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PEW INTERNET & AMERICAN LIFE PROJECT

Teens, Privacy & Online Social Networks

How teens manage their online identities and personal information in the age of MySpace

April 18, 2007

Amanda Lenhart, Senior Research Specialist

Mary Madden, Senior Research Specialist

Summary of Findings

Many teenagers avidly use social networking sites like MySpace and Facebook, and employ a variety of tools and techniques to manage their online identities.

Online social networks are spaces on the internet where users can create a profile and connect that profile to others to create a personal network. Social network users post content to their profiles and use tools embedded within social networking websites to contact other users. Young adults and teenagers are among the most avid users of such websites.

Much of the media coverage surrounding young people and online social networks has focused on the personal information teens make available on these networks. Are they sharing information that will harm their future college or job prospects? Or worse, are they sharing information that puts them at risk of victimization?

A new survey and a series of focus groups conducted by the Pew Internet & American Life Project examines how teens understand their privacy through several lenses: by looking at the choices that teens make to share or not to share information online, by examining what they share, by probing for the context in which they share it and by asking teens for their own assessment of their vulnerability. For many online teens, particularly those with profiles, privacy and disclosure choices are made as they create and maintain social networking profiles. Of course, material shared in a profile is just one of many places where information is shared online – but it provides a snapshot into the choices that teens make to share in a relatively public and persistent online environment. Further, we went on to examine the interactions teens have with people unknown to them on social networking sites, exploring the nature of new friendships created on the networks, as well as unwelcome, and some times uncomfortable or scary stranger contacts.

Most teenagers are taking steps to protect themselves online from the most obvious areas of risk. The new survey shows that many youth actively manage their personal information as they perform a balancing act between keeping some important pieces of information confined to their network of trusted friends and, at the same time,

This Pew Internet & American Life Project report is based on the findings of a nationally representative telephone survey of American teens and a parent or guardian. All numerical data were gathered through telephone interviews conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates between October 23, and November 19, 2006 among a sample of 935 teens ages 12-17 and a parent or guardian. For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects is +/- 3%. For results based teen internet users (n=886), the margin of sampling error is +/- 4%. Quotes in the report were collected during 6 in-person groups and one online focus group, all conducted in June 2006. Groups were conducted with middle and high school students.

Pew Internet & American Life Project, 1615 L St., NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20036
202-419-4500 http://www.pewinternet.org

participating in a new, exciting process of creating content for their profiles and making new friends. Most teens believe some information seems acceptable – even desirable – to share, while other information needs to be protected.

Still, the survey also suggests that today's teens face potential risks associated with online life. Some 32% of online teenagers (and 43% of social-networking teens) have been contacted online by complete strangers and 17% of online teens (31% of social networking teens) have "friends" on their social network profile who they have never personally met.

Here is a general statistical snapshot of how teens use social network sites and the way they handle their privacy on them:

- 55% of online teens have profiles online; 45% of online teens do not have profiles online.
- Among the teens who have profiles, 66% of them say that their profile is not visible to all internet users. They limit access to their profiles in some way.
- Among those whose profiles can be accessed by anyone online, 46% say they give at least a little and sometimes a good deal of false information on their profiles. Teens post fake information to protect themselves, but also to be playful or silly.
- Most teens are using the networks to stay in touch with people they already know, either friends that they see a lot (91% of social networking teens have done this) or friends that they rarely see in person (82%).
- 49% of social network users say they use the networks to make new friends.
- 32% of online teens have been contacted by strangers online – this could be any kind of online contact, not necessarily contact through social network sites.
- 21% of teens who have been contacted by strangers have engaged an online stranger to find out more information about that person (that translates to 7% of all online teens).
- 23% of teens who have been contacted by a stranger online say they felt scared or uncomfortable because of the online encounter (that translates to 7% of all online teens).

Teens post a variety of things on their profiles, but a first name and photo are standard.

Fully 55% of online teens have profiles; here is a rundown of the kinds of information they post:

- 82% of profile creators have included their first name in their profiles
- 79% have included photos of themselves.
- 66% have included photos of their friends.

- 61% have included the name of their city or town.
- 49% have included the name of their school.
- 40% have included their instant message screen name.
- 40% have streamed audio to their profile.
- 39% have linked to their blog.
- 29% have included their email address.
- 29% have included their last names.
- 29% have included videos.
- 2% have included their cell phone numbers.
- 6% of online teens and 11% of profile-owning teens post their first and last names on publicly-accessible profiles;
- 3% of online teens and 5% of profile-owning teens disclose their full names, photos of themselves and the town where they live in publicly-viewable profiles.

Boys and girls have different views and different behaviors when it comes to privacy.

Girls and boys differ in how they think about giving out personal information online. Online, girls are more likely than boys to say that they have posted photos both of themselves and of their friends onto their online profile. Boys are more likely to say they have posted the city or town where they live, their last name and their cell phone number when compared with girls.

In our focus groups, girls were, in general, more concerned than boys about the release of any information that can be linked to one's physical location.

Focus Group Snapshot:

"I use a pseudonym, who is 24. Because I regard myself as an intellectual, it's easier to be taken seriously if people don't know they're talking to a 16 year old. You'd be surprised what respect 8 years buys you."

--Boy, Late High School

Boys and younger teens are more likely than girls or older teens to post false information on their online profiles; 64% of profile-owning boys post fake information compared with 50% of girls who do the same. Younger and older teens exhibit another split, with 69% of younger teens posting fake information versus 48% of older teens.

Older teens share more personal information than younger teens.

Teens ages 15-17 with online profiles are more likely than younger teens to post photos of themselves or friends to their profile as well as share their school name online. Older girls are more likely than any other group to share photos of friends, while younger girls are more likely than younger boys to have shared information about their blog on their profile.

To teens, all personal information is not created equal. They say it is very important to understand the context of an information-sharing encounter.

One of the primary questions animating policy discussions about teens' use of social network sites is framed this way: Are today's teens less concerned about their privacy because the internet gives them so many opportunities to socialize and share information?

Our survey suggests that there are a wide range of views among teens about privacy and disclosure of personal information. Whether in an online or offline context, teenagers do not fall neatly into clear-cut groups when it comes to their willingness to disclose information or the ways they restrict access to the information that they do share. For most teens, decisions about privacy and disclosure depend on the nature of the encounter and their own personal circumstances. Teen decisions about whether to disclose or not involve questions like these: Do you live in a small town or big city? How did you create your network of online "friends?" How old are you? Are you male or female? Do your parents have lots of rules about internet use? Do your parents view your profile? All these questions and more inform the decisions that teens make about how they present themselves online. Many, but not all, teens are aware of the risks of putting information online in a public and durable environment. Many, but certainly not all, teens make thoughtful choices about what to share in what context.

Teens who have online profiles are generally more likely to say it is okay to give out certain pieces of personal information in offline situations than they are to have that information actually posted to their profile. Teens with online profiles have a greater tendency to say it is fine to share where they go to school, their IM screen name, email address, last name and cell phone number with someone they met at a party, when compared with the percentage who actually post that information online. The only piece of information they are more likely to share online rather than in person with a new acquaintance is the city and state where they live.

Most teen profile creators suspect that a motivated person could eventually identify them. They also think strangers are more likely to contact teens online than offline.

While most teens take steps to limit what others can know about them from their profiles and postings, they also know that the powerful search tools available to internet users

could help motivated individuals track them down. Some 23% of teen profile creators say it would be "pretty easy" for someone to find out who they are from the information posted to their profile, and 40% of teens with profiles online think that it would be hard for someone to find out who they are from their profile, but that they could eventually be found online. Another 36% say they think it would be "very difficult" for someone to identify them from their online profile.

Asked where they thought teens were most likely to be approached by a stranger, the majority of online teens believed that people their age were most likely to be approached by strangers online rather than offline. Nearly three-quarters (73%) of online teens believe that someone their age is most likely to be approached by a someone unknown to them online, while 23% of online teens believe it is more likely to take place offline.

One in three (32%) online teens have been contacted online by a stranger. Among those contacted by strangers, two-thirds (65%) said they ignored the contact or deleted it the last time it happened to them. Some 21% have followed up on the encounter by asking for more information from the person contacting them.

Parents are using technical and non-technical measures to protect their children online.

Parents generally think that the internet is a good thing for their children, but few give their children unfettered access at home. Most teens whose online behavior is monitored by their parents recognize that they are being observed.

Focus Group Snapshot:

"My parents limit my time on the Internet. I can only spend about 1-2 hours of non-school work time on it. They try checking up on me but I can get away with a lot if I wanted. They make sure to tell me never to meet people on it because people pretend to be someone they are not."

--Boy, High School

- 53% of parents say they have filtering software on the computer their child uses at home.[1]
- Teens are generally aware that there are filters on their home computers. Half (50%) of teens who go online from home say that the computer they use at home has a filter that keeps them from going to certain websites.
- 45% of parents have monitoring software that records what users do online.

[1] The question regarding filtering was asked differently in the 2006 survey than it was in the 2004 survey, thus the two responses can not be directly compared.

- Teens are also relatively aware of monitoring software on their home computers, though less aware than they are of filtering. About a third of teens (35%) with internet access at home believe that there is monitoring software on their home computer.
- 65% of parents report checking up on their teens after they go online.
- Teens are now more aware that their parents are "checking up" on them after they go online; 41% of teens who go online from home believe that their parents monitor them after they have gone online, up from 33% in 2004 and 27% in 2000.
- Home computers are still overwhelmingly located in open family areas of the home; 74% of teens now say the computer they use is in a public place in the home, compared with 73% in 2004 and 70% in 2000.

More households have rules about internet use than have rules about other media.

The internet is a more regulated piece of technology than the television or video game console. Parents are more likely to restrict the type of content their children view online, as well as the amount of time spent on the internet when compared with other media.

- 85% of parents of online teens say they have rules about internet sites their child can or cannot visit.
- 75% of parents of online teens say they have rules about the television shows their child can watch.
- 65% of parents of online teens say they restrict the kinds of video games their child can play.
- 85% of parents of online teens say they have established rules about the kinds of personal information their child can share with people they talk to on the internet.
- 69% say they have household rules for how long a teen can spend online, compared with 57% of parents of online teens who say they restrict the amount of time their child spends watching TV, and the 58% who limit time spent playing video games.

Teens, Privacy & Online Social Networks: Summary of Findings at a Glance
Many teenagers avidly use social networking sites like MySpace and Facebook, and employ a variety of tools and techniques to manage their online identities.
Teens post a variety of things on their profiles, but a first name and photo are standard.
Boys and girls have different views and different behaviors when it comes to privacy.
Older teens share more personal information than younger teens.
To teens, all personal information is not created equal. They say it is very important to understand the context of an information-sharing encounter.
Most teen profile creators suspect that a motivated person could eventually identify them. They also think strangers are more likely to contact teens online than offline.
Parents are using technical and non-technical measures to protect their children online.
More households have rules about internet use than have rules about other media.
Source: Lenhart, Amanda and Madden, Mary. *Teens, Privacy & Online Social Networks.* Washington, DC: Pew Internet & American Life Project, April 18, 2007.

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Acknowledgements

On behalf of the Pew Internet & American Life Project, the authors would like to acknowledge the contributions to this study by the following people:

Thanks to Alex Rankin Macgill for her research, writing and chart and table producing skills; thanks also to danah boyd, Fred Stutzman and Eszter Hargittai for their assistance with the survey design and feedback on parts of the analysis.

