

The Realities of Cyber Parenting: What Pre-teens and Teens Are Up To Online

As children and teens are spending more of their time online, it is increasingly important parents are aware of their behavior to help protect them from the potential risks and consequences that can come along with the privilege of being online. This year's study of more than 1,000 American parents and 1,000 teens/pre-teens reveals that parents are most concerned with their kids unknowingly interacting with predators while online. This concern seems to have validity as 27% of teen/pre-teen respondents indicated that they have met or would meet someone in person who they first met online.

Additionally, parents still seem to have the "not my child" mentality. While 94% of parents say they are aware of their child's behavior online, 35% of kids admit to bullying others. The tweens and teens surveyed admitted they made fun of other people to someone else (19%), called someone fat or ugly or made fun of other physical appearances (16%), tagged mean pictures or threatened someone (10%). To help ensure kids are growing up to be responsible digital citizens, parents must closely monitor their actions on the Internet, particularly on social media, and have frequent and open talks about what type of behavior is acceptable and what will not be tolerated.

Time Spent Online

- 1 in 3 parents (30%) think their 8 year old son spends less than 5 hours online in a week
- 1 in 3 parents (31%) think their 8 year old daughter spends anywhere from 5-10 or 10-15 hours online in a week
- 35% of parents think their 16 year old son spends more than 20 hours online in a week
- 1 in 4 parents think their 16 year old daughter spends anywhere from 10-15 hours or 15-20 hours online in a week

To Trust or Not Trust

- 14% of parents say that they would not monitor their children's activity across devices while 86% would
 - More than three-quarters (77%) of the parents who would not monitor the child's online activities indicate that they don't feel that it is necessary.
 - A little over half of the parents (51%) who would not monitor the child's online activities say that it is because they feel that it is a breach of trust with their child(ren)
- 90% of the parents who claim to have never attempted to find out what their child is doing online say that they don't because they trust their child
- 94% of the parents claim to know the kind of activities that their child regularly participates in while online
- When it comes to their child's online activity parents are most interested in:
 - Unknowingly interact with predators/pedophiles (28%)
 - Interacting with strangers (21%)
 - Sharing of personal information such as home address or phone number (14%)

- Posting intimate photos (11%)
- Being cyberbullied (8%) or cyberbullying other kids (7%)
- 13% of the parents think that their child has ever cyberbullied someone else
- Most parents (84%) tell their child when they attempt to find out what their child is doing online

Socially Active

Facebook reigns supreme as the network that is not only the most used among kids but also where parents think their kids are the safest.

- Nearly half of parents (48%) feel that Facebook is the safest place for them to post photos of their child - parents potentially believe the privacy settings are the strongest of all social sites or only familiar with this site since it is the only one they are active on
 - More than one in three parents (36%) indicate that there is no safe place online to post photos of their child
- Facebook is by far mentioned most often as being the platform most likely to be used by youth to openly criticize people (48%), followed by Twitter (8%)
- About half of the parents (52%) feel that it is okay if their child is friends with adults on social media
 - 93% of the parents are okay if it is a relative/someone they know
 - 56% of the parents are okay if it is a teacher (for parents with sons aged 13-16 this is 61%, for parents with daughters aged 13-16 this is only 49%)
 - More than half of the children (54%) active on social media say they are connected or 'friends' with their teacher or mentor
- 84% of the parents with children who are active on social media follow their children on social media networks
- The number of 'likes' or 'favorites' it takes to make a child feel happy is very diverse
 - 8-12 year old boys: 19% need 25-50 likes
 - 8-12 year old girls: 28% need 25-50 likes
 - 13-16 year old boys: 17% need 25-50 likes
 - 13-16 year old girls: 19% need 0-25 likes - interesting this is a lot lower for teenage girls
- 34% say that the number of 'likes' or 'favorites' does not matter to them
- Photos of yourself/selfies (56%), or photos with a group (20%) typically get the most likes
- Most used social apps
 - Facebook (50%)
 - YouTube (40%)
 - Instagram (20%)
 - Twitter (16%)
 - Snapchat (13%)
 - WhatsApp (11%)
- Most children (69%) ask their parents for permission before downloading or purchasing apps
- Most children created their Facebook account when they were between 10 and 13 years old

Safe Connecting

Kids want their information to remain private, but will take the risk of invading someone else's privacy to see their information or content they're interested in.

- Nearly 1 in three children (29%) of children know other people's passwords, and nearly half of them (47%) have accessed those accounts without them knowing
 - Main reasons are to see if they were talking to an ex (56%), to see private photos (38%), to dig up dirt on them (24%), or as a joke to change their settings or picture (19%)
- More than a quarter (27%) of children say they would meet – or have met someone in person they first met online
- 89% of the parents find it important or very important that their kids receive online safety or cyber security training in the next 2-5 years to keep their personal information and themselves protected
- Most children learn information about online safety from their parents (79%), in school (59%) or from friends (33%)
- Most children (83%) are concerned about maintaining the privacy of their personal information
- When communicating with their children about social media risks, the most discussed topics are cyberbullying (80%), cyber criminals and identity theft (73%), online reputation (70%) and privacy settings (69%)
- 36% of the children who are active on social media do turn on location services for some or all of their social media accounts

Alias

Aliases are commonly used to hide posts from parents/faculty but also keep negative content away from peers. Most teens use their real names on social media (58%).

- 42% of teens use anonymous names or aliases for their social media profiles. Of those who do:
 - 8-12 year old boys: 46%
 - 8-12 year old girls: 44%
 - 13-16 year old boys: 40%
 - 13-16 year old girls: 36%
 - Main reason for doing so is that they are worried about parents or faculty seeing inappropriate content (52%)
- One in three children who use anonymous names or aliases do so because they don't want friends or classmates to know it is them posting something

Cruel Intentions

- More than half (55%) of children think the worst thing that can happen to them online is that people can find their whereabouts and personal information
 - This is followed by being cyberbullied (39%), being hacked (32%), interacting with strangers (31%), or that secrets about them will be revealed that will affect their reputation (29%)
- 35% of the children indicate that they have bullied people on social media
 - They made fun of other people to someone else (19%), called someone fat or ugly or made fun of other physical appearances (16%), tagged mean pictures or threatened someone (10%)
- Of those who have bullied others, the main reasons for bullying is because the others were mean to them (61%) or they just didn't like the other person (26%)
- 82% of the children are somewhat or very concerned about cybercriminals interacting with them through social or other websites today

For more information:

- Press Release: <http://www.mcafee.com/us/about/news/2015/q2/20150603-01.aspx>
- Gary Davis' Blog Post: <https://blogs.mcafee.com/consumer/family-safety-survey-results>
- Toni Birdsong's Blog Post: <https://blogs.mcafee.com/consumer/gulp-could-your-child-be-the-cyberbully>
- Media contact: Mary_Salvaggio@mcafee.com; 646-527-5858

Quantitative Methodology

Intel Security commissioned MSI International to conduct the online survey among 1,001 children and teens ages 8 to 16 and 1,001 parents in the United States. The survey was split evenly among age and gender. The online interviews were conducted from April 28-May 12, 2015.

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