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AUGUST 2020

Online Safety: A Parent's Perspective.

Shahneila Saeed



PlayStation.



Foreword.

Online safety has never been more important than it is now. With a global pandemic that will continue to affect us for some time to come, we are relying on the Internet and our use of technology more than ever before.

In 2018, we asked over 2000 children what their views and opinions were about online safety education. We felt it only fair to ask parents about their opinions too. As one may expect, there are of course stark differences in their opinions.

As educators, influencers and parents it is important for us to be able to recognise where the gaps lie and to work together to close them.

Technology continues to develop at a rapid pace and it's times like this that result in greater innovation. The landscape and dynamics of our children's use of technology continues to shift at a rapid rate. Today's trending tech is tomorrow's old news. As difficult as it may be, we must try our best to understand it. At the least, enough so that we can help guide our children and help them to continue to make the right decisions online.



Shahneila Saeed
Head of Education at Ukie



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About Digital Schoolhouse.

Ukie's Digital Schoolhouse together with Nintendo UK is a not for profit programme that aims to inspire and engage learners and educators with creative computing and digital skills, preparing them for the 21st Century workplace.

The programme operates through its Schoolhouses (typically Secondary Schools and FE colleges) which run weekly creative computing workshops for local primary schools. Pupils learn computing using a unique collection of resources that adopt a playful approach to teaching the subject.



About Ukie.

Ukie (UK Interactive Entertainment) is the only trade body for the UK's games and interactive entertainment industry. A not-for-profit, it represents businesses of all sizes from small start-ups to large multinational developers, publishers and service companies, working across online, mobile apps, consoles, PC, esports, VR and AR.

Ukie aims to support, grow and promote member businesses and the wider UK games and interactive entertainment industry by optimising the economic, cultural, political and social environment needed for businesses to thrive.

Ukie works closely with the sector to influence government and decision makers, lobbying successfully for the 2014 Video Games Tax Relief, the UK Games Fund, and the Next Gen Skills campaign which resulted in a new Computer Science Curriculum.

It promotes the industry by working with the media to raise awareness of the sector's positive cultural and economic contribution, as well as the societal benefits of games. Ukie runs askaboutgames.com, where families can learn about safe and sensible online practices, parental controls and age ratings.

Ukie's skills work serves to increase inclusion and diversity, advocating a STEAM (STEM + Art) approach to education. Initiatives include the Digital Schoolhouse (DSH), Video Games Ambassadors (VGAs), a Student Membership scheme, and a professional development programme.

The Ukie logo is displayed in white lowercase letters against a dark blue background. The background of the entire slide features a blurred image of a person's hands working on a laptop and writing on a document.

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INTRODUCTION

Executive Summary.

In 2018 we released “[Online Safety: A Pupil’s Perspective](#)” which reported on the views of 10 - 18-year-olds about their opinions on online safety education and support provided both at school and at home. The report highlighted a number of key findings, including the fact that only 19 percent of children said that their parents set and enforced screen time limits. In order to understand findings such as these, we realized we needed to better understand the parent’s views as well.

For this research, we spoke to over 2,000 parents to get their views and opinions on similar issues to see if there was agreement between the two. Over 50 percent of our parents were aged between 30 – 44 years and had varying number of children at home. They ranged in their confidence in digital skills, with some parents working within the tech sector, and some parents having no interactions with digital technologies as part of their everyday work.

Parents were found to be generally quite confident about their ability to stay safe online and took prevention measures into account including privacy settings. 75 percent of parents consider online safety education important. When considering gender differences, it was consistently found that men demonstrated greater confidence in their digital skills and understanding.

85 percent of parents talk to their children about staying safe online (as compared to 63 percent of children reporting the same) and 55 percent set and enforce time restrictions on use of screen time and online activities (as compared to 19 percent reported by children). Likewise, when parents reported on their children’s activities, it appears that over 70 percent of time children spent online is spent playing games.

There are stark differences between the perceptions of parents and their children. One that perhaps leads parents to believe they are communicating and applying more structure than children perceive them to be. The digital divide between parents and children can be clearly seen and is often reported. This research emphasizes the need to ensure that digital literacy courses and training is just as important for adults as it is for children. As we are preparing our children to work in a new technological environment, so we must prepare our parents to have the knowledge and understanding necessary to be able to support them adequately. Including a better understanding of online services to help inform essential parent child discussions.



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INTRODUCTION

Key Findings.

- 41 percent of participating parents said that they considered themselves to work in the tech sector. Almost all parents said that they used computers and digital skills in their workplace.
- Parents have the highest levels of confidence with mobile technologies (rating their confidence at 7.9 out of 10), closely followed by social media. Differences between men and women were largely negligible but the greatest areas of difference where men rated themselves as significantly more confident than women were video games and computer hardware.
- When asked how many hours a week children spent online for leisure purposes, boys on average spend more time online than girls. This was a difference of approx. two hours for general screen time and almost three hours for online activity including games.
- Parents rated quite highly on their confidence to keep themselves safe online and their confidence in their child's ability in keeping themselves safe.
- 85 percent of parents say they talk to their children about online safety issues. 15 percent say they 'hardly ever' or 'never' speak to their children about these issues.
- 55 percent of parents say they set time limits for how much time their child spends online and enforces them. 76 percent of these parents say that their children follow these time limits at least sometimes.
- 71 percent of parents use parental controls on their devices either sometimes or regularly.
- Only half of parents are using advice provided by schools. With one in four parents choose not to use the advice and guidance offered and almost one in four saying that they haven't been offered any advice at all.
- 70 percent of parents say they know where to find information on how to play video games safely and responsibly online.





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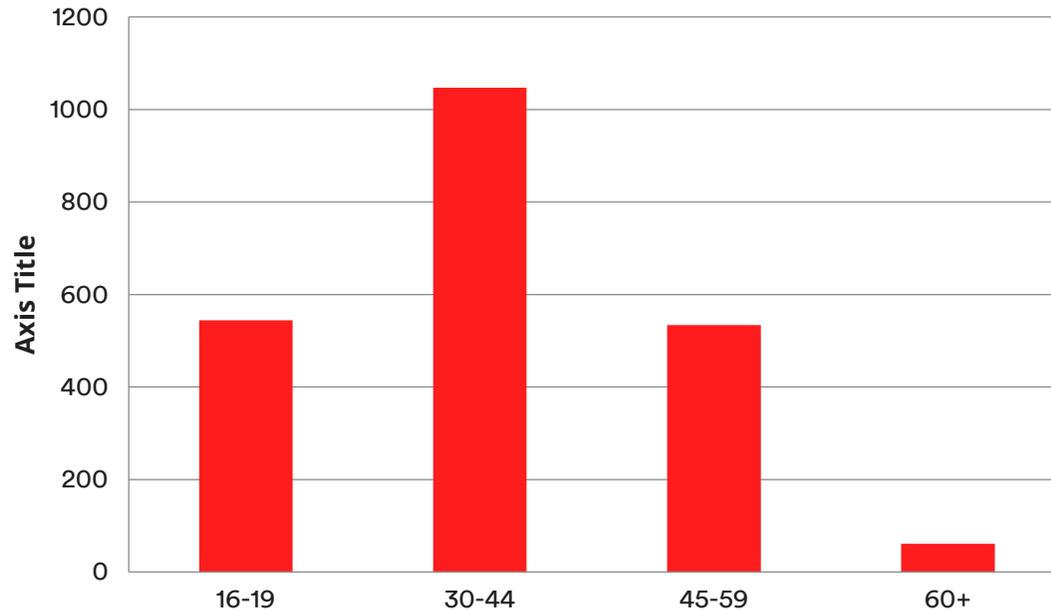


Demographics.

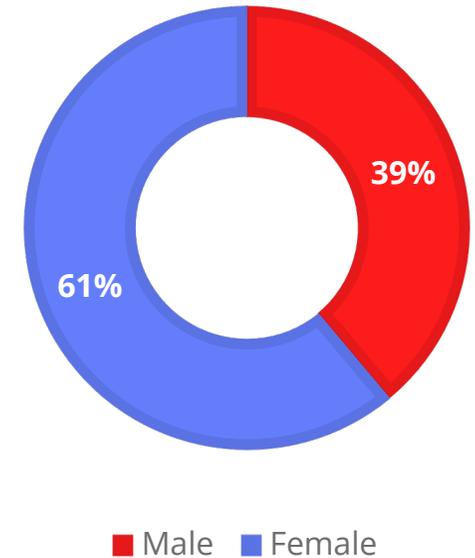
Who took part in the research

Sample Size.

Age Range of Participants



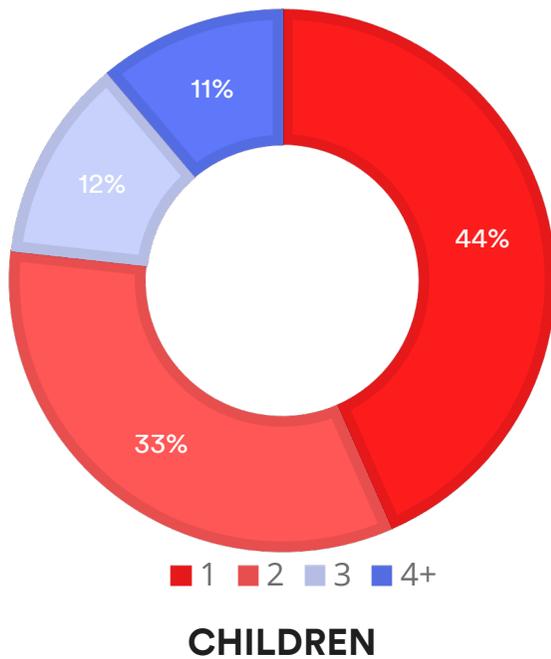
GENDER



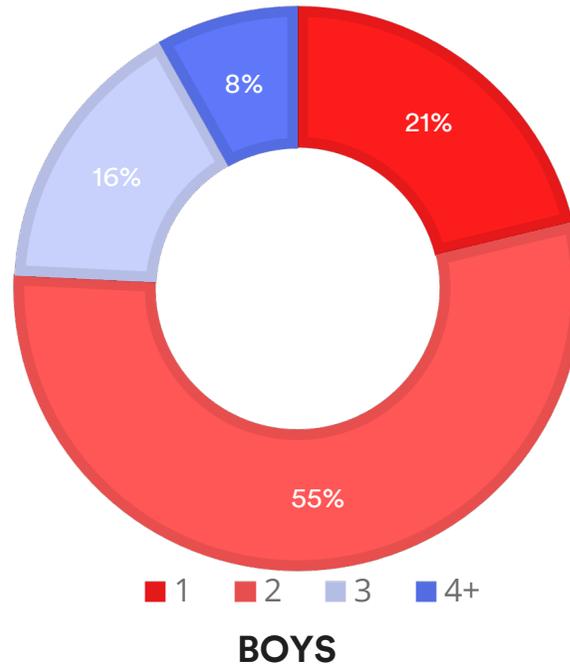
2,006 parents responded to the survey of which 61% were females. Over 50% of the cohort were aged between 30 - 44 years and 27% were young parents aged between 16 - 19 years.



