Family Online Safety Institute

Online Safety | Across the Generations

It's not easy being a digital parent these days.

On the one hand, parents worry about what content their children may access, how much screen time they allow and how their kids conduct themselves online. On the other, they field tech support questions from their own parents and worry over how best to keep Mom and Dad's accounts secure and their identities from being stolen online.

Parents are continually making a risk/benefit analysis about their family's tech use and their ability to simultaneously protect and enable their offspring and elders to get the best that digital technology has to offer. They have concerns over their own screen use and how to be a good digital role model. And many feel they need more control over the content their kids access and time their children spend online.

In this new report, we have done a deep dive into the lives of families and their relationship with technology. For the first time, we've asked questions of elders and grandparents as well as parents to better understand their attitudes and behaviors. And we tested how well parents thought they were doing to guide, protect and enable their kids to flourish in this digital age.

We also took a special look at African-American and Hispanic families and considered similarities and differences across socio-economic classes. We wanted to find out where the baseline is when it comes to steps people are taking to stay safe, secure and private online. And we wanted to see what more has to be done – the tools, rules and schools needed to create a sense of safety and security no matter which generation you're from and to learn what might help seniors use the Internet or feel safer online.

While there is much cause for concern among parents and grandparents about their own or their kids' online use, it is heartening that most see digital technology as a boon to connect and communicate with family members – drawing them closer together. There also appears to be a generational shift, with younger, Millennial parents feeling more confident about their ability to monitor and control their kids' tech use than their forebears.

Whether you are a policy maker, an industry executive, an NGO advocate, an educator or simply a parent, I hope you find much to ponder and to act upon. We urgently need an evidence-based approach to develop new tech tools and innovate public policies and educational efforts to respond to the risks, address the harms, and ultimately to realize the rewards of this fast-moving digital space.

And then to pass the torch to the next generation.

Stephen Balkam
CEO, Family Online Safety Institute

ONLINE SAFETY ACROSS THE GENERATIONS
AT A GLANCE

57% of parents think technology has improved communication among their family members

56% of parents wish they had more control over the content on their child's devices

94% of parents say their older relative turns to them to help troubleshoot technology problems

66% African-American parents are the most likely to use technology together with their child

65% of online seniors say that identity theft of their personal information is a major reason they do not do more online than they do currently
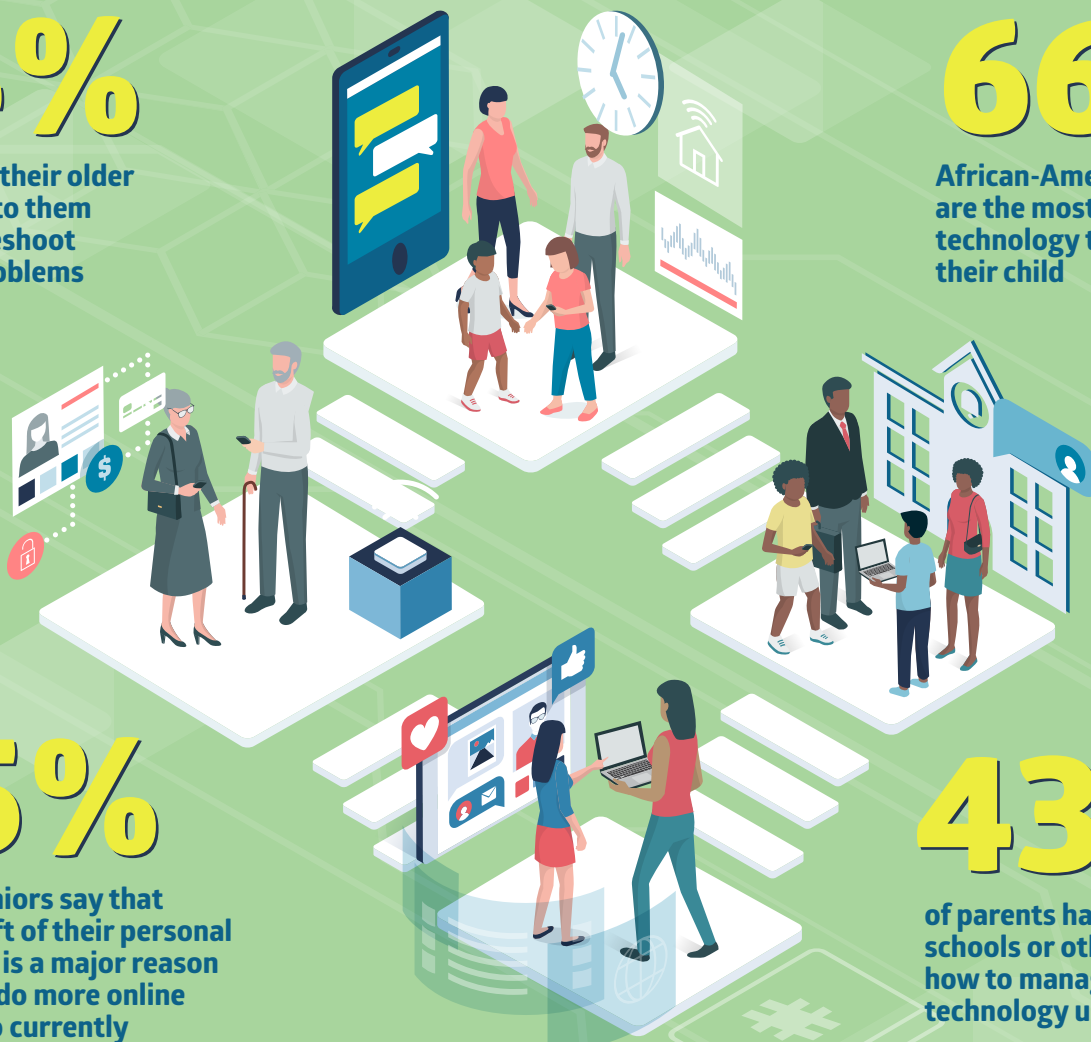
43% of parents have looked to schools or other parents on how to manage their child's technology use

38% of parents say they have had their child help their older relative who needed technological assistance

80% of seniors report that they go online and use the Internet

Technology has the power to bring families together across generations.

As Internet use among Americans of all ages increasingly becomes second nature, there has been an intergenerational conversation within the family – between parents and their children, and among seniors and their adult children and grandchildren – about online safety. Today's parents are the first generation to be confronted with technology use by their parents and elderly relatives, as well as their children, and are in uncharted territory.

This study confirms families' significant participation in the growing ecosystem of online services, and their role on the frontlines of navigating various online threats, and managing the use of tools and technologies to protect their safety and security online. This report offers new insights into the impact of technology on families and fills in some of the informational gaps about the benefits and challenges of being online.

To get a more complete picture of how Americans are faring across the digital landscape, this report consists of two surveys: a survey of senior citizens and a survey of parents. The surveys oversampled the African American, Hispanic, and low-income communities to better understand the unique challenges these groups and their children face, and the choices they make.

Seniors and parents realize the benefits of using the Internet and technology. Two in three online seniors say technology has had a positive effect on their lives. Many online seniors report they use social media and navigation apps, and shop online. Fewer use the Internet for health-related services or grocery delivery, but many express interest in doing so.

Parents of connected children are nearly twice as likely to feel technology and the Internet have made their job as a parent easier rather than harder. Technology and the Internet help with children's homework, and provide access to entertainment, information, and educational content. Parents report being online helps their children build technology skills, research information, foster career skills, life skills, and creativity, and enhances their performance in school.

But challenges remain. About seven in 10 online seniors are concerned about identity theft, computer viruses and malware, and hacking of financial accounts. Across most other online safety concerns explored in the survey, African-American and Hispanic seniors are more likely than whites to worry about them. Most of the 20% of seniors who do not use the Internet report they have little interest in being online.

Parents are concerned about keeping their connected children safe online, noting they find it challenging to monitor their child's use of technology, access to inappropriate content, who their child is engaging with, and total screen time. Social media use in particular worries parents; by a sizable margin, parents think the potential harms of their child having a social media account outweigh the potential benefits. While a majority of parents rate themselves as highly confident in their ability to keep track of and manage their child's use of technology, this confidence diminishes as both parents and children become older.

Most digital families proactively protect themselves. More than nine in 10 seniors take at least one step to protect personal information online and nearly half take two or more steps, such as using strong passwords, using unique passwords for each of their accounts, and installing anti-virus software. Nearly two thirds of parents report using at least one parental control tool, and interest in parental controls is high among those who do not already use them. In addition, the majority of parents have faith that their child fully appreciates the need to be safe and guard personal information online, and understands that things said or posted online are never truly deleted.

Technology has the power to bring families together across generations. Despite the challenges, the majority of parents think technology has improved communication among their family members. Nearly eight in ten parents with living parents or elderly relatives say these relatives use text messaging, e-mail, or social media to communicate with them. And, importantly, both parents and seniors are talking to their children and grandchildren about the importance of being safe online.

Methodology

In August and September 2018, Hart Research Associates conducted qualitative and quantitative research among parents and seniors on behalf of the Family Online Safety Institute.

