



# Life Behind the Screens of Parents, Tweens, and Teens

The 2022 McAfee® Connected Family Study—United Kingdom



## Executive Summary

McAfee's first-ever Global Connected Family Study furthers our commitment to keeping families safe in a connected world, through understanding, education, and empowerment. In this ten-country study, we spoke with parents and their children to understand how they connect and protect themselves online.

Here, we uncovered universal beliefs about online protection, along with several nuances, all of which pinpointed tensions between parents and children when it comes to staying safe while enjoying life online.

The complete findings can be found in our full global report, available [here](#). In this regional report, we'll take a look at findings specific to the United Kingdom—where families differed from global trends and instances where they set some of their own.

- **Comparison One:** Mobile Maturity
- **Comparison Two:** Top Devices
- **Comparison Three:** Concern and Frequency of Cyberbullying
- **Comparison Four:** Account Theft and Financial Information Leaks
- **Comparison Five:** Gendered Protection Bias



## Unique Trends in the UK

Parents in the UK show the least engagement in online safety, yet their children look to them as their primary source for staying safe online.

Parents in the UK took fewer online privacy and security precautions for their children than the rest of the world. Nearly across the board and on computers and mobile devices alike, they were less likely to use technology-based solutions to protect a child’s device, such as antivirus and password protection. One slight exception was found in the case of parental controls software, where parents in the UK used that slightly higher than the international average for computers (+2%) and mobile devices (+1%).

They reported taking fewer hands-on measures as well, such as checking browsing and email history or in-person monitoring.

### Security/Privacy Precautions Implemented on Child’s PC/Laptop and Mobile/Smartphone

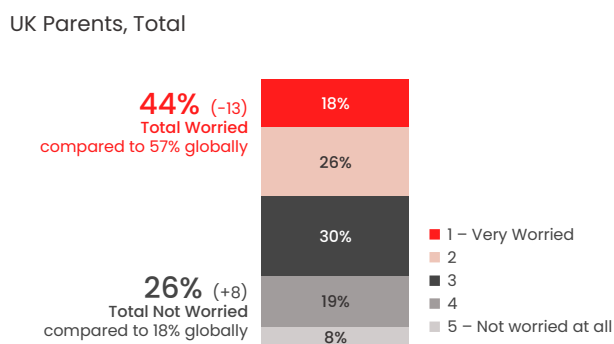
| UK Parents, Total                                   | PC/Laptop | Gap from Global Avg. | Mobile/Smartphone | Gap from Global Avg. |
|---|-----------|----------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| Installed Antivirus                                 | 48%       | -9                   | 28%               | -10                  |
| Password/passcode protect the device                | 33%       | -11                  | 35%               | -7                   |
| Regularly update Operating system to latest version | 36%       | -6                   | 30%               | -7                   |
| Only use reputable online stores*                   | 33%       | -7                   | 33%               | -5                   |
| Check browsing and email history                    | 33%       | -5                   | 29%               | -3                   |
| Regularly educate you on how to protect yourself    | 34%       | -1                   | 30%               | -                    |
| Restrict usage to only certain sites                | 26%       | -7                   | 24%               | -5                   |
| Installed malware remover                           | 26%       | -5                   | 14%               | -6                   |
| In-person monitoring of usage                       | 21%       | -10                  | 22%               | -6                   |
| Turned off location trackers                        | 28%       | -2                   | 25%               | -1                   |
| Parental Controls Software                          | 33%       | +2                   | 28%               | +1                   |
| Installed Virtual Private Network (VPN)             | 16%       | -1                   | 12%               | -2                   |
| Subscribe to Identity Protection services^          | 12%       | -2                   | 10%               | -2                   |

PC7. Which of the following security/privacy precautions have you taken for your child on their PC/laptop? Select all that apply. (Base: British parents who indicate their children use a PC/laptop, n=793)  
 PC8. Which of the following security/privacy precautions have you taken for your child on their mobile phone/smartphone? Select all that apply. (Base: British parents who indicate their children use a mobile/smartphone device, n=1,158) | \* This included the example "(e.g. Google Play, Apple Store)," ^this included the description "(monitoring of illegal use of email and bank accounts)"

