Teen Online Safety & Digital Reputation Survey

Cox Communications Teen Online Safety & Digital Reputation Survey in Partnership with the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children® (NCMEC) (Fielded among teens ages 13-17)

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Contents

- Background, Objectives, & Methodology  Page 2
- Executive Summary & Implications  Page 7
- Detailed Findings  Page 10
  - Online behaviors & attitudes
  - Online reputation management
  - Teens’ vulnerability
  - The gaps between knowledge, concern, & behavior
  - Online profile images
  - The current & future role of social media & the internet
- Demographics  Page 36
Advancing Cox’s commitment to online safety

- As part of its continuing commitment to youth, and in partnership with The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC), Cox Communications sought to better understand teen online behavior and attitudes with a specific focus on digital reputations.
- Cox Communications and TRU have partnered together in previous waves of research to understand teens’ online behavior.
- In an effort to update this research with 2010 data, as well as explore new territory around digital reputations, TRU was commissioned to conduct quantitative research among teens which would...
  - Provide a fresh, up-to-date perspective on these behaviors and attitudes
  - Uncover “press-worthy” insights that might draw attention to these issues
Objectives

Exploring new territory around digital reputations

- Measure teens’ tendency to exhibit potentially risky behavior online, observing the trend that has taken place in the past 5 years.
- Gauge perceptions about the safety or potential risk associated with various online activities, such as posting photos, videos, or other personal content.
- Determine teens’ actual vs. perceived vulnerability based on specific online behaviors and associated attitudes.
- Understand what type of image teens are portraying online, and how this differs, if at all, from the image portrayed in real-life.
- Understand beliefs and perceptions on if/how their current online behavior can affect various aspects of their future.
Online survey among 13- to 17-year-olds

- TRU conducted a total of 1,032 online interviews teens ages 13 to 17.
  - Interviews were distributed evenly by age and gender.
  - African-American and Hispanic males each comprised ~12% of the sample.
  - Surveys were nationally dispersed consistent with U.S. Census figures to ensure a representative geographic mix.
  - Each interview was approximately 15 minutes in length.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13- to 15-year-olds</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>611</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16- to 17-year-olds</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>498</td>
<td>534</td>
<td>1,032</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How to read the comparison data

- Significance testing has been conducted for all data comparisons.
  - A capital letter indicates a significant difference at the 95% confidence level.
  - A lower case letter indicates a significant difference at the 90% confidence level.
  - The absence of a letter indicates no significant difference.

Example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2007 (A)</th>
<th>2010 (B)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>76 A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
<td>54 a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>53</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Contents

- Background, Objectives, & Methodology  Page 2
- **Executive Summary & Implications**  Page 7
- Detailed Findings  Page 10
  - Online behaviors & attitudes
  - Online reputation management
  - Teens’ vulnerability
  - The gaps between knowledge, concern, & behavior
  - Online profile images
  - The current & future role of social media & the internet
- **Demographics**  Page 36
### Executive Summary

While expressing confidence in their own online safety, teens continue to take risks and remain vulnerable

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Teens are seemingly aware of the risks of online behaviors: Most acknowledge that certain online behaviors can impact multiple facets of life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Further, they claim they carefully manage the image they project online: Most would be very upset if their reputation were damaged by online posts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yet, they fail to take basic precautionary steps to protect themselves online: Much of what they post online is hasty and accessible to strangers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Despite strong concern about the consequences, teens continue to post personal info online: This trend has increased over the past few years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Teens claim their online profiles reflect an accurate, positive image of themselves: Teens say, “It’s them, not me,” who try to appear cooler online.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Teens recognize negative online behaviors accompany society’s reliance on social media: And, most expect little improvement over the next 5 years.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Implementing safe online practices among teens and involving parents

Teens must be jolted out of their false sense of security: Filled with the excitement that surrounds new technology and sure of their own digital savviness, teens feel immune to the dangers and consequences that may attend some online behaviors. They frequently overestimate their own capacity to deal with online risk, believing they are more careful than their peers – they are living with a false sense of security.

