



Tweens and Internet Safety

Research Findings

June 2008

Cox Communications Tween Internet Safety Survey,
in Partnership with the National Center for Missing &
Exploited Children® (NCMEC) and John Walsh

(Fielded among young people aged 8-12)

Contact:

Kim Thomas

Cox Communications

kimberly.thomas@cox.com

404-269-8057



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Protecting young people online

- As part of its commitment to youth, and in partnership with the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC), Cox Communications seeks to better understand young people's online behavior, internet safety, and the role parents play in children's use of online media.
- Cox first commissioned TRU in 2006, and subsequently in 2007, to conduct national studies on internet safety among U.S. teenagers ages 13-17. This year, the company is interested in exploring the online behavior of a new cohort—tweens (ages 8-12).
- Cox plans to use this research as it continues to develop messages advocating internet safety and parental involvement in an ongoing campaign together with the NCMEC.

Exploring tweens' internet attitudes and use

Specific questions addressed in this research were:

- How much of an online presence do tweens currently maintain?
- In which different types of online activities do tweens engage?
- To what extent do tweens exhibit potentially risky behavior via the internet or other forms of virtual communication?
- How do tweens respond when exposed to online risks including internet bullying and sharing of personal information?
- What perceptions do young people hold about the safety or risk associated with maintaining internet profiles and posting personal photos and information?
- To what extent are parents aware of and/or involved with what tweens do on the internet or other virtual environments?

Tween sample composition

- Young people ages 8-12 (n=1,015) with online access
- Sample weighting
 - The number of tweens interviewed for this survey is large enough to project the total U.S. tweens. Data are weighted to age and gender to reflect the national population of young people ages 8-12.

Sample Distribution (unweighted)

1,015 total tweens

Interviews	Ages 8-10	Age 11-12
Boys	304	203
Girls	306	202

Tween groups

- The following report focuses on online activity perceptions and behaviors while calling out key differences and similarities among:
 - Tweens 8-10 and tweens 11-12
 - Boys and girls
- However, because online attitudes and experience and parental involvement are so closely related, respondent were further segmented and analyzed. Significant differences—when applicable—are noted throughout for:
 - Tweens who have a public profile on a social networking site
 - Tweens whose parents have discussed internet safety with them to varying degrees

A note on analysis

- Base sizes for charted segments are noted (in parentheses) in legends.
- Letters are used to represent segments for statistical testing
 - A capital letter indicates a value “significantly” higher at the 95% confidence interval (lowercase at 90%)

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Tweens maintain heavy, highly-active presence online

Tween headlines:

- By the time they are nine years old, 90% of tweens report having used the internet.
- Though most spend 1-2 hours online per day, one out of ten tweens venture online more than three hours each day.
- Tweens' internet "presence" (e.g. email, IMing, online profile sites, etc.) doubles or even triples between ages 8-10 and 11-12.
- Girls and older tweens are significantly more active and social online than boys and younger tween counterparts.



Fast facts on tween exposure to online risks

- 1** More than one in five tweens post information about themselves online, including pictures, the city they live in, and how old they are
- 2** The percentage of tweens that tell parents “a lot” or “everything” they do online, drops rapidly with age (86% among 8-10s vs. 69% among 11-12s)
- 3** Tweens with social networking profiles post more online and face greater exposure to unknown contacts and online bullying
- 4** More than a fourth (28%) of tweens have been contacted over the internet by someone they don't know
- 5** Nearly one in five tweens (18%) keep messages received from unknown senders to themselves and don't tell anyone
- 6** One in ten (11%) tweens have responded and chatted with people they don't know on the internet
- 7** One in five report they are unconcerned that posting information online might negatively affect their future

The power of parents...

- Parents talking to tweens helps significantly reduce young people's exposure to online threats.
- Nearly three out of four (73%) report Mom and Dad have talked to them “a lot” about internet safety. More of these tweens:
 - Reportedly perceive posting personal information online as “unsafe”
 - Express concern about the negative effect sharing information can have on one's future
 - Readily tell parents about their online activities
- Of tweens who tell someone when they receive online message from unknown senders, the vast majority reach out to Mom (91% and/or Dad (65%).



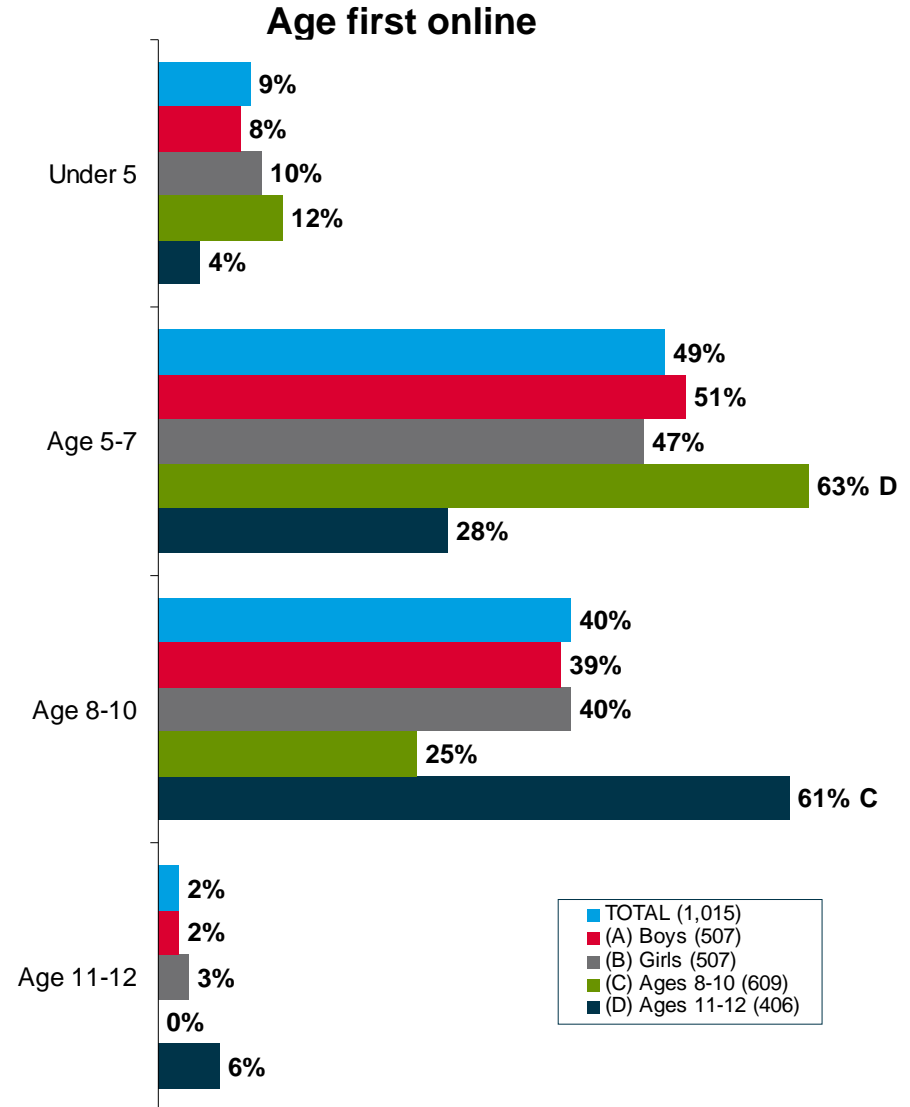
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Internet indoctrination occurs early

