KEEPING UP WITH GENERATION APP:
NCSA PARENT/TEEN ONLINE SAFETY SURVEY

OVERVIEW

As part of ongoing efforts to support consumer education and awareness about online safety for families, NCSA commissioned a national survey to gauge teens' and parents' online experiences and concerns—with a particular focus on how families manage technology-related rules, responsibilities, and exposure to negative content online. Using the Zogby panel, NCSA surveyed a sample of 813 teens ages 13-17 and 809 parents of teens ages 13-17 during the period of September 14-17, 2017. These findings help to document changes over the past year and highlight new opportunities for online safety messaging and outreach.

KEY FINDINGS

- Smartphones are now ubiquitous in teens' lives, but constant mobile connectivity comes with a cost; most teens say they feel as though they generally spend more time online than they would like. Just under one in three (28%) say they spend "too much" time online, while almost half (46%) say they spend "a little more time" online than they would like.

- At the same time, both teens and parents say that disagreements about the amount of screen time they can have are the most frequent points of technology-related tension in their households; 22% of online teens say they frequently have disagreements with their parents about this, and 26% of parents say they frequently argue with theirchildren about screen time.

- Social media remains a staple of teens' daily lives, with 59% saying they use it frequently. Among the top platforms, Instagram (65%) and Snapchat (60%) have become even more favored than Facebook (53%).

- In general, teens feel as though it is mostly their responsibility to keep themselves safe online. Among online teens, 62% say it is "mostly my responsibility," compared with 10% who feel it is mostly their parents' job to keep them safe. Another 23% say they and their parents share the responsibility equally. Parents, on the other hand, are more likely to feel they shoulder most of the burden; 44% of online parents say it is "mostly my responsibility," while only 8% believe it mostly falls to their child to keep themselves safe.

- Teens also tend to feel as though they are the most knowledgeable person in their household when it comes to privacy and security issues. Fully 34% feel that way, compared with 24% who say their Dad knows the most, and 18% who say their Mom is the one who understands these issues the best. However, in a striking gap by gender, teen boys are far more likely than teen girls to feel as though they are the household authority on privacy and security issues; fully 42% of online teen boys say this, compared with just 27% of online teen girls who say they are the most knowledgeable person.

- The majority of online teens continue to engage in some online activities that their parents don't know about; 57% say they have created an account that their parents were unaware of, such as on a social media site or for an app they wanted to use.

- Most online teens are expected to follow at least some rules about their technology use. The most common rules teens report are restrictions on device use at dinner (42%), limits on sharing passwords with friends (33%), and requirements that they report any online incidents that make them feel scared or uncomfortable (30%). When teens were asked what kinds of rules they would also want their parents to follow, two of these three topped the list. Teens said that think their parents should not be allowed to use their devices at dinner (53%) and should not share passwords with friends (49%). In addition, they also felt as though there should be limits on the kind of social media content they can post (38%).

- However, 28% of teens report that their household has no rules about their use of devices. This number is unchanged from 2016. By comparison, only 8% of parents of teens ages 13-17 say they have no rules in their household for their children's use of these technologies.

- At the same time, teens feel that rules are at least somewhat effective at helping to keep them safe. Almost three in four (72%) say this, while fully 95% of parents say that rules are effective. In terms of enforcement, both teens and parents agree that taking a device away remains the most effective measure.

- About one in three (34%) online teens report that someone has been mean or cruel to them when they were online or using cell phones sometime over the past 12 months. That compares to 39% who reported meanness or cruelty over the past year in the 2016 survey.

- Once again, the content of the mean or cruel messages was most often about something the teen said or did (52%) or something about their appearance (35%). About one in four teens said the messages were about their race or ethnicity (27%), their gender (21%), or their political views (20%).

- When asked about their top online safety concerns, teens continue to indicate that the privacy and security of their personal data is paramount; teens report that they are "very concerned" that someone will access their accounts without their permission (41%), that someone will share personal information about them online that they prefer to keep private (39%), or that someone will post a private photo or video of them online (36%). These concerns were also the top three noted in last year's survey, and directly mirror parents' top three concerns about the issues they feel least prepared to help their kids with.

- In addition, teens share larger worries about the veracity of the information they encounter and share online; 24% say they are "very concerned" that they could spread fake news or other misinformation by mistake, and 25% say they are "somewhat concerned" about this possibility.

- Fully 41% of online teens say that a friend of theirs has sought help from them because of something that happened online. This is comparable to the 43% who reported friends seeking help in 2016. Most of these situations involved harassment or bullying, but one in four online teens (25%) said their friends had been threatened online.