Seniors:

On August 21, 2018, a focus group was convened in Bala Cynwyd, Pennsylvania, among seniors age 62 to 79 who use the Internet.

From September 24 to 30, 2018, a telephone survey was conducted among 701 Americans age 62 and older. This included oversamples of African-American seniors (for a total of 151); Hispanic seniors (total of 144); and seniors whose household income, coupled with the number of people in their household, places them at or below 185% of the federal poverty level (total of 322, referred to in this report as "low-income" seniors). The margins of error are ±3.7 percentage points for the full sample, ±4.3 percentage points for seniors who access the Internet at least a few times a year, and ±7.2 percentage points for seniors who never access the Internet.

Parents:

On August 21, 2018, a focus group of parents of children age 8 to 12 who use the Internet was convened in Bala Cynwyd, Pennsylvania.

From September 18 to 26, 2018, an online survey was conducted among a total of 673 parents of connected children age 2 to 17. This included oversamples of African-American parents (for a total of 151); Hispanic parents (total of 149); and parents whose household income, coupled with the number of people in their household, places them at or below 185% of the federal poverty level (total of 244, referred to in this report as "low-income" parents). To qualify for the survey respondents had to say that their children use the Internet at least occasionally and have access to at least one connected device. To simplify survey administration, parents of multiple children in the age bracket were asked to answer questions about their child who had the most recent birthday. The credibility interval is ±3.8 percentage points for the full sample, and is higher for subgroups of the sample.

Part 1: Overview of Findings among Seniors and Parents

Overview of Results among Seniors

- Eighty percent (80%) of seniors report that they go online and use the Internet; 20% of seniors do not. Those who are not online are, on average, appreciably older, less white, less educated, and lower-income than those who are online.

- **Seniors who are online** use the Internet avidly, averaging 18.2 hours per week online. A majority (56%) have been online for at least 10 years.

- Two in three online seniors say technology has had a positive effect on their lives; just 4% say the effect has been negative. They are more mixed when it comes to society in general: 34% say the positives of technology outweigh the negatives, 24% say the reverse, and 34% say the positives and negatives are about equal.

- Online seniors report engaging in many activities online, including using social media, using navigation apps, and shopping online, among others. Fewer use the Internet for health-related services or grocery delivery, but many express interest in doing so.

- To the degree online seniors harbor concerns about being online, hacking, identity theft, and financial theft top their list of concerns, with about seven in 10 saying they worry about these things. Indeed, concern about compromising of personal information is the largest obstacle seniors cite to doing more online. Worry about these and a larger range of issues is notably higher among African-American and Hispanic seniors.

Fewer online seniors use the Internet for health-related services or grocery delivery, but many express interest in doing so.

More than nine in 10 online seniors take at least one step to protect personal information online and 46% take two or more steps.

- At the same time, more than nine in 10 online seniors take at least one step to protect personal information online and 46% take two or more steps. The most popular actions seniors take in this regard are using strong passwords, using different passwords for different accounts, and installing anti-virus software.

- Despite these efforts, just 58% of online seniors say they are confident they are taking appropriate steps to keep their personal and financial information secure when using the Internet; though, confidence increases among those who go online on a daily basis.

- When seeking help on technology-related matters, seniors—especially those who have less online experience—are more likely to have reached out to family members, particularly their adult children, than any other source.

- **Seniors who are NOT online** express little interest in the Internet—just 22% of this group has at some point considered getting online, and fewer than 20% express any interest in online activities and services such as navigation apps, video calls, online banking, or online health services.

- Moreover, these seniors express substantial concern about the online world. They say that people who are online should worry about identity theft, financial theft, and being tricked into giving up personal information above all else, but majorities also express concern about computer viruses, companies tracking purchasing behavior, and encountering offensive content online.

- Their lack of interest in the Internet and concerns about identity theft are each major obstacles to offline seniors getting online—68% say their preference for doing things in person or over the phone rather than online is a "major reason" they are not online; and 62% mention identity theft as a major reason. Cost—of either devices or Internet service—is cited much less often as a reason for not being online, even among seniors with lower incomes.

- Fewer than half (47%) of offline seniors say that a family member has encouraged them to get online. Men and more highly educated seniors are more likely to report that a family member has made this recommendation to them.

- **Regardless of their online status,** many seniors have encouraged young family members to be safe online. Just over half (53%) of all seniors say they have had this conversation with their children, grandchildren, or other younger family members; 56% of seniors who are online have done so, as have 41% of those who are not online.

Seniors who are NOT online express little interest in the Internet—just 22% of this group has at some point considered getting online.

Overview of Results among Parents

- Parents of connected children are nearly twice as likely to feel that technology and the Internet have made their job as a parent easier (53%) rather than harder (28%), though attitudes become less positive as they and their children get older.

- Parents think that their child's use of technology has had a positive impact on many areas of their child's life—most notably their child's technology skills (+77 more positive than negative), ability to research information (+71), future, career, and life skills (+50), creativity (+38), and performance in school (+35).

- They are less sanguine about the impact technology has had in other areas of their child's life, with more parents who feel that the impact of technology has been more negative than positive when it comes to their child's level of physical activity and fitness (-33); their child's attention span (-12); and their child's ability to engage with people in person (-5).

- Parents are slightly more likely to think the potential benefits of their child having a smartphone outweigh the potential harms (36% benefits outweigh, 31% harms outweigh), but by a sizable margin they think the potential harms of their child having a social media account outweigh the potential benefits (20% benefits outweigh; 52% harms outweigh). In both cases, parents of teens are the most positive.

- A 55% majority of parents rate themselves as highly confident in their ability to keep track of and manage their child's use of technology; but this leaves 45% who are less confident. Parents' confidence diminishes as both they and their children become older.

- Majorities of parents have faith that their child fully understands and appreciates the need to be safe and guard his or her personal information online (59%) and that the things he or she says and does online do not necessarily disappear when deleted (57%). However, this still leaves more than two in five parents who do not think their child fully understands these things.

- Online content (64%) trumps time spent online (32%) as a concern for parents about their children's online and technology use, but many parents wish they had more control in each of these areas (56% wish they had more control over content; 42% wish they had more control over time). Only one in three parents are satisfied with the amount of control they have in both of these areas, which leaves two-thirds of parents who wish they had more control over one or both of them.

- To keep their connected children safe online, 91% of parents set household rules, 63% report using at least one of a variety of parental control tools, and 64% frequently discuss online safety with their child.

Just over half (53%) of all seniors say they have had conversations about online safety with their children, grandchildren, or other younger family members.

Parents of connected children are nearly twice as likely to feel that technology and the Internet have made their job as a parent easier (53%) rather than harder (28%).

- The most common rules parents set include what sites their child can access (81%), the time of day he or she can use technology (77%), what online accounts he or she can have (75%), and the amount of time he or she can spend on technology (73%).

- The parental controls that parents are most likely to have used include those that limit the types of websites the child can visit on a mobile device (40%), from a home computer (37%), or from a video game console (34%), as well as approval of in-app purchases (35%).

- Parents look to schools, other parents, and friends as information sources for how to manage their child's technology use.

- More than three in five (63%) parents say they have used information from various sources to learn how to manage their child's technology use and keep them safe online, relying most on their child's school (27%), other parents (27%), and social media posts from friends (24%).

- Parents say their children most commonly have gotten information from their school (45%) to learn how to be safe online.

- Parents see themselves, along with their children's friends, as one of the biggest influences on their child's technology use, and they give themselves high marks as positive technology role models (82% rate themselves as "A" or "B" grade).

- Technology has the power to bring families together across generations.

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- Nearly eight in ten parents (78%) who have living parents or elderly relatives say that their parents or elderly relatives use technology such as text messaging, e-mail, or social media to communicate with them, and many (44%) would like them to use technology and the Internet more than they currently do.

- Notable proportions say that they and their parents or elderly relatives draw on a variety of technologies to communicate with their child/grandchildren, including via text, Facetime or Skype, social media, and e-mail.

- Nearly all parents with a living parent or elderly relative indicate that their elderly relatives always or often turn to them for help understanding how to use technology or to troubleshoot problems always or often, and nearly two in five parents (38%) say they have had their children help an elderly relative who needed assistance with technology.

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Part 2: Detailed Findings Among Seniors

Our survey among seniors age 62 and older was largely divided into two questionnaires: one among the 80% of seniors who currently are online and one among the 20% of seniors who are not.

Difference Between Online and Offline Seniors.

How often do you go online and use the Internet, whether using a computer, smartphone, tablet or other mobile device?*

Compared to others, seniors not online are:
- Older
- More racially/ ethnically diverse
- Less educated
- Lower income

Not online
20%

Online monthly/less
8%

Online daily
53%

Online weekly
19%

Online seniors:

All seniors	80%
Whites	83%
African Americans	63%
Hispanics	64%
Low income	64%

* Additional information in question: "This includes doing things like sending or receiving e-mail, visiting websites, making video calls using Skype or Facetime, using apps on a smartphone, or using social media like Facebook, LinkedIn, or Twitter."

Each cites family members as their most trusted resource for technology-related issues.