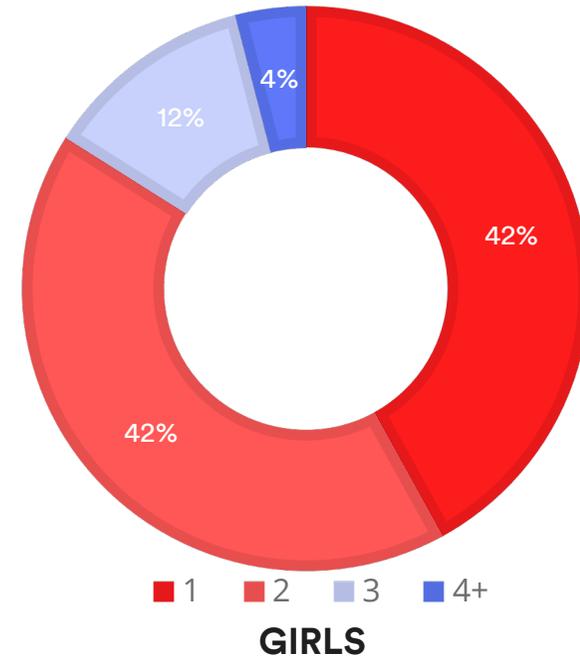
Number of children per household.



43 percent of respondents said one, one third (33 percent) said two, 12 percent said three. 11 percent had between 4 and 6 children.



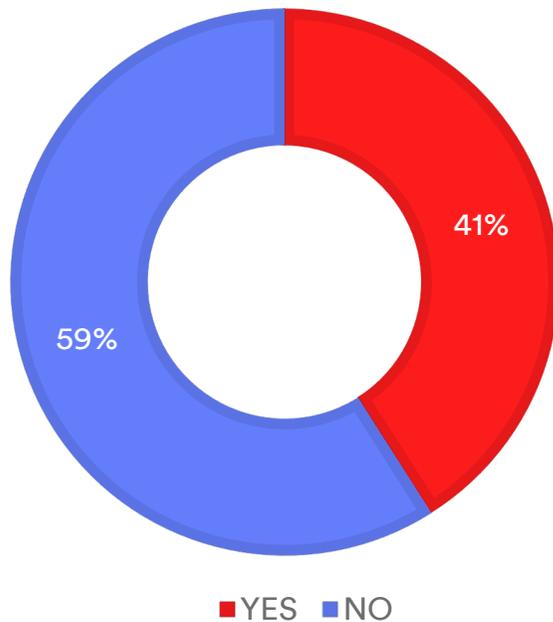
54 percent of respondents said they have one boy living at home. 21 percent said none, 16 percent said two boys and five percent said three.



42 percent of respondents didn't have any girls living at home. Meanwhile 42 percent said they have one girl, 12 percent said two and three percent said three girls.

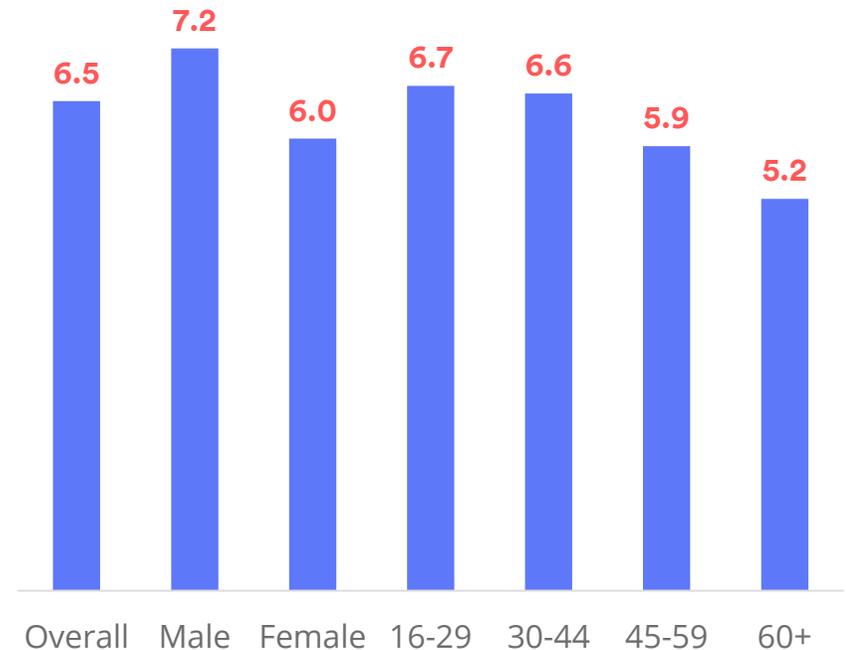
Parental Profile: Digital Skills in the Workplace

If you are working, would you consider your job role to be part of the wider Tech Sector?



59 percent of parents do not consider themselves to work in the tech sector. Of those that do, the number was higher for men at 52 percent as compared to women at 34 percent.

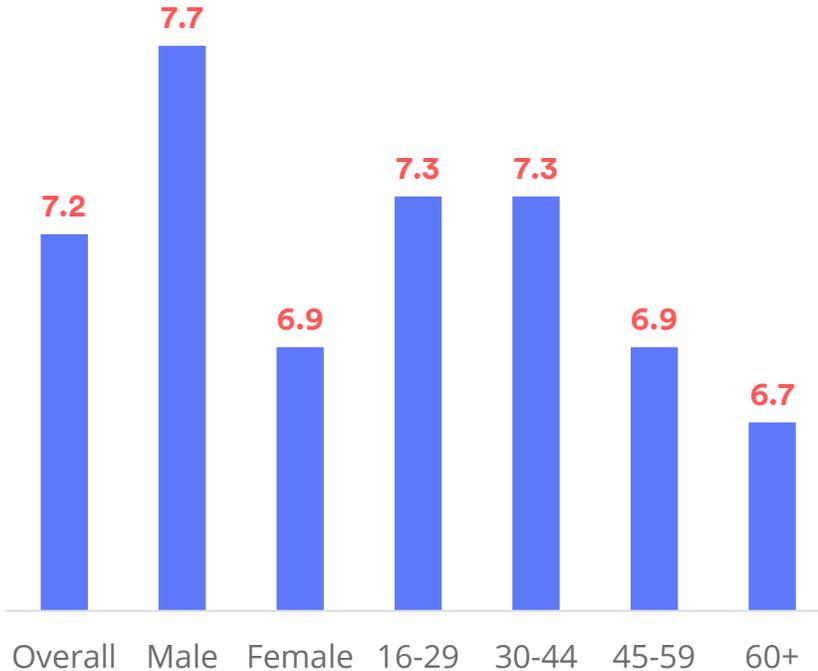
To what extent do you use computers/digital skills in your workplace?



When asked to rate from one to ten (with ten being the highest) the extent they use computers and digital skills in their workplace, on average respondents said 6.5. Men on average responded higher at 7.2 as compared to women with 6.0.



Parental Profile: Overall Confidence.

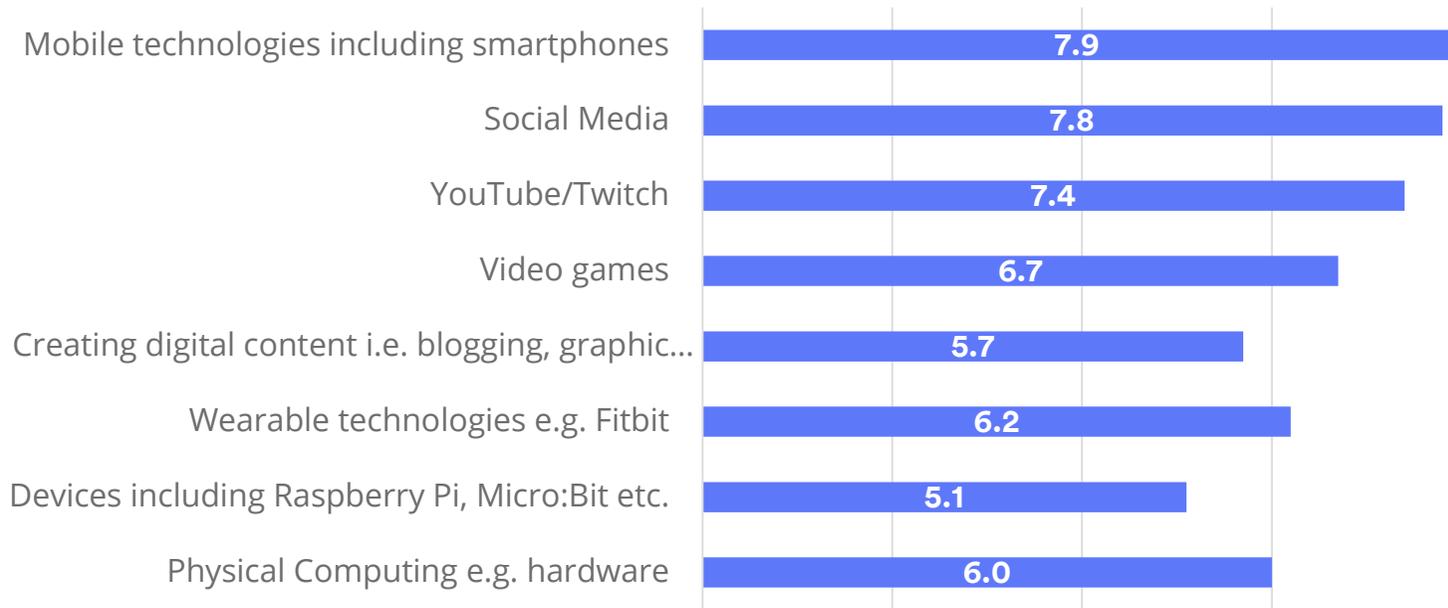


When asked to rate their level of confidence with digital skills and computers parents rated themselves on average at 7.2 (with 10 being the highest). On average men rated themselves with higher levels of confidence at 7.7 as compared to women at 6.9.

It is worth noting though that this was an online questionnaire, therefore, it is feasible that the results are perhaps skewed towards more digitally literate participants.



Parental Profile: Confidence & Understanding in key areas.



Parents rated themselves as having the highest levels of confidence with mobile technologies (7.9), closely followed by social media (7.8) and video platforms (7.4). This is not unsurprising as it aligns with perhaps the most common and everyday uses of technology in the UK today. Also rather unsurprisingly perhaps parents are less confident with newer devices such as the Raspberry Pi and Micro:bit which are commonly used in schools to introduce students to programming, computing and engineering. With these devices not quite making their way into mainstream everyday use, parents are likely to be less confident, alongside the more technical skills of creating digital content (5.7).

Differences between men and women for most areas are negligible. However, areas of greatest differences are:

- Video games where men rate themselves at 7.4 and women at 6.3
- Creating digital content: men have higher levels of confidence (6.5) as compared to women (5.2)
- Computer hardware: men have higher levels of confidence (7.1) as compared to women (5.3)
- Devices including Raspberry Pi: men have higher levels of confidence (6.1) as compared to women (4.5)





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About the Children.

Understanding children's use of screen time and games

How many hours a week do your children spend...

Boys appear to spend more time online than their female counterparts.