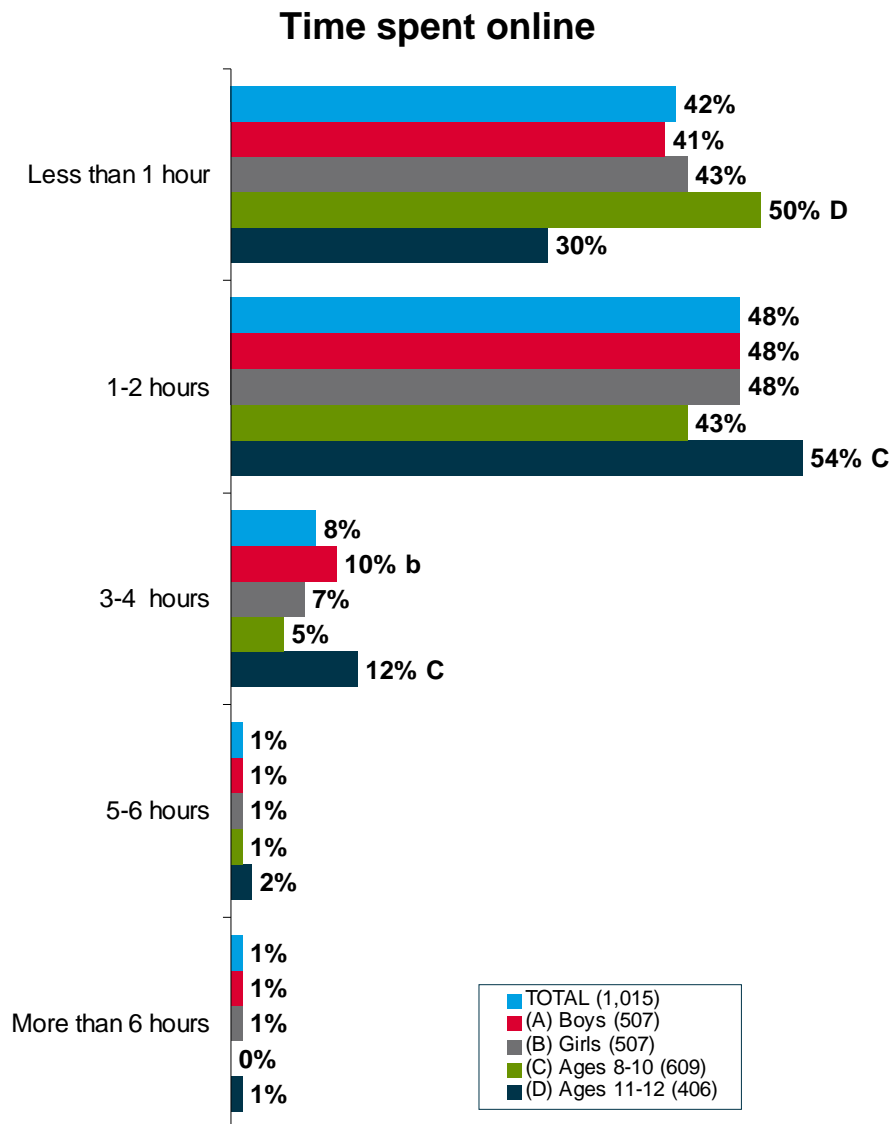
- Three out of five tweens are online by age 7.
- By the time they are nine years old, fully 90% report having used the internet.



Q4: How old were you when you first started using the internet and going online?

Half of tweens online one to two hours per day

- The vast majority of tweens (90%) spend two hours or less on the internet each day.
 - 42% spend less than an hour
 - 48% spend one to two hours
- However, one in ten report daily spending three hours or more online.
- Not surprisingly, internet usage increases as tweens get older.

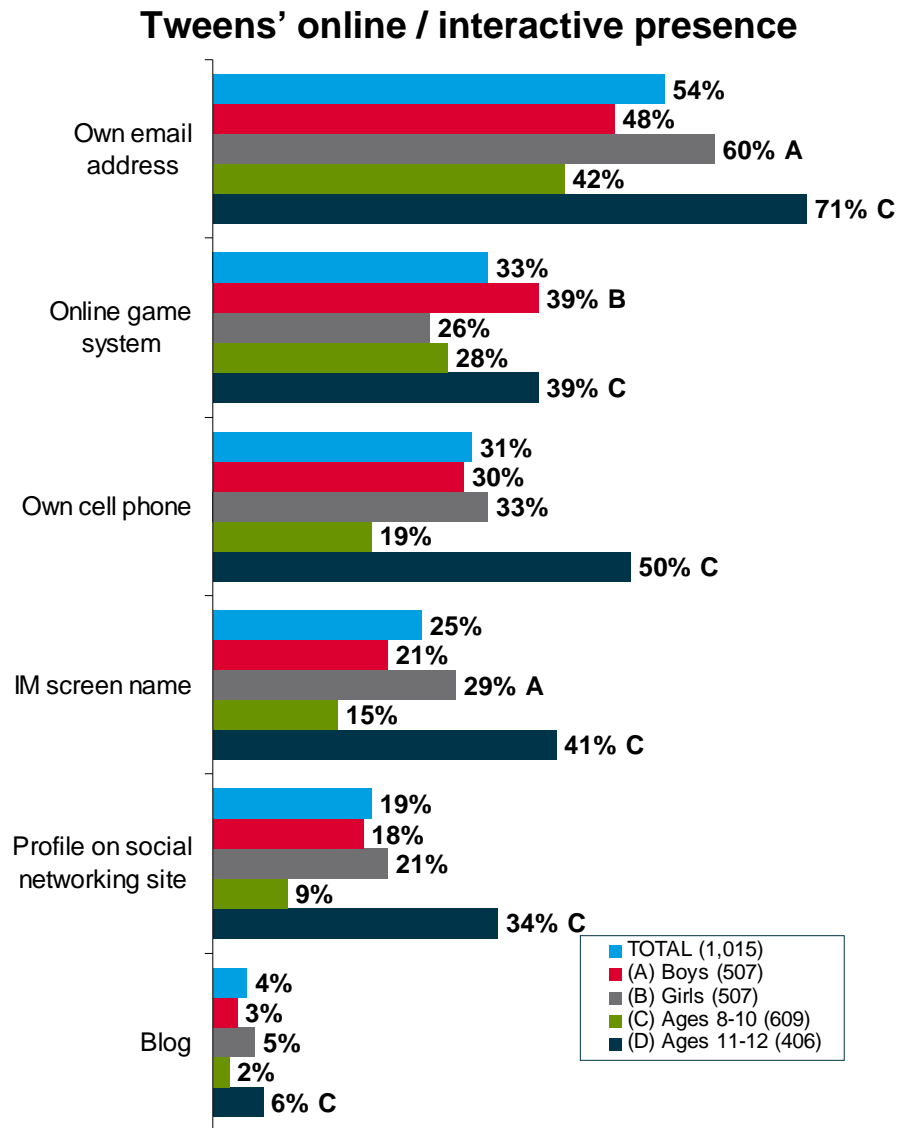


Q5: About how much time do you spend online in an average day?

Online exposure rises dramatically with age

- Tweens' online "presence" doubles or even triples between the age ranges of 8-10 and 11-12:

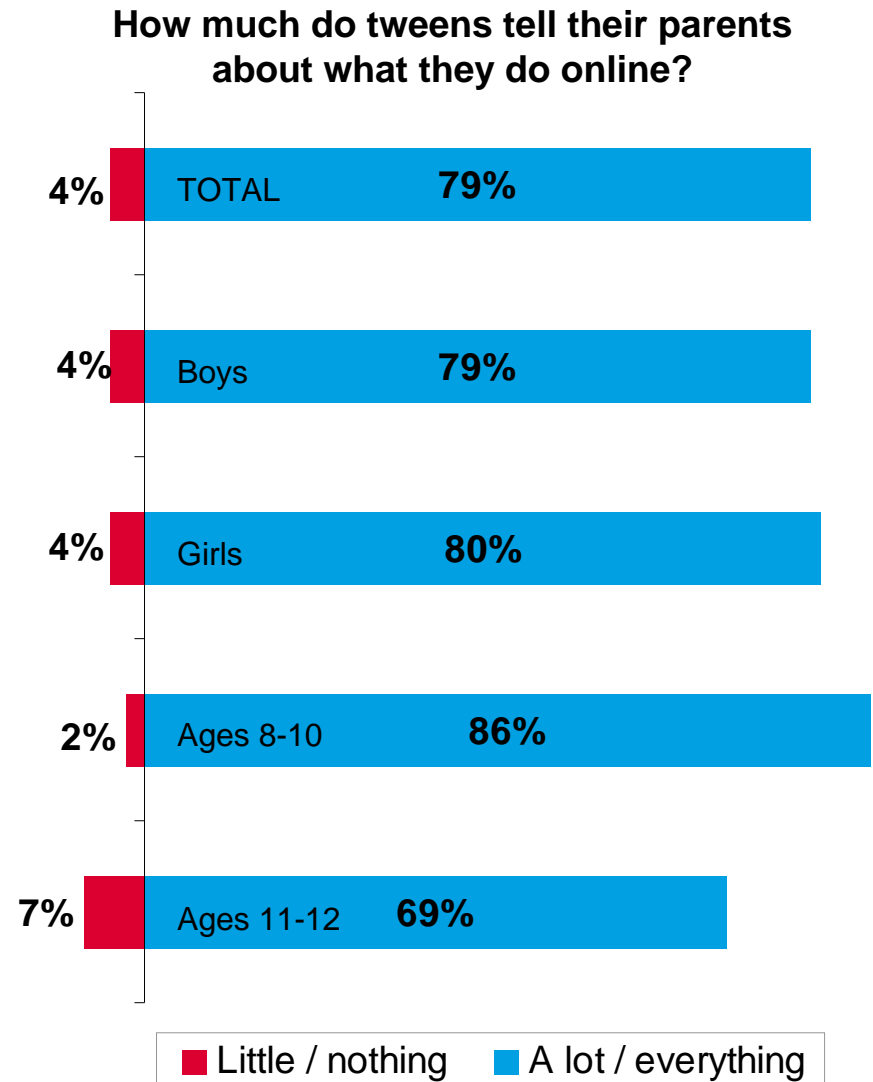
 - 71% of 11-12s have personal email vs. 42% of 8-10s
 - 50% of 11-12s have their own cell phone vs. 19% of 8-10s
 - 41% of 11-12s have an IM screen name vs. 15% of 8-10s
 - 34% of 11-12s have a profile on a social networking site vs. 9% of 8-10s
- In addition, personal email and IM screen names are reportedly more commonplace among girls than boys.