Harris Interactive: Thanks to our focus group partners, the Harris Interactive Youth and Education Research Practice. Special thanks to our project leader, Dana Markow and focus group moderator Jennifer Weeks. http://www.harrisinteractive.com/

Princeton Survey Research Associates International: Thanks also to our survey partners at Princeton Survey Research Associates International, in particular Kristen Purcell and Jennifer Su. http://www.psrai.com/

About the Pew Internet & American Life Project: The Pew Internet Project is a nonprofit, non-partisan initiative of the Pew Research Center that explores the impact of the Internet on children, families, communities, the work place, schools, health care, and civic/political life. Support for the project is provided by The Pew Charitable Trusts. More information available at: http://www.pewinternet.org

Part One:

Internet Use and Teens' Computing Environments

As the new nexus of teens' online experience, online social networks are the focus of widespread concern over the disclosure of personal information online.

Over the course of seven years, our research examining teenagers' use of the internet has repeatedly shown that teens are one of the most wired segments of the American population. And teenagers, perhaps more than any other age group in the U.S., have been well-positioned to take advantage of new communications technologies and social media applications as they emerge.

Psychologists have long noted that the teenage years are host to a tumultuous period of identity formation and role development.[2] Adolescents are intensely focused on social life during this time, and consequently have been eager and early adopters of internet applications that help them engage with their peers. In our first national survey of teenagers' internet use in 2000, we found that teens had embraced instant messaging and other online tools to play with and manage their online identities. In our second major study of teens in 2004, we noted that teenagers had taken to blogging and a wide array of content creation activities at a much higher rate than adults. Teens who adopted these tools were no longer only communicating with text, but they were also developing a fluency in expressing themselves through multiple types of digital media – including photos, music and video.

And along comes MySpace….

MySpace was by no means the first social networking application to come to the fore, but it has been the fastest-growing, and now consistently draws more traffic than almost any other website on the internet. It has also garnered the majority of public attention paid to online social networking, and sparked widespread concern among parents and lawmakers about the safety of teens who post information about themselves on the site.

Social networking sites appeal to teens, in part, because they encompass so many of the online tools and entertainment activities that teens know and love. They provide a centralized control center to access real-time and asynchronous communication features, blogging tools, photo, music and video sharing features, and the ability to post original

[2] See, for example, the writings of psychologist Erik Erikson in *Childhood and Society*.

creative work – all linked to a unique profile that can be customized and updated on a regular basis. However, in order to reap the benefits of socializing and making new friends, teens often disclose information about themselves that would normally be part of a gradual "getting-to-know-you" process *offline* (name, school, personal interests, etc.). On social network sites, this kind of information is now posted *online* -- sometimes in full public view. In some cases, this information is innocuous or fake. But in other cases, disclosure reaches a level that is troubling for parents and those concerned about the safety of online teens.

Social networking sites are by no means the first online application to spark worries among parents. In our first study of teen internet usage in 2000, well before social networking sites emerged, we reported that 57% of parents were worried that strangers would contact their children online. At that time, close to 60% of teens had received an instant message or email from a stranger and 50% of teens who were using online communication tools said they had exchanged emails or instant messages with someone they had never met in person. At the time, parents responded to these worries by taking precautions such as monitoring their child's internet use and placing the computer in a public area of the home -- much as they do today.

Studies of child victimization have shown that incidences of sexual abuse, physical abuse and other forms of maltreatment have been declining since the early 1990's.[3] Research has also shown that acquaintances and family members are responsible for most of the physical crimes committed against children.[4] However, the type of "friending" activity that occurs on social networking sites, where users link to one another's profiles to grow their networks, highlights the radically changing notion of what it means to be acquainted with someone. It is so compelling to some teens to display big friendship networks and so easy with a click or two to establish online connections that it is possible for teens to have virtual ties to others on social networks whom they have never met in person. That raises key questions and concerns: Are these people they have some connection to—through online or offline friends who can vouch for them? What kind of information are they posting to their profiles, and who has access to that information?

When asked these questions, teens consistently say that the decisions they make about disclosing personal information on social networks and in offline situations depend heavily on the *context* of that exchange. Posting a generic school name to a profile like "Jefferson High" does not reveal the same level of specificity as posting "Our Lady of Perpetual Help School." Likewise, those who live in smaller towns who disclose the name of the city where they live would share more detail than those who say they live in a large metropolitan area. Many of the teens we interviewed were aware of these distinctions and most are taking steps to restrict public access to their profiles.

[3] See Finkelhor and Jones, "Why Have Child Mistreatment and Child Victimization Declined?" Available through the UNH Crimes Against Children Research Center: http://www.unh.edu/ccrc/pdf/CV137J.pdf

[4] See Douglas and Finkelhor, "Childhood Sexual Abuse Fact Sheet." Available through the UNH Crimes Against Children Research Center: http://www.unh.edu/ccrc/factsheet/pdf/CSA-FS20.pdf

This study was conducted in two parts; first we conducted a series of six focus groups with middle and high school students in two American cities in June of 2006. Groups were single gender, and grouped in three grade ranges – 7th and 8th, 9th and 10th, and 11th and 12th grades. After completing the six in-person focus groups, a 7th online, mixed gender high school-age focus group was also conducted. These qualitative results are not representative of the U.S. teen population.

Second we fielded a nationally-representative call back telephone survey of 935 parent–teen pairs. We interviewed teens who were between the ages of 12 and 17. This survey was fielded between October 23, 2006 and November 19, 2006 and has an overall margin of error of plus or minus three percentage points.[5]

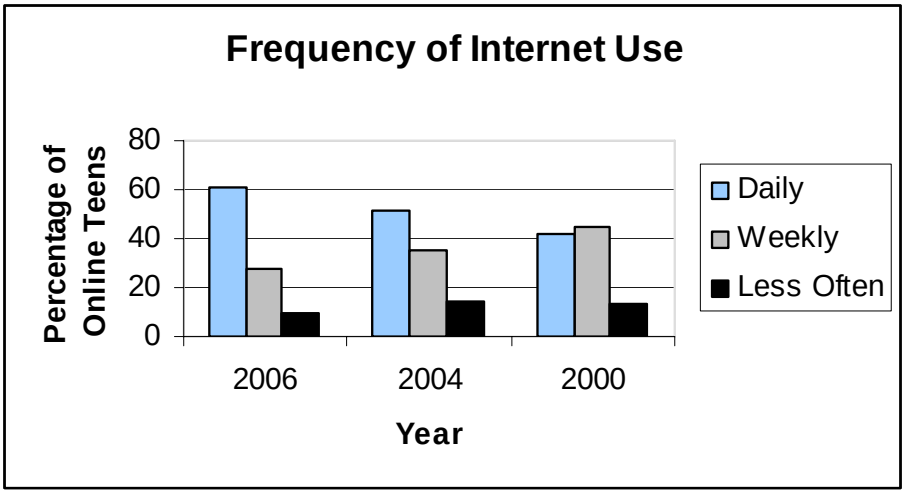
American teenagers continue to lead the trend towards ubiquitous internet connectivity in the U.S.

Looking at a general picture of teen internet adoption, American teens are more wired now than ever before. According to our latest survey, 93% of all Americans between 12 and 17 years old use the internet. In 2004, 87% were internet users, and in 2000, 73% of teens went online.

While teens go online in greater numbers and more frequently than in the past, usage gaps between teens of different socio-economic status persist. Teens whose parents are less educated and have lower incomes are less likely to be online than teens with more affluent and well-educated parents. Of teens whose parents have college educations, 98% are online while only 82% of teens whose parents have less than a high school education are online. In general, income and parental education levels have a greater impact than race and ethnicity on the frequency of internet use.

Not only are more teens online, but they are also using the internet more intensely now than in the past. Eighty-nine percent of online teens use the internet at least once a week. The percentage of online teens who report using the internet daily has increased from 42% in 2000 and 51% in 2004 to 61% in 2006. Of the 61% of teens who report using the internet daily in 2006, 34% use the internet multiple times a day and 27% use the internet once a day. If teens log onto the internet daily, they are more likely to log on multiple times rather than once per day.

[5] For more detailed information on the methodology of the survey, please see our methodology section starting on page 39.



Home continues to be the primary location where teens access the internet. However, there are still notable numbers of teens, especially those in lower income or single parent households, who report using the internet most often from school, the library, or a friend or relative's house.

More and more teens have broadband connections at home. Three-quarters of all online teens live in households with broadband internet access, up from 50% of online teens with broadband in 2004. Just a quarter of online teens have dial-up internet access at home.

As we found in 2004, teens who have active lives offline are also active online. For instance, teens who are involved in after school activities such as sports, band, drama club, or church go online with greater frequency than teens who have fewer extracurricular commitments.

Many parents take online safety precautions with their teenage children.

To understand fully how teens use the internet and in particular social networking websites, it is important to explore the circumstances of their home internet use – where the computer is located, what kinds of protective software are used, and what kind of rules a parent has in the household around use of the internet and other media. This helps to add context to generalized parental worries about teen internet use. We looked at both technical and non-technical methods that parents use.

More than half of parents with online teens have a filter installed on their computer at home.

There are two main types of technical methods families can use to keep an eye on their children's internet use. The first are filters, which are software programs run either on a family's computer or provided at the ISP level that block content that parents find

objectionable. More than half of all parents of online teens (53%) say that they have a filter installed on the computer that their child uses at home. About a third (34%) of parents say they do not have a filter on their home computer, and another 10% say they do not know if there is a filter installed. About 3% of parents volunteered that they do not have home internet access. These findings are similar[6] to the Project's findings in 2004, when 54% of parents reported having filters on their home computer.

Teens are generally aware that there are filters on their home computers. Half (50%) of all online teens who go online from home say that the computer they use at home has a filter that keeps them from going to certain websites. A bit more than a third of teens (37%) say that their home computer is not filtered, and another 13% say they do not know if the computer has a filter or not.

Teens have a reasonably accurate understanding of whether or not their home computer (according to their parent or guardian) has a filter installed on it. One-third or 34% of online teens were correct that their parents had installed a filter on their home computer. Another 18% of online teens agreed with their parents when they stated that they did not have filters on their home computer. However, in some families there are contradictions between what the parents say and what their children say. Nearly 13% of teens said that they did not have filters on their home computers, while their parents stated that they did. And another 12% believed that they had filters on their computer at home, when their parents said a filter was not in use.

Some teens simply professed uncertainty and said they did not know if they had filters at home. Overall 6% of online teens were uncertain and actually had filters at home, with another 6% of online teens unsure and living in homes without filters.

Monitoring software is not as popular as filters, but is still used by 45% of parents with online teens.

The other broad category of technical protection for online teens is monitoring software – these are programs that run on the family computer and record where a child goes, what he or she does, and in some cases, record every key stroke that a child makes. A bit under half (45%) of parents of online teens say that they have monitoring software installed on the computer that the teen uses at home. About 4 in 10 (38%) parents say they do not have monitoring software installed and another 14% say they are not sure.