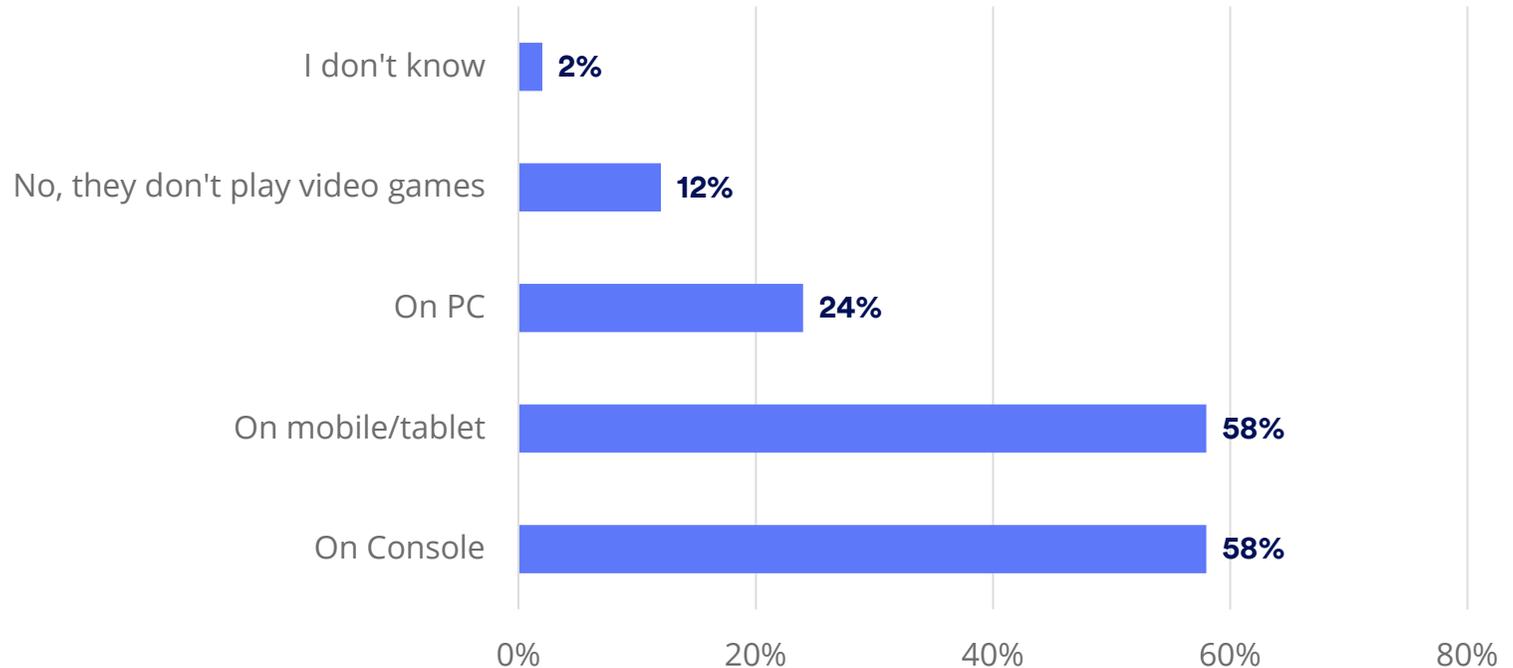
...using screen-based technologies for leisure time?

...online, including games?



Do your children play video games?

86% of parents report that their children play video games.



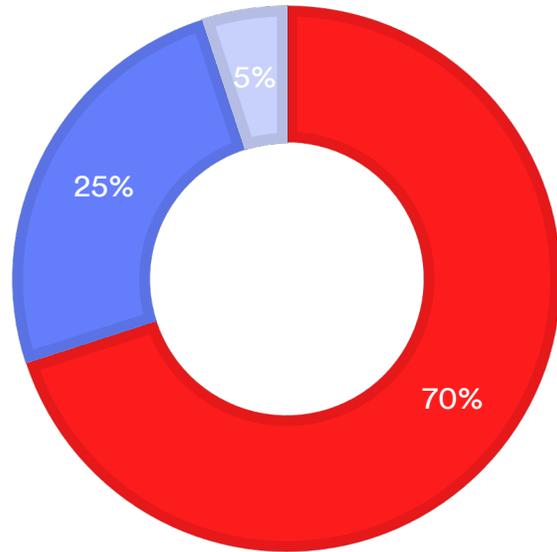
According to the parent's perspective it can be said that 86 percent of children play video games. 2 percent did not know if their child did or did not play video games and 12 percent said they did not.

The two most dominant platforms were console games and mobile games, with 58 percent of parents responding to each of these. 24 percent said their children played PC based games.



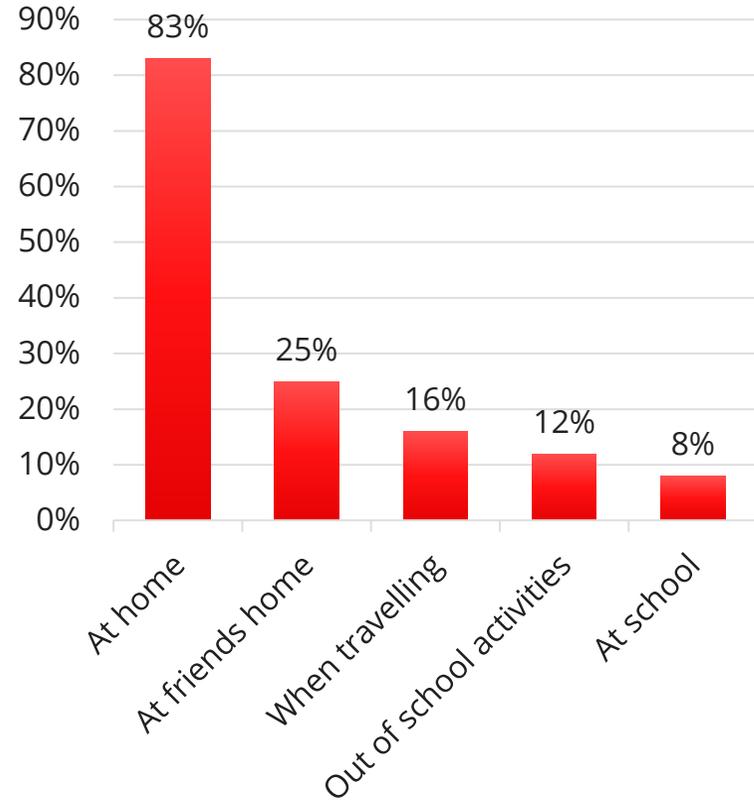
Do your children play video games online?

70% of parents say their children play video games online, and its mostly at home.



■ Yes, I know they do ■ No, I know they do not
■ I don't know

Seven in ten parents say they know their children play video games online, with one quarter (25 percent) say they know their children don't.



83 percent of parents say their children are playing online game at home with a quarter saying that their children play games while at their friends' home. Games are acknowledged as a source of entertainment while travelling by 16 percent of parents.





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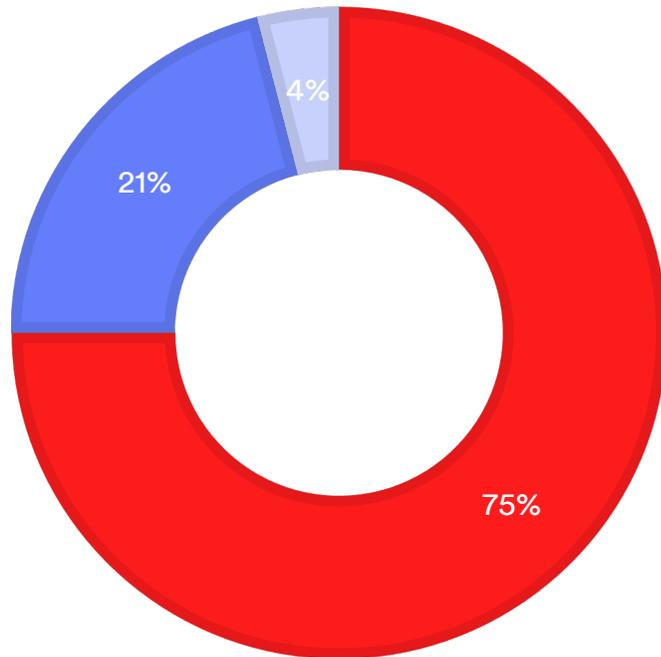
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Online Safety Education.

The importance of Online Safety Education

How important do you think online safety education is for your children?

75% of parents say online safety education is very important.



- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Has little importance

75 percent of parent felt that it was very important. All parents felt that online safety education had at least some importance for their child. 4 percent felt that it had little importance within their child's education, while 21 percent felt that it was somewhat important.

When comparing responses, women were more likely to rate the importance of online safety as higher. 77 percent of women felt that online safety education was very important, compared to 70 percent of men.

When looking at parents who felt it had no importance it is interesting to see that only 1 percent 16 - 29 year old parents subscribed to this view and 7% of parents aged 60+ years. Within the 30 - 44 year olds everyone felt that it had at least some importance.

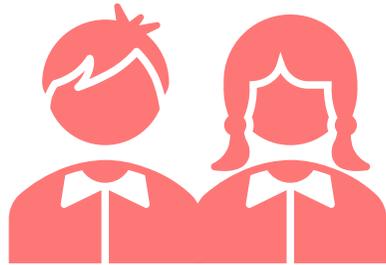


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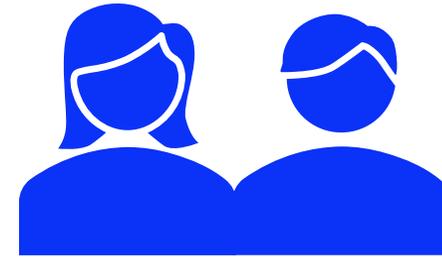
Staying safe online: How confident are you?

Parents feel more confident about keeping themselves safe online than they do about their child's ability to do so.



How confident are you about your child's ability to keep themselves safe online?

Parents rated their confidence with their children's ability to keep themselves safe online at 7.2 on average (with 10 being "completely confident")



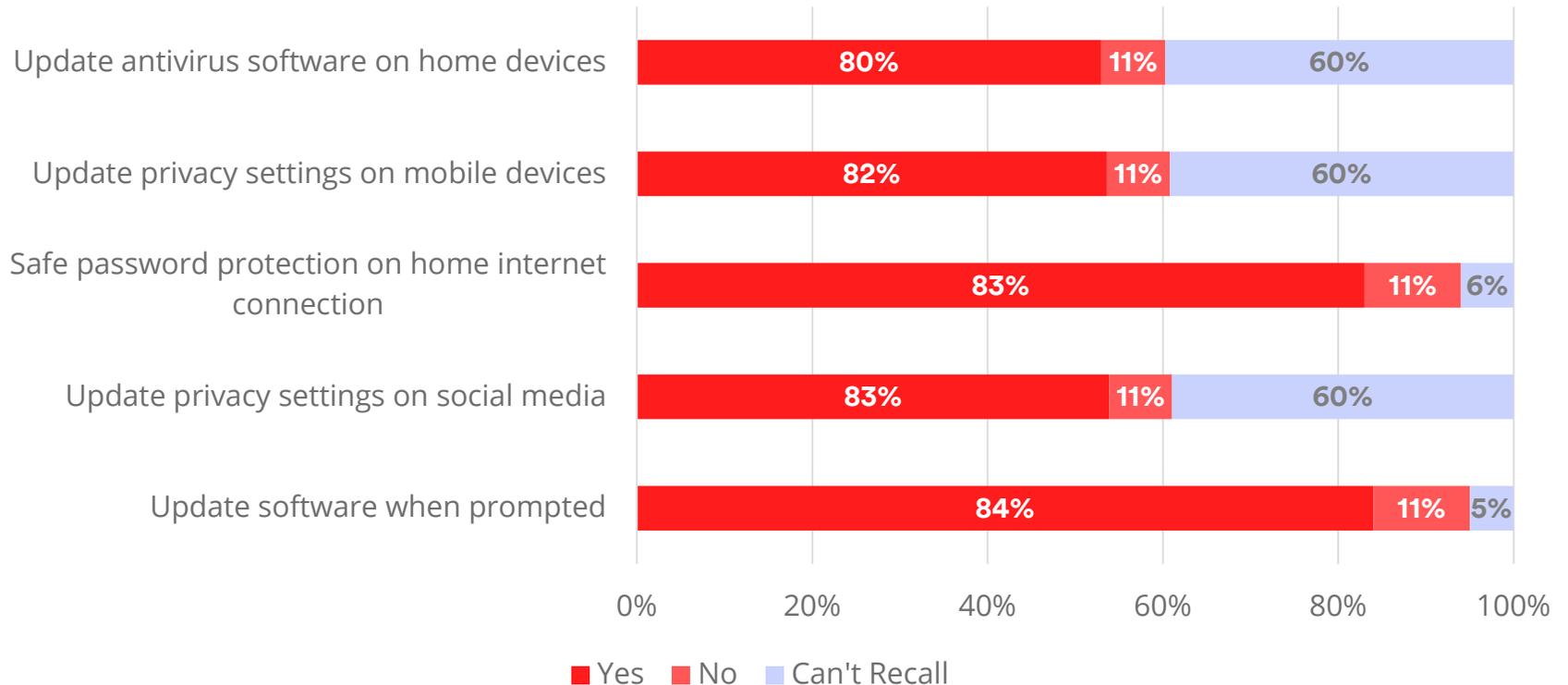
How confident are you about your own ability to keep yourself safe online?