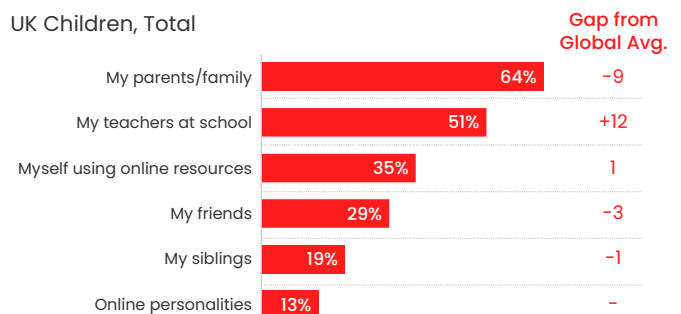
Likewise, parents in the UK expressed the lowest level of concern about the amount of screen time their children have on their devices. Only 44% reported being worried about how much screen time their children are getting, which was 13% below the global average.

Meanwhile, their children ranked them as the top resource to help them be safe online, with teachers at school coming in at second. However, children in the UK were 9% less likely to cite parents as a preferred resource and 12% more likely to look to teachers for support.

### Concern about Child’s Amount of Time on Devices



### Preferred Resources about Being Safe Online



PC22. Are you worried about the amount of time your child spends using computer, gaming consoles and/or mobile devices? (Base: British parents, n=1,481)  
 C22. Who is best placed to teach you about being safe online? Select all that apply. (Multiple responses allowed. Base: British children, n=1,197)



## Comparison One: Mobile Maturity

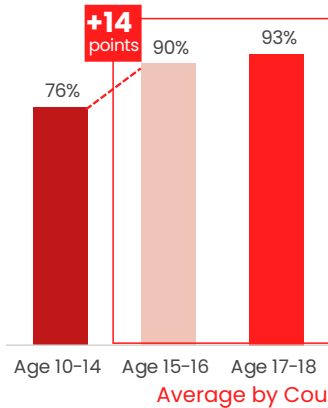
Children in the UK report using mobile devices at an early age just as other children do and continue to increase their smartphone usage largely in step with the rest of the world.

As mentioned above, children worldwide reported a major uptick in mobile device usage as they approached their mid-teens. Our study found that children across the globe hit their online stride right about the same point in life, between 15 and 16 years old. At this point, their mobile usage jumps significantly, so much so that it approaches levels that they will carry into adulthood.

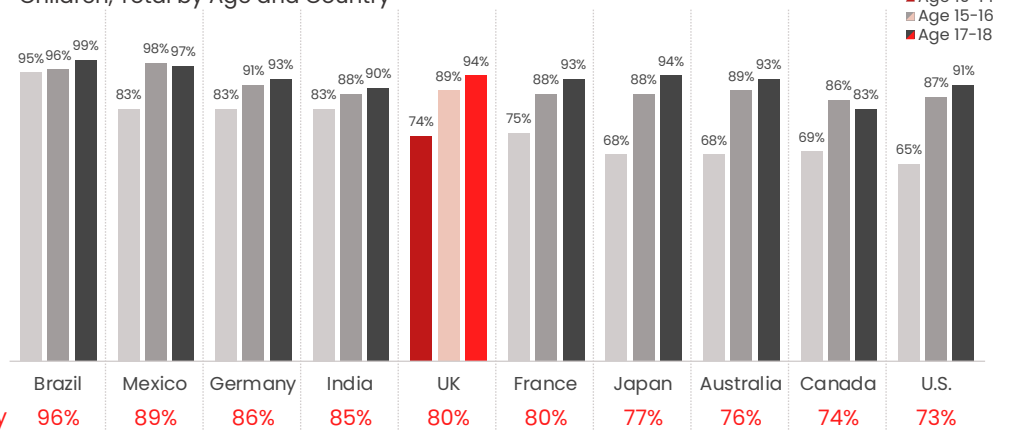
Yet their connected lives start much earlier, with smartphones and mobile devices leading the way online exposing them to the broader internet full of apps, chats, entertainment, and social media—along with the benefits and risks nearly right away.

