

Parents in the dark

A recent Symantec study, the Norton Online Living Report, fielded by Harris Interactive, reports how kids and adults are spending their time online, do they talk to strangers, treat online friends different than offline friends, look for a date, pay a bill, play a game, or compare to the rest of the world?

Of thousands of children and adults, Internet users in the US, UK, Australia, Germany, France, Brazil, China and Japan, 52% around the world report having made friends online, suggesting that "don't talk to strangers" doesn't apply when in online worlds. In addition, 46% of users who made friends online said they enjoyed those relationships as much or more than friendships made offline. Other online activities ranking high around the world are dating (23%), using social networking sites (50%), and playing games (72%).

The study found that parents in the US think their kids are online two hours a month, but in reality, kids report spending 20 hours a month online. And, 41% of US teens ages 13-17 years old agree that their parent have no idea what they are looking at online.

- 35% of US online children ages 8-17 have made friends online compared to 50% of US teens ages 13-17 who report that they have made friends with people online. One in three US children report that they prefer to spend time with their online friends the same amount or more than their offline friends.
- 76% of US teens ages 13-17 years old "constantly," "frequently" or "sometimes" visit social networking sites. Globally, about half of boys (51%) and girls (48%) visit social networking sites.
- Kids take after their parents when it comes to social networking. 47% of US parents "constantly," "frequently" or "sometimes" use social networks while 46% of US children report the same. When you look at China, the numbers are 78% of adults and 85% of children.
- 35% of US children report being "very confident" or "confident" in shopping online. This number shoots to 69% among children in China.
- About 4 in 10 US teens ages 13-17 have received an online request for personal information.
- US children report that 16% of them have been approached online by a stranger. However, US adults believe that just 6% of children have been approached online by a stranger.
- On average, only a third of parents worldwide set parental controls and monitor their children's online activities.

Other key findings from the Norton Online Living Report...

- About a third of online adults globally work on their personal blog at least sometimes. This number skyrockets to 86% among Chinese and 44% among Brazilians.
- More men (26%) globally than woman (19%) report that they have dated online.
- 79% of consumers across the globe report reading news from online sites or blogs at least an hour a month, compared to 85% who report reading news from a printed newspaper or magazine at least one hour per month.
- About half of adult online users across the globe get beauty and/or fashion advice online at least "sometimes." China leads the pack with 82% of online users.
- About 4 in 10 online adults in all countries report visiting pornographic websites, with about one-half of Chinese (51%) and Brazilians (55%) reporting doing the same. Globally, men (58%) are much more likely to visit porn sites than women (18%).

Marian Merritt, Internet Safety Advocate, Symantec, concludes that "Parents are in the dark when it comes to knowing what their kids are doing online... this report clearly demonstrates a global digital divide between parents and their cyber-savvy children..."

And Dave Cole, Senior Product Manager, Norton by Symantec, says, "Two-way communications technologies-things like VoIP, chat and instant message-were seamlessly integrated into online games, virtual worlds, e-commerce sites and more... The integration happened so rapidly that we never stopped to think that we were really connecting with strangers... What surprised us was how fast this migration has occurred and how deeply it has infiltrated nearly every activity... "

For more about this study, please visit Symantec [here](#).

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