Parents felt fairly confident about their own ability to keep themselves safe online, rating themselves on average at 8.0 (with 10 being "completely confident").



Staying safe online: Taking practical measures.

At least 80% of parents have taken some practical steps to keep themselves safe.



When asked about the practical measures they have taken to keep safe online, most parents have generally taken some steps. 84 percent of respondents said they have updated software when prompted, 83 percent have updated privacy settings on social media accounts and 83 percent have safe password protection on their home internet connection. 82 percent have updated privacy settings on their mobile devices and 80 percent have updated antivirus software on home devices

A point to note is that there was no significant difference found between male and female responses.

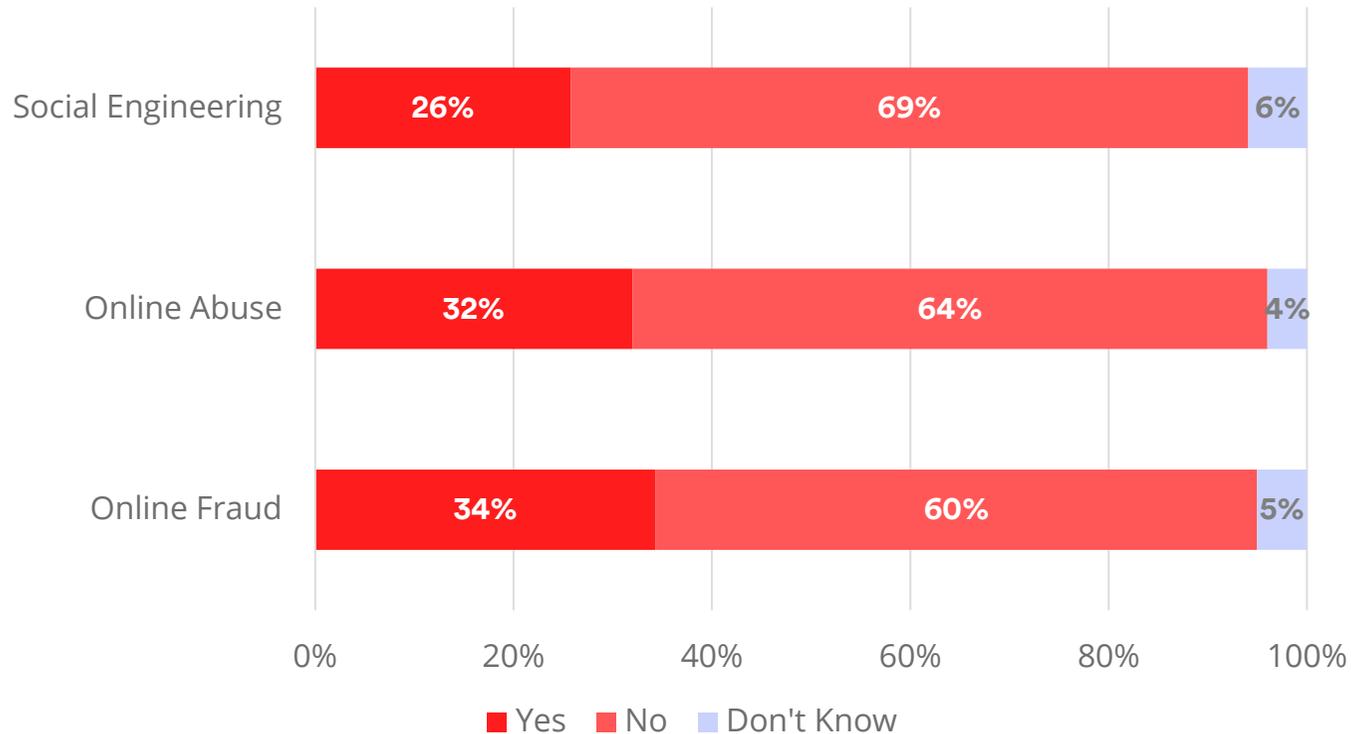


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Staying safe online: Have you been a victim?

Approximately one third of parents seem to have fallen prey to online fraud or abuse.



Roughly a third of respondents have seem to have fallen prey to online fraud or abuse of some kind. However, there seem to be marginal differences here between male and female respondents.

More men seem to fall prey to online fraud (39 percent) as compared to women (31%), and a similar difference was found for online abuse with 35 percent of men reporting they'd been a victim of online abuse compared to 30 percent of women. The difference for social engineering was more marked amongst men and women. 33 percent of men reported being a victim of social engineering compared to women at 21 percent.





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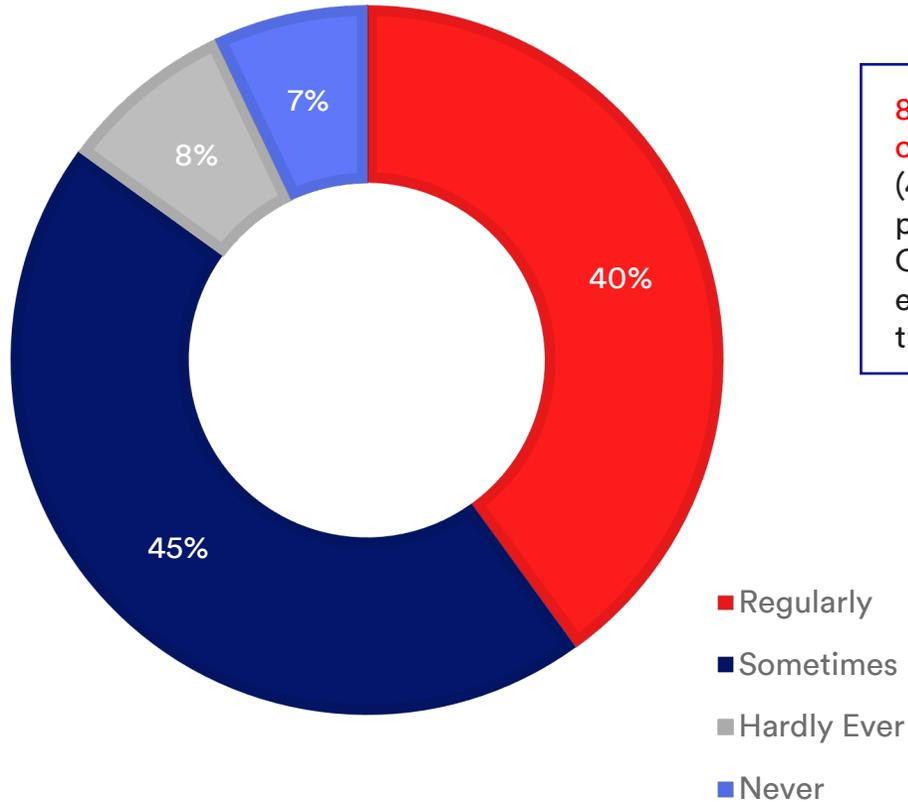
Engaging with Children.

Direct engagement with children about online safety issues

Talking to children about online safety.

85% of parents talk to their children about online safety issues.

Do you talk to your children about staying safe online?



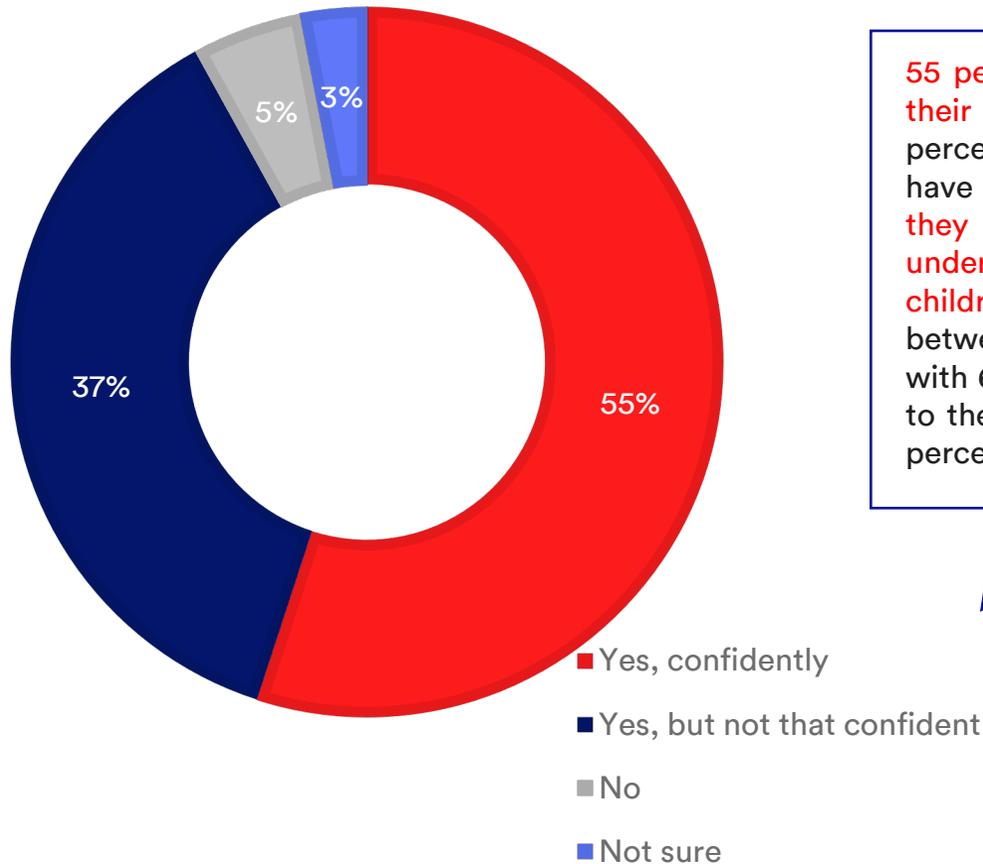
85 percent of parents say that they talk to their children about online safety issues. Two in five (40 percent) say they do so regularly, and 45 percent say they speak to them sometimes. Only 15 percent of parents say they “hardly ever” or “never” speak to their children about these issues.



Talking to children about online safety.

45% of parents do not feel completely confident discussing these issues.

Do you believe you have the necessary abilities and understanding to adequately teach your children about online safety?