Q6: Which of the following do you have/use?

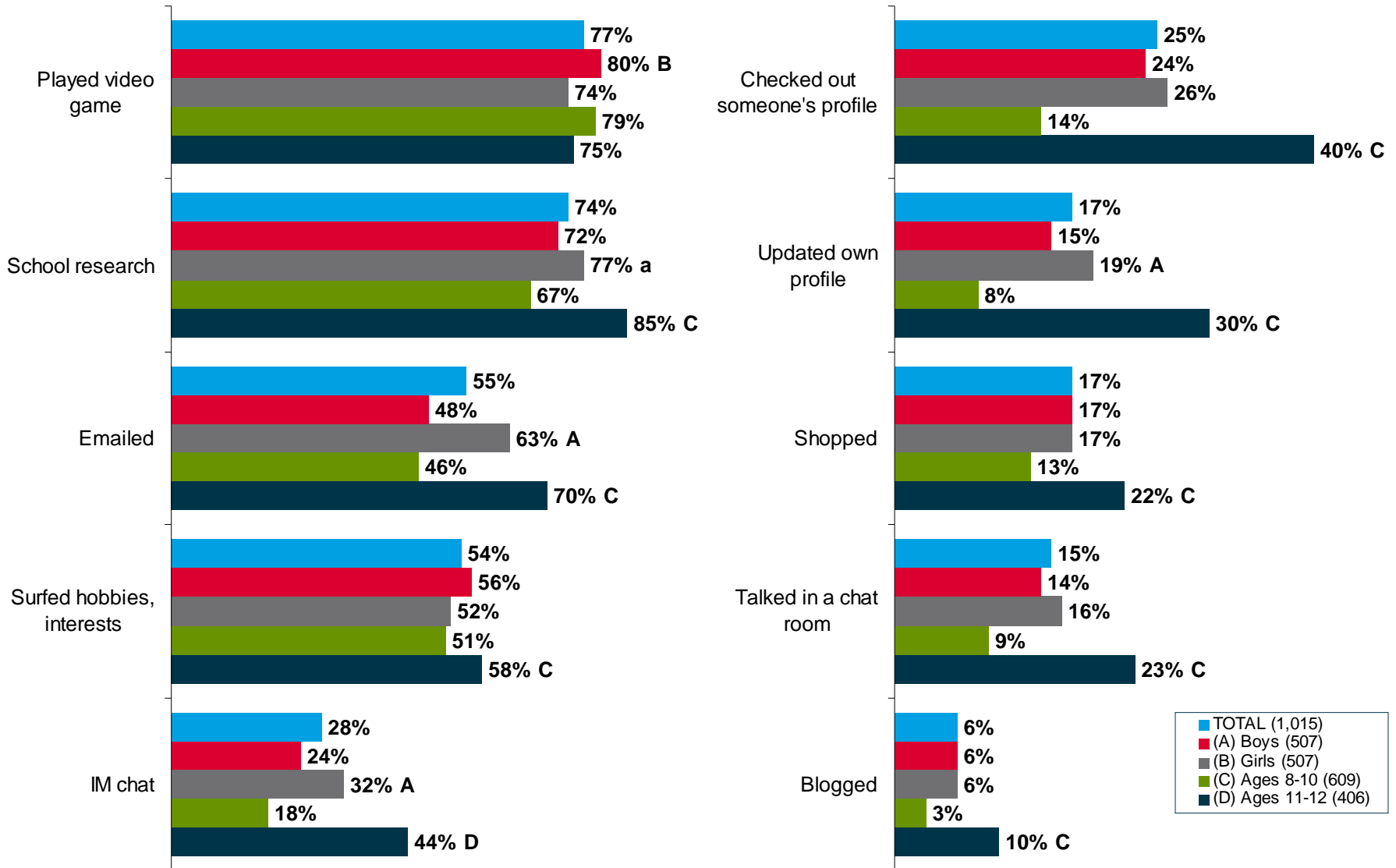
Older tweens less forthcoming about online activities

- Fully 96% of tweens tell Mom and Dad about at least some of what they do online.
 - 79% tell parents nearly everything
- However, older tweens, who are more active and more social via the internet, tend to tell parents less.
 - 69% of 11-12s tell Mom and Dad a lot/everything vs. 86% of 8-10s



Q17: How much do you tell your parents about what you do and where you go online?