### Mobile/Smartphone Device Usage

Children, Total by Age



Children, Total by Age and Country



CI. Which of the following devices do you use? (Base: Children, n=12,057)

For children in the UK, this trend holds true when compared to other children around the world—trailing only slightly in the early and mid-teens and then increasing slightly above average once they approach adulthood.



## Comparison Two: Top Devices

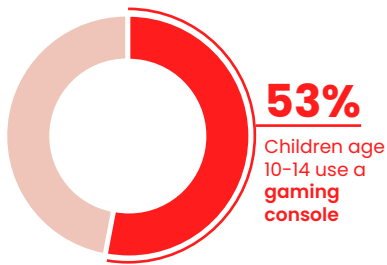
While smartphones come in first for parents and children alike, the second-most important device differs—and differs in how its viewed when keeping connected with family.

Parents and children in the UK alike say that their mobile device is the most important one in their life. Parents placed mobile in their top two with their smartphone at 68% followed by their computer or laptop at 47%. Tweens and teens put their smartphone at the top of the list as well, yet at a decisive 81%, followed by their gaming console at 69%.

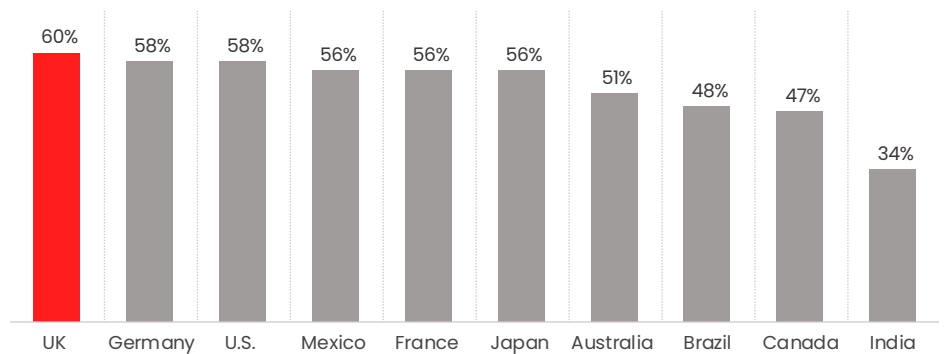
Tweens and young teens in the UK lead the world in gaming console usage, with 60% of them saying they play on connected game systems. This puts them 7% above the global average.

### Gaming Console Device Usage

Children, Age 10-14



Children, Age 10-14 by Country

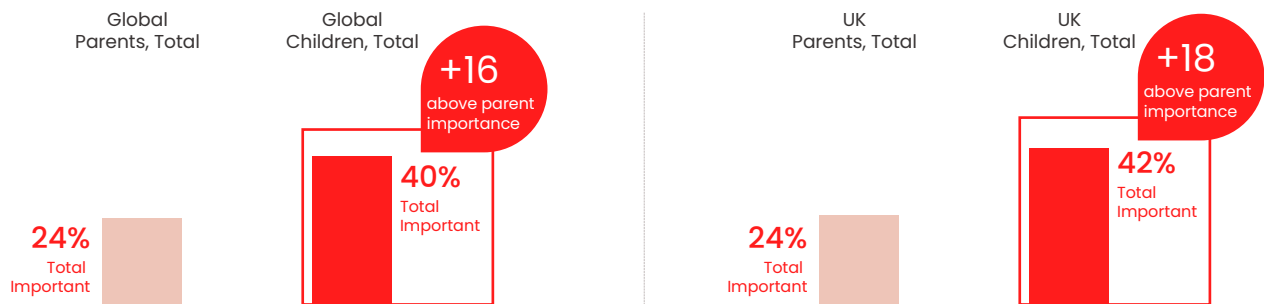


C1. Which of the following devices do you use? (Base: Children age 10-14, n=7,571)

## REPORT

Of further interest is that children said their gaming console is their second-most important device for keeping connected with family, with 42% expressing this, just 2% above the global average of 40%. Meanwhile, parents appear to place a much lower importance on the gaming console as a way to connect with family at 24%.