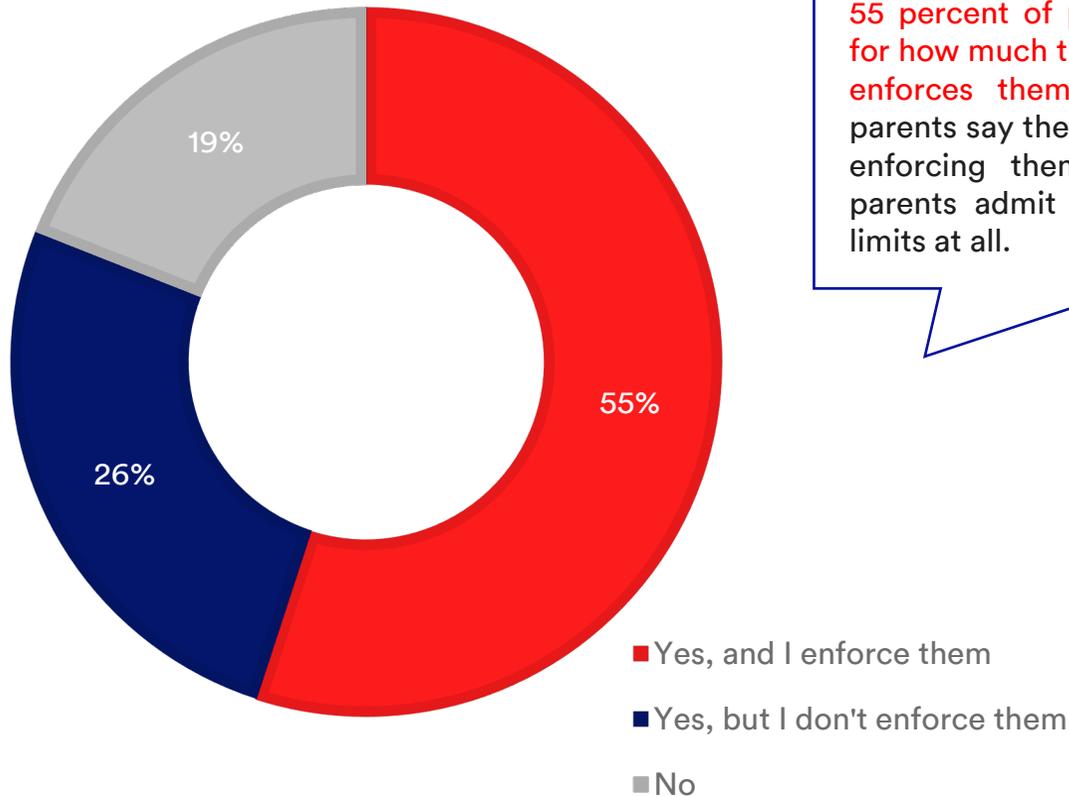
55 percent of parents feel confident talking to their children about online safety issues. 37 percent of parents admitted that they didn't have a lot of confidence and 5 percent said that they didn't believe they had the ability or understanding to discuss these issues with their children at all. There was some difference here between the responses of men and women, with 61 percent of men saying they could speak to their children confidently as compared to 51 percent of women.



Time Limits.

45% of parents either do not set time limits or do not enforce them for time spent online.

Time spent online.



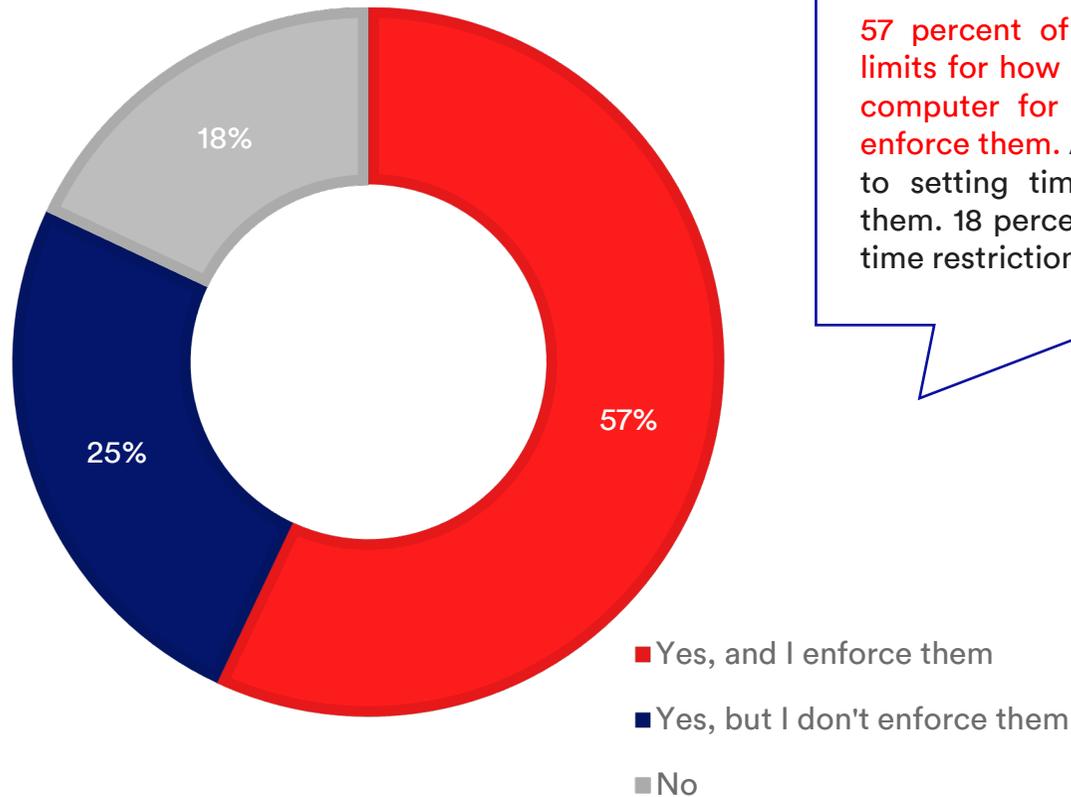
55 percent of parents say they set time limits for how much time their child spends online and enforces them. Furthermore, 26 percent of parents say they set time limits but admit to not enforcing them. Interestingly 19 percent of parents admit that they do not set any time limits at all.



Time Limits.

43% of parents either do not set time limits or enforce them for time spent using computers for leisure.

Time spent using computers for leisure.

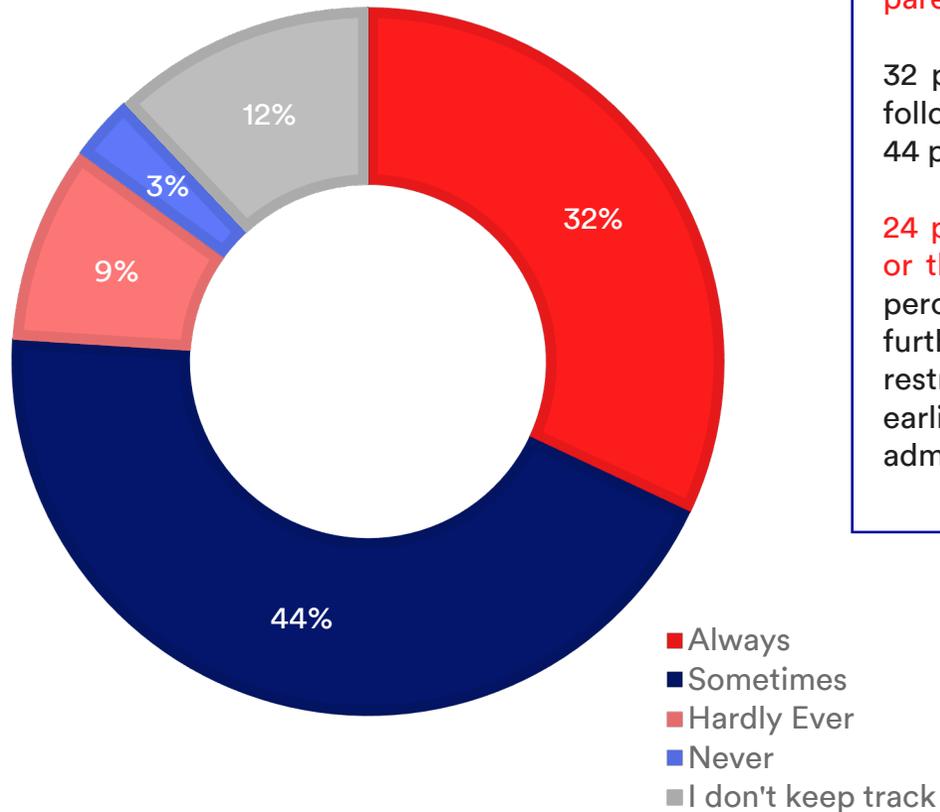


57 percent of parents say they set time limits for how much time their child uses a computer for leisure purposes, and they enforce them. A further 1 in 4 parents admit to setting time limits but not enforcing them. 18 percent of parents do not set any time restrictions at all.



Time Limits: Does your child follow them?

76% of parents say their children follow the time limits set by them.



76 percent of children follow the time limits set by parents at least sometimes.

32 percent of parents say that their children always follow the time limits that they enforce, with a further 44 percent of parents saying they do so sometimes.

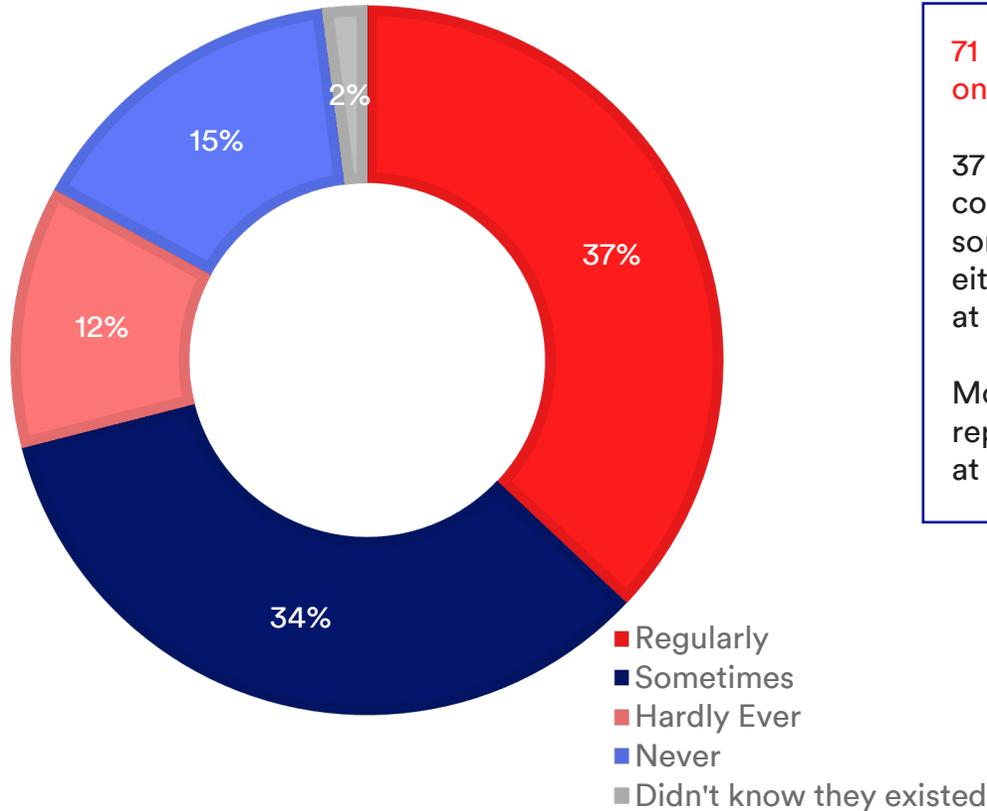
24 percent of children either don't follow time limits or their parents don't keep track to find out. Only 3 percent of parents said their children never do and a further 12 percent admit to not keep track of the time restrictions that they set. These findings back up the earlier finding that on average 25 percent of parents admit to not enforcing any time limits that they do set.