This bifurcation was necessary given the entirely different relationship each group has to technology and the Internet. That said, the two groups have a couple of important things in common: namely, each expresses significant concern about online identity theft, and each cites family members as their most trusted resource for technology-related issues.

More important than the similarities between seniors who are and are not online are the differences between them, most notably the demographic differences between them—those not online are, on average, older, less white, less educated, and far lower income than those who are online.

Demographic Differences Between Seniors who are and are Not Online

	Seniors Online %	Seniors Not Online %
Age 75 or older	28	54
African American	8	18
Hispanic	7	16
No more than high school diploma	33	62
Low income (185% of federal poverty level)	21	48

And, not surprisingly, the two groups have different views of technology writ large. Equal proportions (24% of those online, 25% of those not online) say that "the negatives of technology and the Internet outweigh the positives"; but online seniors are twice as likely as those who are not online to take the opposite view, that the positives outweigh the negatives—34% of those online say this, compared with 16% of those not online.

Attitudes of Seniors Who Are Online

1.   **Seniors who are online are avid and experienced denizens of the Internet who believe that technology has a positive effect on their lives and who connect in multiple ways.**

- The most common way seniors go online is using a desktop or laptop computer—more than four in five (82%) seniors do so. But 76% also use a smartphone and 60% use a tablet. One in five (21%) presently uses a smart speaker (such as Google Home or Amazon Alexa), but another 27% say they are "seriously considering" using a smart speaker to get online.

- Seniors report spending an average of 18.2 hours per week online, though 19% say they spend 30 hours or more per week online. Interestingly, the amount of time seniors spend online is relatively even among various demographic groups—women spend a bit more time online than men, and the oldest cohort spends less time than others, but otherwise there are only modest differences:

Average Number of Hours Spent Online Per Week

Men	16.6
Women	19.6
Age 62 to 64	18.0
Age 65 to 69	21.8
Age 70 to 74	19.9
Age 75 and older	13.2
White	18.2
African American	18.8
Hispanic	19.8
Income less than $23,000	19.1
Income $23,000 to $38,999	19.1
Income $39,000 or more	20.2

At least **62% of online seniors** in every age, racial, ethnic, and economic category say the **effects of technology on their lives has been positive.**

- Moreover, most of these seniors are not new to the online world—56% say they have been online for at least 10 years, including 39% for at least 15 years. On this measure there are some differences, such as the fact that 40% of white seniors have been online for 15 or more years, compared with 23% of African-American and 25% of Hispanic seniors. The same holds true by income, with 39% of seniors with an income over $23,000 having been online for 15 or more years, compared with 26% of those with an income less than $23,000.

- As noted, 34% of online seniors say that for society in general the positives of technology outweigh the negatives. When it comes to their own lives, many more online seniors believe the positives of technology outweigh the negatives: 67% say technology has had a mostly or somewhat positive effect on their lives, while just 4% say it has been negative; 18% say it has been a mix. This belief is widely held, as at least 62% of online seniors in every age, racial, ethnic, and economic category say the effects of technology on their lives has been positive.
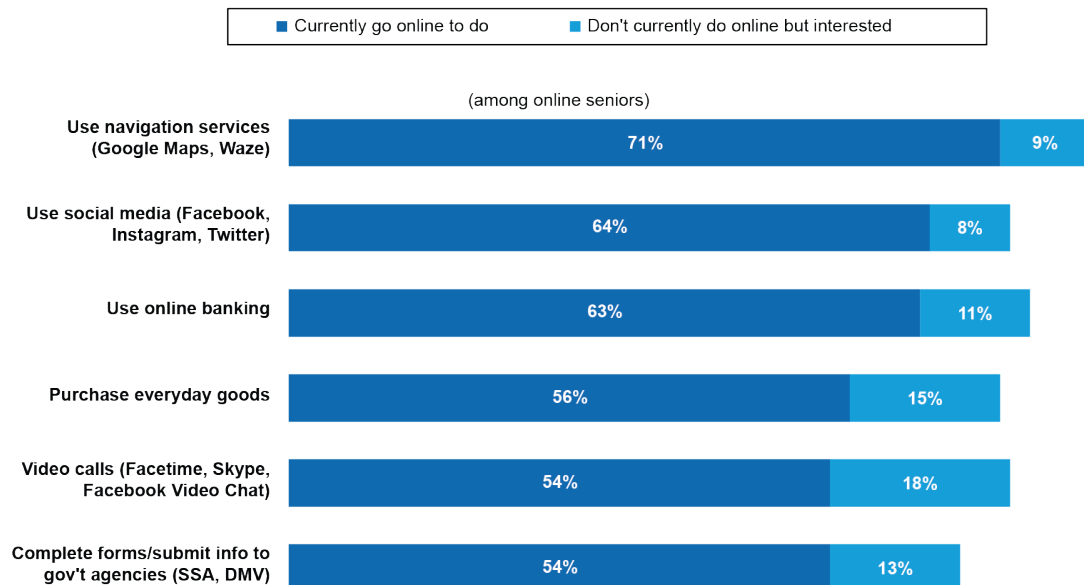
> "**I think it's essential**. I do all of my stock trading, my emails, I get a lot of my news via the Internet and I'm glad we have it."
>
> *– Online Senior*

2. **Online seniors are not only largely experienced online, they are also highly active in using a range of services and applications.**
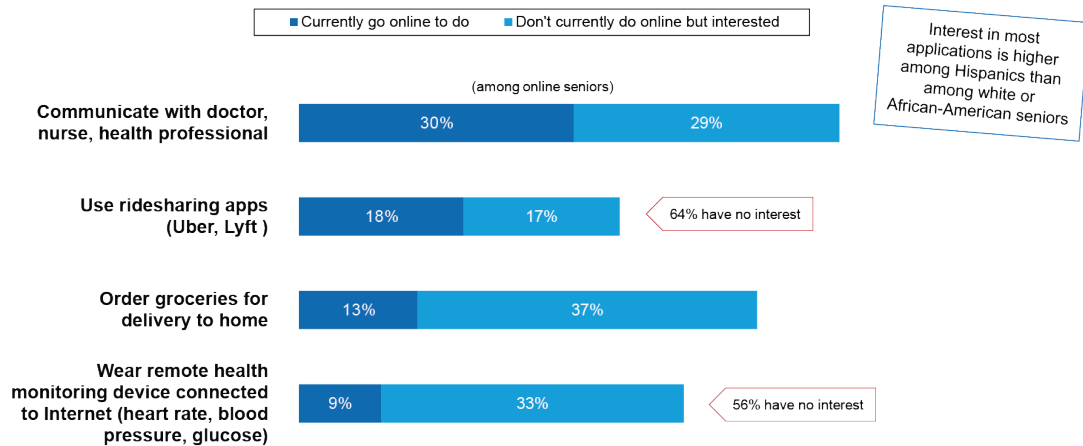
- Seniors generally express satisfaction with their current "online lives"—only 19% say there are things they would like to try or do online (in the abstract) that they are not currently doing, while 77% say that this is not the case for them.

- And, indeed, seniors are engaged in a range of online activities. We asked about 10 online activities specifically and found that majorities (in some cases large majorities) currently engage in six of them:

Online seniors take advantage of much of what the Internet has to offer.

| | Currently go online to do | Don't currently do online but interested |

(among online seniors)

Activity	Currently go online to do	Don't currently do online but interested
Use navigation services (Google Maps, Waze)	71%	9%
Use social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter)	64%	8%
Use online banking	63%	11%
Purchase everyday goods	56%	15%
Video calls (Facetime, Skype, Facebook Video Chat)	54%	18%
Complete forms/submit info to gov't agencies (SSA, DMV)	54%	13%

- Navigation apps and services are especially popular, but more than 60% also bank online and use social media. Use of the services above is relatively even across racial and ethnic groups (though Hispanic seniors are less likely than African-American or white seniors to purchase everyday goods online), but use declines as income level decreases.

- The four other online services we asked about are used far less; however, significant proportions express interest in three of the activities.

Seniors who are online express appreciable interest in using the Internet for health applications and grocery delivery.

■ Currently go online to do   ■ Don't currently do online but interested

(among online seniors)

Interest in most applications is higher among Hispanics than among white or African-American seniors

Communicate with doctor, nurse, health professional	30% / 29%
Use ridesharing apps (Uber, Lyft)	18% / 17% — 64% have no interest
Order groceries for delivery to home	13% / 37%
Wear remote health monitoring device connected to Internet (heart rate, blood pressure, glucose)	9% / 33% — 56% have no interest

- This level of interest suggests that many seniors may simply be unaware of the fact that they are able to order groceries online for home delivery, communicate with health professionals, or have devices that monitor their health. Though, it is worth noting that the one in five seniors who do say they would like to do more online are particularly interested in these three activities: 44% of that group are interested in communicating with health professionals, 41% are interested in grocery delivery, and 37% are interested in wearable health monitors.

3. **Online seniors express a multitude of concerns about online safety and security, especially as related to hacking and identity theft.**

- Despite the benefits that being online brings them, online seniors fully recognize that there are concerns in the online world as well. They express concern about a host of issues, but are particularly worried about financial and identity theft and computer viruses and malware.