- When providing peer support for the negative experiences their friends have online, teens find that other friends are the most valuable resource. Fully 57% said their other friends were the most helpful in these situations, while 42% said their parents were the most helpful resource.

- However, in general, teens say that their parents are still their primary source for learning about online safety and security. Almost half (47%) of online teens say their parents are among their top three sources for learning how to stay safe online, compared with 40% who say their friends are top sources. Another one in three (32%) online teens say the news media is a primary source for education about online safety and security.

- Looking at priorities for education and outreach, both parents and teens continue to say that the topic of "preventing identity theft" is the number one topic they would like to learn more about; 44% of teens and 45% of parents say this. However, news and information literacy also ranks relatively highly; 35% of online teens would now like to learn more about how to identify fake emails, social posts and texts, as would 30% of parents.

WHERE TEENS CONNECT AND COMMUNICATE ONLINE

Smartphones continue to be the most dominant form of connectivity for American teens. Fully 82% of online teens say they have their own smartphone. By comparison, 67% of online teens ages 13-17 say they have their own laptop, 54% have a gaming device, and 48% say they have their own tablet. Newer connected devices are also growing in importance; 20% of online teens say they have their own wearable device (such as a Fitbit or smart watch) and 12% have a personal assistant device like an Amazon Echo or Google Home.

Yet, all of this connectivity adds up, and most feel as though they generally spend more time online than they would like. Just under one in three (28%) say they spend "too much" time online, while almost half (46%) say they spend "a little more time" online than they would like. Girls and boys and teens of all ages are equally likely to feel this way.

However, even as teens themselves feel as though they spend more time online than they would like, the issue of screen time (whether from computer use, games or TV watching) still ends up being the most frequent point of technology-related tension with their parents. Both teens and parents say that disagreements about the amount of screen time they can have are the most common issue they struggle with; 22% of online teens say they frequently have disagreements with their parents about this, and 26% of parents say they frequently argue with their children

about screen time. Boys are somewhat more likely than girls to report frequent disagreements over screen time (25% vs. 18%).

Teens' most frequent online activities include listening to music (60% do this frequently), using social media (59%), watching online video (56%), doing schoolwork or homework (52%) and playing games (43%). Looking at gender differences, girls continue to be heavier users of social media than boys; 70% of teen girls say they use social media frequently compared with 49% of teen boys. Similarly, girls are more frequent online music listeners; 70% do so frequently, while just 51% of teen boys do so. By contrast, boys prefer playing games; 51% do so frequently, compared with 35% of teen girls. And all teens are equally likely to use the internet to do schoolwork and watch videos, regardless of gender.

Looking more closely at the array of social media applications and websites in teens' lives, YouTube continues to be the most widely used platform (91%), with Gmail ranking second (79%). And among the top social platforms, Instagram (65%) and Snapchat (60%) have become even more favored than Facebook (53%).

WHERE TEENS CONNECT AND COMMUNICATE ONLINE

% who report using the following   Online Teens (13-17)

Website or App	2016	2017
YouTube	91%	91%
Gmail	75%	79%
Instagram	65%	65%
Snapchat	66%	60%
Facebook	61%	53%
Twitter	40%	37%
Facetime	n/a	34%
Skype	43%	29%
KiK Messenger	52%	26%
Twitch	n/a	22%

Source: NCSA Online Surveys of Teens and Parents. For 2016 data, surveys fielded between June 7-10, 2016. N=804 online teens ages 13-17 for the teen survey and N=810 parents of online teens ages 13-17 for the parent survey. For 2017 data, surveys fielded between September 14-17, 2017. N=813 online teens ages 13-17 for the teen survey and N=809 parents of online teens ages 13-17 for the parent survey.

TEENS AND ONLINE SAFETY CONCERNS

When asked about their top online safety concerns, teens continue to point to the privacy and security of their personal information as their biggest worry; teens report that they are "very concerned" that someone will access their accounts without their permission (41%), that someone will share personal information about them online that they prefer to keep private (39%), or that someone will post a private photo or video of them online (36%). These concerns were also the top three noted in last year's survey, and directly mirror parents' top three concerns about the issues they feel least prepared to help their kids with. In addition, teens continue to express concerns about the veracity of the information they encounter and share online; 24% say they are "very concerned" that they could spread fake news or other misinformation by mistake, and 25% say they are "somewhat concerned" about this possibility.