Teens are also relatively aware of monitoring software on their home computers, though less aware than they are of filtering. About a third of teens (35%) with internet access at home believe that there is monitoring software on their home computer, and about half

[6] Note: The questions were asked differently between 2004 and 2006, and thus cannot be directly compared. The language in 2004 was "Thinking about the computer or internet account at home, do you have monitoring software or a filter that keeps people from going to some types of internet websites, or not?" and the language in 2006 was "Thinking about the computer your [AGE] –year old [boy/girl] uses at home, does this computer have a filter that keeps people from going to some types of internet web sites or does it not have this?"

(48%) say there is not any monitoring software installed. About 1 in 6 (17%) say they are not sure whether or not there is monitoring software on the computer they use at home.

Teens are a bit less accurate than they were with filters when it comes to assessing whether or not there is monitoring software on their home computer. Overall, 22% of teens correctly indicated that they have monitoring software on their home computer. Another 22% correctly indicated that they do not have monitoring software at home. Some 18% of teens incorrectly believed that they did not have monitoring software on their home machine when according to their parents they did, and another 10% believed there was monitoring software on their computer when there was not. And as with filters, a significant number of teens said they did not know whether or not they had monitoring software installed – 7% of online teens are uncertain and do actually have monitoring software installed according to their parents and another 6% of online teens are unsure and did not have the software installed on the computer they used at home.

Many filtering packages warn users when the software is blocking content, while monitoring packages often work silently in the background. Users of computers with filters may be more aware that such a tool is installed because of the operational characteristics of the software.

Technical protective measures are used most often in households with younger teens.

More of these technical protection and monitoring tools are used in households with younger children. Fully 58% of families with teens ages 12-14 have filters installed compared with 47% of homes with older teens, and 51% of households with younger teens say they use monitoring software, compared with 39% of households with teens ages 15-17. Monitoring software seems to be used most in homes with younger teen boys, while filters are used in the homes of younger teens regardless of gender. Parents who have a more positive view of technology in their lives and those who own more types of personal technology (cell phones, PDAs) are more likely to use monitoring software on the computer their child uses at home.

Parents also employ a wide array of non-technical protections and behaviors to protect their teens.

On the non-technical side, parents have a variety of techniques at their disposal. Parents can check the computer to see where a teen has gone online and what they have done. They can also place the computer in a well-traveled area of the home. Parents can establish family computer and internet use rules, including what websites may or may not be visited, what types of personal information may be shared online with others and how much time a child may spend online.

More Parents are Checking Up on Their Teen's Online Activities

After you go online, do your parents ever check to see what web sites you went to?

	2006 [n=811]	*2004 [n=868]*	*2000 [n=680]*
Yes	41%	33%	27%
No	49%	59%	64%
Don't know/Refused	10%	7%	10%

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project Parents and Teens Survey, October-November 2006. Based on online teens who use the internet from home. Margin of error for the overall sample is ±4%.

Teens today are more aware that their parents are watching them online.

Not only are teens aware of the filtering and monitoring software installed on the computers they use at home, teen are also more aware that their parents are "checking up" on them after they go online. As we found in 2004, about two-thirds of parents (65%) of online teens report that they "check up" on their child after he or she has gone online. One male high school-aged teen put it this way "well.... I think mainly my dad doesn't want to wake up in the morning and find porn on his computer... lol I'm not into that, though he gets cranky if I spend too much time on it too. And I think that sometimes he checks up to make sure I'm not doing anything he wouldn't deem appropriate."[7]

Another late high school-aged girl explains the relationship between monitoring and trust established in her family. "My parents sometimes monitor where I go, but they pretty much trust me when I'm online. I spend about 3 hours a day online, including time at work. They have talked to me about being careful what sites I visit."

Teens in the other, less-monitored third of online teens, explain how knowledge imbalance affects oversight in the home. Says one tech-savvy high school boy, "I'm pretty sure they'd be upset if they saw me browsing hate sites, or looking at animal porn, but my internet usage isn't very well moderated. No, they don't talk to me about it, simply because it's probable that I know more about it than them."

Three years ago, we found that 33% of teens believed that their parents were checking up on their online behavior after they went online, while 41% of today's teens believe that their parents monitor them after they've gone online. Parents are most likely to report checking up on younger teens (ages 12-14), in particular younger girls. Seven in ten parents of younger teens checked up on their online behaviors, compared with 61% of parents of older teens.

[7]Note: Quotes from focus groups conducted with middle and high school-aged teenagers in June 2006 appear throughout this report. Teens are identified by their gender and grade in school in two-grade increments.

Three-quarters of home computers are in a public place in the home.

Teens report that the computer that they use at home is generally found in a public area in the home, like a living room, den or study. Three-quarters of teens who go online at home say the computer is in an open family area. Another quarter (25%) say it is in a private space in the home, like a bedroom. And one percent say they have a laptop which can be moved and used in a variety of places both public and private. These numbers are remarkably similar to the findings in our 2004 and 2000 surveys, where 73% of teens and 70% of teens, respectively, reported that their computer was in a public location in the home.

The Majority of Teens' Computers are Located in an Open Family Area

Is the computer you use at home in a private area like your bedroom, or in an open family area, like a living room, den, or study?

	2006 [n=811]	*2004 [n=868]*	*2000 [n=680]*
Open family area	74%	73%	70%
Private area	25%	26%	27%

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project Parents and Teens Survey, October-November 2006. Based on online teens who use the internet from home. Margin of error for the overall sample is ±4%.

More households have rules about internet use than for other media.

Parents are also particularly likely to establish rules about their children's internet wanderings and information sharing. More than eight in ten parents (85%) of online teens said that they had rules about internet sites their child could or could not visit, and a similar number (85%) said they had established rules about the kinds of personal information their child could share with people they talk to on the internet. Fewer parents (69%) said they had household rules for how long a teen could spend online. One high school-age boy detailed his internet restrictions at home. "My parents limit my time on the internet. I can only spend about 1-2 hours of non-school work time on it. They try checking up on me but I can get away with a lot if I wanted. They make sure to tell me never to meet people on it because people pretend to be someone they are not."

Still, most teens focused on household internet time limits when talking about restrictions on their internet use in our focus groups. "My parents don't really have any rules directed to the internet," one young high school age women told us. "I know better [than] to go to dirty sites and stuff. The only rules I have is that I have 2 hours a day on the computer, and I can't be on the computer after 10 pm. I tend to bend the 2 hours rule quite often." While rules about what kinds of sites teens could visit and length of time they can spend online do not vary by age or sex, most of the rules about the sharing of personal information are implemented (or are reported to be so) by parents of girls and older teens.

The Internet is the Most Regulated Form of Media in the Home *In your household, do you happen to have rules about any of the following things…?*			
Based on All Parents (n=935)	***Yes***	***No***	***Don't Know/ Refused***
What kinds of television shows your child can watch	77%	20%	3%
How much time your child can spend watching TV	58%	40%	2%
What kinds of video games your child can play	67%	19%	14%
How much time your child can spend playing video games	59%	25%	16%
Based on Parents of Online Teens (n=790)	***Yes***	***No***	***Don't Know/ Refused***
Internet sites your child can or cannot visit	85%	13%	2%
The kinds of personal information your child can share with people they talk to on the internet	85%	10%	5%
How much time your child can spend online	69%	29%	2%

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project Parents and Teens Survey, October-November 2006. Margin of error for the overall sample is ±4%.

Nevertheless, in comparison to other types of media with in the home, the internet is a much more regulated piece of technology than the television or video game console.

Younger boys are the most likely to have gaming rules applied to them.

Nearly two-thirds of parents of online teens (65%) say they have household rules about the types of video games their child can play, and 58% of those same parents said they had rules about the amount of time their teen could spend playing video games.

Much of the regulation of gaming is aimed at the most avid game-players – younger boys. Parents of younger boys were more likely than other groups of parents to say they had rules about what kind of games could be played and for how long. It is also important to note that fewer teens play games than go online, which may be reflected in the lower percentage of parents with rules about games.

Younger Teen Boys are the Most Likely to Play Games Online

Do You ever play computer or console games like Xbox or PlayStation? Do you ever play games online?

	All Teens (n=935)	*Boys 12-14 (n=223)*	*Boys 15-17 (n=248)*	*Girls 12-14 (n=208)*	*Girls 15-17 (n=256)*
Play computer or console games online	49%	69%	62%	45%	22%
Play computer or console games offline	18%	21%	22%	13%	15%
Do not play computer or console games	33%	10%	17%	42%	63%

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project Parents and Teens Survey, October-November 2006. Based on all teens [n=935]. Margin of error for the overall sample is ±4%.

Regulation of television watching habits is mainly aimed at younger teens.

Three quarters (75%) of parents of online teens regulate what kinds of television shows their child watches, and 57% of parents of kids who go online say that they have rules about how much time their child can spend watching TV. Regulation of television watching habits is primarily aimed at younger teens, with parents of these teens more likely to report having these rules than parents of older teens.

Despite all the rules parents impose on internet use, parents still think that the internet is a good thing for their child.

Overall, 59% of parents of online teens say that the internet is a positive addition to their children's lives. Still, the percentage of parents who think that the internet is good for their children has decreased a statistically significant amount from 67% in 2004 to 59% in 2006. However, that does not mean that more parents today are more "anti-internet" than they were two years ago. Instead, more parents have become ambivalent; in 2006, 30% said that they did not think that the internet had an effect on their children one way or the other, compared with 25% who reported this in 2004.

Part 2.

Teens and Online Social Networks

More than half of online teens use social networks.

More than half or 55% of all online American teens use social networks.[8] Likewise, 55% of online teens 12-17 have posted a profile online. Teen girls, particularly girls 15-17, are more likely to use social networking websites than boys, and girls are more likely to have posted a profile online.

Demographics: Teens Who Create Profiles Online

The percentage of online teens in each group who create profiles online:

Sex	
Boys	51%
Girls	58%
Age	
12-14	45%
15-17	64%*
Age by Sex	
Boys aged 12-14	46%
Girls aged 12-14	44%
Boys aged 15-17	57%
Girls aged 15-17	70%*
Household income	
Less than $50,000	55%
$50,000 or more	56%
Race/ethnicity	
White, non-Hispanic	53%
Non-white	58%

*Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project Teens and Parents Survey, Oct.-Nov. 2006. Margin of error is ±5% for profile creators. * indicates statistically significant differences.*

Online social networks are spaces on the internet where users can create a profile and connect that profile to others to create a personal network. Social network users post content to their profiles and use tools embedded with in the social networking websites to contact other users.

[8] Lenhart, Amanda & Madden, Mary. "Social Networking Websites and Teens: An Overview," Pew Internet & American Life Project. January 7, 2007. http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/198/report_display.asp

Age is a particularly important factor for understanding teen use of social networks. For 12 and 13 year olds, social network use is not as prevalent, with just two in five (41%) of teens those ages using the sites. Once teens approach or enter high school, their use jumps -- 61% of teens 14-17 use online social networks.

MySpace dominates the social networking realm, with more than 85% of teens with online profiles saying that the profile they use or update the most resides on that site. Following on its heels is Facebook, with 7% of profile-owners updating their Facebook profile most regularly. Another 1% have a profile on Xanga and others told us that they have a presence on sites like Yahoo, Piczo, Gaiaonline and Tagged.com, among others.[9]

Teens who use social networking websites visit them frequently, both to edit their own profiles and to view the profiles of others. Almost half of teens who use social networks, visit them once a day (26%) or several times a day (22%). One in six (17%) visit the sites 3 to 5 days a week and 15% visit them 1 to 2 days a week. One in five or 20% say they visit online social networks every few weeks or less often.