Concerns of Online Seniors

	Worry A Lot/ Some About This %
Being a victim of identity theft	74
Having your computer or device infected by viruses, spyware, or malware	70
Having your bank account or other financial accounts hacked into	67
Losing some or all of your stored data or information if something goes wrong with your computer	58
Being tricked into giving too much of your personal information by someone who is misrepresenting themselves online	55
Companies tracking your online activity and purchases	53
Having your location tracked by applications or services	51
People learning too much about you from information you have posted on social media or other places online	42
Encountering inappropriate or offensive content	39

- Financial and identity theft are particular concerns, with half of online seniors saying they worry "a lot" about each. Moreover, African-American and Hispanic seniors express more concern than white seniors about most of the items above. For instance, whereas 40% of white seniors express concern about "people learning too much about you," 55% of African Americans and 61% of Hispanics worry at least some about this; 37% of whites are worried about "encountering inappropriate or offensive content," compared with 56% of African Americans and 57% of Hispanics.

- Indeed, identity theft is a material concern for seniors that directly affects their online behavior. Two-thirds (65%) of online seniors say that concern about identity theft and the compromising of their personal information and finances is a major reason they do not do more online than they do currently. While this obstacle diminishes as seniors gain more experience online, it is a concern across the board—73% of those who have been online for fewer than five years say it is a major reason they do not do more online, compared to 69% of those who have been online for five to 14 years and 54% of those who have been online for 15 years or more.

- Identity theft dwarfs other obstacles to seniors doing more online. About half (52%) say that there are things they would rather do in person or on the phone than online, but other obstacles such as distrust of online sources (34%), fear of exposure to inappropriate content (29%), and concern about lack of technical skills (24%) are much less prevalent.

Two-thirds (65%) of online seniors say that concerns about identity theft and the compromising of their personal information and finances is a major reason they do not do more online than they do currently.

4. **Most seniors take appropriate steps to protect their personal information online, but even those who are doing so realize they cannot be complacent.**

- Half of seniors say they use strong passwords, and nearly as many use different passwords for different accounts and have installed anti-virus software on their computer. Fewer are employing more complicated or technical protections.

Percentage Who Do Each of the Following

	%
Use strong passwords that include a combination of uppercase and lower-case letters, numbers, and symbols	50
Use different passwords for different online accounts	44
Install anti-virus protection on your computer	43
Keep your operating systems and apps updated	35
Enable security and privacy settings on social media and other online accounts	27
Use multi-factor authentication when available, which requires multiple steps to log in	24
Do none of these	7

- More than nine in 10 seniors take at least one of these steps, and 46% take two or more of them; women are a bit more likely than men to take two or more of these steps (48% vs. 43%), and whites (46%) and African Americans (45%) are more likely to do so than Hispanics (33%). Moreover, low-income seniors are appreciably less likely than average to take any of these steps. The amount of time seniors spend online also makes a difference—49% of those who go online daily take two or more of these security steps, compared with 40% of those who go online weekly and 37% of those who go online less than once a week.

- However, despite the fact that nearly all online seniors make at least some effort at online security using these steps, far fewer are confident they are doing all that is needed to protect the privacy of their personal information. In fact, just 58% say they are extremely or very confident they are taking the appropriate security steps; 30% are somewhat confident, and 10% are not confident. Despite taking more security steps, women are less confident than men (55% vs. 62% confident); African Americans are appreciably more confident (68%) than whites or Hispanics (each 58%). And even though they are less likely to take any of the specific security steps noted, 58% of low-income seniors say they are confident they are taking appropriate steps—the same proportion as seniors overall.

- Regularity of online activity makes a difference, as 63% who go online daily are confident, compared with 49% of those who go online weekly or less often. Though actually taking security steps does not necessarily engender greater confidence—those who take two or more of the security steps listed previously are no more likely than average to be highly confident that they are taking all the appropriate steps, suggesting that these seniors "know what they don't know" when it comes to online safety.

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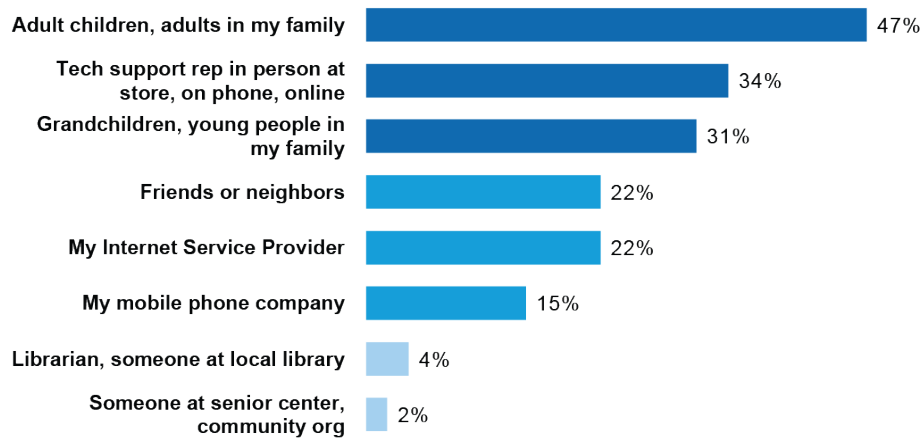
5. When it comes to online matters, seniors trust family above all others.

- When presented with a list of sources they could turn to for technology-related assistance, online seniors are more likely to have contacted family members for help than any other source.

Online seniors prioritize family when seeking help with technology or the Internet.

I have turned to these people for assistance in using electronic devices to go online and using the Internet:

(among online seniors)

Adult children, adults in my family	47%
Tech support rep in person at store, on phone, online	34%
Grandchildren, young people in my family	31%
Friends or neighbors	22%
My Internet Service Provider	22%
My mobile phone company	15%
Librarian, someone at local library	4%
Someone at senior center, community org	2%

- Respondents could choose multiple sources, so there is overlap among the numbers above; but when we remove duplicate responses we find that a total of 61% of seniors have turned to either adult or younger family members for help with technology, vastly outnumbering the other sources. The less experience a senior has online, the more important family becomes:

Online Seniors who Turn to Family Members for Help with Technology.

	Turn to Adult Family Members %	Turn to Young Family Members %
Been online less than five years	54	44
Been online 5 to 14 years	48	34
Been online 15 years or longer	46	24

- Tech support representatives are also are a fairly heavily-used source, though more for white seniors (38%) than African-American (16%) or Hispanic (19%) seniors.

Attitudes of Seniors Who Are Not Online

6. **Interest in the Internet is very low among seniors who are not currently online—essentially, most are not online by choice.**

- More than three in four (77%) seniors who are not online say they have not considered using the Internet and just 22% have considered it. Interest is low across the board, though slightly higher among those under age 75 (27%) than age 75 and older (18%).

- We noted earlier in this report that seniors who are online express interest in engaging in several new online activities, such as grocery deliveries and health-related activities. This interest is not shared by seniors who are not online—when presented with the same list of online activities, fewer than one in five offline seniors express interest in any of them. The highest level of interest is in video calls with friends and family, in which 18% of offline seniors express a great deal or fair amount of interest.

- Indeed, just 22% say they believe using the Internet would help them stay in closer touch with family and friends; 69% do not believe this is the case, and 9% are unsure.

More than three in four (77%) seniors who are not online say they have not considered using the Internet and just 22% have considered it.

7.   Offline seniors' concerns about being online are as high as their interest is low.

- We asked seniors who are not online about the same list of potential issues that we asked of online seniors. (Because they are not online themselves, we asked the question in the context of "is this something Internet users should worry about?"). Offline seniors express a substantial level of worry about each item, though, like their peers who are online, identity and financial theft are at or near the top of their list.

Concerns Keeping Seniors Offline

	Worry A Lot/ Some About This %
Being a victim of identity theft	76
Being tricked into giving too much of their personal information by someone who is misrepresenting themselves online	74
Having their bank account or other financial accounts hacked into	69
People learning too much about them from information they have posted on social media or other places online	62
Having their computer or device infected by viruses, spyware, or malware	61
Companies tracking their online activity and purchases	60
Having their location tracked by applications or services	60
Encountering inappropriate or offensive content	58
Losing some or all of their stored data or information if something goes wrong with their computer	58

- In fact, their general lack of interest in the Internet and concerns about identity and financial theft make up the primary reasons that these seniors are not online. Sixty-eight percent (68%) say their preference for doing things in person or on the phone is a "major reason" they are not online; 62% cite concerns about identity theft as a major reason. Majorities also express distrust for online sources (56%) and lack of technical skills (54%) as major reasons.

- Despite the fact that offline seniors are a fairly low-income group overall, the cost of devices needed to get online (29%) and the cost of Internet service (28%) are the least common "major reasons" for not being online. That said, it is worth noting that offline seniors who are at or below 185% of the federal poverty level are more likely than those with a higher income to cite cost as a major reason for not being online. In particular, there is a 12-percentage-point gap between low-income seniors and those who are not low-income who point to cost of devices as their primary obstacle to getting online (35% of low-income seniors, compared with 23% among seniors that are not low-income). There is only a five-percentage-point gap between these two groups with regard to cost of Internet service (31% to 26%). So while cost is not the primary obstacle to the vast majority of low-income seniors getting online—their top obstacle is their preference to do things in person or over the phone (70%)—it may be a consideration for some.