Tweens' past-month online activities

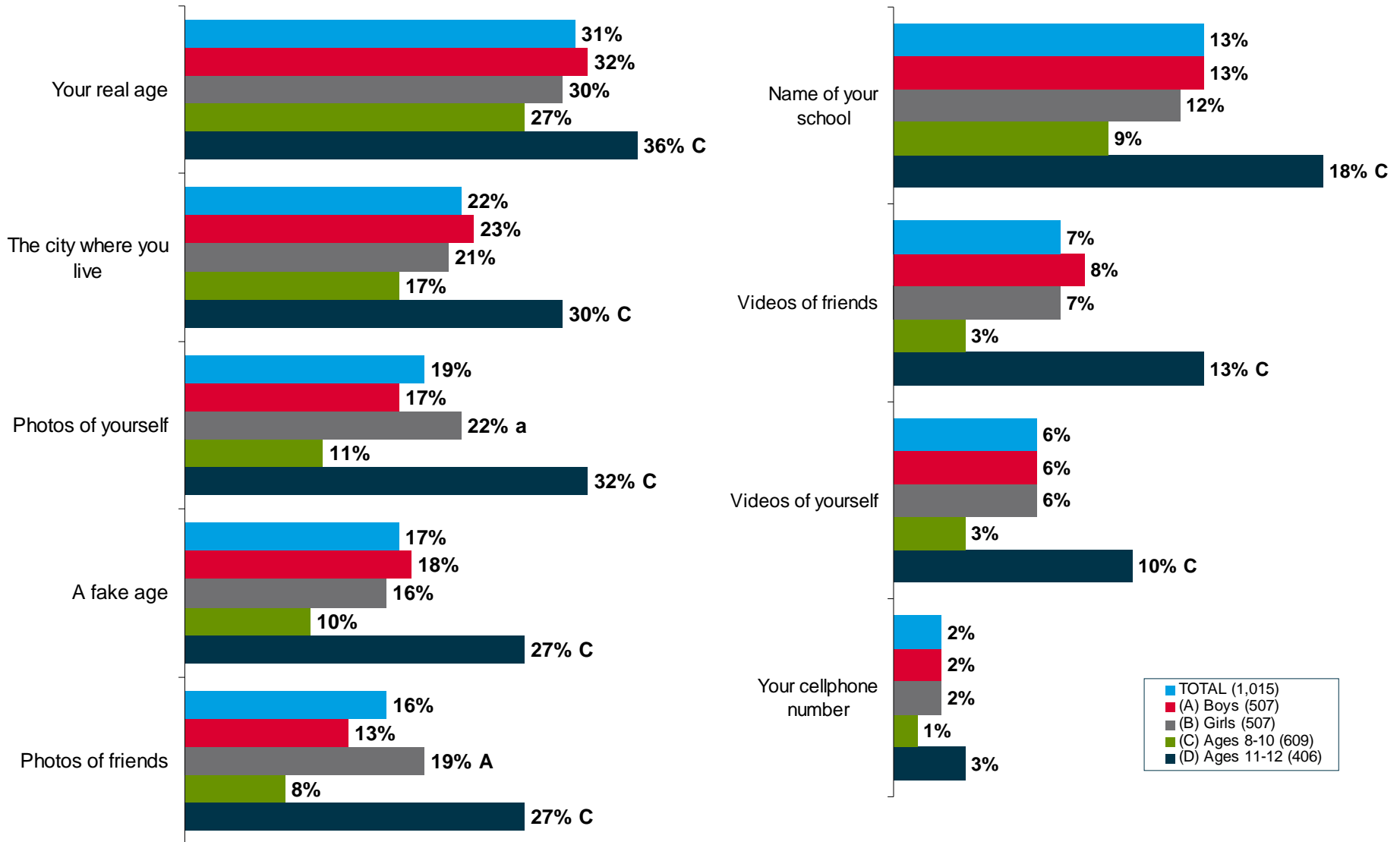


Girls and older tweens more socially active online

- In the past month, significantly more girls than boys have:
 - Emailed other people
 - Chatted over IM
 - Updated their own social networking profile
- More 11- to 12-year-olds than 8- to 10-year-olds have engaged in online social interaction:
 - Emailed other people
 - Chatted over IM
 - Updated their own social networking profile
 - Checked out others' profiles
 - Talked in a chat room
 - Blogged
- More girls and older tweens report IMing among the three things that they do most often online.
 - 21% of girls vs. 14% of boys
 - 29% of 11-12s vs. 10% of 8-10s

Q7: Which of the following things have you done online in the past month...which three things do you do most often online?

What do tweens post online?



One in five (or more) tweens post personal information online

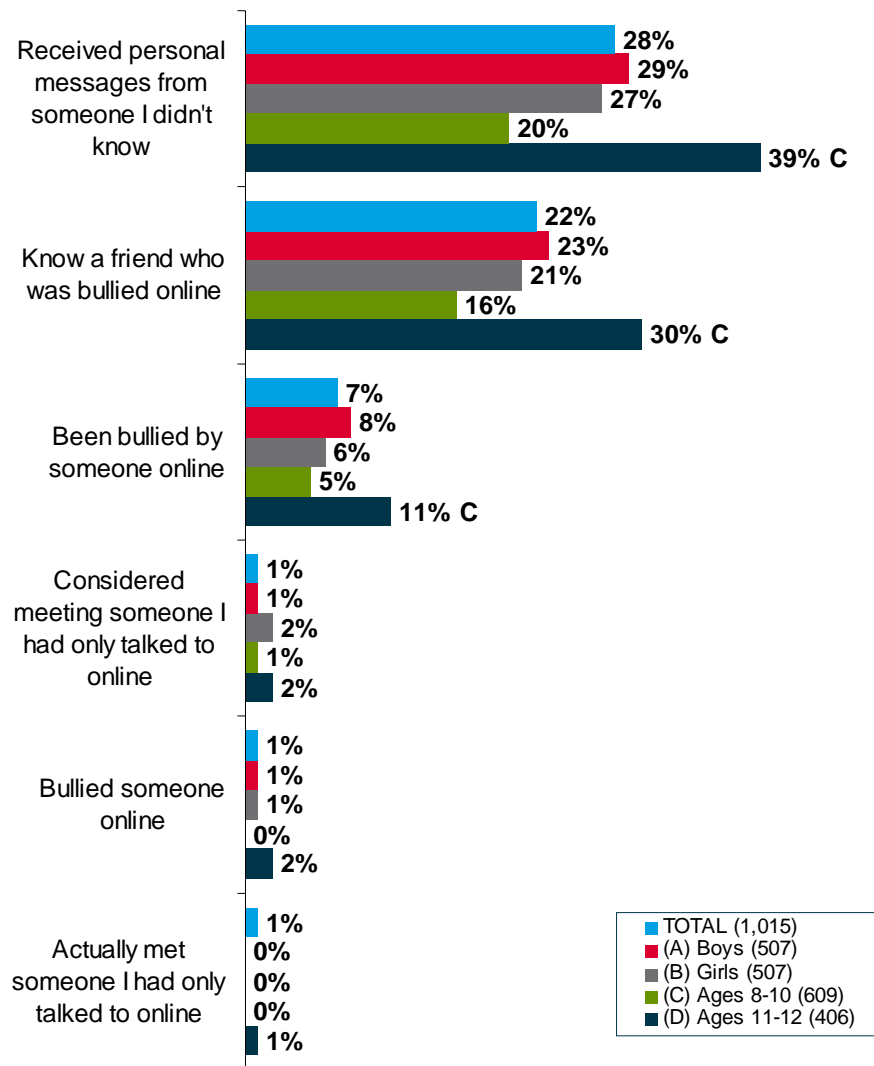
- One out of five or more tweens upload information about themselves including pictures, the city they live in, and their age.
 - A third or more 11- to 12-year-olds post this personal information
 - More than a quarter (27%) of 11- to 12-year olds admit to posting a fake age
- Reflecting their higher degree of online social activity, more girls than guys post photos of both themselves and their friends.

Q8: Have you posted/shared the following types of information online?

More than one in four tweens contacted online by people they don't know

- Few, if any tweens have met or even considered meeting someone they have only talked to online.
- Nevertheless, more than one in four (28%) has received personal online messages from someone they don't know.
- One in five (22%) report knowing a friend who has been bullied online; and 7% have personally been bullied.
- As with online exposure in general, experience with these potential threats increases as tweens get older.

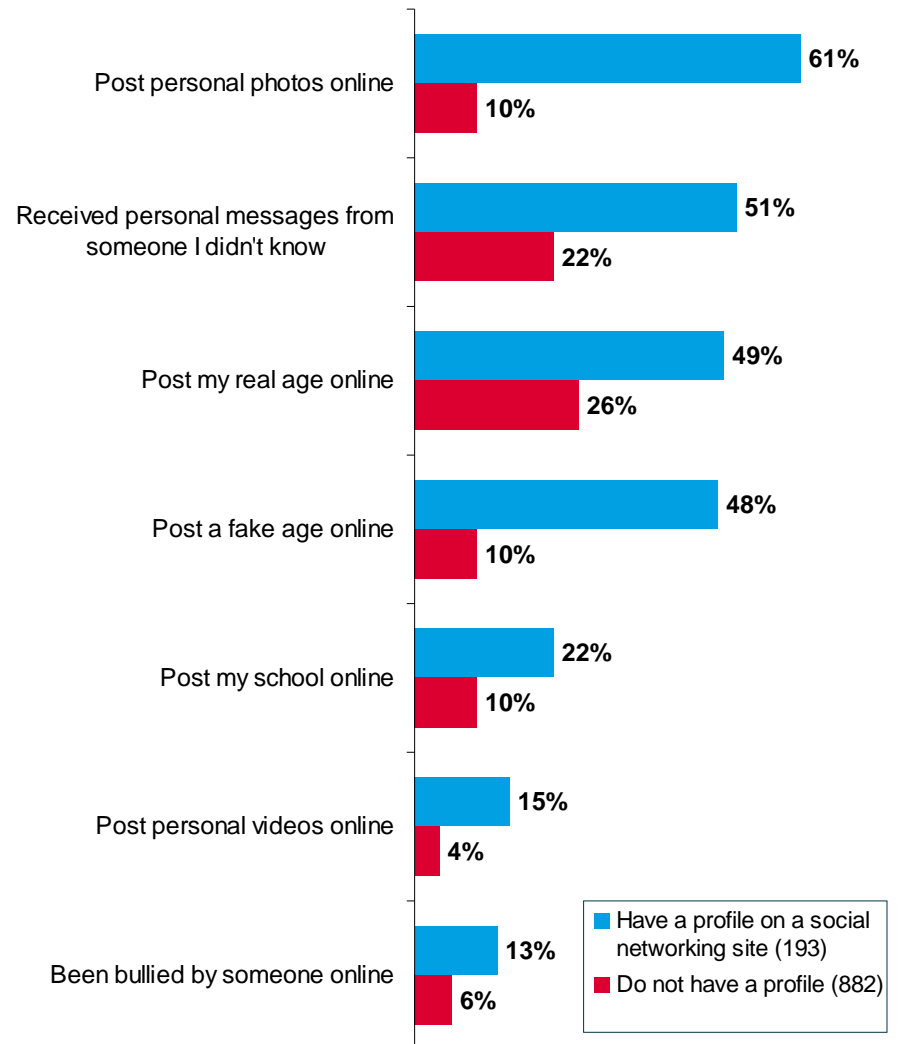
Experience with potential online threats