Teens use social networks from the places where they go online most often. For most teens, that means that they use social networks on their home computers. Teens who go online from home are more likely to visit social networking websites and have a profile posted online than their counterparts who go online most often from school.

Parents usually know if their teen has a profile online.

Most parents of online teens are aware that their children have profiles on the internet. Nearly half (49%) of parents of online teens say that their child has a profile online, and 45% say that their child does not have a profile online. Six percent of parents say they do not know whether the child has a profile online or not. Parents of girls and older teens are much more likely to (and quite accurately) say that their child has a profile online. Some 57% of parents of girls say they have an online profile compared with 40% of parents of boys; 58% of parents of older teens say their child has a profile, compared with 39% of parents of teens 12-14. Parents of older girls are the most likely to report that their teen has an online profile – 67% of parents of girls 15-17 said that their daughter had a profile online.

Of parents of teens with online profiles, three-quarters (73%) accurately stated that their child had a profile online, while 23% incorrectly said that their child did not have an online profile. Another 4% of parents of teens with online profiles reported that they were not sure if their child had one or not.

[9] While MySpace and Facebook are both social networking sites, they are very different types of social networking systems. MySpace is open to anyone, and has loose age restrictions, but in essence, users can create whatever type of profile and network there that they choose. Even with its new openness, Facebook is still primarily organized around real-world physical communities – first college campuses and later high schools, employers and geographic regions. On Facebook, creative expression is limited to text, posted photos and links to other outside material.

Social networks provide public and private communication tools.

Social networking websites offer a variety of ways for users to communicate with people both in and out of their personal social network. There are private messages that can be sent from user to user, but there are also more public means of communicating within the social networking space. A user can post messages to a friend's page or wall, send a bulletin or group message to a user's network, post comments to a friend's blog, or give e-props, "pokes" or kudos by posting small icons to a friend's page. An early high school-aged boy explained how it works in our focus group: "People send friend requests so you can approve or deny it and you can ask to be someone's friend, so once you approve them you can post comments about them and receive comments from them, but if you're not friends with someone they can still give you messages."

The most popular way of communicating via social networking sites is to post a message or comment to a friend's profile, page or "wall." More than 4 in 5 social network users (84%) have posted messages to a friend's profile or page. "It's a nice feeling to get, like, comments," said an early high school-aged boy.

Social networks provide affirmation and feedback for teens.

One of the major reasons why teens are such enthusiastic users of social network sites is that the sites give them opportunities to present themselves to a group of peers and then

get feedback and affirmation via the content tools built into the online social networking system. Teens get to feel like they are a part of a group of like-minded friends, and can visualize their network of relationships, displaying their popularity for others. This sentiment was expressed repeatedly in our in-person focus groups as well as in online forums where teens discussed the appeal of social networking sites.

Here are some of the most illustrative comments:

"Part of what people like about it is when you go on and you do your profile and there's this little box at the bottom that tells you if you have a new friend request or new comments and so you click on it and then you see what's going on." – Boy, Early High School

"If you wait more days then they accumulate more." – Boy, Early High School

"It is a great feeling. Like if you go on there and you haven't been on in a day and you don't find anything in the box, you don't want to be on there anymore but if you go on there and there's a new picture, comments, people want to talk to you, you start feeling part of a group." -- Boy, Early High School

"And you feel special when you have a picture comment." – Girl, Middle School

"It's a sense of attention. For some people it's like 'well, people know I exist, I'm there, people acknowledge me,' you know you feel like you're a part of something." – Boy, Early High School

"It's like there's a sense of like you can put your interests and stuff on there and people can be like 'well, yes I like that too' and stuff and you can start talking to someone and eventually it's like you get friends from it. Like you start meeting more people that have the same interests and you're part of a group now." – Boy, Early High School.

"It's just sort of another way of communicating. There's like [ways to] say 'What's going on?' …and you can post funny things…and if you have friends who live in a different state or something and you don't see them all the time, you can sort of use your MySpace as a way to keep in touch with them, or read what they're doing." – Girl, Middle School

"I go on MySpace. I have my own. I do it to comment on people and look at other people's MySpace. You get to know their personality by their MySpace. It says a lot about them just like how they decorate it and the pictures." – Girl, Early High School

Part 3.

Online Privacy: What Teens Share and Restrict in an Online Environment

Much of the media coverage surrounding young people and online social networks has focused on the type and amount of personal information teens make available on these networks. Are they sharing information that will harm their future college or job prospects? Or worse, are they sharing information that puts them at risk of victimization?

We set out to examine how teens understand their privacy through several lenses: by looking at the choices that teens make to share or not to share information online, by examining what they share, the context in which they share it and their own assessment of their vulnerability. For many online teens, particularly those with profiles, privacy choices are made manifest in the information shared in a social networking profile. Of course, material shared in a profile is just one of a larger number of places where information is shared online – but it provides a snapshot into the choices that teens make to share in a relatively public and persistent online environment.

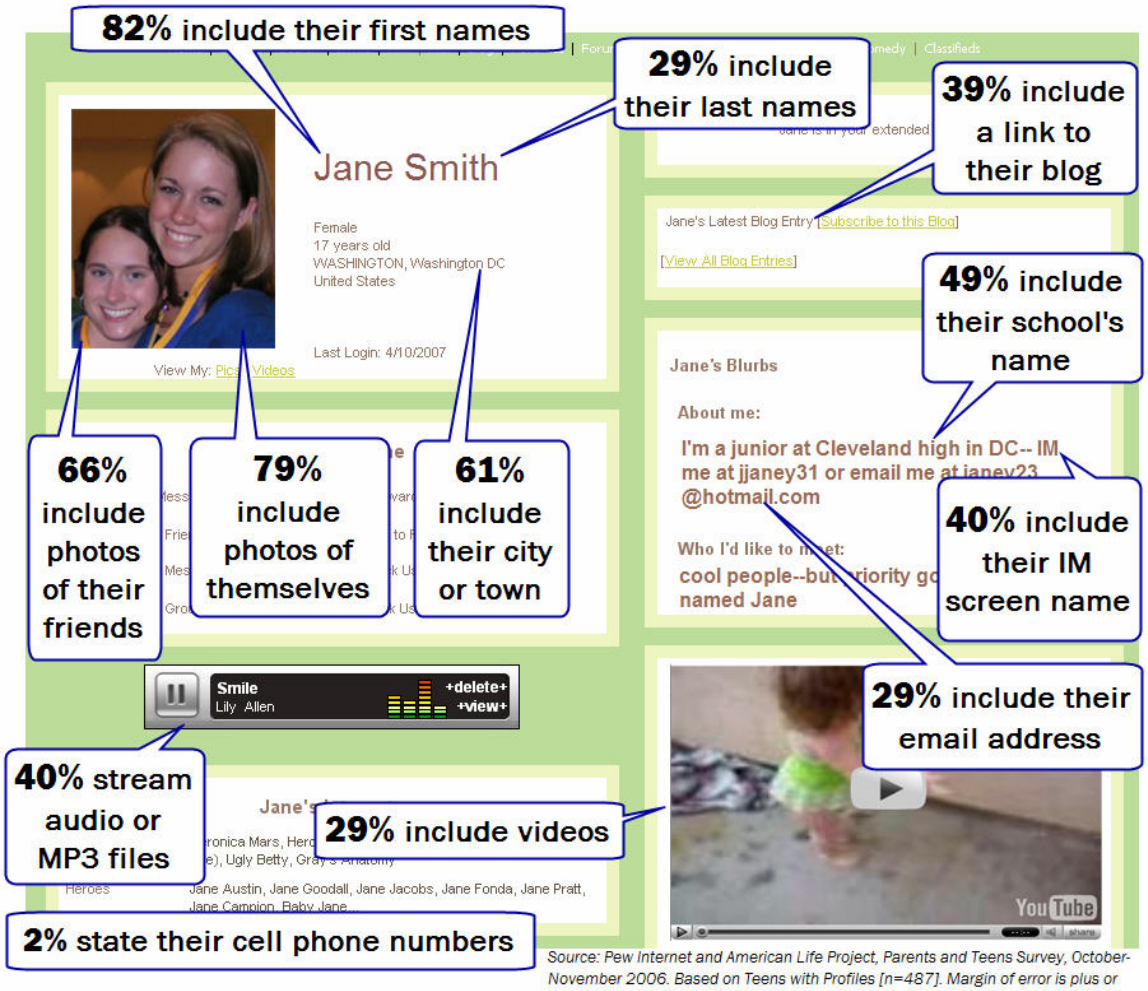
> "Just pictures. And not obscene pictures. Like if my Mom saw it I wouldn't care. I'm really careful with that whole MySpace thing. I've heard of employers not hiring people because of it. So I just put things up there that if my Grandma or Mom saw it I wouldn't care. It wouldn't be a big deal."
>
> – Girl, Late High School

In order to understand these issues better, we asked a series of questions both in representative national phone surveys and in focus groups that gauged teens' sense of privacy relating to sharing personal information. We wanted to understand how teens make decisions to share information both in online and offline contexts. Two scenarios were presented in our survey and focus groups: First, we asked teens about the kinds of information they might consider sharing with someone they had just met at a party or other social situation, and we followed with questions regarding the information teens have shared on an online profile.

What is okay to share online? Teens prefer to keep it vague.

For many teens, a first name is okay to post online since it is relatively generic. More than 4 out of 5 teens (82%) with online profiles post their first name to their profile. Photos are also frequently posted by teens to their profiles, with 79% of teens posting a photo of themselves and 66% posting photos of friends to their online profiles. When

asked in focus groups whether they had any concerns about publicly posted photos, most teens said they were not worried about risks to their privacy. They felt that, for the most part, there was not enough information in the photos posted, even when combined with the information contained in the profile, to compromise their privacy or safety. Other teens told us that they had set their profiles to private or deliberately made their age younger to achieve a higher level of restricted access built into the social network they use. This allows them to protect their privacy while still sharing information with an approved group of friends.



Source: Pew Internet and American Life Project, Parents and Teens Survey, October-November 2006. Based on Teens with Profiles [n=487]. Margin of error is plus or minus 4%. Credit: Alex Rankin Macgill

The "city or town where you live" is posted to the profiles of 6 in 10 teens who have online profiles. And just about half of teens say they have put their school name up online. Four in ten teens say they have posted their IM Screen name, streaming audio or mp3 files, or access to their blog. Three in ten teens say they have posted their last name, their email address, or a video file to their online profile. A mere 2% of teens have posted their ultra-personal cell phone number to their online profile.

Part 3. Online Privacy: What Teens Share and Restrict in an Online Environment

Few teens disclose their full name on public profiles.

Overall, 14% of online teens post both their first and last name to their online profile. Looking at the data another way, 26% of teens with online profiles post their full names. However, most of these teens who include their full name restrict access to their profile; just 6% of online teens and 11% of profile-owning teens post their first and last name to a publicly viewable profile that is visible to anyone online.

Just 7% of online teens say they post their full name, a photo of themselves, their school name, and the city or town where they live to their online profile. This represents 13% of all profile-owning teens. Again, most of these "transparent teens" restrict who has access to their profile; just 3% of online teens, and 5% of profile-owning teens disclose all of these details on a publicly viewable profile.

