



Youth & the Internet: *The Online Life of Teenagers*

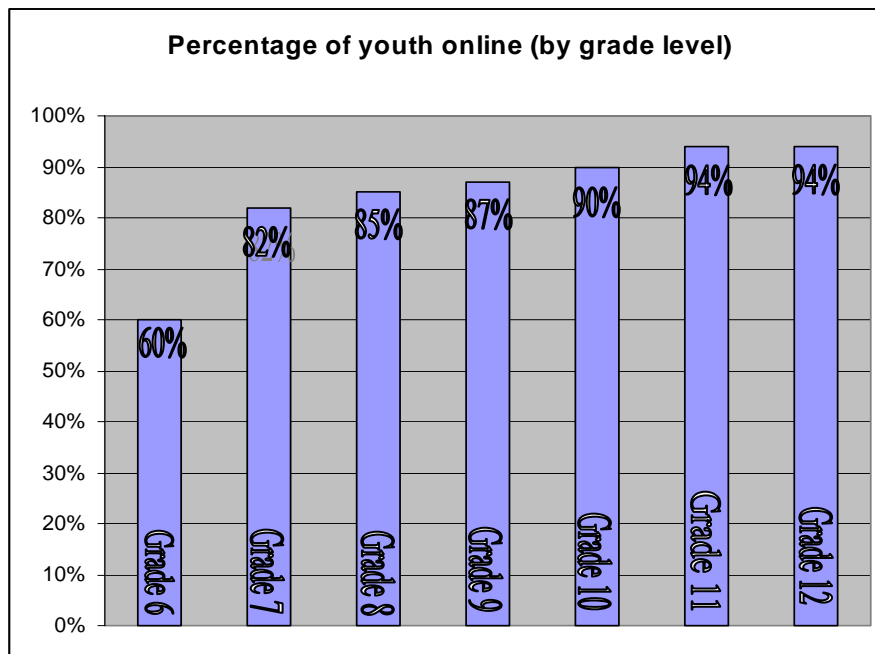
Teens are increasingly plugged into the online universe. Their online behaviors range from innocuous research and Web surfing to more high-risk activities, such as meeting strangers, creating multiple identities, and keeping secrets from their parents about what they do online.

Getting Online

87 percent of youth, or about 21 million teens, go online.¹

- **82 percent** of younger teens (12-14)
- **92 percent** of older teens (15-17)
- **85 percent** of boys
- **88 percent** of girls

Internet access by grade²

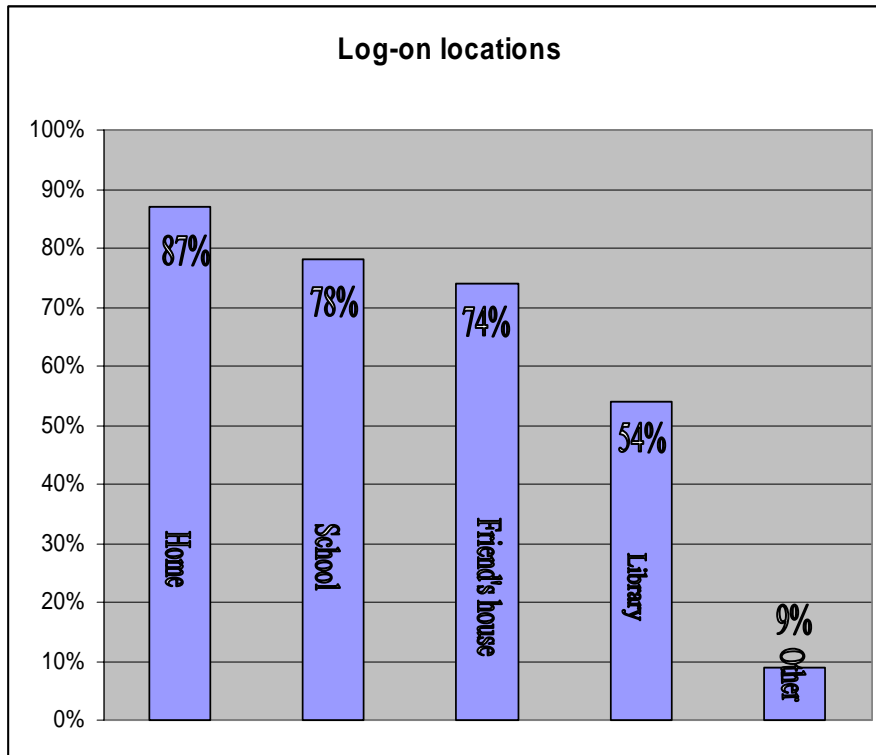


Frequency of use³

- **51 percent** of "wired" teens go online at least once daily
- **59 percent** of older "wired" teens (15-17) go online once a day or more
- **43 percent** of younger "wired" teens (12-14) go online once a day or more