Tweens with public online profiles face greater exposure to potential risks

- Compared to tweens without profiles on social networking sites, more 8- to 12-year-olds who have public profiles on sites such as MySpace and Facebook have:
 - Posted their personal information
 - Received messages from unknown senders
 - Been harassed or bullied by someone online

Experience with potential online threats

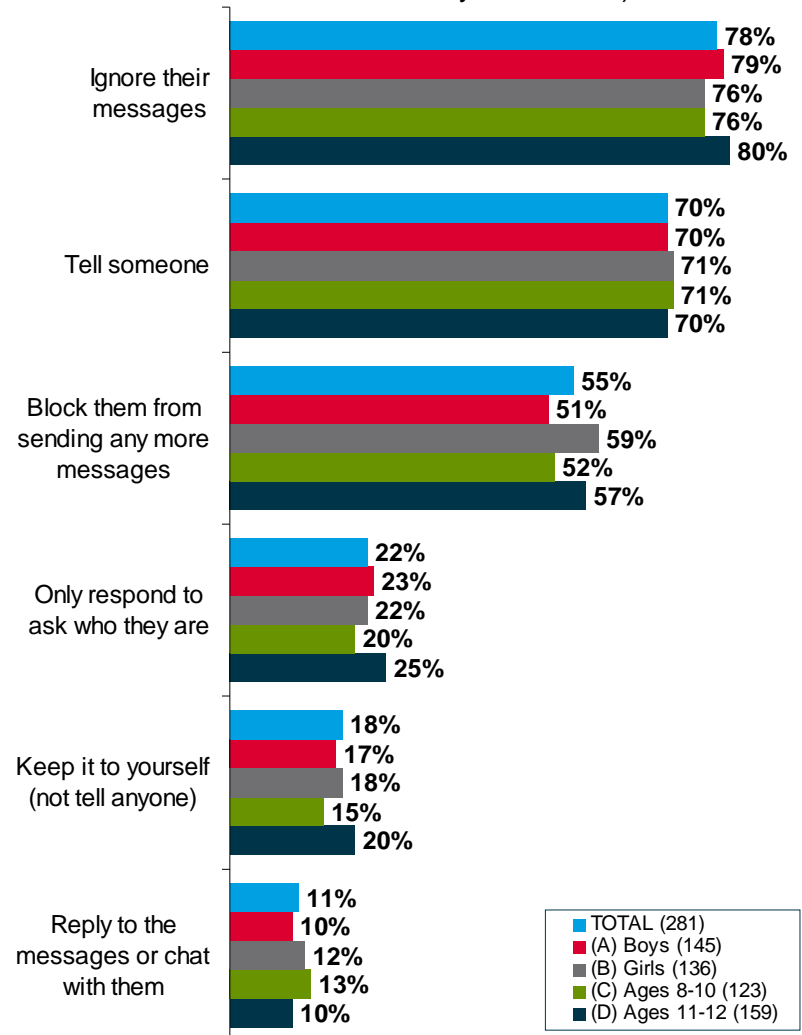


Most tweens ignore and report online messages from senders they don't know

- The vast majority of tweens who receive online messages from an unknown contact usually opt to ignore them (78%) and/or tell someone (70%)
 - More than half (55%) block these contacts permanently
- However, 18% of tweens keep these contacts to themselves and don't tell anyone.
- And alarmingly, 11% reply to these messages and chat with the person they don't know.

Q10: What do you do when someone whose name you don't recognize contacts you online?

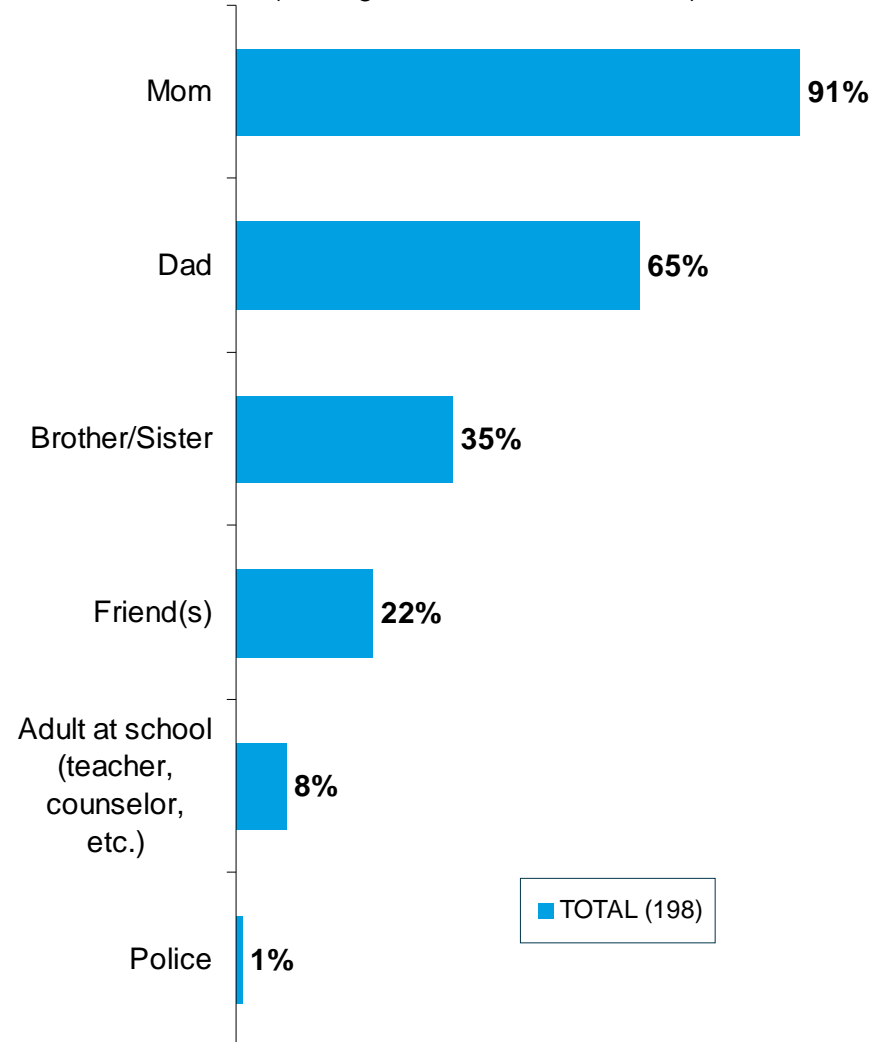
Talking online to someone you don't know
(Among those who have received messages from someone they don't know)



Parents the “go-to” when tweens contacted online by someone they don’t know

- Tweens reach out to parents— Mom in particular—when they receive a message on the internet from someone that they don’t know.
 - 91% have told Mom
 - 65% have told Dad

Who do you tell if someone contacts you?
(Among those who tell someone)