Girls and boys have different levels of disclosure on their online profiles.

Girls and boys make different choices about giving out personal information online. Girls are more likely than boys to say that they have posted photos both of themselves and of their friends onto their online profile. Boys are more likely to say they have posted the city or town where they live, their last name and their cell phone number when compared with girls.

This differential between the sexes was reinforced by comments from our focus groups. When teens, particularly girls, talked about protection of their privacy online, their main concern was the protection of their physical self – if a piece of information could easily lead to them being contacted in person, girls would not share it readily. A middle school girl explains "If they can access you, like person to person or in any way other than [the internet], it's not okay…Like if they can…talk to you, if they can find out where you live, that's not okay. If you're putting anyone in danger, it's not all right." But for modes of communication that were not physical or "real world," girls were more likely to share information of that type.

Boys Are More Likely Than Girls To Post Their Last Names Online

We'd like to know if the following kinds of information are posted to your profile, or not. You can just tell me yes or no.

	Boys	*Girls*
What they are equally likely to share		
My first name	83%	80%
My school name	51%	48%
My IM screen name	39%	42%
My blog or a link to my blog	36%	42%
My email address	29%	29%
My cell phone number	4%	1%
What girls are more likely to share than boys		
A photo of myself	74%	83%
Photos of my friends	58%	72%
What boys are more likely to share than girls		
The city or town in which I live	68%	54%
Streaming audio or MP3 files	53%	30%
My last name	40%	19%
Videos	40%	20%

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project Parents and Teens Survey, October-November 2006. Based on teens with profiles [n=487]. Margin of error is ±4%.

Most interestingly, a teen's school name seems to be the exception to the general rule of withholding specific location information, or information that can be used to contact you in the real world. Some teens were concerned by it, others less bothered.

Culturally, some of the attitude differences between boys and girls may be explained by the messages transmitted to girls about their own safety and the need to protect themselves through different rules and expectations set in homes for girls and boys.

As one older high school boy put it: "Girls are more vulnerable than guys are... I have two older sisters and my parents tell me that all the time. They let me get away with stuff that they never got away with."

Another older high school boy noted: "I have an older sister and a younger sister, and I watch over my little sister. They are kind of like are more lenient when she's with me. But if she's not, she's in at 10:00. If she's with me, she can come home at like three, four in the morning."

Older teens share more personal information than younger teens.

Younger teens and older teens have different information sharing practices as well. Older teens ages 15-17 with online profiles are more likely than younger teens to post photos of themselves or friends to their profile as well as share their school name online. Older girls are more likely than any other group to share photos of friends, while younger girls are

more likely than younger boys to have shared information about their blog on their profile.

Older teens include more information on their online profiles

We'd like to know if the following information is posted on your profile, or not.

	Teens 12-14 (n=170)	*Teens 15-17 (n=317)*
What older teens are more willing to share than younger teens		
Photo of yourself	67%	87%*
Photos of your friends	56%	72%*
School name	35%	59%*
Where there is little difference in age groups		
First name	81%	82%
Last name	30%	28%
City or Town where you live	56%	64%
IM screen name	40%	41%
Your blog or a link to your blog	39%	40%
Streaming audio or MP3 files	37%	42%
Videos	33%	27%
Email address	31%	28%
Cell phone number	1%	3%

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project Parents and Teens Survey, October-November 2006. = statistically significant difference between the percentages in the row indicated. Margin of error for the overall sample is ±4% Margin of error for subgroups is ±8.7% to ±9.8%.*

Our focus group participants were aware that parents and other adults might see their profiles. A middle school girl said this: "When I'm on MySpace I will never put anything on it that I wouldn't want my parents to see. People have stuff, my friends have stuff like 'What Victoria Secret model are you?' And a picture of a girl in lingerie."

Meanwhile, a high school girl had this to say: "Yes...not just because you don't want your parents to see it, but if your parents wouldn't approve of it it's obviously not something that you should be putting on there because other people would think you're a different type person…and the dean of students got an anonymous MySpace account was looking at everyone's, so you wouldn't want them to see it. And colleges, I know colleges have been looking MySpace and if they don't like what you post on there they don't [admit you]."

We conducted a similar activity in our focus groups in which we asked teens to categorize various pieces of personal information into groups that were never okay to

share, which were okay to share under certain circumstances and those which were almost always okay to share online.

Information That Teens Feel Should or Should Not Be Shared Online

Info That Is Almost **Never** Okay to Share	Info That **Might Be Okay** To Share under some circumstances (because it wouldn't be *that* easy to locate the discloser in person)	Info That Is Generally **Okay** To Share Online
• Information that might allow someone to easily find them such as: address, home phone number, parent's names • Passwords or combinations • Personal identification information such as social security numbers, medical information	• Cell phone number • School name and location • Town/City where you live • Zip code	• Age • Boyfriend or girlfriend status • Email address • Gender • Gossip (although the boys didn't think it was a good idea) • IM Screen name • Parents' profession • Personal preferences (movies, food, etc.) • Pet information • Physical appearance • Pictures & photos • Religious affiliation • State

Source: Pew Internet Project/Harris Interactive teen focus groups, June 2006.

Teens in our focus groups debated whether or not it was okay to share or post their school names on their profile. Half of teens have their school name posted to their profile, and many of them felt it was a way for friends to find them. They said they felt like their school was big enough and safe enough that it would be difficult for someone to find them using the name of their school and other information on the profile. But others, particularly those who went to smaller schools and lived in smaller towns, felt that it was giving out too much information. Teens from small towns and suburbs felt similarly about revealing their city or town online, while urban teens felt much more at ease posting their location. As one high school girl put it: "It depends on how big it is. [My town] isn't that big so if someone says do you know where this person lives they're like yeah…"

Part 3. Online Privacy: What Teens Share and Restrict in an Online Environment

In an offline setting, teens are most guarded about their phone numbers.

There are always a certain number of "transparent" teens who say they will share most any piece of information offline, and teens who are very private and will not share any information under any circumstances. But in between, a cohort of teens strike the balance between being open enough to start down a road towards friendship (or more) but also being aware of their personal responsibility to protect their privacy and that of their family.

For offline privacy among teens, there are distinct lines drawn over information that is okay to share with a new acquaintance and information that you would not share at a first meeting. The information deemed most "okay" to share with someone you had just met at a party include the state you live in, the name of the school you go to, the city or town where you live and your IM screen name. Information that is regarded as more private when sharing in person includes a link to your blog, your cell phone number and most private of all – your home phone number.

> "my question to you is if its ok to tell ur school name, why isnt it ok to tell ur school location? they can find that anywhere online."
>
> – Boy, Late High School.

In an offline environment, for almost every piece of information we presented that is not related to internet-based contact, boys are much more likely than girls to say that it is okay to share personal information (like your last name, city and state where you live, cell phone number, school name, etc).

Online teens are least likely to give out their telephone number in person

Please tell me if you think it is okay to share the following information with someone you just met

Based on online teens [n=886]	*Okay to share*
State where you live	81%
School name	71%
IM screen name	52%
City or town where you live	52%
Last name	44%
Email address	44%
Your blog or a link to your blog	32%
Cell phone number	29%
Home phone number	19%

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project Parents and Teens Survey, October-November 2006 Based on teens with profiles (n=886). Margin of error for the overall sample is ±4%.

For almost every piece of information except home phone number, older teens are much more likely than younger teens to say it is okay to share it offline with someone you just met.

And of course, much of this depends on context. If you share the state where you live and go to a high school with a relatively generic name like "Eastern High" then revealing those pieces of information is not likely to be giving away much important information about yourself. But for young people who live in small towns, or who go to small and more uniquely-named schools, giving away your state and the name of your school might be all the information someone needs to show up at the front door of the schoolhouse.

Teens are more likely to say it is okay to share certain types of personal information in an offline social situation than they are to actually post that information to their online profile.

Teens who have online profiles are generally more likely to say it is okay to give out certain pieces of personal information in offline situations than they are to have that information actually posted to their profile. Teens with online profiles have a greater tendency to say it is okay to share where they go to school, their IM screen name, email address, last name and cell phone number with someone they met at a party, when compared with the percentage who actually post that information online. The only piece of information they are more likely to share *online* is the city and state where they live. This type of information is seen as innocuous and as something that helps new and long-lost friends locate each other on social networking websites.

In our focus groups, teens told us they are generally more comfortable sharing information at a party because they have much more contextual information in an offline setting than an online one – they can see the person, their mannerisms, and tone of voice. They can see how they deal with and treat other people when not directly interacting with you. In addition, they have landed at the same party as you – and in many cases, that means that they have some sort of connection and know people in common. Much of this contextual information is not available online. Teens do not always have the same level of familiarity with their audience and they are cognizant of these differences between online interactions and real-life ones.

In our focus groups, we asked teens whether or not they were surprised by the material that some of their peers posted to their social networking profile. Some online teens expressed shock at the nature and content of some postings. One older high school boy told us "I am sometimes kind of surprised by HOW MUCH information is revealed by someone." Another early high school-aged girl said "Sometimes I'm surprised by the amount of sexual language used on posts, but with the fastness of our culture today I'm not too surprised." Other teens cast a critical eye towards some of the stories told on profiles. "Sometimes people tell about doing drugs, drinking, partying that you wouldn't expect from them but it's hard to tell if they do these things a lot or a little because they can't provide a good explanation," said one early high school girl. "…most of the time I

think it's exaggeration, not usually a blatant lie but I have no way of judging if I don't know them well." And still other teens expressed a complete lack of surprise at anything found online. "Nothing really surprises me because you can find all kinds of people online," said one late high school-aged girl.

Teens With Profiles Are More Likely To Share Certain Pieces of Personal Information Offline Than Online

	Teens with profiles who say It is okay to give out the following information at a party	*Teens with profiles who say they share the following information in their online profile*
School name	69%	49%
IM screen name	65%	40%
City or town in which you live	52%	61%
Email address	51%	29%
Your blog or a link to your blog	43%	39%
Last name	40%	29%
Cell phone number	34%	2%

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project Parents and Teens Survey, October-November 2006. Based on teens with profiles [n=487]. Margin of error for the overall sample is ±4%.

More than half of teens post false information in online profiles.

While some teens choose to withhold certain types of information from their profile, other teens take additional protective (or playful) measures such as posting fake information in their profile. Of all teens with online profiles, 56% of teens have posted at least a few pieces of false information. A little less than a third of profile owners say that "a little" of the information on their profile is false and one in six (17%) say that some of the information in their profile is made up. Eight percent of teens with online profiles say that most or all of the information on the profile is fake. And 44% of teens with profiles say that their profile is completely truthful and that none of the information on it is false.

> "I have never pretended to be someone else, I just don't put any information on the sites that could be dangerous to me."
>
> – Girl, Late High School

Boys are more likely than girls to report posting fake information to their online profiles. Nearly two-thirds (64%) of boys with online profiles say that they've got at least a little false information posted to that profile, while just half (50%) of girls say the same.

Younger teens are more likely to say they have fake information on their profiles than older teens. Nearly 7 in 10 (69%) younger teens 12-14 say they've got false information on their profiles, while less than half (48%) of older teens 15-17 say they've posted untrue information to their online profiles. Some of this false information posting by younger teens may be related to age restrictions on some social networking sites that require that users be older than 13, meaning that 12 and 13 year old teens must lie about their age to use the sites.