Parental Controls.

71% of parents use parental controls on their devices.

Do you use the parental controls available on devices such as games consoles?



71 percent of parents use the parental controls on their devices either sometimes or regularly.

37 percent of parents regularly use parental controls, with a further 34 percent doing so sometimes. In contrast 27 percent of parents either never or hardly ever use parental controls at all.

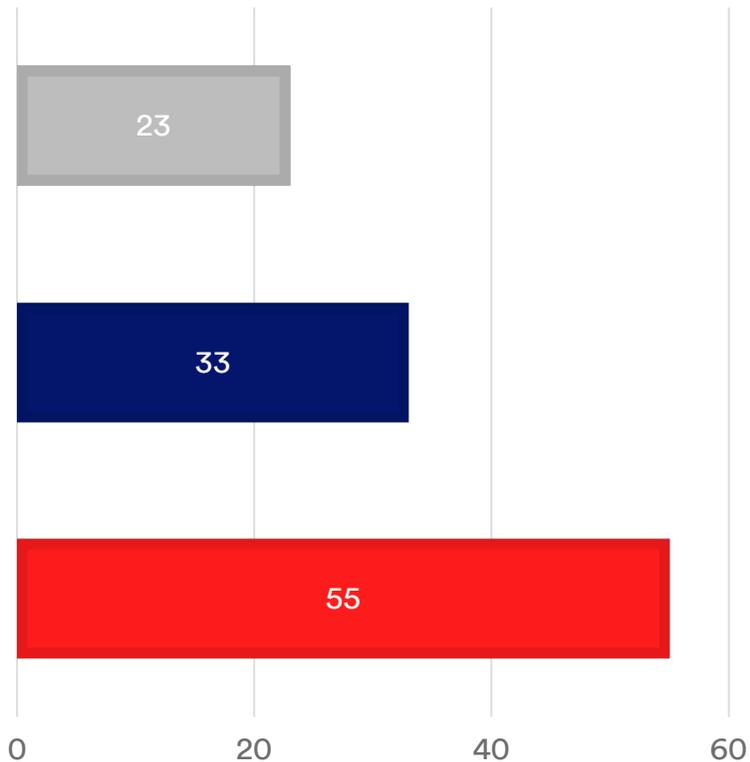
More reassuringly only 2 percent of parents report having no knowledge of parental controls at all.



Children's Activity.

45% of parents do not monitor their child's activity on social media.

Do you monitor your children's activity on social media and online games?



Over half of parents monitor their child's activity on social media (55 percent), however this number falls to one in three (33 percent) for monitoring activity for online games. Almost a quarter of parents (23 percent) do not monitor their child's online activity at all.

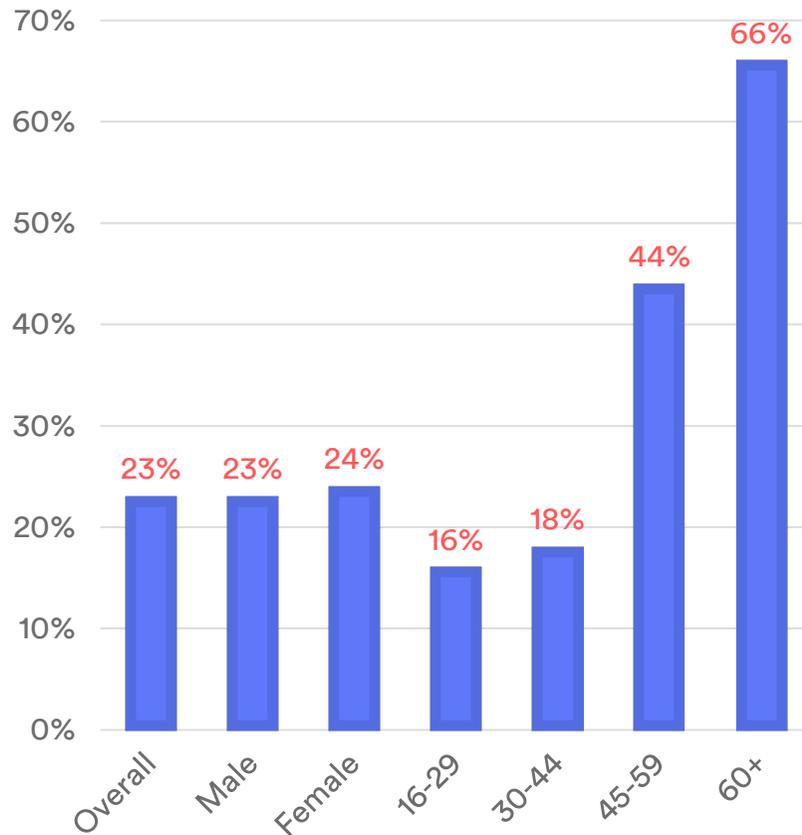
- % Yes I monitor their activity on social media
- % Yes I monitor their activity on online games
- % No I don't



Children's Activity.

23% of parents do not monitor their child's activity online.

Do you monitor your children's activity on social media and online games?



Of the 23 percent of parents that do not monitor their child's online activity, a disproportionate representation of these are within the 60+ age bracket.

Men and women were equally represented here but when breaking down the results according to parental age groups, the number rises according to the age bracket.

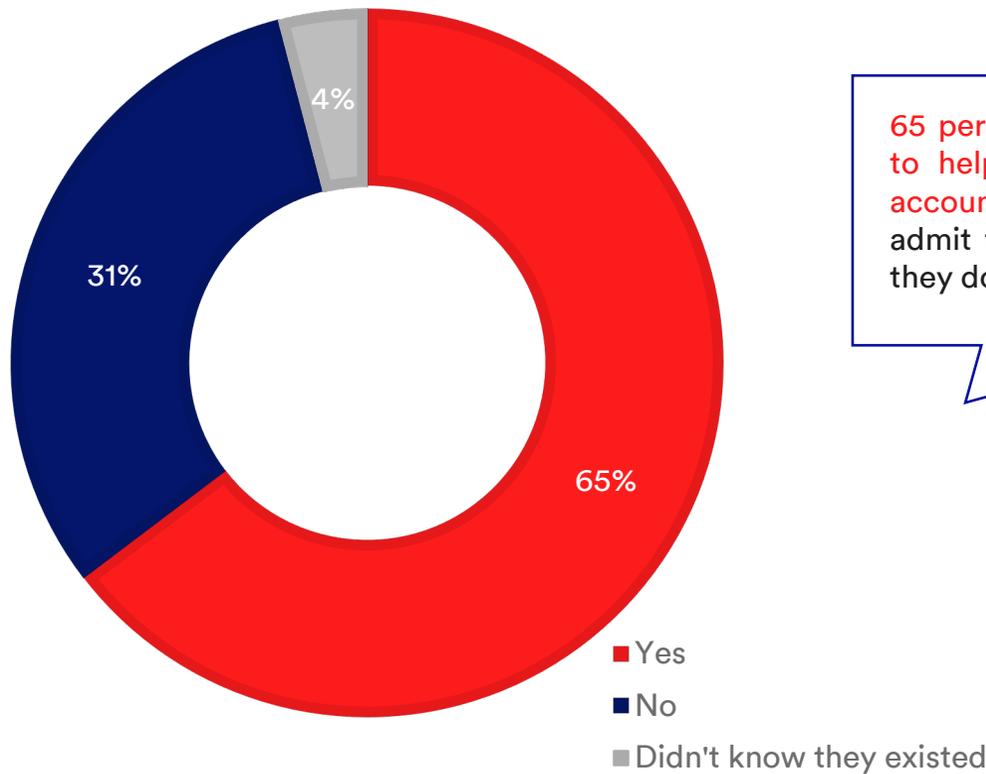
This could be because older parents also have older children and therefore do not feel the need to closely monitor their child's activity. However, it could also be an impact of their own digital literacy skills and understanding of the digital environments that their children engage with.



Children's Activity.

65% of parents help their children set privacy settings on their social media accounts.

Do you work with your children to set their privacy settings within their social media accounts?



65 percent of parents work with their children to help set privacy settings on social media accounts. Almost a third of parents (31 percent) admit to not doing so, and 4 percent say that they don't know they existed.





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Online Safety at School.

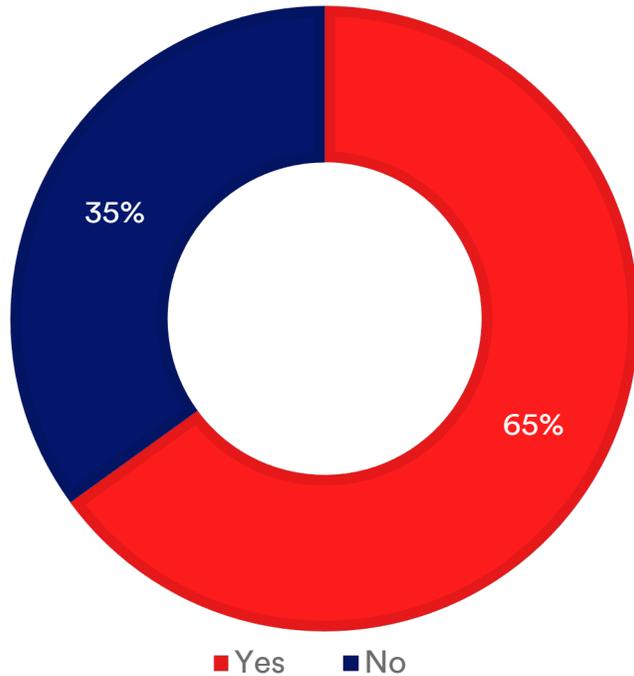
Views and perceptions of online safety education provision at school

School Provision.

65% of parents are aware of what is taught by the school.

Are you aware of what is covered as part of the online safety education offered by your child's school?

How effective do you believe the online safety education in the school is? Do you think it reflects the technology your child uses outside school?



Most parents (65 percent) are aware of what is taught by their school as part of the online safety provision.



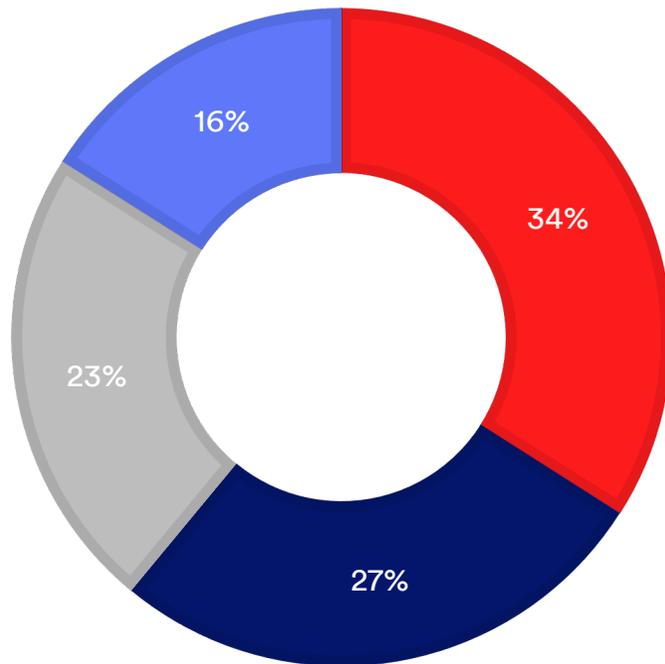
On average parents rated the effectiveness and relevance of their child's online safety education in school as 7.7 out of 10. Where 10 equalled completely relevant and 0 was equivalent to no relevance at all.