Their general lack of interest in the Internet and concerns about identity and financial theft make up the primary reasons that these seniors are not online.

8. **To the degree they would even consider getting online, offline seniors—much like their online counterparts—put faith in family for help and information.**

- We gave offline seniors the same list of potential information sources that we gave to online seniors and got remarkably similar results. The most trusted source for information and guidance on issues related to the Internet for offline seniors is adult children or other adults in their family (39%), followed by grandchildren or other younger family members at 24%.

- Forty-seven percent (47%) say that their children, grandchildren, or other younger family member has encouraged them to use the Internet; an exactly equal proportion say this has not happened. The breakdown between offline seniors who have and have not been encouraged by family to get online provides another interesting snapshot of the degree to which socioeconomic status is a factor in seniors Internet use—though, in this case, it is more related to education than income.

Family Encouragement to Go Online

	Has Encouraged %	Has Not Encouraged %	Net Encouraged ±
Men	53	41	+12
Women	43	51	-8
No more than high school diploma	31	59	-28
At least some college education	75	25	+50
Below 185% federal poverty level	45	46	-1
Above 185% federal poverty level	49	47	+2

The most trusted source for information and guidance on issues related to the Internet for offline seniors is adult children or other adults in their family (39%), followed by grandchildren or other younger family members at 24%.

- However, it is possible that family encouragement makes very little difference in this case. For one thing, all of these offline seniors—regardless of whether their family urged them to get online—remain offline. And in a follow-up question we asked those whose family has not encouraged them to get online if it would make a difference if their family did so; just 6% of that group said that it would make them more likely to use the Internet if their family encouraged them to do so.

- Finally, it seems that regardless of their online status, many seniors have encouraged young family members to be safe online. Just over half (53%) of all seniors say they have had this conversation with their children, grandchildren, or other younger family member under age 18; 56% of seniors who are online have done so, as have 41% of those who are not online. Seniors age 62 to 64 (63%) and African-American seniors (57%) are among the most likely to have done so.

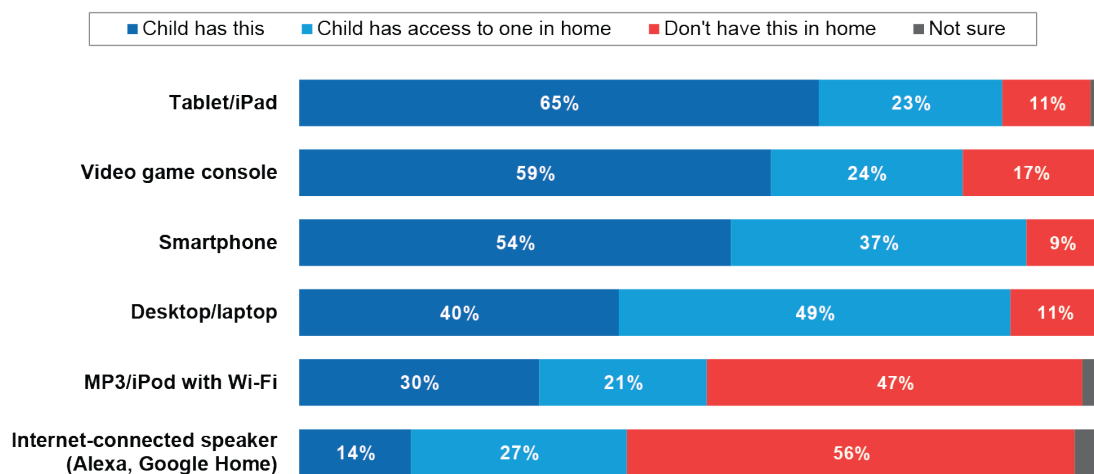# PART 3: Detailed Findings Among Parents of Connected Children

Seniors—whether they are online or not—are clear about the concerns they have about the Internet: identity theft, hacking, and financial theft. Fear of exposure to inappropriate or offensive content is a lower-level concern for seniors who are not online, and a quite minor issue for those who are online.

Parents, on the other hand, view online content as a real challenge. Like online seniors, parents believe there is a wide range of benefits to their children using technology and being online, from skills development to the formation of tighter family bonds. But managing and exercising some control over the content their child sees and hears when they are online and using technology is something that many parents struggle with— even more than they struggle with managing screen time, though many parents have concerns about screen time as well. Given these concerns and the ubiquity of technology in their children's lives (both in terms of the number of devices they use and the number of games, accounts, and services children have or take advantage of) it is no wonder that the large majority of parents have implemented a host of rules governing how and when their children can use technology.

9. Connected children access the Internet in a variety of ways—with many having devices of their own.

Parents of connected children report that their child accesses the Internet and uses technology in many ways. More than eight in 10 connected children have access to a tablet (65% say their child has this, and 88% say their child either owns or has access to it), a video game console (59% has, 83% has access), a smartphone (54% has, 91% has access), and a computer (40% has, 89% has access). Half of parents say their child has three or more of their own devices.

Children have access to various connected devices.

	■ Child has this	■ Child has access to one in home	■ Don't have this in home	■ Not sure
Tablet/iPad	65%	23%	11%	
Video game console	59%	24%	17%	
Smartphone	54%	37%	9%	
Desktop/laptop	40%	49%	11%	
MP3/iPod with Wi-Fi	30%	21%	47%	
Internet-connected speaker (Alexa, Google Home)	14%	27%	56%	

Notably fewer low-income parents say their child has his/her own laptop or computer (33% low-income, 53% upper-income).

- Low-income parents are nearly as likely as upper-income parents to say their child has his/her own smartphone (54% low-income, 56% upper-income), and they are only slightly less likely to say their child has his/her own tablet (60% low-income, 68% upper-income) or gaming console (55% low-income, 65% upper-income). Notably fewer low-income parents say their child has his/her own laptop or computer (33% low-income, 53% upper-income). However, low-income children's access to these devices is roughly on par with access for children overall; the only exception is smart speakers—while 41% of parents overall say their child has access to a smart speaker this drops to 29% among low-income parents.

- Those whose child has a social networking account first allowed it at an average age of 11.4, compared with 10.4 for those whose child has a smartphone. Those whose child does not yet have a social networking account say they will not allow him or her to have one until an average age of 14, and a notable 19% say they will not allow it at all. Parents of a child without a smartphone will allow him or her to have one at an average age of 13.2, and only 8% say they will never allow it.

- Children use technology and the Internet in a variety of ways, most commonly to play games online (75%) and to use online education websites such as ABC Mouse or Khan Academy (53%). About half of parents (49%) say their child has either a Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, or Snapchat account.
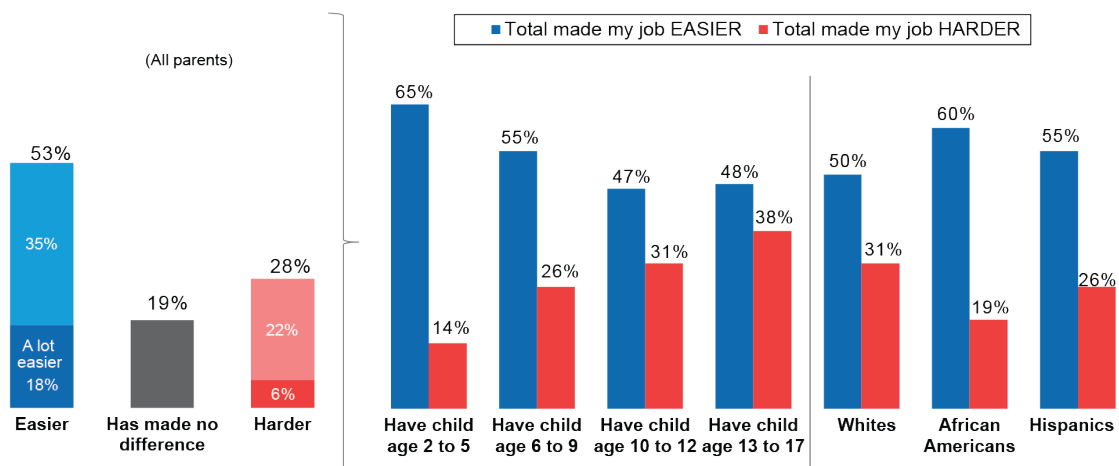
While **41% of parents overall** say their child has access to a smart speaker this drops to 29% among low-income parents.

10. **The majority of parents of connected children feel that technology and the Internet make their job as a parent easier. Technology's perceived benefits for parenting taper off as children get older, however.**

- Parents are nearly twice as likely to feel that technology and the Internet have made their job as a parent easier (53%) rather than harder (28%). Though parents' attitudes become less positive as both they and their children get older.

  - African-American parents, in particular, feel that technology and the Internet have made their jobs as parents easier (+41 more easy than hard) compared with white parents (+19). Dads also feel more positive (+35) than do moms (+17).