"I say instead of being 14 I'm 15… No one wants to talk to a 14-year old. So why not just add another year? And I'm a sophomore so I was born in August."

– Boy, Early High School

"I said I'm 60."

– Boy, Middle School

While over half (54%) of teens who have profiles that are visible to anyone say that they have entirely truthful information on their profile, just 39% of teens with friends-only profiles say that everything posted to their profile is true. Or put another way, 46% of teens with visible profiles have posted some amount of fake information on their profile, compared with 61% of teens who have posted false information to their private profile.

"Mine says I'm from Egypt."

– Girl, Early High School

I don't want anyone to know where I'm from. You don't need the people that you know to be able to read where you're from because they already know."

– Girl, Middle School

Rural teens are more likely to be fully truthful on their online profiles than their suburban or urban compatriots. More than half, 52%, of rural teens with online profiles say that all the information posted to their profile is true. In comparison, 41% of suburban teens and 42% of urban teens say that all the information on their online profiles is true.

Put another way, 48% of rural teens say they have posted fake information to their online profiles, while 59% of suburban teens and 58% of urban teens have done the same.

Part 3. Online Privacy: What Teens Share and Restrict in an Online Environment

Teens struggle to find the balance point between sharing details that will facilitate meeting peers with similar interests and keeping themselves safe from unwanted online attention. When asked how easy it would be for someone to "find out who you are from your profile," most teens occupy a middle ground between total disclosure and complete closure; 40% of teens who have an online profile say that someone would have to work at it, but would be able to figure out eventually who they were if they tried hard enough. Another third of teens (36%) say that it would be very difficult for someone to find out who they were from their profile, and about one quarter of teens with profiles say that it would be "pretty easy" for someone to identify them from their online materials.

> "I use a pseudonym, who is 24. Because I regard myself as an intellectual, it's easier to be taken seriously if people don't know they're talking to a 16 year old. You'd be surprised what respect 8 years buys you."
>
> – Boy, Late High School

Younger teens are more likely to believe that they are very difficult to find online from the information posted in their online profile, while older teens believe that they are relatively difficult to find, but that a determined person could eventually track them down. Half of younger teens think that it would be very difficult to figure out who they are from their online profile. Another third (33%) think it would be hard to find them, but that eventually someone could figure it out. And 15% think it would be easy to find them online from their profile. Older teens, by contrast, are a little more sanguine about how findable they are. Just 26% think they're truly very difficult to find from their profiles. Another 45% think that they are difficult to find, but that someone could eventually figure out who they are, and 29% think that they are easy to find from their online profiles.

Girls are less likely than boys to say that they are easy to find online from their profiles. Only 19% of teen girls with profiles say that they are easy to find, while 28% of boys say the same. The differences are less distinct for the moderately difficult to find and very difficult to find – the differences between boys and girls for these categories are within the margin of error.

> "Well, everyone saw those things on the news how MySpace is killing children and so after they say that they were like, 'Okay, make sure you go through your friends list, make sure there's no one there that you don't know.' Personally, I think that if you befriend people you don't know and/or put information on there that can help them, like your phone number or where you live, that's just stupid. (…) So I don't do that. I know my MySpace site is private and if someone requests me, I make sure I know them."

– Girl, Middle School

Teens who post a significant amount of false information on their profile are unsurprisingly more likely to say it would be very difficult for someone to find out who they are from their online profile. More than half (59%) teens who say that "all" or "most" of the information on their profile is fake say it would be difficult to determine who they were from their profile. Teens who say that "some" or "very little" of the information on their profile is fake are most likely to say that while it would be difficult to figure out who they were from their profile, that some one could figure it out if they tried hard enough – with 45% of the "some" or "very little" fake information providers responding that they could be found from their profile after good effort.

Teens who provide no fake information are mixed on how easy it would be to track them down – 28% say it would be easy to find them from the information provided on their profile, 37% of profile owners who are truthful say it would be difficult to find them from their profile, but it could be done, and another 35% said it would be extremely difficult to track them down based on their profile.

Teens walk the line between openness and privacy.

Not only is *what* teens choose to share or not in online profiles important, but also *how* teens choose to share that information by making profiles or online materials public or private. Social network users and others who share content online can take advantage of the privacy and restriction tools offered within the system where they share their personal information or self-created content. This can mean password protecting an account, blog or other online sharing space, or it can mean making a profile or blog posting private so that only those on a friends list or in an online network can see what you've posted beyond a few basic pieces of information.

Many teens with online profiles restrict access to them.

As noted previously by the Project, a large number of teens with online profiles in some way obscure or restrict access to their online information. Indeed, a total of 66% of all teens who have ever created an online profile in some way restrict access to their profiles, including making them private, password protecting them, hiding them completely from others or even taking them offline. Three in four teens who have a profile (77%) say that it is currently available online. Of those teens with an active, currently posted profile, 59% of them say that their profile is only visible to friends. Another 40% say that anyone can see their profile. There is no statistically significant difference in restricting access to profiles by sex or age.

Teens with parents who know that they have a profile online are more likely than teens with unaware parents to have their profile visible only to friends. Nearly two-thirds (62%) of teens whose parents are aware of their online profile say that their profile is only

available to friends, while 46% of teens whose parents do not know about their online profile say they have set their profiles to private. For some teens, making their profile private may be a response to parental concerns regarding keeping personal information private, or it may be that they are making their profiles private to keep them away from prying parental and other adult eyes.

Teens who have an online profile are somewhat more likely to have parents who have rules about the kinds of personal information they can share with people they talk to on the internet. Fully 89% of parents of teens with profiles say they have rules about the personal information their child can share with people they talk to online, compared with 81% of parents of online teens who do not have profiles.

Half of all online teens and three-quarters of social networking teens post photos online.

Teens also take steps to restrict other kinds of material they have shared online. Digital photos, often one of the anchoring elements of online profiles and blogs, are widely posted online by teens in many different contexts. With the proliferation of digital cameras and cell phone cameras, in particular, many teens have the means to document the most mundane and profound moments of their lives. They can then share these photos with family, friends or the world at large by posting them online to their profiles or to popular photo sharing sites like Flickr. About half of wired teens (47%) say they upload photos online where others can see them. In comparison, 73% of teens who use social networking post photos compared with just 16% of non-SNS teens.

Girls eclipse boys in photo posting.

Girls are far more likely to have posted photos online when compared with boys; 54% vs. 40%. Older teens are also more active posters 58% of teens ages 15-17 post photos vs. 36% of younger teens ages 12-14. Older girls are more seasoned posters, with 67% of them uploading photos, compared with 48% of older boys. Younger girls and boys are equally as likely to upload photos; 39% of younger girls ages 12-14 upload photos while 33% of younger boys do so.

Teens that live in homes with high-speed internet access are better positioned to upload content, and it shows. While 51% of broadband teens upload photos online, just 39% of dial-up teens post photos. Likewise, teens that are online frequently are more engaged with photo posting; while 59% of those who go online daily post photos, just 35% of teens who go online several times per week have uploaded photos.

Teens that go online most often from home are considerably more likely to post photos when compared with those who are primarily at-school users.[10] About half (51%) of online teens who access the internet mostly from home have uploaded photos, compared

[10] This is most likely related to the generally low SNS use of at-school users.

with 36% of those with primary access at school. Many schools block social networking sites on their school networks, so many young people with access primarily at school may have fewer opportunities to upload photos, as those sites are for many a primary photo-sharing space.

Most teens restrict access to their posted photos – at least some of the time. Girls are more conservative about restricting access to photos.

Few teens who upload photos online consistently publish them without any restrictions. While 39% say they restrict access to their photos "most of the time," another 38% report restricting access "only sometimes." Just 21% of teens who post photos say they "never" restrict access to the images they upload.

Girls are more likely to restrict access to their photos ("most of the time") when compared with boys; 44% of girls who post photos regularly restrict access, while 33% of photo-posting boys do so. Older girls are even more protective of their images, with 49% of photo-posting girls restricting access most of the time vs. 29% of photo-posting older boys.

> "i try to post as little information as possible. there is no way of knowing who is going to see the information posted and i'm really stingy. i don't think it's okay to share last names, date of birth, where i live, anything that will help people identify me. pictures are OK because it's really difficult to find someone if the only thing you know about them is what they look like."
>
> – Girl, Early High School

One in five social networking teens have posted video files online. Boys lead the video-posting pack.

While just 14% of all online teens say they have uploaded a video file online where others can watch it, 22% of social networking teens report video posting. And in a striking departure from the trends observed with photo posting, online teen boys are almost twice as likely as online teen girls to post video files (19% vs. 10%). Not even the highly-wired and active segment of older girls can compete with boys in this instance; 21% of older boys post video, while just 10% of older girls do so. Overall, 57% of all online teens have watched a video on a video sharing site like YouTube or GoogleVideo.

Videos are not restricted as often as photos.

For the most part, teens who post video files want them to be seen. Just 19% of video posters say they restrict access to their videos "most of the time." As previously mentioned, that compares to 39% of photo posting teens who "most of the time" set

limits on who can view the photos they post. Over one-third of teens who post videos (35%) say they restrict access to their videos "only sometimes" and 46% say they "never" limit who can watch their videos.

The group of teens who post videos (n=124) is too small to note any significant variations in privacy restrictions according to gender, age or other demographic characteristics. It is also important to note that when teens say that they have restricted access to content they have posted online, it may mean making it visible only to friends, and it also may mean flagging it as content that is only appropriate for adults.

Posting photos and videos starts a conversation. Most teens receive some feedback on the content they post online.

The posting of content does not happen in a vacuum. Teens and adults post content so that it might be seen by an audience, regardless of how that audience is limited by restrictions set on the content by the content poster. And sometimes that audience responds to the content posted online, making the content as much about interaction with others as it is about sharing with them. About half (52%) of teens who post photos online say that people comment or respond to their photos "sometimes." Another third (37%) say that their audience comments on their posted photos "most of the time." Only 10% of teens who post photos online say that people "never" comment on what they have posted.

Video posters report a similar incidence of commenting on the videos they post online – a little under half (48%) say that people "sometimes" comment on their video postings. A quarter (24%) say that people comment on their online videos "most of the time." Another quarter (27%) say that they "never" get comments on posted videos.

Teenagers' disclosure of personal information does not follow clear patterns.

Whether in an online or offline context, teenagers do not fall neatly into clear-cut groups when looking at the type of information they are willing to disclose or the ways they restrict access to the information that they do share. For instance, those who restrict access to their profiles are not always more forthcoming with the range of information they share, but neither are they completely conservative across the board. Likewise, those who restrict access to their profile are actually more likely to post fake information there, rather than the other way around. Perhaps this is because teens are referring to the basic placeholder information that is posted to the "front page" of one's profile – which is visible to anyone, even when the rest of your profile is restricted – or perhaps these teens who post fake information to a friends-only profile are simply more comfortable joking around and being silly with friends.

Still, there are general tendencies that ring true across many of the different scenarios we posed. Older teens post more personal information to their profiles in a more public manner when compared with younger teens. Girls are more reticent about posting

personal information online than boys. In our focus groups, young women and the younger boys told us that their main concern when thinking about what information to share online was how easy it would be to physically contact them in person because of access to that information. Teens make a serious distinction between online harassment and physical harm, and that distinction informs many of the choices they make to share online.