Log-on locations⁴

Internet use in the home⁵



- **73 percent** of teens who go online at home do so in an open family area
- **26 percent** of teens who go online at home do so in a private place, such as a bedroom
- **These numbers are virtually the same as in 2000**, indicating that some parents are unaware or unconcerned about the dangers of unrestricted, secretive Internet activity
- Online parents appear to be more aware of the dangers of private Internet use, as teens with one parent who does not go online are more likely to have private Internet access (**40 percent**) than those whose parents both go online (**25 percent**)

Internet protections

- **54 percent** of parents use Internet filters (up from **41 percent** in December 2000)
- **62 percent** of parents claim to monitor their child's Internet use
- **64 percent** claim to set rules for their teen's Internet use
- **65 percent of parents and 64 percent of teens** say they think teens do things online they would not want their parents to know about

Cell phones⁶

- **45 percent** of teens have a cell phone
- **57 percent** of older teens (15-17) have a cell phone
- **32 percent** of younger teens (12-14) have a cell phone
- Of the approximately **11 million teens** with a cell phone, **10 percent** use it to connect to the Internet
- **7 percent** of all teens have a personal digital device, or handheld (such as a Blackberry), and about **one-third** of them use it to connect to the Internet

High-speed Internet access⁷

- **51 percent** of teens who go online at home have a high speed (broadband) Internet connection
- **47 percent** of teens who go online at home have a dial-up connection

Online Activities

Email⁸

- **89 percent** of online teens use email
- **93 percent** of online girls use email
- **84 percent** of online boys use email
- **46 percent** of online teens prefer Instant Messaging (IM) over email and cell phone text messaging for written communication with friends
- **33 percent** of online teens prefer email for written communication
- **15 percent** prefer text messaging for written communication
- **36 percent** have received inappropriate email or chat room comments⁹
- **Only 21 percent** have told parents about the inappropriate exchange¹⁰

Instant Messaging (IM)¹¹

- **75 percent** of online teens and **65 percent** of all teens (16 million) use IM
- **48 percent** of IM-using teens use it every day
- **29 percent** use it weekly
- **22 percent** use it less than once per week
- **37 percent** of teens who use IM use it for one-half or one hour on a typical day
- **27 percent** use it less than one-half hour
- **24 percent** use IM 1 to 2 hours per day
- **56 percent** of IM-using teens (**36 percent** of all teens) have posted a profile (including name and other identifying information) where others can see it
- **28 percent** of teens using IM have posted their phone number
- **20 percent** of teens have used IM to ask someone out, and **19 percent** have used it to break up with someone

Online Purchases¹²

- **43 percent** of online teens have made purchases through the Internet (**31 percent** of teens had done so in 2000)
- **52 percent** of older teens (15-17) have made an online purchase
- **33 percent** of younger teens (12-14) have made an online purchase

Teens and credit cards¹³

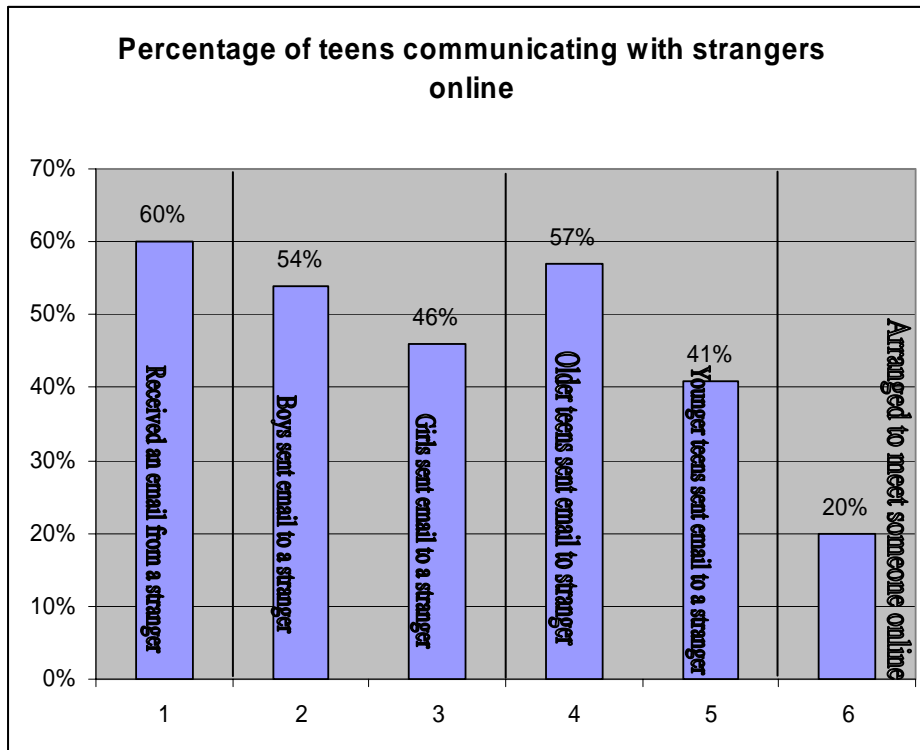
- **11 percent** of all teens have their own credit card
- **13 percent** of 17-year-olds have a card
- **8 percent** of 15 and 16-year-olds have a card
- **6 percent** of 13 and 14-year-olds have a card