TEENS' CONCERNS ABOUT TECH

% who report the following as something they are "very concerned" about…

Online Teens (13-17)

	2016	2017
Having someone access my accounts without my permission	47%	41%
Having someone share personal information about me	43%	39%
Having someone post a photo or video of me I wanted to remain private	38%	36%
Having someone post untrue things about me	35%	29%
Receiving unwanted communications that make me uncomfortable	32%	26%
Spreading fake news or other misinformation by mistake	n/a	24%
Being pressured to participate in harassing or bullying someone else	32%	24%
Being harassed or bullied for a sustained period	29%	23%
Being called offensive names	25%	20%
Being directed to content about extreme political or religious activities that make me feel uncomfortable	27%	20%
Being harassed because of my political beliefs	n/a	20%
Being approached by people I don't know online	25%	19%

Source: NCSA Online Surveys of Teens and Parents. For 2016 data, surveys fielded between June 7-10, 2016. N=804 online teens ages 13-17 for the teen survey and N=810 parents of online teens ages 13-17 for the parent survey. For 2017 data, surveys fielded between September 14-17, 2017. N=813 online teens ages 13-17 for the teen survey and N=809 parents of online teens ages 13-17 for the parent survey.

HOW TEENS THINK ABOUT RESPONSIBILITY, SAFETY AND RULES

Teens overwhelmingly feel as though they bear the majority of responsibility to keep themselves safe online. Among online teens, 62% say it is "mostly my responsibility," compared with 10% who feel it is mostly their parents' job to keep them safe. Another 23% say they and their parents share the responsibility equally. Parents, on the other hand, are more likely to feel they shoulder most of the burden; 44% of online parents say it is "mostly my responsibility," while only 8% believe it is primarily their child's responsibility to keep themselves safe. While younger teens are modestly less likely than older teens to feel as though they shoulder most of the responsibility for keeping themselves safe online, girls and boys are equally likely to say it mostly falls on them and not their parents.

In keeping with the sense of responsibility about online safety that teens feel, most teens also believe that they are the most knowledgeable person in their household when it comes to privacy and security issues. Fully 34% feel that way, compared with 24% who say their Dad knows the most, and 18% who say their Mom is the one who understands these issues the best. However, in a striking gap by gender, teen boys are far more likely than teen girls to feel as though they are the household authority on privacy and security issues; fully 42% of online teen boys say this, compared with just 27% of online teen girls who say they are the most knowledgeable person. Instead, girls are much more likely than boys to point to their mom as the expert; 25% say that their mom is the most knowledgeable about privacy and security issues, while just 11% of online teen boys say this.

The majority of online teens continue to engage in some online activities that their parents don't know about; 57% say they have created an account that their parents were unaware of, such as on a social media site or for an app they wanted to use. Older teens are somewhat more likely than younger teens to say they have created an account that their parents didn't know about, but girls and boys are equally likely to say they have done this.

Most online teens are expected to follow at least some rules about their technology use. The most common rules teens report are restrictions on device use at dinner (42%), limits on sharing passwords with friends (33%), and requirements that they report any online incidents that make them feel scared or uncomfortable (30%). When teens were asked what kinds of rules they would also want their parents to follow, two of these three topped the list. Teens said that think their parents should not be allowed to use their devices at dinner (53%) and should not share passwords with friends (49%). In addition, they also felt as though there should be limits on the kind of social media content they can post (38%).

However, at the same time, 28% of teens report that their household has no rules about their use of devices. This number has remained stable since 2016, and in general, older teens are the most likely to report living without technology rules. Yet, parents tell a distinctly different story; only 8% of parents of teens ages 13-17 say they have no rules in their household for their children's use of these technologies.

Still, even as teens and parents report different perceptions of rule setting, both groups feel that rules are at least somewhat effective at helping to keep them safe. Almost three in four online teens (72%) say this, while fully 95% of parents say that rules are effective. In terms of enforcement, both teens and parents agree that taking a device away remains the most effective measure.

WHEN TEENS TURN TO PEERS AND PARENTS FOR SUPPORT

When asked whether people their age are mostly kind or mostly unkind to one another when using the internet and smartphones, teens offer mixed reviews. Just under half (44%) said "it depends" on the situation, 28% said teens their age are mostly kind to one another, and 22% said that kids their age are mostly unkind. Boys and girls report similar responses, as do younger and older teens.