Teens lack credible guidance: TRU believes teens’ online risk-taking is, in some ways, even more insidious than risk-taking in other aspects of their lives. In areas typically associated with teen risk – driving, drinking, drugs, sex – teens can rely on parents to provide guidance. With technology, teens are often ahead of their parents, making parenting difficult and reinforcing teens’ vulnerability.

Parents must be challenged to step up to the plate: Parents must take initiative to get familiar with the complexities of teens’ online universe. They must seek out tools that can empower them to provide guidance to their teens. Simple conversations between parents and their teens can be productive first steps in helping parents become aware of their teen’s online behaviors and helping teens realize and address their online vulnerability.
Contents

- Background, Objectives, & Methodology  Page 2
- Executive Summary & Implications  Page 7
- Detailed Findings  Page 10
  - Online behaviors & attitudes
  - Online reputation management
  - Teens’ vulnerability
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- Demographics  Page 36
Teen use technology that *works for them* – cellphones, social networking, and gaming have taken huge jumps.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2006 (A)</th>
<th>2010 (B)</th>
<th>% of teens who have...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>95</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>Personal email address</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>84 A</td>
<td>Cell phone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>84 A</td>
<td>Social networking profile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84 B</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>IM screen name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>45 A</td>
<td>Game system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37 B</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Blog</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q.4 Which of the following do you have? (n=1,032 Total teens)
Teens know online posts can impact many aspects of life

% of teens who believe each can be affected by online posts

- **82%** Their reputation
- **80%** Their safety
- **72%** Their friendships
- **60%** Their future, in general
- **59%** Their dating relationships
- **59%** Their ability to get a job in the future
- **55%** Their chances of getting accepted into the college of their choice

Q.11 Which, if any, do you think can be affected by what you post online (photos, videos, blogs, comments, status updates, etc.)? (n=1,032 Total teens)
Most say they carefully manage their online reputation

(68%) agree “I care a lot about the image I portray of myself online”

Nearly as many (64%) say the same of most people their age

(67%) agree “I carefully manage the image I portray of myself online”

Only 34% say the same of most people their age

Q.13 How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following? Top 2 Box (n=1,032 Total teens)
And, most would be upset if their reputation were damaged

73% would be very upset if their reputation was damaged by content posted online

Q.22 How upset would you feel if your reputation was damaged based on the information, photos, videos, and other content posted online? Top 2 Box (n=1,032 Total teens)
Losing the respect of their family is what they fear most

### Rank order of consequences of risky online posts teens fear most:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Consequence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Losing the respect of family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Getting in trouble with parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Losing the respect of friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Jeopardizing their physical safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Jeopardizing college opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Jeopardizing future job opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Getting in trouble with teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Jeopardizing dating opportunities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q.25 Which of the following consequences of risky online posts do you fear the most? (n=1,032 Total teens)
Yet many don’t think before posting photos of themselves…

% of teens who NEVER do the following before posting photos of themselves online:

- **62** Check with a parent
- **43** Ask a friend’s opinion
- **35** Consider the long-term consequences
- **29** Consider what authority figures will think about them
- **23** Consider what their peers will think about them

Q.20 How often do you do each of the following before posting a photo of yourself online? (n=1,032 Total teens)
Detailed Findings: Teens’ vulnerability

...or before posting a comment or status update

% of teens who NEVER do the following before posting a comment or status update online:

- Check with a parent: 67%
- Ask a friend’s opinion: 56%
- Consider the long-term consequences: 41%
- Consider what authority figures will think about them: 33%
- Consider what their peers will think about them: 24%
- Proofread it: 18%

Q.21 How often do you do each of the following before posting a comment or status update or other public post online? (n=1,032 Total teens)
Many unknowingly place themselves at risk by allowing unrestricted access to their online profiles.
And many are even social network friends with **strangers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of teens who are social network friends with...</th>
<th>92%</th>
<th>Someone they don’t know well, if at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>An acquaintance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>Someone they’ve never communicated with in person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>Someone they’ve never communicated with at all</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Yet, teens fail to recognize their own vulnerability

Nearly half (47%) believe they have complete control over what happens with photos, videos, and other content they post online.