### Perceived Importance of Gaming Consoles when Connecting with Family



Perhaps unsurprisingly, both parents and children said the smartphone was the most important device for maintaining family connections, with parents at 81% and children at 72%—both of which trended higher than the global norm, which was 59% for parents and 64% for children.



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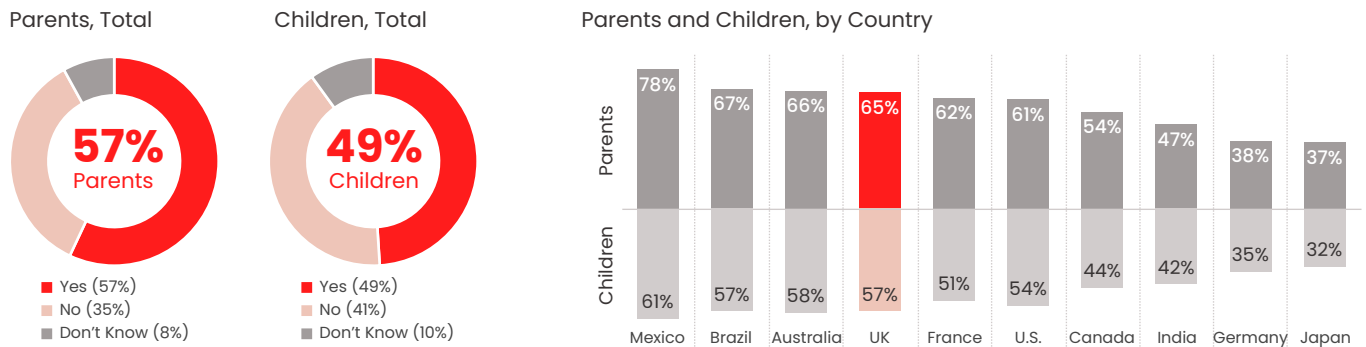
### Comparison Three: Concern and Frequency of Cyberbullying

While children claim that the smartphone is the most important device they own, risks appear to come with that, such as early exposure to cyberbullying—at a higher rate than the rest of the world.

Both parents and children expressed mixed feelings about posting on social media because it could possibly lead to bullying or abuse. Globally, 57% of parents worried about such bullying and abuse on social media, while 49% of children said they held the same worry.

In the UK, those figures trended higher, with 65% of parents stating their worry, 8% above the global average—and 57% of children saying likewise, also 8% above the global average.

#### Perception that Posting on Social Media and Public Forums Could Expose Children to Bullying or Abuse



PC15B. Do you think posting on social media like Facebook, Tiktok or other public forums could expose your child to bullying or abuse? (Base: Parents, n=15,156)  
 CI5B. Do you think posting on social media like Facebook, Tiktok or other public forums could expose you to bullying or abuse? (Base: Children, n=12,030)

These figures trended highest in Mexico, with parents at 78% and children at 61%. Brazil was not far behind at 67% and 57%. On the low end of the scale, Germany’s figures were 38% and 35% with Japan at 37% and 32%.

As far as exposure to cyberbullying, 20% of children in the UK reported having experienced it at some time. Globally, children reported a rate of 17%, putting the UK slightly higher by 3%. Note how this compares to the highest and lowest reported rates, with the U.S. at 28% and Japan at 6%.



### Comparison Four: Account Theft and Financial Information Leaks

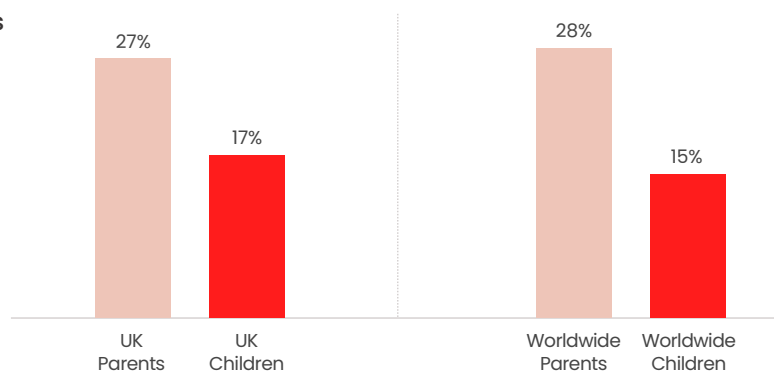
In addition to cyberbullying, families reported their experiences with other online threats, indicating issues with online privacy and security—also at a higher rate than the rest of the world.

