



Life Behind the Screens of Parents, Tweens, and Teens

The 2022 McAfee® Connected Family Study—United States



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 States—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 United States

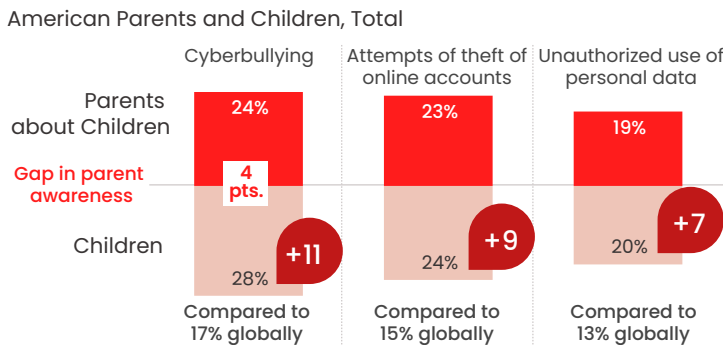
Children in the U.S. report the highest rate of cyberbullying in the world, while incidents of account theft and unauthorized data use are not far behind.

The U.S. reported the highest rate of cyberbullying among children, along with the highest gap of parental awareness. Here, 28% of children reported cyberbullying and only 24% of parents said they have knowledge of it taking place, a gap of 4%.

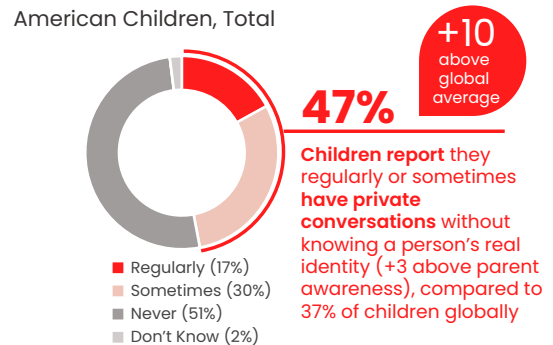
The U.S. is also home to some of the highest reported rates of attempted account theft and unauthorized use of personal data. Attempted theft was reported by 24% of children in the U.S. compared to 17% worldwide. For unauthorized data use, those figures were 20% in the U.S. and 13% across all nations.

Holding private conversations without knowing a person’s real identity also trended far higher in the U.S., a full 10% over the international average. Forty-seven percent of children in the U.S. said that they have such conversations either sometimes or regularly—a figure that’s 3% above parental awareness.

Parents’ Knowledge and Children’s Experience with Online Risks



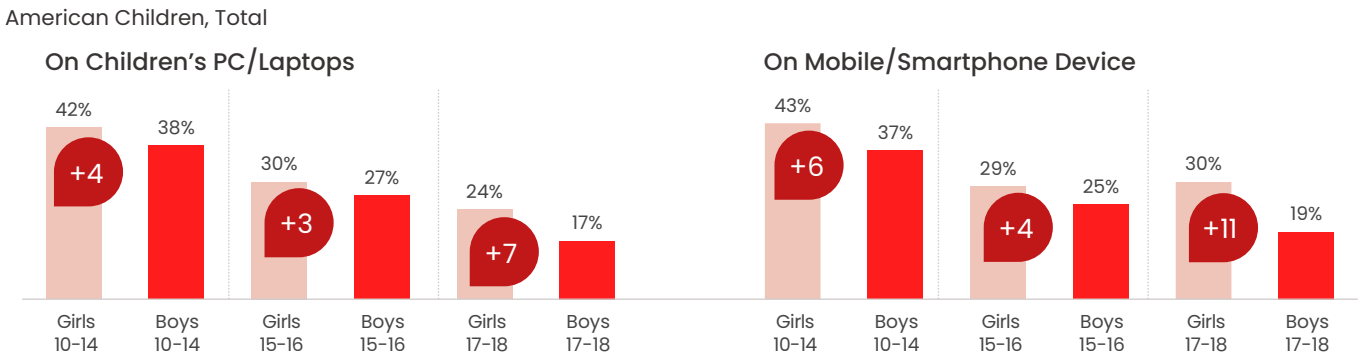
Holding Private Conversations without Knowing a Person’s Real Identity