Most teens have a good grasp of how easy it would be to find them online – the majority of teens with profiles believe that they've taken enough steps to protect their privacy from all but the most determined online searcher.

But perhaps the most important takeaway is that decisions about privacy are highly context dependant: How much information have you shared? Is it all true? Is your profile private? Do you live in a small town or big city? How did you create your network of online "friends?" How old are you? Are you male or female? Do your parents have lots of rules about internet use? Do your parents view your profile? All these questions and more inform the decisions that teens make about how they share themselves online. Many, but not all, teens are aware of the risks of putting information online in a public and durable environment. Many, but certainly not all, teens make reasonable, informed choices about what to share in what context.

Social network use and online self-presentations for teens combine the difficult recipe of tremendous facility with and enjoyment of technology, and a desire to meet, make and reinforce friendships, during a time of personal growth, risk-taking and testing. All of these factors combined with the myriad ways that teens can control the release of their online information paint a grey and fragmented portrait of teens and online privacy.

Part 4.

Friendship, Strangers and Safety in Online Social Networks

One in four online teens make friends on social networks.

Teens use social networks for the creation and the maintenance of friendships. Most teens are using the networks to stay in touch with people they already know, either friends that they see a lot (91% of social networking teens have done this) or friends that they rarely see in person (82%).

Teens also use the online networks to make new friends; 49% of social network users (27% of online teens) say they use the networks to make new friends. Boys are more likely to report using the networks to make new friends than girls. Teens from middle and lower income families were more likely to say that they use the sites to make new friends than higher income teens. A bit more than a third (37%) of teens from households earning more than $75,000 annually said they used social networks to make new friends, compared with 57% of teens from families earning less than $75,000 annually. Children of single parents were also much more likely to use online social networks to find new friends than teens with married parents.

Teens told us in their own words about how they use social network sites to make friends and communicate with people. For some teens it is how they make new friends "I like it. I just like networking, that's about it," said one late high school-aged boy. "…my school is pretty big, so if I didn't know a person I can meet them through MySpace and just see them at school then. That's how I make friends, I guess." Another high school boy echoed his sentiments: "When you look at their profile you get to see who they are and see if they might like the same things you like. You might like how they look or something like that." And for some teens, high school-aged boys in particular, it is a way to meet and approach potential romantic partners. One high school boy said, "Yes, like if you're just on there and you're looking through and you see a good-looking girl on there and she wants to be my friend and you accept!"

For some teens, making friends on social networks is less about finding common ground, and more about avoiding giving offense. One middle school-aged girl told us "My friends will have friends that I don't know. You look at them…Then you feel bad because they're like, 'Oh, well, I just saw you in this play, be my friend.' And then you're like, 'Okay.' All right, you know, why not." Another middle school girl elaborated, "I mean, I'm not really making new friends, I'm just not hurting peoples' feelings. If I know that

they're friends with someone else that I don't feel like they're [going to] come and attack me, and so it's safe."

16% of teens are connected to "friends" on social networking sites who they have not met in person.

As the above quotes suggest, some social networking teens report that their online friends are people that they have never met in person. One in six or 17% of online teens and 31% of social networking teens have "friends" on their social networking profile who they have personally never met. More than two-thirds (69%) of social networking teens say they do not have unmet friends in their network. Older teen boys (ages 15-17) are much more likely than any other group to say that they have friends in their network who they have never met in person. Nearly half of social network-using older teen boys (47%) have friends in their social network who they have never met. For older girls, only 28% report having people they have never met in their networks. About 1 in 3 (29%) of younger boys report having friends they have never met, and just 22% of younger girls say the same.

Some un-met online friends are connected through other friends...

Out of the small group of teens who have friends in their social networks who they have never met in person, many have friends who are in some way connected to an offline friend, and a smaller number have friends in their network who are in no way connected to online or offline friends. 12% of online teens have "friends" on social networking sites whom they have never met, but who have *some connection* to their offline friends.

> "If people I don't know request to be my friend I'll add them but I don't talk to them. I don't know why I add them if I don't talk to them, now that I think about it. That's kind of stupid. It just means they're on my friends list. I don't really get anything out of it. They can just send me comments."
>
> – Girl, Late High School

To look at the data another way, 70% of social networking teens with un-met "friends" say some of these people have a connection to their offline friends – people like a chemistry partner's older sister, or the cousin of a good friend. It also could be that these friends have simply been "friended" by another friend of the social network user, and are in fact, true strangers with no offline connection. There are not statistically significant differences between age groups and girls and boys with these kinds of online friends.

…Others have friends in their social networks that neither they nor their friends have ever met.

A small subset of teens with unmet friends in their social network say that some of these friends have *no connection* to their online or offline friends. This group represents just 9% of online teens and a bit more than half (53%) of teens with un-met friends. However, the practice of "friending" celebrities, musicians and political candidates in order to be affiliated with them in some way is a popular practice on social networks, and we do not know how many of these profiles account for links to unmet and unknown online "friends."

> "i have a myspace and a xanga. most of the people i meet online are friends of friends of mine so i know they're really who they say they are and stuff. i think its really good. i got to know one of my present best friends thanks to myspace."
>
> – Girl, Late High School

Even though girls are less likely to have friends in their social network whom they have never met, those girls that do have unmet friends are more likely than boys with un-met friends to say that these people have no connection to online or offline acquaintances. Two-thirds (66%) of girls with un-met online friends say that they have social network friends who have no connection to any of their online or offline friends – 42% of boys with un-met friends say that at least some of their social networking friends are totally unconnected with other online or offline friends. Most of the difference between boys and girls comes from the older girls (ages 15-17) in this group, of whom 72% say they have friends online who they have not met who are not connected to other online or offline friends. Just 39% of boys of the same age report these kinds of friends.

> "I know when I get a friend request, if I don't know the person I won't automatically deny them, I'll go to their page and see who's in their top eight and see if I know any of their friends... They're not like strangers if your good friend knows them, like they are to you, but it's not like they're dangerous."
>
> – Girl, Middle School

32% of online teens have been contacted online by a complete stranger. Profile-owning teens are much more likely to have been contacted.

In some cases teens are contacted online by complete strangers, through social networks or other means of online communication like IM or email or in chat rooms. Out of online

teens, nearly a third (32%) have been contacted online by someone who was a complete stranger and who had no connection to any of their friends.

In our first study of teen internet usage in 2000, we reported that 57% of parents were worried that strangers would contact their children online. At that time, close to 60% of teens had received an instant message or email from a stranger and 50% of teens who were using online communication tools said they had exchanged emails or instant messages with someone they had never met in person.

In our current study, online girls (39%) and older teens ages 15-17 (41%) were more likely than boys or younger teens to have been contacted online by a stranger. Older girls were the most likely to report some kind of stranger contact, with half (51%) saying that they had been contacted online by someone unknown to them. Only 30% of older boys report similar stranger contact.

Social network-using teens are more likely to have been contacted by a complete stranger than teens who do not use the networks; 43% of teens who use social networks have been contacted by a stranger online, while just 17% of teens who do not use social networks have had that experience. The data is similar for teens with online profiles – 44% of profile owners have been contacted online by a stranger, while just 16% of those with out online profiles have been contacted by someone unknown to them or their friends.

However, as in the offline world, stranger contact can take many forms. An unsolicited spam email message, instant message or comment from a stranger might be cause for alarm and distress or it may simply get deleted or ignored by the teen. And some strangers who contact teens may, in fact, turn out to be like-minded peers in search of friends.

Most Teens Ignore Strangers Who Contact Them Online

Thinking about the LAST time you were contacted online by someone who was a complete stranger to you, how did you respond?

Just ignored it or deleted it	65%
Responded so I could find out more about the person	21%
Responded and told them to leave me alone	8%
Told an adult or someone in authority	3%
Other	3%

Note: Table may exceed 100% due to multiple responses

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project Parents and Teens Survey, October-November 2006. Based on teens who have been contacted online by a stranger [n=291]. Margin of error is ±4%.

Most teens ignore or delete stranger contact and are not bothered by it.

Out of all the teens contacted online by strangers, the vast majority of them responded to the most recent occurrence by ignoring or deleting the contact. Nearly two-thirds (65%) of teens who had been contacted by a stranger ignored or deleted the contact. Another 21% of contacted teens responded to the stranger so that they could find out more about the person. Older teens, and particularly older teen boys, were more likely to respond to the stranger contact with requests for more information to assess the level of threat posed by the communication.

> "It gets weird. I think two weeks ago I got a request. And one of my friends hit approve. And the person, this guy started sending me weird comments….And he's sending me these comments like oh, you're so hot, where do you live? I want to meet you. That gets a little weird."
>
> – Girl, Late High School

Another 8% of teens who were contacted by people unknown to them responded to the most recent contact by responding and telling the author to leave them alone. Just 3% of teens told an adult or someone in authority and another 3% took some other kind of action, including blocking the person from contacting them, or asking the individual to identify themselves with their real name.

While profile-owning and social network-using teens are more likely to have been contacted online by strangers, their behavior in response to the stranger contact is not significantly different from online teens who do not have a profile and who do not use social networks.

> "yeah ive had instant messages from random people i didnt know. i was really uncomfortable but usually its a friends friend. and if its not i bs everything about myself or i just ignore them or block them all together."
>
> – Girl, Late High School

7% of online teens say they have been scared or uncomfortable after being contacted by a stranger online.

Out of all the times online teens have been contacted by strangers, a relatively small percentage of the teens report ever feeling scared or uncomfortable. Teens who have been contacted online by people unknown to them typically say they have not felt scared or uncomfortable because of these contacts. Three-quarters (77%) of teens who have been contacted say they have never felt scared or uncomfortable, compared with 23% of contacted teens who have felt scared or uncomfortable after communication with a stranger. Looking at online teens as a whole, roughly 93% have never had the experience

of being contacted online by a stranger in a way that made them feel scared or uncomfortable, while 7% have experienced this.

> "My brother got into an online relationship with a [older] girl. He told her where he lived and she moved to [town] the next week. She would show up at our house. She followed me around. 'Where is your brother?'" – Girl, Early High School

Girls are more likely than boys to report feeling scared or uncomfortable because of a stranger contact. Of girls who have been contacted online by someone unknown to them, 27% said they felt scared or uncomfortable, while only 15% of boys reported the same feelings. There is no significant difference between age groups in reporting feeling scared or uncomfortable after stranger contact – about one in 4 of teens contacted in either age group reported these feelings. Profile-owning teens are no more likely than their counterparts to feel scared or uncomfortable because of contact from someone they do not know.

Teens feel that they are more accessible to strangers when they are online.

Asked where they thought teens were most likely to be approached by a stranger, the majority of online teens believed that people their age were most likely to be approached by strangers online rather than offline. Nearly three-quarters (73%) of online teens believe that someone their age is most likely to be approached by a someone unknown to them online, while 23% of online teens believe it is more likely to take place offline. Another three percent of teens think it happens with equal frequency online or offline. Teens present a unified front on this question, with little variation between boys, girls, age groups or between teens with online profiles and those without them.