Parents in the UK reported the attempted theft of online accounts at 27% while their children were at 17%. There was a slight difference in reporting here, however. When asked if their child had been exposed to possible online account theft, 16% of parents said so—one point lower than what children reported.

The UK is relatively in line with global figures, with the international data putting parents at 28% and children at 15%. As for that difference in reporting, 14% of parents said their child had been exposed to possible theft—once again, one point lower than what children reported.

#### Attempted Theft of Online Accounts

Reported Rate



Both parents and children reported leaks of financial information as well, which could include bank info, credit or debit card info, or other identifying information. In the UK, 26% of parents said they had experienced it at some point in the past—while 13% of children reported the same.

Parents and children reported this threat at a higher rate than families worldwide, with parents 5% higher than the 21% average and children 3% higher than the 10% average.

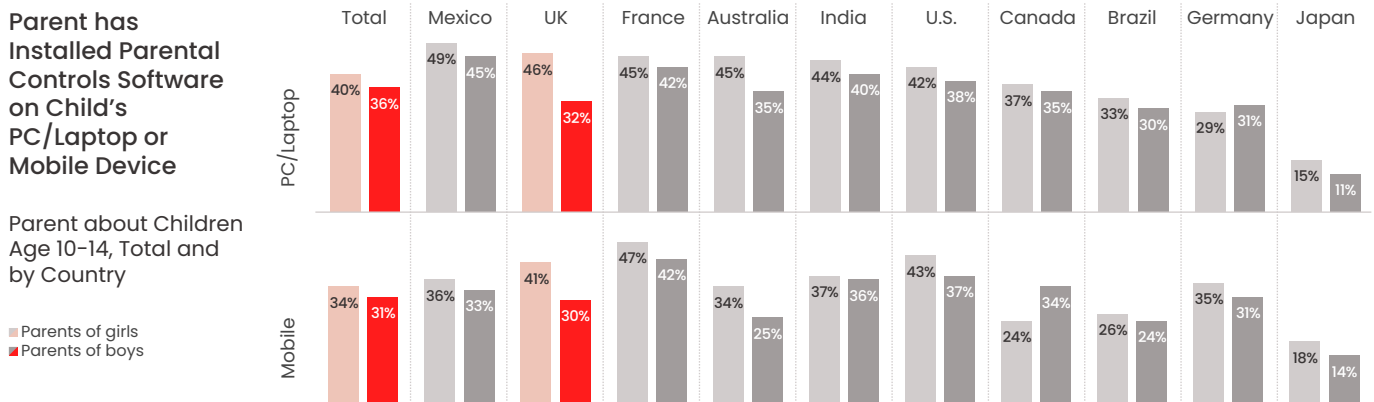




## Comparison Five: Gendered Protection Bias

Globally, research showed that girls receive more protection and oversight online than boys—sometimes dramatically so in the UK, yet boys experience more threats online.

Using the presence of parental controls software as one measure, girls are protected more than boys worldwide—on both their computers and smartphones. This holds quite true in the UK as well, and even more markedly so. On computers, 46% of girls have parental controls software installed compared to just 32% of boys, a 14% difference. The gap is slightly smaller on mobile at 11% in favor of girls, with the rates being 41% and 30%, respectively. In fact, the UK shows the highest degree of bias when it comes to the use of parental controls.