Multiple Identities¹⁴

- **56 percent** of online teens have more than one e-mail address or screen name
- **61 percent** of boys have more than one e-mail address — **almost a quarter** have four or more
- Older boys (15 to 17) are the most likely to have more than one address, with **two-thirds** reporting multiple addresses
- **Half of online girls** have more than one screen name or e-mail account and nearly **one in five girls** have more than four identities

Meeting strangers¹⁵

- **60 percent** of online teens have gotten an e-mail or IM from a total stranger and **63 percent** of these say they have responded to such contacts
- **54 percent** of boys and **46 percent** of girls have sent email or IM to a stranger
- **57 percent** of older teens have done this, compared to **41 percent** of teens ages 12-14
- **One in five** teens has arranged to meet an online friend in person¹⁶
- Girls are more likely than boys are to arrange a face-to-face meeting (**26 percent vs. 14 percent**)¹⁷



Secrets (According to a Girl Scout survey)

Girls think they can do a lot online without their parents' knowledge.

- **86 percent** believe they could chat in a chat room
- **57 percent** think they can read their parents' e-mail
- **54 percent** claim the ability to carry on a cyber romance

- **46 percent** say they could set up a meeting with someone they met online
- **42 percent** believe they could view a porn site¹⁸

Only **30 percent of teens** think their parents know their e-mail password, **but 56 percent of parents** claim they know their teen's password. **Fourteen percent of teens**, however, claim to have an e-mail address their parents do not know about.¹⁹

More information

View the Pew Internet and American Life report: Teens and Technology

http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_Teens_Tech_July2005web.pdf

View the Pew Internet and American Life report: Teenage Life Online

http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_Teens_Report.pdf

View the Junior Achievement Poll on Teens and Personal Finance

http://www.ja.org/files/polls/personal_finance_2005.pdf

¹ Amanda Lenhart, Mary Madden, and Paul Hitlin, *Teens and Technology: Youth are leading the transition to a fully wired and mobile nation*, (Washington, D.C.: Pew Internet & American Life Project, July 27, 2005), p. 1.

² Lenhart, Madden and Hitlin, *Teens and Technology*, p. 1

³ Lenhart, Madden and Hitlin, *Teens and Technology*, pp. 2, 4.

⁴ Lenhart, Madden and Hitlin, *Teens and Technology*, pp. 4-5.

⁵ Lenhart, Madden and Hitlin, *Teens and Technology*, p. 7-8.

⁶ Lenhart, Madden and Hitlin, *Teens and Technology*, p. 10-11.

⁷ Lenhart, Madden and Hitlin, *Teens and Technology*, p. 6.

⁸ Lenhart, Madden and Hitlin, *Teens and Technology*, p. 14

⁹ *Web Savvy and Safety: How Kids and Parents Differ in What They Know, Whom They Trust*, Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates, September 2000, p. 18.

¹⁰ *Web Savvy and Safety*, p. 18.

¹¹ Lenhart, Madden and Hitlin, *Teens and Technology*, pp. 15-17, 20, 23-24.

¹² Lenhart, Madden and Hitlin, *Teens and Technology*, pp. 36-37.

¹³ *JA Interprise Poll on Teens and Personal Finance*, Junior Achievement Worldwide, 4 April 2005, p. 11, <
http://www.ja.org/files/polls/personal_finance_2005.pdf> (9 August 2005).

¹⁴ Amanda Lenhart, Lee Rainie, and Oliver Lewis, *Teenage life online: The rise of the instant-message generation and the Internet's impact on friendships and family relationships*, (Washington, D.C.: Pew Internet & American Life Project, June 20, 2001), p. 18.

¹⁵ Lenhart, Rainie, and Lewis, *Teenage life online*, p. 19.

¹⁶ Dick Thornburgh and Herbert S. Lin, eds., *Youth, Pornography and the Internet*, (Washington, D.C.: National Academies Press, 2002), p. 7-14.

¹⁷ Thornburgh and Lin, *Youth, Pornography and the Internet*, p. 7-14.

¹⁸ Whitney Roban, *The Net Effect: Girls and New Media*, Girl Scout Research Institute, 2002, p.11.

¹⁹ *Web Savvy and Safety*, p. 19.