- When asked to name ways in which technology and the Internet have made their job as parents easier, parents most commonly mention that it helps with homework, provides entertainment, provides access to information, and is educational.

- On the other hand, they say that technology has made parenting harder due to the need to consistently monitor their child's use, their child being unable to stop playing games or watching videos, and inappropriate content.

Parents generally find technology makes parenting easier, though feelings change as children get older.

In general, technology and the Internet have made my job as a parent:

11. Parents see many benefits of technology and the Internet for their children—but also identify some clear negatives.

- When asked to give one word describing how they feel about **the role technology** plays in their child's life, parents' reactions are varied. More than half (56%) offer positive words and phrases ("exciting," "entertaining," "educational," "helpful"), while about one in three (29%) lists more negative or critical ones ("scary," "addictive," "time-consuming," "disruptive," and "distracting").

- Parents' impressions of **technology's impact** on their children vary depending on which aspect they are considering. There are many areas in which parents think their child's use of technology has had a clearly positive impact, but they are less sanguine about the impact in other areas.

  - **Positives:** Parents feel that technology has had the most positive effect on their child's technology skills (+77 more positive than negative), ability to research information (+71), future, career, and life skills (+50), creativity (+38), performance in school (+35), and their child's communication skills (+12). Parents are more ambivalent, though still generally positive, about the effect technology has had on their child's behavior (+2) and their own relationship with their child (+6).

  - **Negatives:** On the other hand, more parents think the impact of technology has been more negative than positive in some areas, including their child's level of physical activity and fitness (-33); their child's attention span (-12); and their child's ability to engage with people in person (-5).

- Parents overall think that the potential benefits of their child having a **smartphone** outweigh the potential harms by a small margin (36% benefits outweigh, 31% harms outweigh), but this obscures notable differences in attitudes depending on the age of child. Parents of teens are the only ones more likely to think the potential benefits outweigh the potential harms.

More than half (56%) offer positive words and phrases:

exciting
entertaining
educational
helpful

About one in three (29%) lists more negative or critical ones:

scary
addictive
time-consuming
disruptive
distracting

Parents' Assessment of Various Impacts of Technology on their Children's Lives

	Positive %	Negative %	Differential ±
Your child's technology skills	81	4	+77
Your child's ability to research and find information	76	5	+71
Your child's future, career, and life skills	57	7	+50
Your child's creativity	53	15	+38
Your child's performance in school	48	13	+35
Your child's communication skills	36	24	+12
Your child's social relationships with friends	32	21	+11
Your child's relationships with grandparents/older family members	31	20	+11
Your child's ability to make new friends	29	21	+8
Your relationship with your child	25	19	+6
Your child's ability to interact/engage with people in person	25	30	-5
Your child's behavior	24	22	+2
Your child's attention span	24	36	-12
Your child's level of physical activity and fitness	16	49	-33

" There's a lot of really convenient things that come from technology, like **I love being able to communicate instantly with the kids**, text them back and forth. I like being able to track them, I have apps that can track them. I can make sure they got to school okay, if they're going to a friend's house afterward I can make sure they got there. I can see if their dad or carpool is driving them home from somewhere, I can literally see how far away they are and where they are. So there's a lot of convenience that comes from it, **but just like everyone else** says here, **they're addicted to it**, they don't know anything else, they prefer to do that pretty much over everything else at any given time. "

– Parent of connected child

Parents' Assessment of Benefits Vs. Harms of Different Aspects of Technology

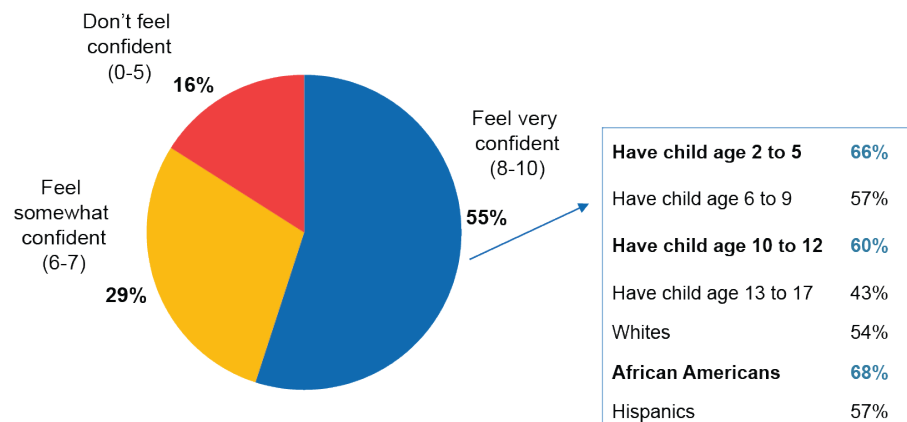|	Benefits Outweigh %	Harms Outweigh %	Differential ±
Your child having a smartphone			
All parents	**36**	**31**	**+5**
Child age 2 to 5	26	49	-23
Child age 6 to 9	29	32	-3
Child age 10 to 12	28	36	-8
Child age 13 to 17	51	16	+35
Your child having a social media account, such as on Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter			
All parents	**20**	**52**	**-32**
Child age 2 to 5	18	63	-45
Child age 6 to 9	12	62	-50
Child age 10 to 12	17	61	-44
Child age 13 to 17	26	36	-10

- When it comes to the question of their child **having a social media account**, parents overall think that potential harms far outweigh the potential benefits (20% benefits outweigh; 52% harms outweigh).

  - While parents of younger children are the most negative about their child having a social media account, even parents of teens are more likely to think harms outweigh the benefits (36%) than the reverse (26%).

  - While parents across racial/ethnic groups are negative toward social media, white parents (-39 negatives outweigh) are more so than African-American (-23) or Hispanic (-27) parents. Upper-income parents (-42) are also more pessimistic than are low-income parents (-32).

12. **The majority of parents of connected children feel confident in their knowledge of technology and the Internet and their ability to manage their child's use of it, but this is less true for parents of teens.**

- Overall, 55% of parents rate themselves as highly confident (eight, nine, or 10 on a scale of zero to 10) in their **ability to keep track of and manage their child's use of technology**—leaving 45%, however, who are less confident.

  – Just as parents of older children are less likely to think technology and the Internet have made their job as a parent easier, their confidence in managing technology diminishes as both they and their children become older. Only 43% of parents of teens and 45% of parents age 45 or older feel highly confident in their ability to manage their child's technology use; African-American parents (68%) and parents with children age 2 to 5 (66%) feel the most confident.

Parents' confidence in managing tech use diminishes when kids become teens.

On a scale from 0 to 10, how confident do you feel in your ability to keep track of and manage your child's use of technology, including electronic devices and being online?

Have child age 2 to 5	**66%**
Have child age 6 to 9	57%
Have child age 10 to 12	**60%**
Have child age 13 to 17	43%
Whites	54%
African Americans	**68%**
Hispanics	57%

Pie chart:
- Don't feel confident (0-5): 16%
- Feel somewhat confident (6-7): 29%
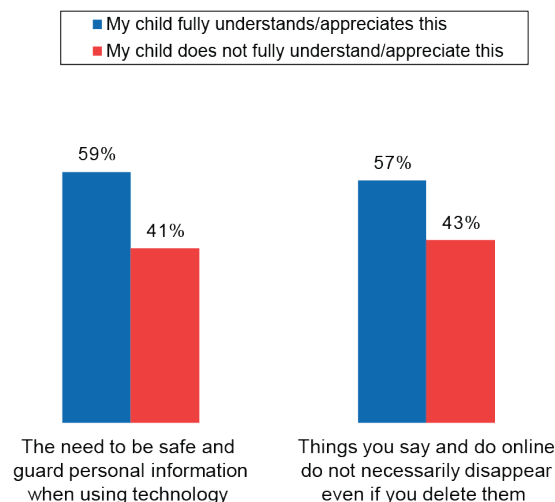- Feel very confident (8-10): 55%

"I circled seven because there's no way to be extremely confident in something like that. Also, **you don't know everything you think you know**, but I feel that I talk to my daughter, I have an open relationship."

– Parent of connected child

- Fully 70% of parents **feel they know more than their child does** about technology and online activities. Only 16% think their child knows more than them, and 14% think they know just about as much as their child does.

  - However, parents' perceived advantage in technological know-how diminishes as both they and children become older. Fewer than half (48%) of parents with children age 13 to 17 feel they know more than their child, compared with 91% of parents of children age 2 to 5, 83% with children age 6 to 9, and 69% with children age 10 to 12. Millennial parents (83%) are much more likely to say they know more than parents age 45 or older (49%).

- Although parents say they know more than their child, majorities also have faith that their child fully understands and appreciates the **need to be safe and guard his or her personal information** (59%) and that the **things he or she says and does online do not necessarily disappear when deleted** (57%). However, this still leaves more than two in five parents who do not think their child fully understands these things.

  - Not surprisingly, parents' sense of their child's understanding increases with the child's age. Fewer than two in five parents of children age 2 to 5 think their child fully understands both of these things, while seven in 10 parents of teens think their child fully understands them.