PC15A. Has your child been exposed to Cyber bullying in the past? | PC16A. Has your child been exposed to attempts of theft of their online accounts (gaming, social, etc.) in the past? | PC5. How often does your child do the following? Hold private conversations with people without knowing their real identity (Base: American parents, n=1,977) | C15A. Have you been exposed to Cyber bullying in the past? | C16A. Have you been exposed to attempts of theft of your online accounts (gaming, social, etc.) in the past? | C18A. Have you had unauthorized use of your personal data (spam, fraud, attempts to send virus to my contacts) in the past? | C5. How often do you do the following? Hold private conversations with people without knowing their real identity (Base: American children, n=1,546)

As for the gender gap in online protection, the U.S. likewise holds a lead there. On mobile devices, older teen girls are 11% more likely to have parental controls installed on their mobile device compared to boys of the same age, and younger teen girls aged 10 to 14 are 6% more likely than their male counterparts.

Parents have Installed Parental Controls on Children’s Devices



PC7. Which of the following security/privacy precautions have you taken for your child on their PC/laptop? Select all that apply. (Base: American parents who indicate their children use a PC/laptop, n=1,023)
 PC8. Which of the following security/privacy precautions have you taken for your child on their mobile phone/smartphone? Select all that apply. (Base: American parents who indicate their children use a mobile/smartphone device, n=1,390) | * This included the example “(e.g. Google Play, Apple Store).” ^this included the description “(monitoring of illegal use of email and bank accounts)”
 *Note, small base size for girls and boys age 17-18, interpret data with caution.



Comparison One: Mobile Maturity

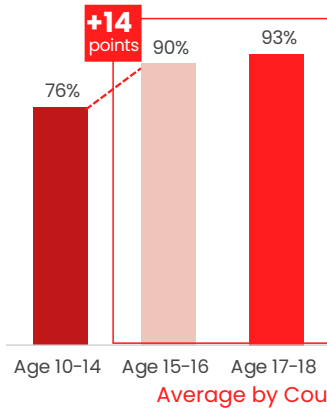
Children in the U.S. report using mobile devices at an early age at a lower rate than other children do and then increase their smartphone usage largely in step with the rest of the world.

As mentioned above, children worldwide reported a major uptick in mobile device usage as they approached their mid-teens. Our study found that children 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.

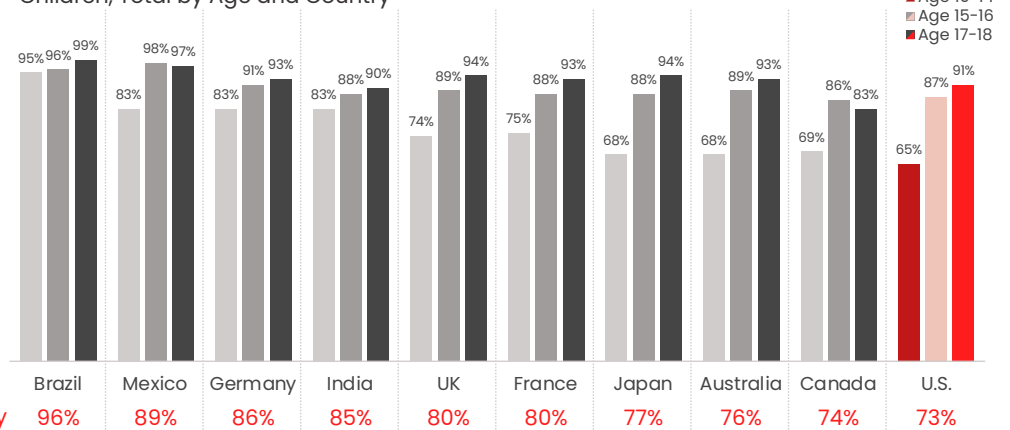
Yet their connected lives start much earlier, with smartphones and mobile devices leading the way online exposing them to the broader internet full of apps, chats, entertainment, and social media—along with the benefits and risks nearly right away.