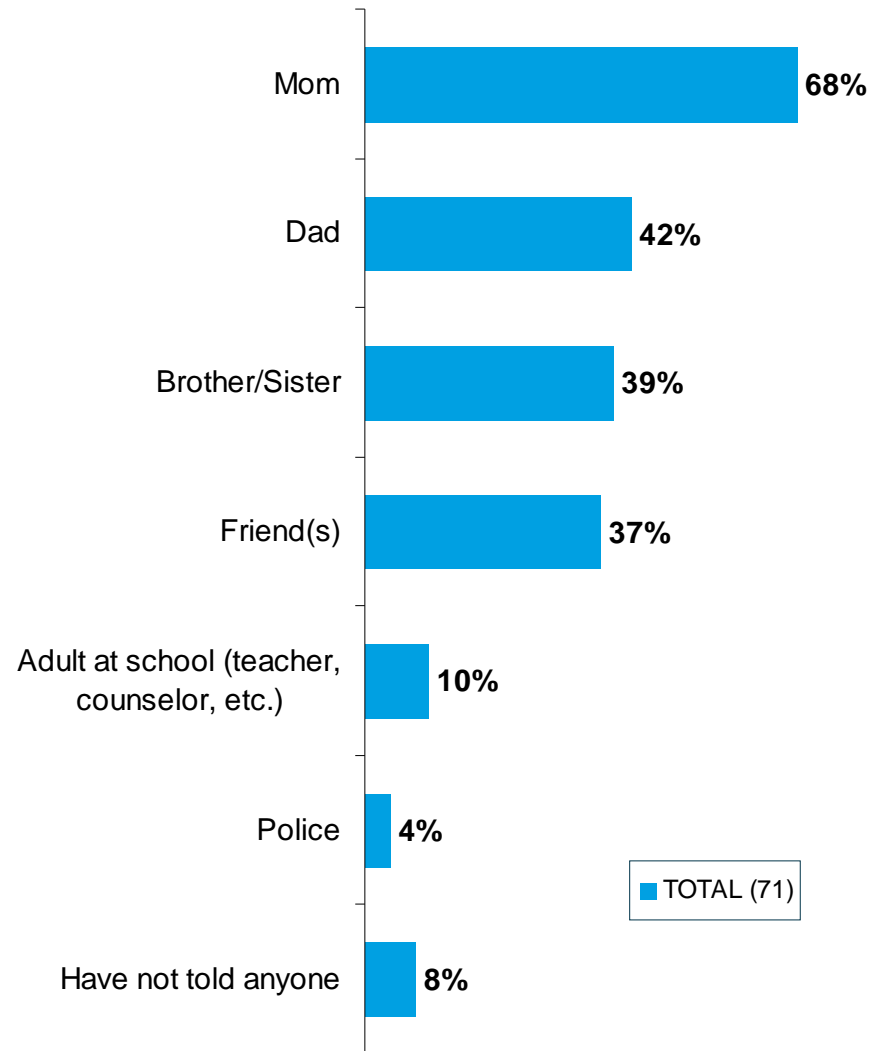


Q11: Who have you told when someone whose name you don't recognize contacts you online?

Bullying less common, less talked about with parents

- Tweens' experience with bullying (7%) is less common than receiving messages from unknown contacts (28%).
- Though parents remain the "go-to," fewer tweens report telling Mom or Dad when they've been bullied.
 - More talk to friends about bullying (37%) than about online messages from people they don't know (22%)
 - Bullying appears more likely to involve friends and people with whom tweens are already acquainted
- About 8% haven't told anyone when they've been bullied.

Who do you tell if someone bullies you?



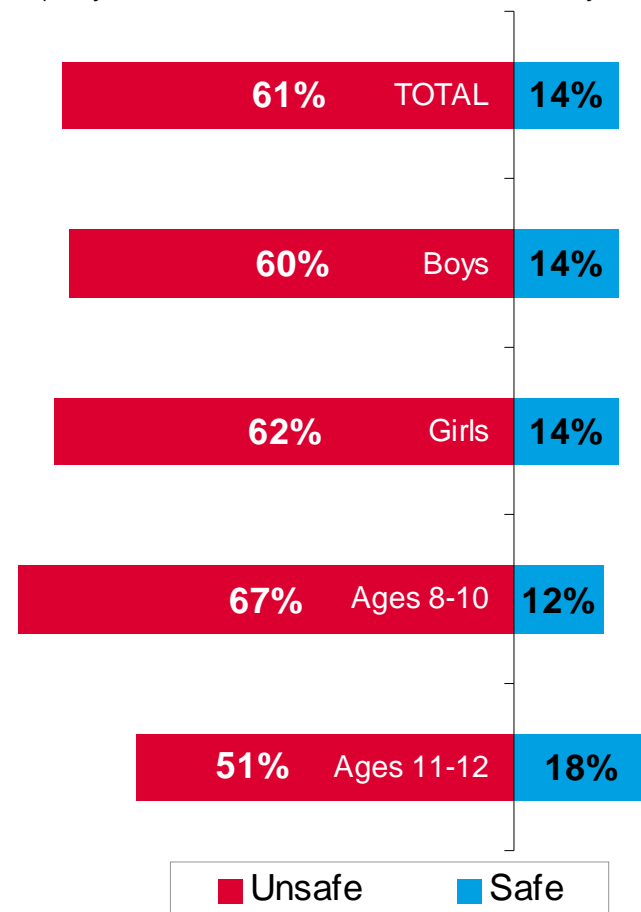
Q15: Who have you told, if anyone, that you were bullied online?

Nearly one in five 11- to 12-year-olds claim posting personal information online is safe

- Young tweens view posting personal information over the internet with particular watchfulness, though this care diminishes with age.
 - Two-thirds (67%) of 8-10s report posting to be unsafe
 - Only half (51%) of 11-12s report posting to be unsafe

How safe do tweens think it is to post personal information online?

(Very/somewhat unsafe vs. Somewhat/very safe)



Q16: How safe do you think it is to have personal information or photos on a public blog or social networking site?

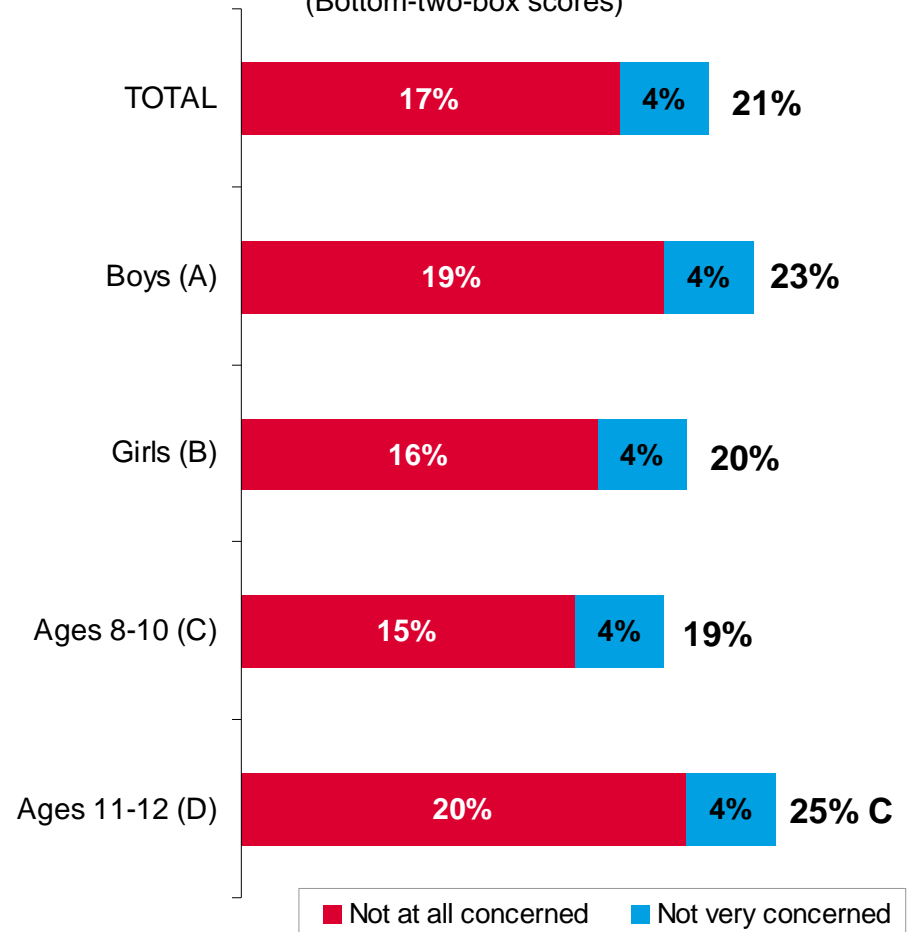
One in five tweens unphased by prospect that posting information might negatively affect their future

- Fully 21% of tweens reported they were unconcerned that uploading personal information to the internet might impact their future in undesired ways.
- Concern is greater among younger tweens and girls.
 - 50% of 8-10s “extremely/very concerned” vs. 41% of 11-12s
 - 50% of girls “extremely/very concerned” vs. 43% of boys

Q21: How concerned, if at all, are you that posting your personal information (including photos or videos) online could have a negative effect on your future?