> "My cousin met this guy. He seemed nice. He said he was 16 and went to a military academy. He gave my cousin his cell phone number. I think he did that so he could get hers. She called him. He really was 16. When she called him he got all her information. He got her phone number and kept on calling her."
>
> – Girl, Early High

Teens appear to be acting on the awareness that they are more accessible to outside contact when they are online. For the most part, the warnings and concern coming from parents and educators are not falling on deaf ears. While a first name and a photo are standard features of most teenagers' online profiles, they rarely post personal information such as their full name, home phone number or cell phone number to a public profile.

Other research echoes these findings; a recent content analysis study of 1,475 randomly selected MySpace profiles by Criminal Justice professors at Florida Atlantic University and the University of Wisconsin found that a large segment of teens restricted access to their profiles, and of those with public profiles, a small minority included personal information such as a full name or cell phone number.[11]

Older boys consider themselves to be more accessible and are more likely to make new friends through social networking sites.

While older girls are, in many ways, the power users of social networking sites and have been the primary focus of safety concerns, older boys are the ones who are most likely to use the sites to make new friends. Fully 60% of older boys who use social networking sites say they use them to make new friends, compared with just 46% of older girls, and roughly the same segment of younger boys (44%) and younger girls (48%).

Older boys are also more likely to say it would be "pretty easy" to find out who they are from the information posted to their profile; 36% of older boys with profiles report this, compared with 23% of older girls and smaller segments of younger boys (18%) and younger girls (11%).

Teens who use social networking sites to meet new friends are more accessible to strangers, but are no more likely to have experienced stranger contact that made them scared or uncomfortable.

In general, looking at both boys and girls, teens who say they use social networking sites to make new friends are more likely than the average profile-owning teen to have a publicly viewable profile. These "friending" teens who are deliberately trying to meet new people are also more likely to post photos of themselves, as well as links to their blog on their profile. More of these "friending" teens have unmet friends in their network when compared with the average profile-owning teen, and they are more likely to have been contacted by a stranger online. However, they are no more likely to have experienced a contact that made them scared or uncomfortable.

This suggests several possible implications that might be explored in future research. First, since boys are more likely to use the sites for friending, and are much more likely to have unmet friends in their network, a special analysis of *teen girls* who actively make new friends on the networks would help to explain the extent to which girls' negative experiences with stranger contact may or may not be related to networking activity on the sites. Second, those who have had a negative experience with stranger contact online may be more wary of using social networking sites to make friends, and may now make more conservative choices about the information they disclose online as a result of their experiences. As a result, they may have eschewed social networking sites altogether, or simply made the choice to restrict access to their profile. This sample was too small to

[11] See Hinduja and Patchin, "Personal Information of Adolescents on the Internet: A Quantitative Content Analysis of MySpace," presented to the 2007 Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences Conference in Seattle.

yield reliable answers to these questions, but future studies that focus on those who have had negative experiences would shed additional light on the privacy choices teens make in different online contexts and in response to different experiences.

Methodology

The Parents & Teens 2006 Survey, sponsored by the Pew Internet and American Life Project, obtained telephone interviews with a nationally representative sample of 935 teens age 12 to 17 years-old and their parents living in continental United States telephone households. The survey was conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates International. The interviews were done in English by Princeton Data Source, LLC from October 23 to November 19, 2006. Statistical results are weighted to correct known demographic discrepancies. The margin of sampling error for the complete set of weighted data is ±3.7%.

Prior to fielding the telephone survey, a series of six in-person focus groups with middle and high school students in two American cities was conducted by Harris Interactive in June of 2006. Groups were single gender, and grouped in three grade ranges –7th and 8th, 9th and 10th, and 11th and 12th grades. Each group contained 7 – 8 participants. After completing the 6 in-person focus groups, a 7th online, mixed gender high school age focus group was also conducted by Harris Interactive. Participants were screened to meet several criteria. All participants had internet access at home. Participants in the in-person focus groups spent at least 5 hours per week online and at least half of the participants accessed social networking sites at least a few times a month. Participants in the online focus group spent at least 15 hours per week online and at least 80% of participants accessed social networking sites at least a few times a month. At least half of participants in the in-person and online focus groups had their own cell phone and at least half of the girls and three-quarters of the boys participated in electronic or online gaming. The participants reflected a range of household income levels and racial and ethnic backgrounds. The 24 participants in the online focus group lived in states from across the United States.

These qualitative results from the focus groups are not representative of the US teen population. All participants were paid a modest cash incentive for their participation.

Details on the design, execution and analysis of the telephone survey are discussed below.

DESIGN AND DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

Sample Design

The sample was designed to represent all teens ages 12 to 17 living in continental U.S. telephone households. The sample is also representative of parents living with their teenage children.

The telephone sample was pulled from previous PIAL projects fielded in 2004, 2005, and 2006. Households with a child age 18 or younger were called back and screened to find 12 to 17 year-olds. The original telephone samples were provided by Survey Sampling International, LLC (SSI) according to PSRAI specifications. These samples were drawn using standard list-assisted random digit dialing (RDD) methodology.

Contact Procedures

Interviews were conducted from October 23 to November 19, 2006. As many as 10 attempts were made to contact every sampled telephone number. Sample was released for interviewing in replicates, which are representative subsamples of the larger sample. Using replicates to control the release of sample ensures that complete call procedures are followed for the entire sample.

Calls were staggered over times of day and days of the week to maximize the chance of making contact with potential respondents. Each household received at least one daytime call in an attempt to find someone at home. In each contacted household, interviewers first determined if a child age 12 to 17 lived in the household. Households with no children in the target age range were deemed ineligible and screened out. In eligible households, interviewers first conducted a short interview with a parent or guardian, then interviews were conducted with the target child.

WEIGHTING AND ANALYSIS

Weighting is generally used in survey analysis to compensate for patterns of nonresponse that might bias results. The interviewed sample was weighted to match national parameters for both parent and child demographics. The parent demographics used for weighting were: sex; age; education; race; Hispanic origin; marital status and region (U.S. Census definitions). The child demographics used for weighting were gender and age. These parameters came from a special analysis of the Census Bureau's 2005 Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) that included all households in the continental United States that had a telephone.

Weighting was accomplished using Sample Balancing, a special iterative sample weighting program that simultaneously balances the distributions of all variables using a statistical technique called the Deming Algorithm. Weights were trimmed to prevent

individual interviews from having too much influence on the final results. The use of these weights in statistical analysis ensures that the demographic characteristics of the sample closely approximate the demographic characteristics of the national population. Table 1 compares weighted and unweighted sample distributions to population parameters.

Table 1: Sample Demographics

	Parameter	Unweighted	Weighted
Census Region			
Northeast	19.2	20.2	19.5
Midwest	22.1	28.4	22.6
South	34.9	31.4	34.3
West	23.8	19.9	23.5
Parent's Sex			
Male	44.3	40.6	43.3
Female	55.7	59.4	56.7
Parent's Age			
LT 35	10.5	8.4	9.9
35-39	19.2	15.1	19.0
40-44	28.6	24.5	28.2
45-49	24.4	27.2	25.0
50-54	11.8	15.1	12.0
55+	5.5	9.7	6.0
Parent's Education			
Less than HS grad.	12.5	4.7	10.0
HS grad.	36.7	27.6	36.4
Some college	22.5	27.0	23.7
College grad.	28.3	40.7	30.0
Parent's Race/Ethnicity			
White~Hispanic	67.3	84.7	71.0
Black~Hispanic	10.8	6.8	10.4
Hispanic	15.9	5.5	12.5
Other~Hispanic	6.0	3.1	6.0
Parent's Marital Status			
Married	82.8	79.3	82.3
Not married	17.2	20.7	17.7
Kid's Sex			
Male	51.2	50.4	50.5
Female	48.8	49.6	49.5
Kid's Age			
12	16.7	15.0	16.9
13	16.7	14.3	16.2
14	16.7	16.8	17.1
15	16.7	15.9	16.6
16	16.7	19.6	16.1
17	16.7	18.4	17.1

Effects of Sample Design on Statistical Inference

Post-data collection statistical adjustments require analysis procedures that reflect departures from simple random sampling. PSRAI calculates the effects of these design features so that an appropriate adjustment can be incorporated into tests of statistical significance when using these data. The so-called "design effect" or deff represents the loss in statistical efficiency that results from systematic non-response. The total sample design effect for this survey is 1.36.

PSRAI calculates the composite design effect for a sample of size n, with each case having a weight, w_i as:

$$deff = \frac{n\sum_{i=1}^{n} w_i^2}{\left(\sum_{i=1}^{n} w_i\right)^2}$$

Formula1

In a wide range of situations, the adjusted standard error of a statistic should be calculated by multiplying the usual formula by the square root of the design effect ($\sqrt{deff}$). Thus, the formula for computing the 95% confidence interval around a percentage is:

$$\hat{p} \pm \left(\sqrt{deff} \times 1.96 \sqrt{\frac{\hat{p}(1-\hat{p})}{n}} \right)$$

Formula 2

where $\hat{p}$ is the sample estimate and n is the unweighted number of sample cases in the group being considered.

The survey's margin of error is the largest 95% confidence interval for any estimated proportion based on the total sample— the one around 50%. For example, the margin of error for the entire sample is ±3.7%. This means that in 95 out every 100 samples drawn

using the same methodology, estimated proportions based on the entire sample will be no more than 3.7 percentage points away from their true values in the population. It is important to remember that sampling fluctuations are only one possible source of error in a survey estimate. Other sources, such as respondent selection bias, questionnaire wording and reporting inaccuracy, may contribute additional error of greater or lesser magnitude.

RESPONSE RATE

Table 2 reports the disposition of all sampled callback telephone numbers ever dialed. The response rate estimates the fraction of all eligible respondents in the sample that were ultimately interviewed. At PSRAI it is calculated by taking the product of three component rates[12]:

- Contact rate – the proportion of working numbers where a request for interview was made – of 95 percent [13]
- Cooperation rate – the proportion of contacted numbers where a consent for interview was at least initially obtained, versus those refused – of 62 percent
- Completion rate – the proportion of initially cooperating and eligible interviews that agreed to the child interview and were completed – of 79 percent

Thus the response rate for this survey was 46 percent.[14]

Methodology prepared by Princeton Survey Research Associates International and Harris Interactive

[12] PSRAI's disposition codes and reporting are consistent with the American Association for Public Opinion Research standards.
[13] PSRAI assumes that 75 percent of cases that result in a constant disposition of "No answer" or "Busy" over 10 or more attempts are actually not working numbers.
[14] The response rates for the original surveys that provided the callback sample averaged approximately 30 percent, thus the 46% response rate is a subset of the 30% initial response rate.

Table 2: Sample Disposition

	Final
Total Numbers dialed	7,399
Business	86
Computer/Fax	70
Cell phone	3
Other Not-Working	946
Additional projected NW	245
Working numbers	6,049
Working Rate	**81.8%**
No Answer	17
Busy	4
Answering Machine	201
Callbacks	22
Other Non-Contacts	88
Contacted numbers	5,717
Contact Rate	**94.5%**
Initial Refusals	1,603
Second Refusals	600
Cooperating numbers	3,514
Cooperation Rate	**61.5%**
No Adult in HH	19
Language Barrier	81
Ineligible - screenout	2,232
Eligible numbers	1,182
Eligibility Rate	**33.6%**
Interrupted	247
Completes	935
Completion Rate	**79.1%**
Response Rate	**46.0%**