Mobile/Smartphone Device Usage

Children, Total by Age



Children, Total by Age and Country



C1. Which of the following devices do you use? (Base: Children, n=12,057)

For children in the U.S., this trend holds true when compared to other children around the world. Of note, smartphone use at a younger age trailed well behind the international average by a full 11%. However, as children entered the mid-teens and then approached adulthood, the figures fell in line with their peers around the globe, albeit at a slightly lower rate.



Comparison Two: Top Devices

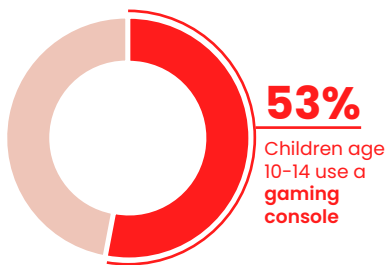
While smartphones come in first for parents and children alike, the second-most important device differs—the gaming console, where an above-average number of tweens and teens report they use one.

Parents and children in the U.S. 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 58% followed their computer or laptop at 43%. Tweens and teens put their smartphone at the top of the list as well, yet at 73%, followed by their gaming console at 67%.

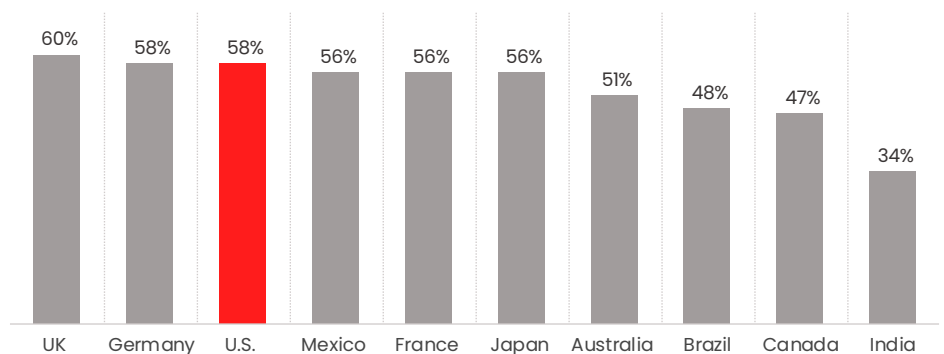
Tweens and young teens in the U.S. trend above the average in gaming console usage, with 58% of them saying they play on connected game systems, 5% higher than the rest of the world.

Gaming Console Device Usage

Children, Age 10-14



Children, Age 10-14 by Country

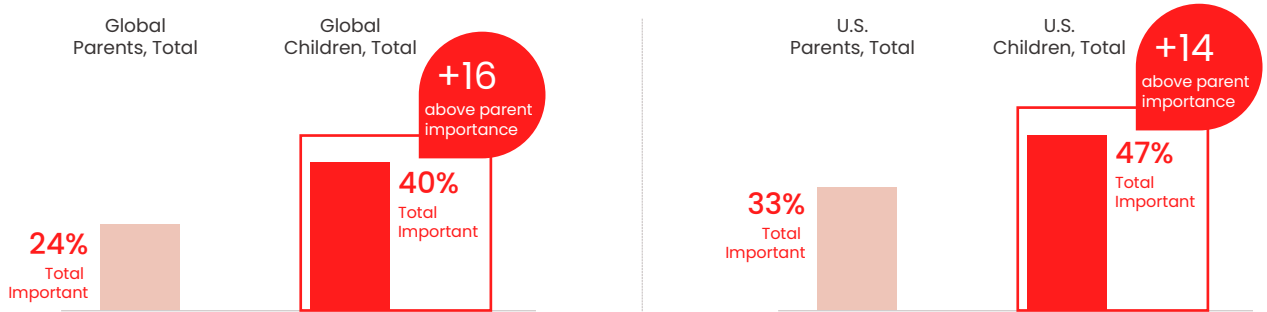


C1. Which of the following devices do you use? (Base: Children age 10-14, n=7,571)

REPORT

Of further interest is that children said their gaming console is their second-most important device for keeping connected with family, with 47% expressing this, some 7% above the international average of 40%. Meanwhile, parents appear to place a much lower importance on the gaming console as a way to connect with family at 33%.

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 62% and children at 64%—both of which came very close or actually hit the global norm, which was 59% for parents and 64% for children.