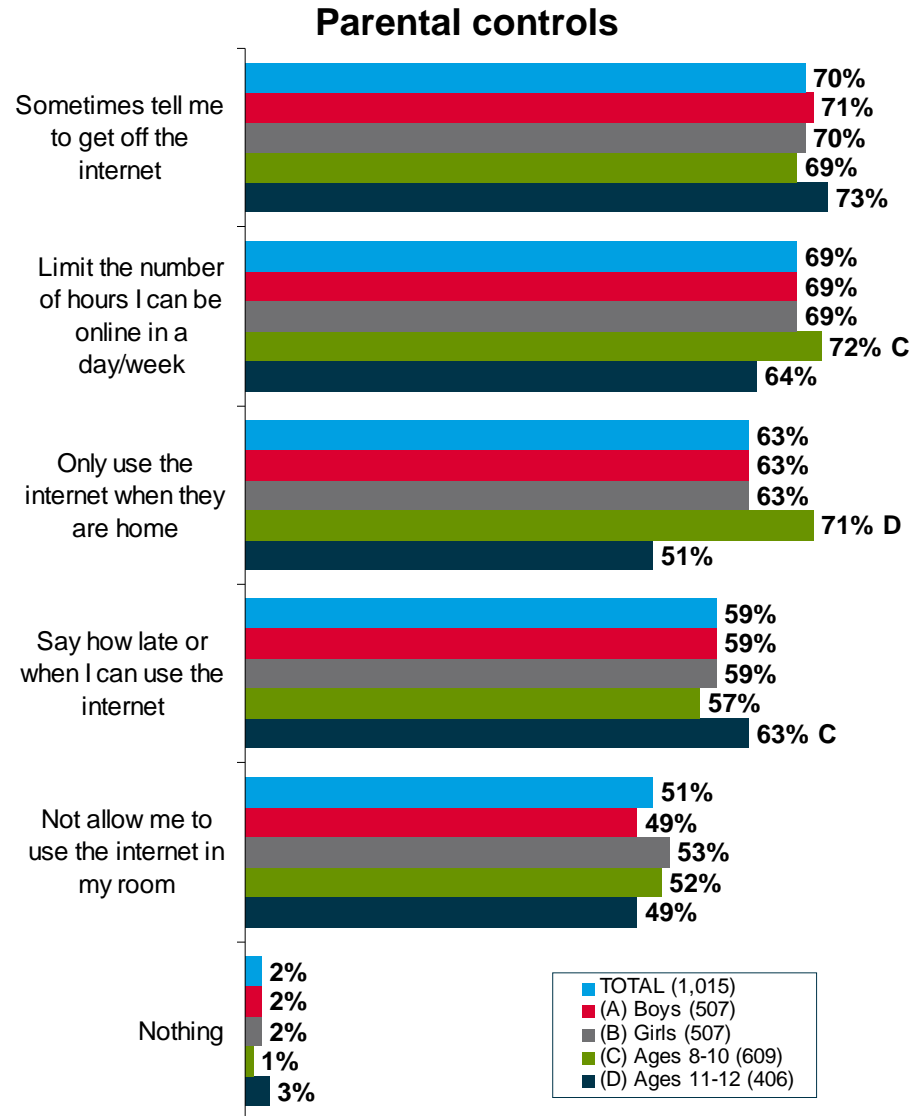
How concerned are tweens that posting information could negatively affect their future?

(Bottom-two-box scores)



Majority of parents limit tweens' internet use

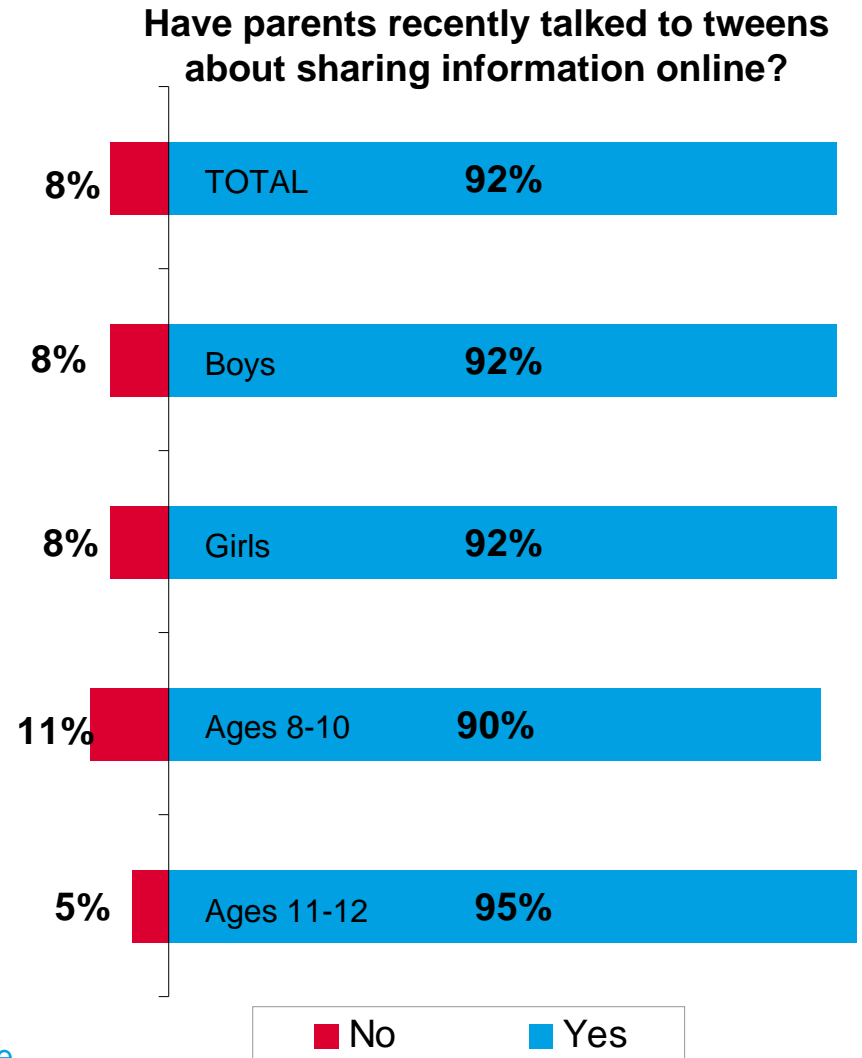
- Just 2% of tweens say that their parents do nothing to limit, monitor, or otherwise restrict their use of the internet.
- About 70% report their parents sometimes tell them to log off or limit the number of hours they can be online.
- Half (51%) of tweens are not permitted to access the internet in their rooms.



Q19: What, if anything, do your parents do to limit/control your internet use at home?

Nine out of ten tweens have recently talked with Mom and Dad about sharing personal information online

- The vast majority (92%) of tweens report that their parents have talked to them in the past year about the potential dangers of volunteering personal information online.

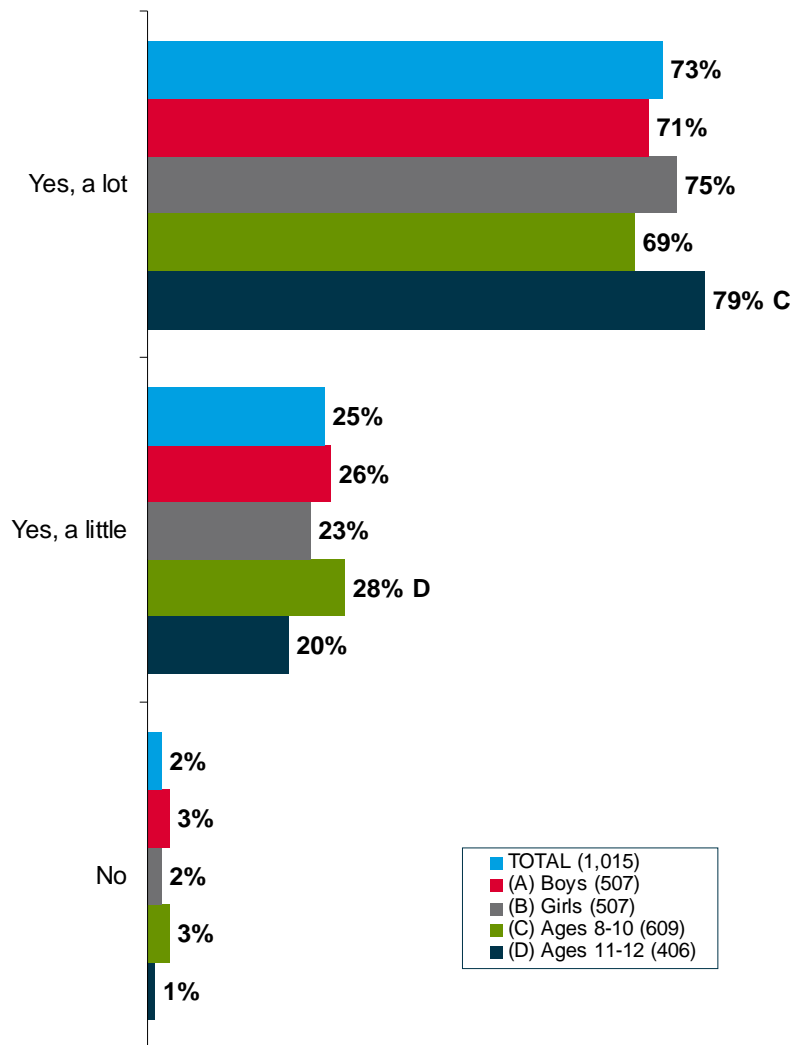


Q20: In the past year, have your parents talked to you about the potential dangers of sharing personal information online?

