and information online.

- **Set privacy settings**: 81%
- **Set limits on who I share posts with**: 65%
- **Blocked person from seeing my posts**: 59%
- **Removed tagged photo**: 54%
- **Moved comment/post from public to private**: 49%

(Among teens who have used a **social networking site** in the past 30 days)

- **Set privacy settings**: 48%
- **Limited those who can follow me**: 26%

(Among teens who have used **Twitter** in the past 30 days)

- **Set privacy settings**: 44%
- **Limited those who can see my posts**: 33%

(Among teens who have used **Instagram** in the past 30 days)
Parents report protecting their children in ways teens are unaware of.

- Talked to child about risks/benefits of being online and rules/expectations: 93% (Parents) vs 61% (Teens)
- Reviewed child’s browsing history: 79% (Parents) vs 29% (Teens)
- Logged onto child’s Facebook/social network account*: 71% (Parents) vs 22% (Teens)
- Set rules about amount of time child spends online: 70% (Parents) vs 34% (Teens)
- Reviewed child’s cell phone text messages*: 70% (Parents) vs 30% (Teens)
- Set time limits/rules for child’s use of a cell phone*: 62% (Parents) vs 23% (Teens)

*Asked only of those who report they/their teen uses a cell phone/social networking site.
Two in five teens admit to having posted something online that they later regretted.

Teens: Have you ever posted something online that you later regretted and wish you had not posted?

I have posted something I regret 43%
I have not posted something I regret 57%

Top reasons for regretting post:

- Mean to someone else 28%
- Shared more info about myself than I should have 28%
- Other people teased me 21%
- Got in trouble with parents, teacher, or boss at work 20%
- Got in trouble with friends 12%