School Provision.

One third of parents have made use of school advice and guidance. 39% of parents either cannot recall or have not been offered any advice.

Has your child's school offered advice on how you can support online safety education at home?



- Yes, and I've used this
- Yes, but I didn't make use of this
- No, they haven't offered any guidance
- I can't recall

A third of all parents (34 percent) have been offered and made use of advice and guidance on online safety issues given by their child's school.

However, perhaps more notably over one in four parents (27 percent) chose not to make use of this advice even though it was offered.

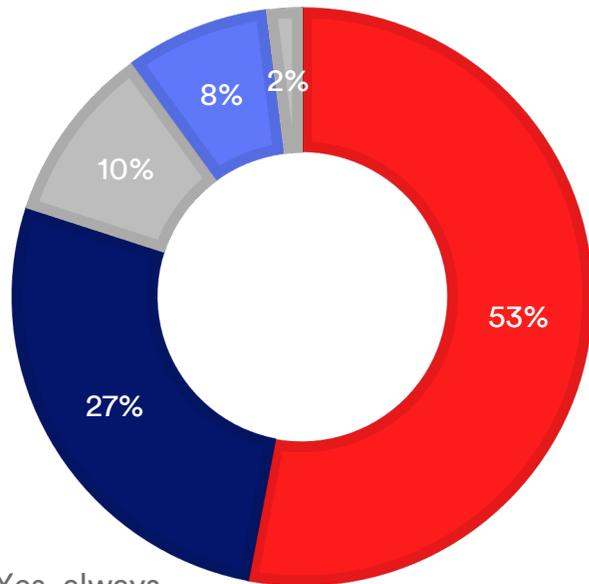
It is interesting to see that almost one in four parents (23 percent) state that they haven't been offered any advice and guidance and a further 16 percent cannot recall if they ever did.



Reporting Concerns.

53% of all parents would notify their child's school if an issue were to occur.

If your child was part of an online incident that caused concern would you notify their school?



- Yes, always
- Yes, but only if it involved other students in the school
- I'm not sure
- No
- Other

53 percent of all parents would always notify their child's school if an online safety issue were to occur. Over a quarter (27 percent) would only notify the child's school if it concerned other students.

How likely do you think it is that your child will come and talk to you if something ever happened online that concerned them?

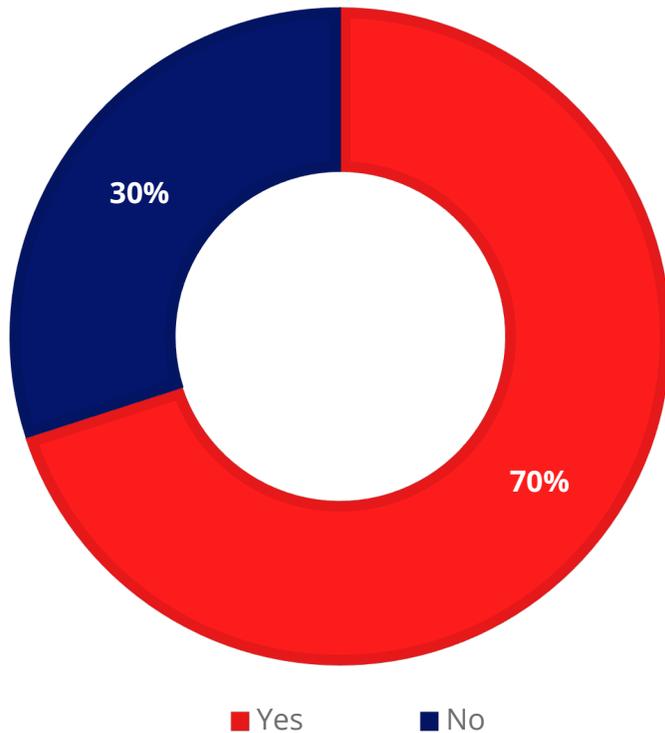


Parents were asked to rate the likelihood of their children reporting online safety concerns to them out of 10; where 10 stood for "I'm completely confident that they'd always talk to me regardless of the situation" and 0 equalled "They'd never speak to me". On average parents rated the likelihood as 7.9. There was some difference between men and women, with men averaging at 7.7 and women slightly higher at 8.1



How to play games safely & responsibly online.

70% of parents know where to find information on playing video games safely.



70 percent of parents say that they know where to find information on how to play video games safely and responsibly online.





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Parents vs Children.

Comparing the findings with “Online Safety: A Pupil’s Perspective” (2018)

PARENTS VS CHILDREN

In 2018 we released our first online safety report entitled “Online Safety: A Pupil’s Perspective”. Over 2000 children were surveyed and questioned on their thoughts and opinions on online safety education provision both at school and at home. The research yielded some interesting findings.

This report is a follow on from that previous research and has sought to discover parent’s opinions on the same issues. As part of the research we decided to look back to see if we could draw comparisons from the data. Are parents' thoughts and opinions in line with what the children said?

Drawing some comparisons on key issues between the two data sets has highlighted some interesting differences. While broadly there are similarities in findings, parents and children are not always in agreement, and confidences indeed vary.

For organisations wishing to work in this space, these are certainly factors for consideration. How can we better engage and educate our population to help them be better prepared for the digital world of today and tomorrow?

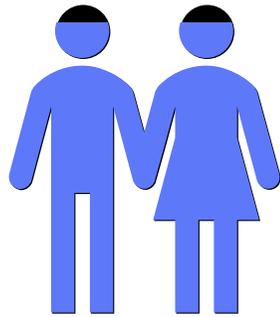
The following section highlights the comparable differences found between parents and children’s opinions.

Looking back to look ahead.



The Importance of Online Safety.

96% of parents say online safety education is important, compared to 62% of children.



PARENTS

96 percent of parents say that online safety education is at least somewhat important.



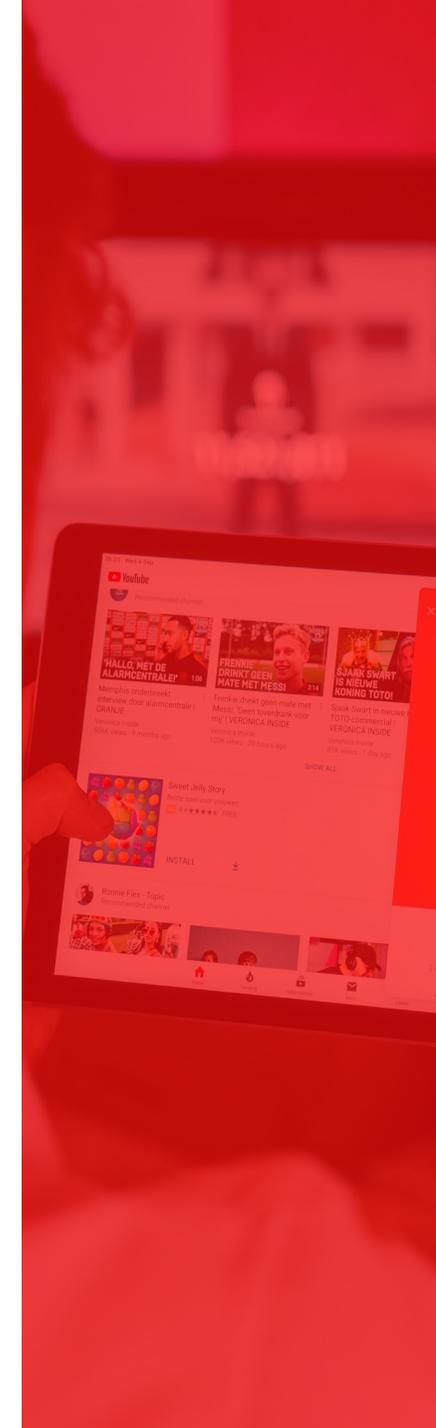
CHILDREN

62 percent of children say that online safety is at least quite important.

Generally, parents see online safety as more important than children do. This is not surprising and perhaps to be expected. As 'grownups', parents are likely to be more aware of the possible risks and will by their very nature place greater importance on safety related issues.

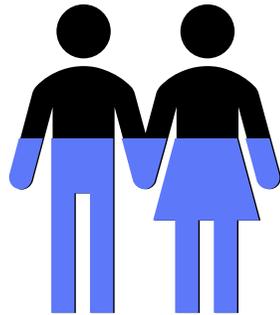


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The Importance of Online Safety.

76% of children feel completely confident in their ability to stay safe online, compared to 55% of parents who feel they have the understanding required to support them.



PARENTS

55 percent of parents believe that they have the necessary abilities and understanding to adequately teach their children about online safety.



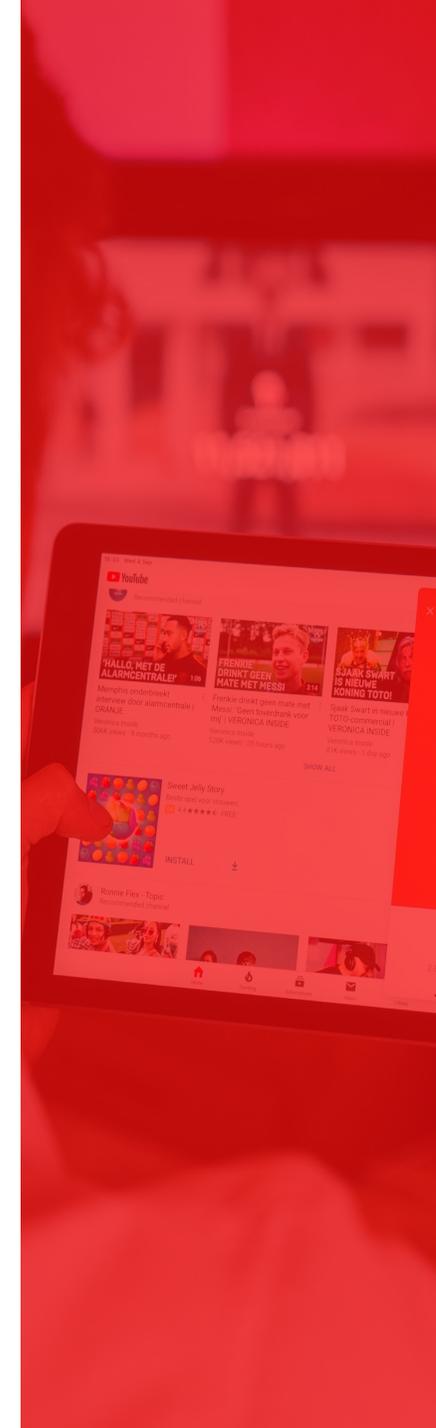
CHILDREN

76 percent of children say that they are very to completely confident in their own ability to stay safe online.

Roughly only one in two parents believing they have the abilities and understanding of online safety issues to be able to support their children in this area. Despite children feeling confident in their own abilities to keep themselves safe online; advice, guidance and support are an important part of upbringing, and parents play a key role in this. As technology continues to develop at a pace there is a need to use mainstream outlets to help educate adults as well as children about these issues.



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Setting Time Limits.