  - Despite parents' general reservations about social media, seven in 10 of those who say their child has a social networking account think their child fully understands and appreciates the need to be safe and that things said or done online do not necessarily disappear.

The majority of parents think their child fully understands the need to be safe online; but two in five do not.

■ My child fully understands/appreciates this
■ My child does not fully understand/appreciate this

59%
41%

57%
43%

The need to be safe and guard personal information when using technology

Things you say and do online do not necessarily disappear even if you delete them

My child fully understand/appreciates this about being online:

By child's age:	Need to be safe/ guard personal information	Things you say/ do online don't disappear
Age 2 to 5	35%	38%
Age 6 to 9	57%	50%
Age 10 to 12	67%	63%
Age 13 to 17	72%	70%

13. **Online content trumps time spent online as a concern for parents, though many do not feel satisfied with their level of control in either area.**

- The **aspects of managing their children's use of technology and the Internet that parents find most challenging** include managing the content their child is exposed to (71% big or small challenge), managing the amount of time their child spends using technology (68%), and knowing what their child is doing and with whom he or she is interacting online (63%). In each case, parents of teens are more likely to say it is a challenge than are parents of 2- to 5-year-olds.

  - Fewer parents—but still nearly half (46%)—indicate that their child setting up accounts without their knowledge is a challenge. Nearly one in three (30%) feel that it is a challenge to manage the amount of money their child spends on in-app or in-game purchases. Money management is the only area that just as many parents of 2- to 5-year-olds as parents of teens find challenging.

- Regardless of their child's age, parents say they are **more concerned about the content** of what their child sees and hears online and while using technology (64%) than about the amount of time they spend online and using technology (32%). Parents of children age 6 to 9 (72%) and 10 to 12 (70%) express greater concern about content than do parents of children age 2 to 5 (57%) or parents of teens (58%).

- The majority of parents **wish they had more control** over the content their child sees and hears (56%), while fewer than half feel the same way about the amount of time their child spends online and using technology (42%). Only one in three (33%) is satisfied with the amount of control they have over both content and time spent, while two-thirds (67%) wish they had more control in one or both of these areas.

Regardless of their child's age, parents say they are more concerned about the content of what their child sees and hears online and while using technology (64%) than about the amount of time they spend online and using technology (32%).

Content trumps time management as a concern for parents.

Which one of these are you generally more worried about in the use of technology and the Internet?
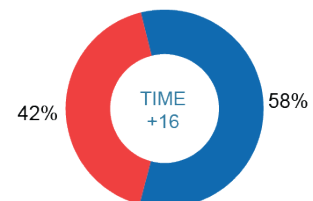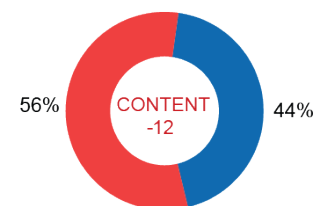
Content and things my child sees and hears when online and using technology
64%
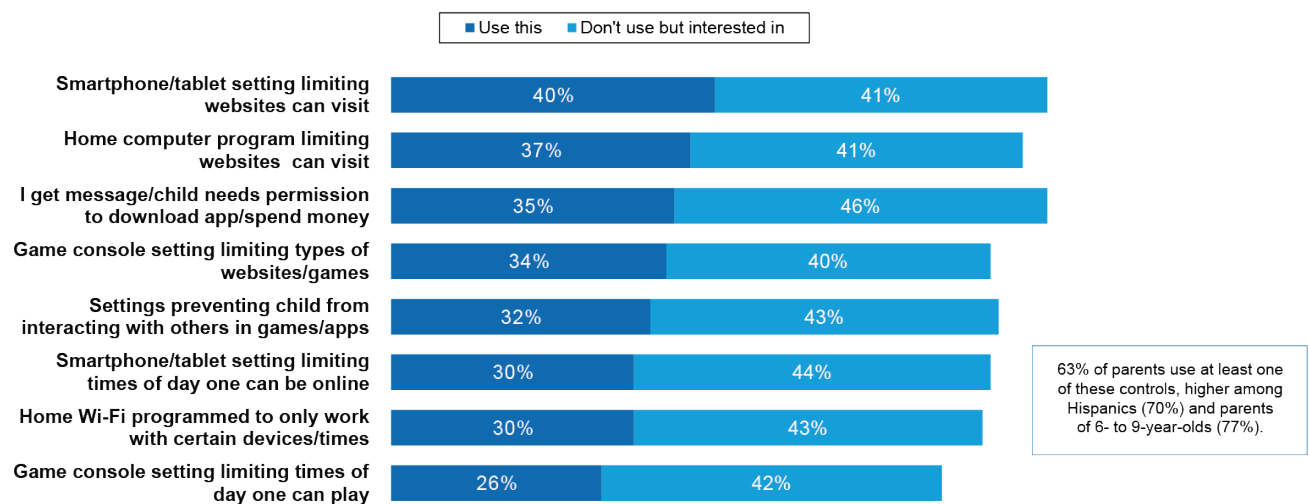
Amount of time my child spends online and using technology
32%

■ Satisfied with control I have in this area
■ Wish I had more control in this area

CONTENT
-12
56%   44%

TIME
+16
42%   58%

14. To keep their connected children safe online, parents set rules, draw on a variety of parental control tools, and frequently discuss online safety with their child.

- Nine in 10 (91%) parents have **rules for their child's technology use**. The most common rules parents set include what sites he or she can access (81%), the time of day he or she can use technology (77%), what online accounts he or she can have (75%), and the amount of time he or she can spend on technology (73%). Parents of teens are less likely to say they have most of these rules for their child than are parents of younger children.

- Nearly two in three (63%) parents report using at least one of a list of **parental control tools, programs, or apps** to limit their child's Internet use. One-third or more of parents say they use limits on types of websites their child can visit on a mobile device, from a home computer, or from a video game console, as well as approval of in-app purchases.

  - Use of at least one of these controls is higher among Hispanic parents (70%) and parents of 6- to 9-year-olds (77%).

- Interest in parental controls is high among those who do not already use them: for each parental control tool tested, at least two in five parents indicate that while they do not use it, they would be interested in doing so.

Use of parental controls varies, but interest is high.

Legend: ■ Use this ■ Don't use but interested in

	Use this	Don't use but interested in
Smartphone/tablet setting limiting websites can visit	40%	41%
Home computer program limiting websites can visit	37%	41%
I get message/child needs permission to download app/spend money	35%	46%
Game console setting limiting types of websites/games	34%	40%
Settings preventing child from interacting with others in games/apps	32%	43%
Smartphone/tablet setting limiting times of day one can be online	30%	44%
Home Wi-Fi programmed to only work with certain devices/times	30%	43%
Game console setting limiting times of day one can play	26%	42%

63% of parents use at least one of these controls, higher among Hispanics (70%) and parents of 6- to 9-year-olds (77%).

Interest in parental controls is high among those who do not already use them: for each parental control tool tested, at least two in five parents indicate that while they do not use it, they would be interested in doing so.
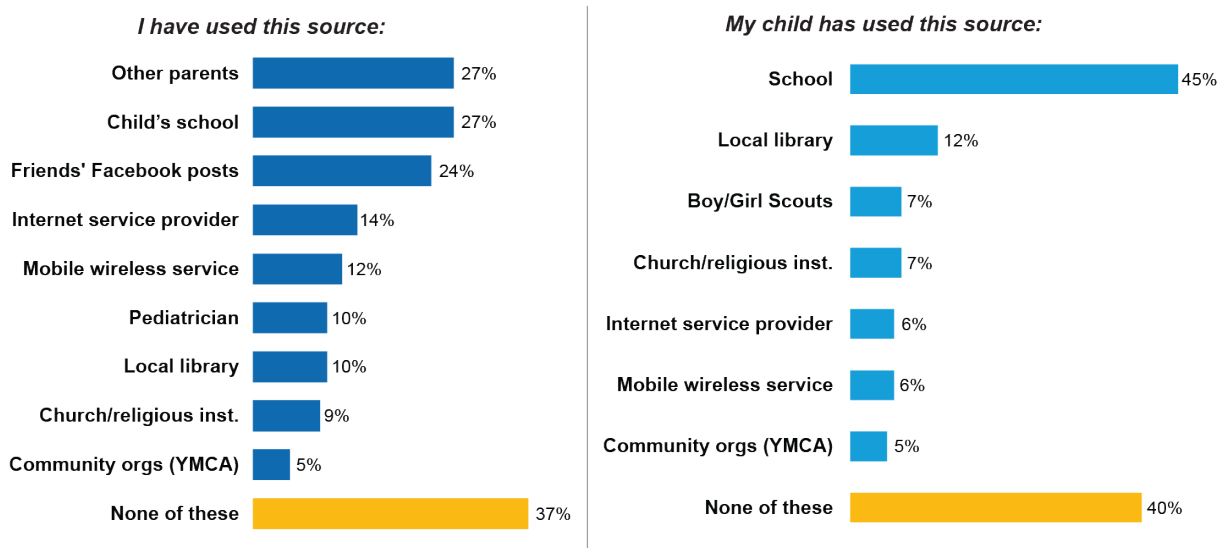
- The vast majority (88%) of parents report having **discussions with their child about being safe online** and protecting his or her personal information, including fully 64% who say they do so a few times a month or more often.