However, about one in three (34%) online teens report that someone has been mean or cruel to them when they were online or using cell phones sometime over the past 12 months. That compares to 39% who reported meanness or cruelty over the past year in the 2016 survey. Girls and boys are equally likely to say that someone has been mean or cruel to them, but older teens are modestly more likely than younger teens to report these experiences in the past year. As in 2016, the content of the mean or cruel messages was most often about something the teen said or did (52%) or something about their appearance (35%). About one in four teens said the messages were about their race or ethnicity (27%), their gender (21%), or their political views (20%). Teen girls are more likely than boys to say that the mean or cruel messages were related to their appearance (41% vs. 29%) or their sexual orientation (24% vs. 14%), while boys were more likely than girls to report meanness and cruelty associated with their political beliefs (24% vs. 15%).

When teens do have negative experiences online, they often rely on each other for support; fully 41% of online teens say that a friend of theirs has sought help from them because of something that happened online. This is comparable to the 43% who reported friends seeking help in 2016. The oldest teens are the most likely to say that a friend has sought their help, but boys and girls are equally likely to say that peers sought support related to an experience they had online.

Most of these situations involved harassment or bullying, but one in four online teens (25%) said their friends had been threatened online. And when teens are called upon to provide support for the negative experiences their friends have online, teens find that getting help from other friends is often the most valuable resource. Fully 57% said their other friends were the most helpful in these situations, while 42% said their parents were the most helpful resource.

Looking at topics for further education and outreach, in both 2016 and 2017, parents and teens have been almost entirely aligned in their priorities. Both parents and teens continue to say that the topic of "preventing identity theft" is the number one topic they would like to learn more about; 44% of teens and 45% of parents say this. In addition, 34% of teens and 36% of parents

would like to learn more about "keeping their devices secure," while 31% of teens and 33% of parents are interested in learning more about ransomware and malware. However, beyond security, news and information literacy also ranks highly; 35% of online teens would now like to learn more about how to identify fake emails, social posts and texts, as would 30% of parents. Similarly, in a new question that was asked in 2017, 30% of online teens and 20% of parents would like to learn more about how to identify fake news.

WHAT ONLINE SAFETY TOPICS PARENTS AND TEENS WOULD LIKE TO KNOW MORE ABOUT

% who say they would like to know more about…	Parents of Online Teens	Online Teens (13-17)
Preventing identity theft	45%	44%
Keeping my devices secure	36%	34%
Ransomware/Malware	33%	31%
How to identify fake emails, social posts and texts	30%	35%
How to be safer when using free WiFi networks	29%	32%
Dealing with a bully	29%	26%
Phishing	27%	31%
How to verify the identity of the people you meet online	26%	26%
How to handle harassment	25%	25%
How to determine if a website is secure	24%	29%
How to report serious problems I encounter online	23%	23%
How to manage my privacy online	23%	22%
Blocking people	22%	24%
Adjusting settings on social networks	20%	17%
How to identify fake news	20%	30%
Strong authentication	18%	20%
Creating better passwords	14%	22%

Source: NCSA Online Surveys of Teens and Parents fielded between September 14-17, 2017. N=813 online teens ages 13-17 for the teen survey and N=809 parents of online teens ages 13-17 for the parent survey

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WHERE TEENS AND PARENTS THINK TECHNOLOGY COMPANIES COULD DO BETTER

When asked for ideas about "one thing that technology companies like Apple, Google or Facebook could do to make them feel safer when using the internet," both teens and parents offered a range of suggestions related to increasing access to free educational resources, improving security, and making privacy settings easier to use. In addition, many respondents—both youth and parents—felt that addressing bullying, harassment and filtering out various forms of misinformation online would help to make them feel safer.

HOW CAN TECH COMPANIES MAKE YOU FEEL SAFER ONLINE?

In your opinion, what's one thing that technology companies like Apple, Google or Facebook could do to make you feel safer when using the internet?

Teen Responses:	Parent Responses:
"Offer classes about online safety."	"Free education."
"Don't leave backdoors for the government."	"Allow people to have accounts without being followed across the internet by advertisers, etc."
"Have a website rating to rate how safe the site is."	"Limit the data they share with 3rd party companies."
"Delete accounts/websites with abusive content."	"Make it harder for people to bully/harass them. Make it harder for people to hack into accounts."
"Filter out fake news."	"Make it very easy to set privacy controls for who sees what they are posting."

Source: NCSA Online Surveys of Teens and Parents fielded between September 14-17, 2017. N=813 online teens ages 13-17 for the teen survey and N=809 parents of online teens ages 13-17 for the parent survey.