55% of parents say they enforce limits compared to 19% of children (a gap of 36%).



PARENTS

55 percent of parents say they enforce limits on how much time their children spend online



CHILDREN

19 percent of children say that their parents enforce limits on how long they spend online

There is a stark difference in the opinions of parents and children here. According to parents not only do 55 percent of them enforce time limits, but on average say that 76 percent of children follow them at least sometimes. In comparison only 19 percent of children say that their parents actually enforce time limits.

These results could be exaggerated, parents perhaps recalling their experiences in a more positive light. The key thing here is a child's perception. If the child doesn't feel that any such restrictions are in place then they are obviously less likely to follow them. The concern of course is that parents may as a result of this difference have an overinflated sense of whether their children are following their restrictions, thereby putting their child's online safety at risk.

Parental controls may also play a part here. As 75 percent of parents feel that they are using parental controls at least some times, then many of them may feel that those are all the restrictions required. What is needed here is improved digital literacy education for all with an increasing emphasis of its importance amongst adults.



Online Gaming Safety.

41% more parents report talking to their children about online safety than children do.



PARENTS



CHILDREN

Children playing online games

70%

85%

Parents talking to children about online safety

85%

44%

Knowing where to find information about online safety

70%

77%

The comparisons have revealed some findings which may cause concern.

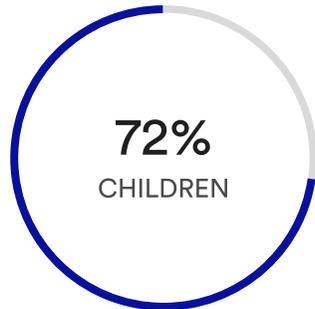
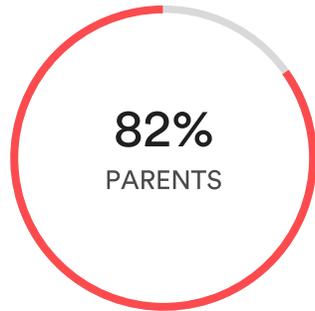
It seems that a significantly greater number of children play games online than parents are aware of. 85 percent of children admitted to playing games online, but only 70 percent of parents reported this. Internet safety organisations such as Ask About Games underline the importance of parents talking to their children about their gameplay habits. The more conversations that are had, the better parents will understand their child's online behaviours. Our "Online Safety: Pupil's Perspective" report also revealed that children who felt their parents discussed these matters with them were more likely to report concerning issues that may arise. However, despite 85 percent of parents stating that they speak to their children about online safety issues, only 44 percent of children agree. There could be difference in interpretation here – for example, between talking about online safety issues and gameplay more broadly – but it is still a large difference.

The findings from both reports consistently indicate that children seem to be more confident on a range of matters in comparison to their parents. When searching for information on how to stay safe online, the findings are no different with 77 percent of children saying they know where to go in comparison to 70 percent of parents. Schools potentially play a large part here, with online safety being an essential part of the school curriculum.



Privacy Settings.

More parents update their privacy settings than children, and have a greater degree of confidence that their children will speak to them should a potential incident occur.



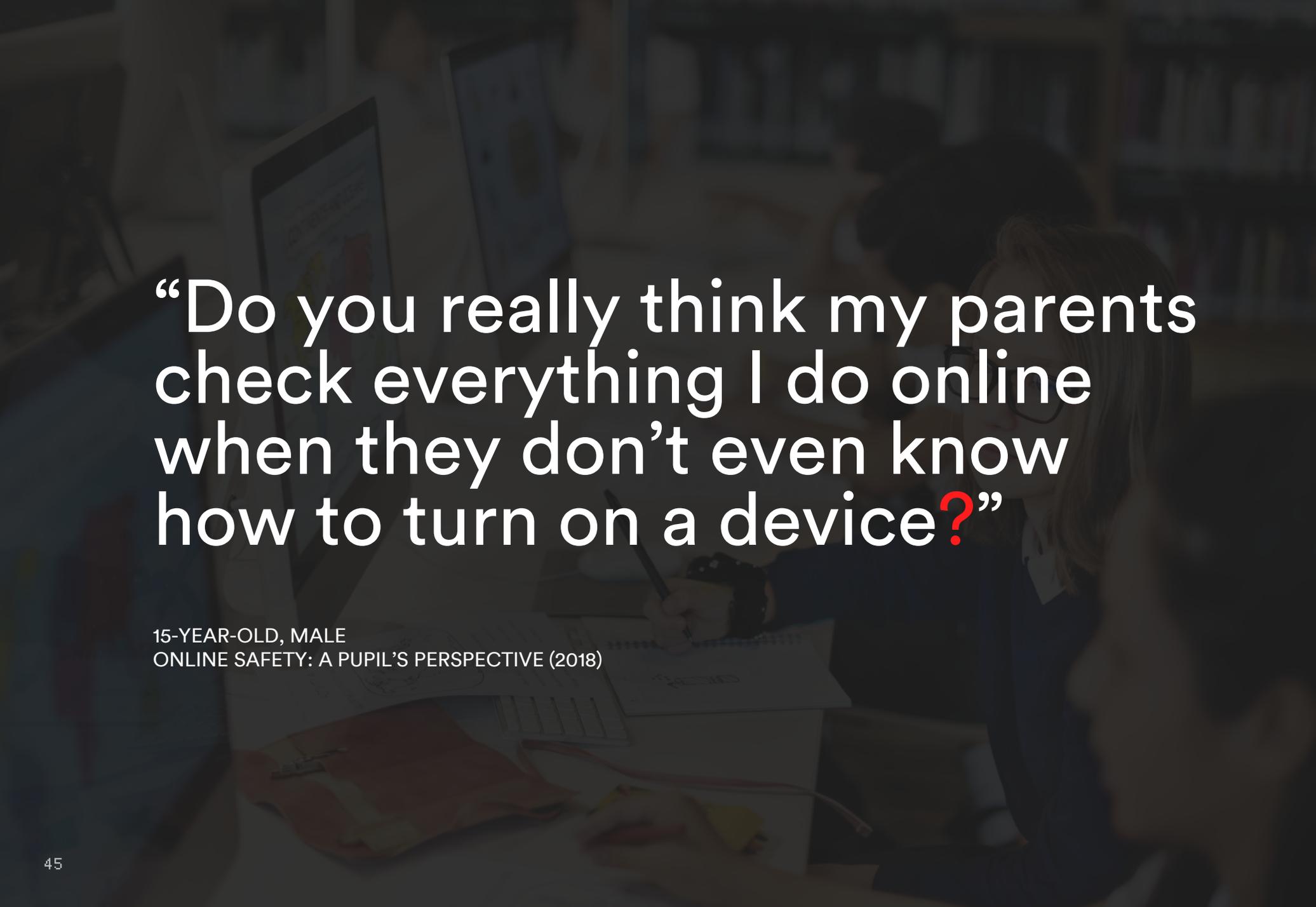
A greater number of parents (82 percent) say they have updated privacy settings on mobile devices, while in contrast only 72 percent of children say they have updated privacy settings on their own tablets and smartphones. This does indicate a significant difference between the two with parents more likely to update their settings than children, potentially indicating that parents are perhaps more likely to be concerned or act upon their concerns.

55 percent of children said that if something happened that concerned them online, the first people they would speak to would be their parents. Whereas on average all parents gave a high score when asked to rate how likely it is that their children would report an online concern to them, thereby demonstrating greater confidence in this regard.

This is certainly something worth consideration. If not reporting incidents to parents then children would speak to their friends (19 percent) or their siblings (9 percent). Interestingly 5 percent of children said that they wouldn't speak to anyone; when comparing these against those children that wouldn't report an incident to their school the number rises to 12 percent.

Are parents aware that 12 percent of children wouldn't feel comfortable reporting to anyone either at home or in school? Are parents aware that children are perhaps less confident in speaking to their parents than they think? How is it possible for us to overcome this? What can we do to initiate conversations between parents, children and schools? It seems clear that further research is required to identify the factors that potentially discourage children from reporting incidents to a responsible adult, in particular their parents. Is it their perceived lack of parents' digital expertise?





“Do you really think my parents check everything I do online when they don’t even know how to turn on a device?”

15-YEAR-OLD, MALE
ONLINE SAFETY: A PUPIL’S PERSPECTIVE (2018)

A young girl with glasses is looking at a smartphone. The background is dark and shows a desk with papers and a laptop. The text is overlaid on the image.

“My mum doesn’t even know how to screenshot so I’m sure she can’t educate me on settings of social media.”

15-YEAR-OLD, FEMALE
ONLINE SAFETY: A PUPIL’S PERSPECTIVE (2018)



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Conclusion.

So what have we found and where next?

Conclusion.

It seems quite clear that there appears to be a general level of confidence amongst the parents that participated in this research. Parents largely feel that they are talking to their children about online safety issues, they set restrictions and enforce them, and they are confident with the most common uses of technology today. Although interestingly while over half of them (55 percent) monitor their child's social media activity, only one third monitor their online games activity, and almost a quarter do not monitor at all. However this does mean that two-thirds of parents do not monitor their child's online games activity and almost half of parents do not monitor their child's social media activity. This is an area of concern, and while further research would be required here to determine the factors and reasoning behind this, some of these could be down to a lack of confidence with the online game environment and an understanding of the technology. The risks associated with social media are widely publicised as compared to online games, and that is possibly the reason behind the difference in monitoring levels also.

Parents feel generally confident in their school's provision of online safety education. However, not all schools appear to be offering advice and guidance to support parents, with a quarter reporting nothing being offered by their child's school. Interestingly, out of the cohort that were offered support, only a third made use of it and a quarter chose not to. Schools are an ideal mechanism through which parents can be kept up to date with trusted guidance and offers of support, with approximately half of all parents stating they would inform the school if any online safety issues arose with their child, it is clear that for many schools are a trusted central source.

But why are two thirds of parents not utilizing their child's school as a resource? Again, there may be multiple factors involved with this, anything from awareness and time to numerous other possibilities. It is no secret though that parents, and especially working parents lead extremely busy lives. A recommended next step going forward would be for education and industry to think collectively and creatively to see how best we can keep parents informed with relevant information and how we can best support their needs to help keep our children safe.



Conclusion.

When comparing the data from this research with the attitudes and perceptions of children from our “Online Safety: A Pupil’s Perspective” report, we were able to identify gaps in parents and children’s perceptions of these issues, and they highlight areas of concern. One notable difference is in the enforcement of time limitations and restrictions; with 55 percent of parents reporting that they enforce limits, yet only 19 percent of children agree. This could be parents reporting more ‘favourably’ than what actually takes place, but the gap is still significant. We know that children are not great at self-regulation, so it is important for parents to have open and honest discussions about what is reasonable in terms of screen time and activity and then help to enforce that structure. If children do not perceive there to be any limitations, then they simply won’t abide by them.

But the differences do not end there. More children are playing games - and games online - than parents realise, at a difference of 15 percent. Children also don’t think their parents talk to them about these issues as much as parents say they do - in fact, there is a difference of over 40 percent between their opinions.

It seems quite clear in many regards, there is a communication gap between parents and children regarding children’s online activities, what they do and how much time is spent. There are perceived differences in confidence levels, understanding, priorities and usage. Placing greater importance on digital literacy and specifically online safety education for all adults will certainly go a long way to help close this gap.

How can we better engage and educate our population to help them be better prepared for the digital world of today and tomorrow? It’s a digital world out there and as adults if we are going to help our children navigate their way through it then its important that we first understand the landscape as they perceive it.





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