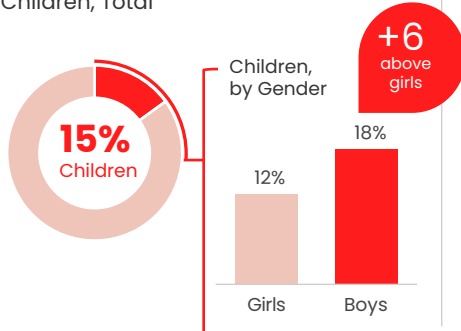
PC7. Which of the following security/privacy precautions have you taken for your child on their PC/laptop? Select all that apply. (Multiple responses allowed) Parental Controls Software (Base: Parents with children age 10-14 who use a PC/laptop, n=3,569) | PC8. Which of the following security/privacy precautions have you taken for your child on their mobile phone/smartphone? Select all that apply. (Multiple responses allowed) Parental Controls Software (Base: Parents with children age 10-14 who use a mobile/smartphone, n=5,740)

This gap continues as we look at other forms of protection and oversight. For girls aged 10 to 14, their parents are more likely to check their calls and texts at 44%, with boys at 40%. Checking the websites and apps their child visits or uses showed bias as well at this age. Fifty-five percent of parents said they do so for girls and only 51% for boys.

Of note, any such gap should be seen in light of the following: boys worldwide report experiencing threats online at a rate higher than girls.

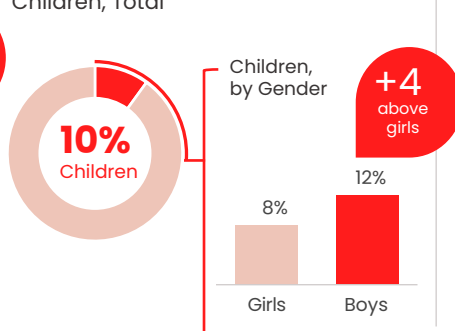
Experience with Attempted Thefts of Online Accounts

Children, Total



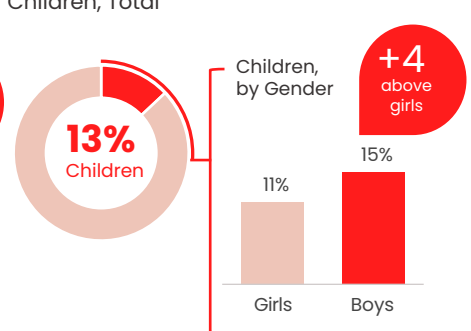
Experience with Leaks of Financial Information

Children, Total



Experience with Unauthorized Use of Personal Data

Children, Total



C16A. Have you been exposed to attempts of theft of your online accounts (gaming, social, etc.) in the past? (Base: Children, n=12,030)

C17A. Have you been exposed to leaks of your financial information (bank, credit card, passport or other identifying information) in the past? (Base: Children, n=12,030)

C18A. Have you had unauthorized use of your personal data (spam, fraud, attempts to send virus to my contacts) in the past? (Base: Children, n=12,030)

In all, this stands as a reminder that all children can stand to benefit from online protection and oversight from their parents.



Globally, research showed that girls receive more protection and oversight online than boys—sometimes dramatically so in the UK, yet boys experience more threats online.





For the full 2022 McAfee Connected Family Study Report, along with its detailed global findings, visit us for a [free download](#).

## Survey Methodology

In December 2021 McAfee LLC conducted a study about beliefs and behaviors around digital participation and online protection among members of connected families—as individuals and as a family unit.

Global survey of parents and children, with children answering alongside their parents.

Parents and children were surveyed together, with parents answering first and then bringing their children in to consent and answer.

These findings represent connected families not collections of individuals.

In multiple countries 15,500 parents of children in the age 10–18 participated in the study, as well as more than 12,000 of their children.

The research was conducted between December 13th–29th, 2021 by MSI-ACI via an online questionnaire to 15,500 parents and 12,057 children from 10 countries.

## About McAfee

McAfee is a global leader in online protection. We're focused on protecting people, not devices. Our solutions adapt to our customers' needs and empower them to confidently experience life online through integrated, easy-to-use solutions.

For more information about online protection, visit us at [mcafee.com/blogs](https://mcafee.com/blogs)