Nearly three quarters report parents have talked “a lot” about internet safety

- Encouragingly, 73% say that their parents have talked to them “a lot” about internet safety.
 - 25% report parents have talked to them “a little”
 - More older tweens (more active online) also report parents have talked to them “a lot”

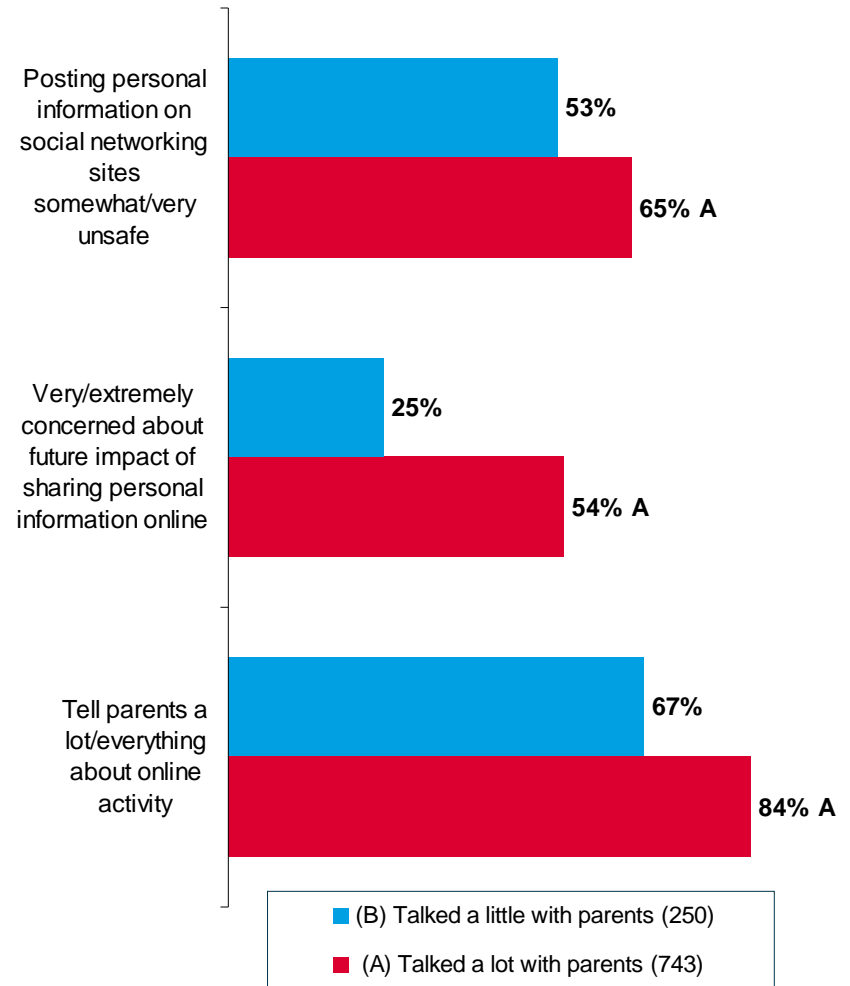
How much have parents talked to tweens?



Family conversations promote greater caution

- More tweens whose parents have talked to them “a lot” about internet safety:
 - Recognize potential safety risks associated with posting information on social networking sites
 - Report concern about the negative effect sharing personal information can have on one’s future
 - Tell parents more about their online activities

Tween concern / internet safety



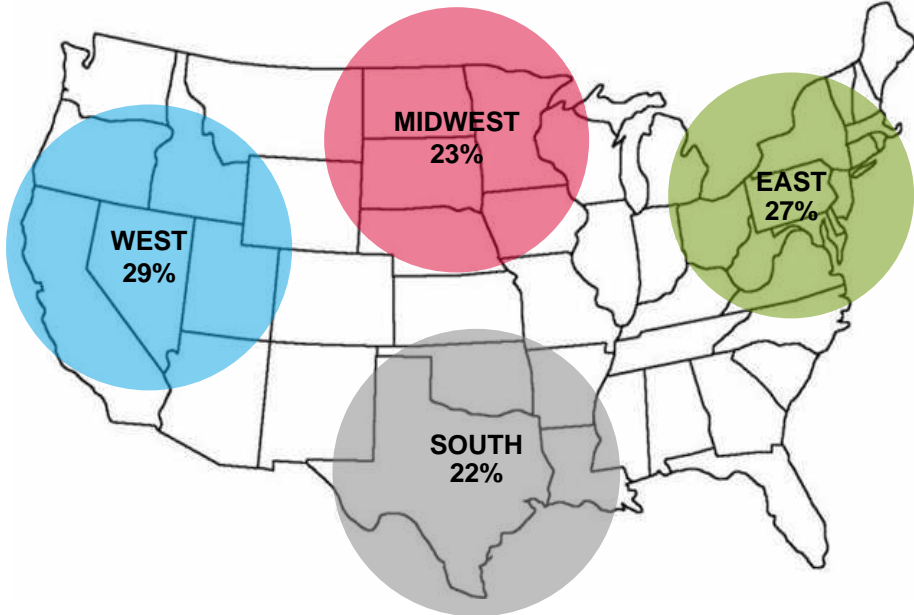
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Respondent profiles

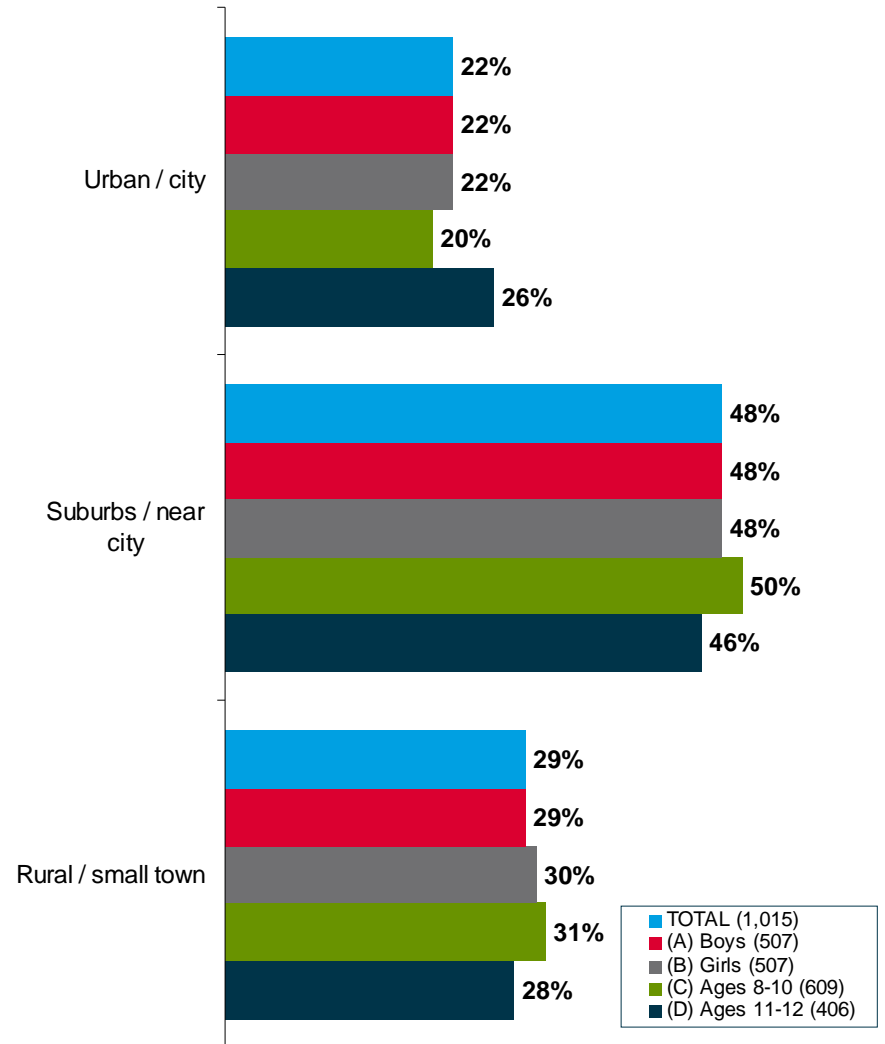
Geographic region



Q22: What state do you live in?

Q23: Which of the following best describes where you live?

Community type



Respondent profiles