Q.13 How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following? Top 2 Box (n=1,032 Total teens)
Teens recognize danger linked with certain online behavior

Only...

1 in 3

Considers it safe to have **personal info** on a blog or social network site (33%)

However...

This is up from **20%** just 3 years ago (2007)

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Q.10 How safe do you think it is to have personal information or photos on a public blog or social network site (like MySpace, Facebook, etc.)? Top 2 Box (n=1,032 Total teens)
And many express concern about the consequences

62%
Express concern that their reputation could be damaged based on info, photos, or videos posted online

% of teens who express concern that online posts will lead to...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>%</th>
<th>Concern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>Personal info unknowingly ending up online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69</td>
<td>Someone using personal info undesirably</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>Their photos unknowingly ending up online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>A negative effect on their future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>Someone causing them physical harm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>Missed job opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>Getting in trouble with parents/teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>Not getting accepted into choice college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>Friends/family losing respect for them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Missed dating opportunities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q.14 How concerned are you, if at all, about each of the following? – Top 3 Box (n=1,032 Total teens)
Despite concern about posting contact info online, most do it anyway

88% Worry about the consequences of posting their contact info online

80% Do it anyway

2007 (A) 2010 (B) % of teens who have posted...

59 71 A The city they live in
49 63 A The name of their school
8 29 A Their cell phone number
9 9 A Their physical location
Risky postings are also worrisome, but some still do it

87% Worry about the consequences of making risky posts online

1 in 5 Do it anyway (20%)

% of teens who have posted...

13 Sexual comments/posts
9 Photos, videos, or posts with cigarettes, alcohol, or drugs
6 Photos, videos, or posts with physical fighting
3 Revealing, sexual, or naked photos or videos of themselves

42% Have posted curse words online

Q.7 Have you ever posted/shared the following types of information online? (n=1,032 Total teens)
Q.8 How worried are you about the consequences of posting any of this information? Top 2 Box (n=1,032 Total teens)
Even seemingly innocent posts raise concerns among teens; yet the majority disregard these concerns.

7 in 10 Worry about them (71%)
9 in 10 Post them anyway (92%)

% of teens who have posted...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2007 (A)</th>
<th>2010 (B)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Photos or videos of themselves</td>
<td>Photos or videos of friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82 A</td>
<td>73 A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q.7 Have you ever posted/shared the following types of information online? (n=1,032 Total teens)

Q.8 How worried are you about the consequences of posting any of this information? Top 2 Box (n=1,032 Total teens)
Most say their online profiles present them positively

Words teens say peers AND teachers would use to describe them, based only on their online profile

Q.15 If someone your age came across your online profile(s), what words would he/she use to describe you, based only on what he/she sees online?  (n=1,032 Total teens)

Q.16 If one of your teachers came across your online profile(s), what words would he/she use to describe you, based only on what he/she sees online?  (n=1,032 Total teens)
Most claim this is the same image they project in person

Only 14% say their online profiles portray a different image than the image they portray in person.

Q.17 How different do you think the image you portray online is from the image you portray in person? (n=1,032 Total teens)
Detailed Findings: Online profile images

Few admit to projecting a cooler/different image online...

Only 16%

Agree: “I use social networks to make myself look cooler than I really am”

Only 11%

Agree: “I try to project an online image that is very different from who I am in real-life”

Q.13 How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following? Top 2 Box (n=1,032 Total teens)
But they’re quick to accuse other teens of doing so

Q.13 How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following? Top 2 Box (n=1,032 Total teens)

65% Agree: “Most people my age use social networks to make themselves look cooler than they really are”

54% Agree: “Most people my age try to project an online image that is very different from who they are in real-life”
Despite their alleged “positive” online image, many would be embarrassed if certain people viewed their profile.