Tweens and young teens in the U.S. trend above the average in gaming console usage.



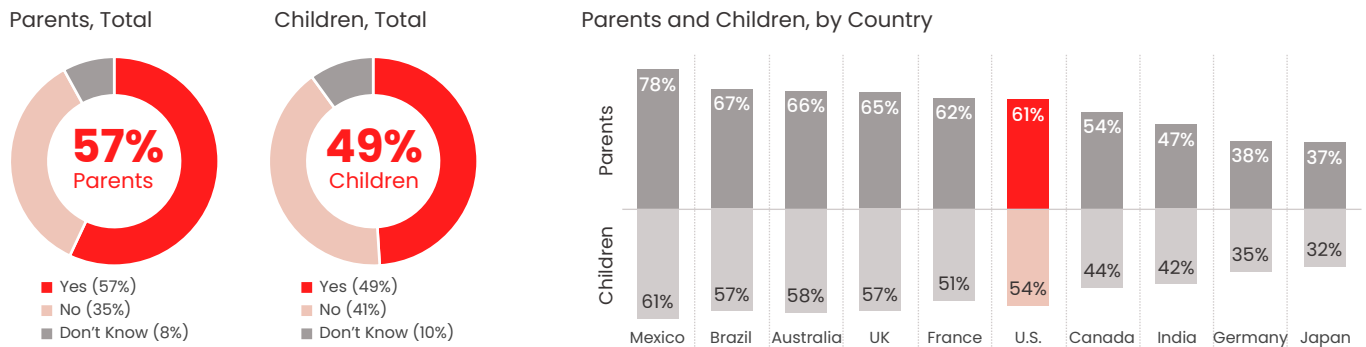
Comparison Three: Concern and Frequency of Cyberbullying

While children claim that the smartphone is the most important device they own, risks appear to come with that, as the U.S. is the world leader in reports of cyberbullying.

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 U.S., those figures trended higher, with 61% of parents stating their worry, 4% above the global average—and 54% of children saying likewise, also 5% 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%. Note 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, 28% of children in the U.S. reported having experienced it at some time. Globally, children reported a rate of 17%, putting the U.S. eleven points above the global average. Note how this compares to the lowest reported rate in Japan at 6% and the second-highest rate in Australia at 24%.



Comparison Four: Account Theft and Financial Information Leaks

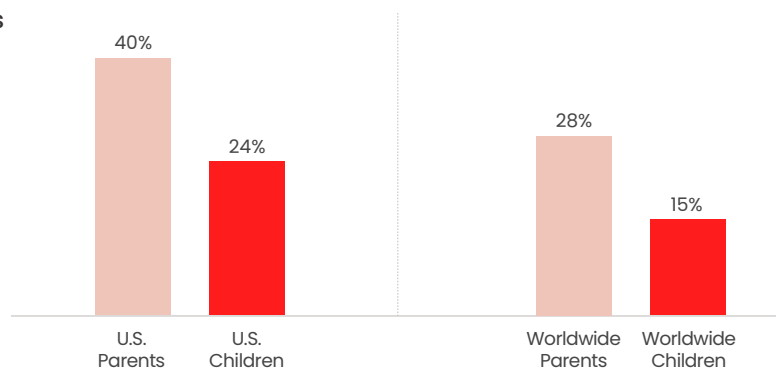
In addition to cyberbullying, families in the U.S. reported some of the highest rates with other online threats, indicating issues with online privacy and security—at nearly double the global average.

Parents in the U.S. reported the attempted theft of online accounts at 40% with their children at 24%. There was a slight difference in reporting here, however. When asked if their child had been exposed to possible online account theft, 23% of parents said so—one point lower than what children reported.

That 40% figure for parents in the U.S. is well above the global average, with the international data putting parents at 28%. The same holds true for children. The international figure for children is 15%—which is 9% lower than for children in the U.S. As for that difference in reporting, 14% of parents worldwide reported that 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 U.S., 33% of parents said they had experienced it at some point in the past—while 19% of children reported the same.

Parents and children in the U.S. reported this threat at a much greater rate than families worldwide, with parents 12% higher than the 21% average and children 9% higher than the 10% average.