% of teens who would be embarrassed if someone viewed their online profile:

- Their teachers: 63%
- Their boyfriend / girlfriend’s parents: 63%
- Their own parents: 61%
- Their best friend’s parents: 45%
- Their boyfriend / girlfriend: 23%

Q.19 Would you be embarrassed if any of the following people viewed your online profile(s) right now, including your photos, videos, posts, etc.? (n=1,032 Total teens)
Teens don’t deny society’s dependence on the internet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>% of Teens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Keeping in touch with family</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staying in touch with current world events</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staying in touch with local community events</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making new friends</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding a job</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operating a business</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buying a car</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding a spouse / partner</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting an education</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buying a house</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q.28 How much do you think people today rely on the internet and social media platforms (such as social network sites like Facebook or MySpace, professional sites like LinkedIn, dating sites like Match or eHarmony, or micro-blogging sites like Twitter) for each of the following? Top 2 Box (n=1,032 Total teens)
And they expect this reliance will only get stronger

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of teens who say people will rely more on the internet and social media platforms in the next 5 years for...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Keeping in touch with family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding a job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operating a business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staying in touch with current world events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making new friends</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q.29 Thinking ahead to five years from now, do you think people will rely more, less, or about the same on the internet and social media platforms (such as social network sites like Facebook or MySpace, professional sites like LinkedIn, dating sites like Match or eHarmony, or micro-blogging sites like Twitter) for each of the following? Top 2 Box (n=1,032 Total teens)
With online dependence come serious online issues

% of teens who consider each as a very serious issue today...

- Texting while driving: 84%
- Identity theft: 81%
- Digital bullying: 66%
- Sexting: 63%
- Negative online reputations: 48%
Teens don’t expect much improvement in the next 5 years

% of teens who expect each to stay the same or get worse

- **83%** Negative online reputations
  - Same: 45
  - Worse: 37
- **83%** Sexting
  - Same: 34
  - Worse: 49
- **79%** Digital bullying
  - Same: 40
  - Worse: 39
- **76%** Identity theft
  - Same: 32
  - Worse: 44
- **59%** Texting while driving
  - Same: 23
  - Worse: 36

Q.27 Thinking ahead five years from now, do you expect each of these issues will get better, get worse, or stay the same?
Top 2 Box (n=1,032 Total teens)
Their predictions for the future may be a result of the past.

The percent who’ve experienced bullying hasn’t changed much in the past few years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Harassed or bullied</th>
<th>In person</th>
<th>Online</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>17% (via text message)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q.12 Have you ever been harassed or bullied? (n=1,032 Total teens)
Contents

- Background, Objectives, & Methodology .............................................. Page 2
- Executive Summary & Implications .................................................. Page 7
- Detailed Findings
  - Online behaviors & attitudes
  - Online reputation management
  - Teens’ vulnerability
  - The gaps between knowledge, concern, & behavior
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- Demographics .......................................................................................... Page 36
Demographics

Gender, age, ethnicity

Q.1 Are you male or female? (n=1,032 Total teens)
- Male: 48%
- Female: 52%

Q.2 What is your age? (n=1,032 Total teens)
- 15: 20%
- 14: 19%
- 13: 17%
- 12: 13%
- 11: 16%
- 10: 17%

Q.3 Are you...? (n=1,032 Total teens)
- Caucasian: 72%
- Hispanic: 12%
- African-American: 12%
- Asian: 6%
- Other: 3%
Demographics

Place of residence

Region

- WEST 30%
- MIDWEST 17%
- EAST 26%
- SOUTH 27%

Urbanicity

- Suburban 55%
- Urban 24%
- Rural 21%

Q.30 What state do you live in? (n=1,032 Total teens)
Q.32 Which of the following best describes where you live? (n=1,032 Total teens)