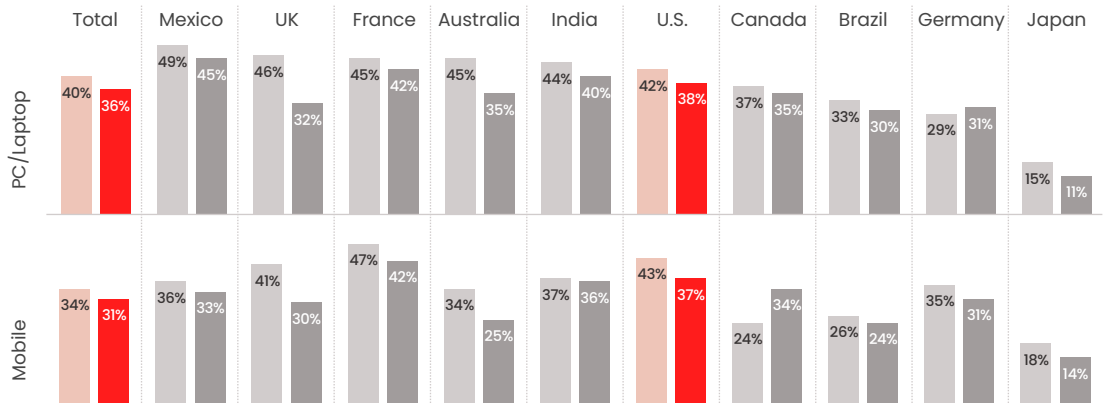


Comparison Five: Gendered Protection Bias

Globally, research showed that girls receive more protection and oversight online than boys, and such is the case in the U.S., 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 true in the U.S. as well. On computers, 42% of girls have parental controls software installed compared to 38% of boys, a difference of 4%. The gap is roughly the same on mobile at 6% in favor of girls, with the rates being 43% and 37%, respectively.

Parent has Installed Parental Controls Software on Child's PC/Laptop or Mobile Device



Parent about Children Age 10-14, Total and by Country

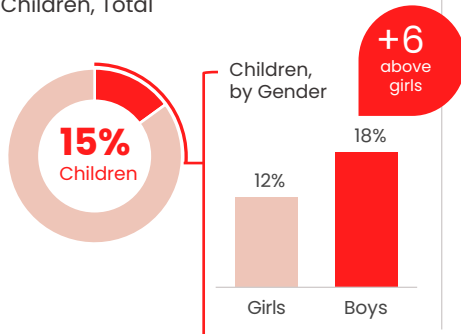
Parents of girls (light grey)
Parents of boys (dark grey)

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)

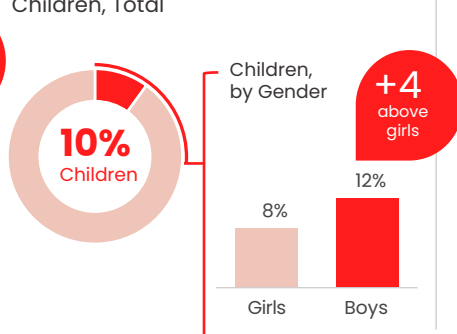
This gap continues as we look at other forms of protection and oversight. This is most notable for girls aged 10 to 14, their parents are more likely to check their calls and texts at 53%, with boys at 48%. That gap only increases as they approach adulthood, with a 40% - 32% split for girls and boys. Checking on the websites and apps their child visits or uses showed bias as well for children aged 10 to 14. Sixty-five percent of parents said they do so for girls and only 61% 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.

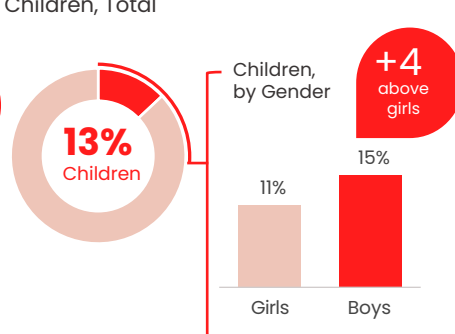
Experience with Attempted Thefts of Online Accounts
Children, Total



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, and such is the case in the U.S., 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