  - Most parents have these conversations frequently regardless of their confidence in tracking and managing their children's tech and online use. Two thirds of those (67%) who are very confident have conversations at least a few times a month, as do 63% who are fairly confident and 61% who are less confident.

  - Parents of children age 6 to 9 (78%) and 10 to 12 (73%) are more likely to say they have these conversations at least a few times a month; Hispanic (72%) and African-American (70%) parents say they have these conversations more often than white parents (59%) do.

  - Low-income parents have these discussions with their children at the same rate as parents overall, though they do so with more frequency: 42% of low-income parents say they have discussions with their children weekly or more often, compared to 34% of parents overall who say this.

63% of parents report using at least one of a list of parental control tools, programs, or apps to limit their child's Internet use.

15.   Parents look to schools, other parents, and friends as sources of information for how to manage their child's technology use.

- More than three in five (63%) parents say they have used information from various **sources to learn how to manage their child's technology use** and keep them safe online. They are most likely to say they have relied on their child's school (27%), other parents (27%), and social media posts from friends (24%). Smaller proportions have relied on other resources listed in the corresponding table. More than one in three parents (37%) say they have not used any of these sources, however.

- When it comes to **sources of information that their child has used** to learn how to be safe online, parents recognize their child's school (45%) as far and away the greatest source of information. A little more than one in 10 (12%) parents say their child has used their local library as a source of information; fewer say their child has used information from any of the other sources listed.

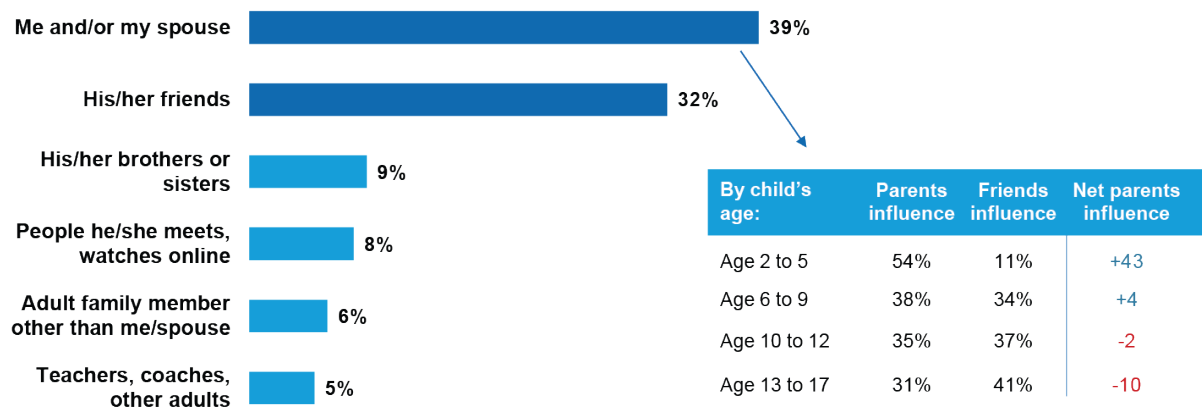## Schools are a top source of information for children and parents to learn how to manage technology use.

I have used this source:

Other parents	27%
Child's school	27%
Friends' Facebook posts	24%
Internet service provider	14%
Mobile wireless service	12%
Pediatrician	10%
Local library	10%
Church/religious inst.	9%
Community orgs (YMCA)	5%
None of these	37%

My child has used this source:

School	45%
Local library	12%
Boy/Girl Scouts	7%
Church/religious inst.	7%
Internet service provider	6%
Mobile wireless service	6%
Community orgs (YMCA)	5%
None of these	40%

16. **Parents see themselves as one of the biggest influences on how their child uses technology, and they award themselves high marks as positive technology role models.**

- Parents believe that they (39%) are one of the **biggest influences on their child** in how he or she uses technology, although they identify their child's friends (32%) as significant influences as well.

  - Parents of older children recognize that this influence has shifted to their child's friends. Among those with children age 13 to 17, 31% identify themselves and 41% identify their child's friends as one of the biggest influences on their child, compared with 54% who say themselves and 11% who say their child's friends among those with children age 2 to 5.

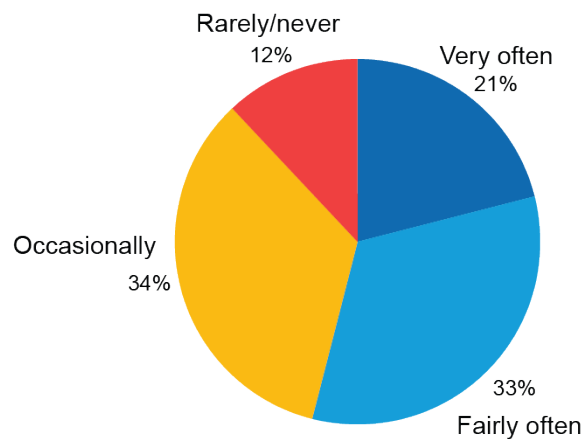## Parents say the dynamic of technology influences shifts as children age.

Which one or two of these sources are the biggest influences on your child in how he/she uses technology?

Me and/or my spouse	39%
His/her friends	32%
His/her brothers or sisters	9%
People he/she meets, watches online	8%
Adult family member other than me/spouse	6%
Teachers, coaches, other adults	5%

By child's age:	Parents influence	Friends influence	Net parents influence
Age 2 to 5	54%	11%	+43
Age 6 to 9	38%	34%	+4
Age 10 to 12	35%	37%	-2
Age 13 to 17	31%	41%	-10

- More than half (54%) of parents very or fairly often make the effort to **use technology together with their children**—such as going on websites together, playing games, doing educational activities, or looking at social media posts. However, just as their perceived influence wanes as their children get older, so does this shared time: parents of teens (42%) are less likely to use technology with their child than those with younger children (59% with children age 2 to 5; 62% age 6 to 9; and 59% age 10 to 12).

    - African-American parents (66%), Hispanics (61%), and Millennials (62%) are the most likely to use technology together with their children.

Technology brings parents and children together.

How often do you and your child use technology together (go to websites, play video games, do educational activities, look at social media posts)?
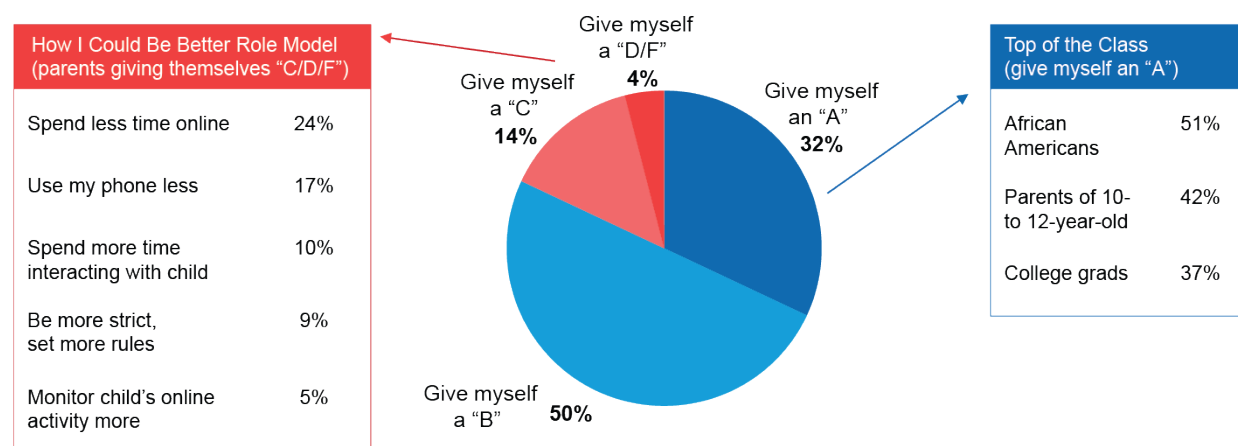

Use technology very/fairly often with my child:	
All parents	54%
African Americans	66%
Hispanics	61%
Millennials	62%

- We asked parents to give themselves a grade for the job they are doing in setting a good example and being a **good role model** in showing their child the kind of behavior they expect from him or her when using technology and being online, and 82% gave themselves an "A" (32%) or "B" (50%). Interestingly, parents who have not used any parental controls (77% A or B grade) are only slightly less likely than parents who have used two or more parental controls (86%) to give themselves a high mark.

    - African-American parents (51% gave themselves an A) and parents of 10-to 12-year-olds (42%) give themselves the highest marks.

- When asked in what **ways they could be a better role model** for their child, parents most commonly offer that they could spend less time online, use their phones less, monitor their child's online activity more often, and be on top of what content he or she accesses online. Some also feel they could be stricter with rules for use and spend more time interacting with their child.

Parents rate themselves as modeling good—if not perfect—technology behavior for their children.

What grade would you give yourself for the job you are doing in setting a good example and being a good role model in showing your child the kind of behavior you expect when using technology and being online?

How I Could Be Better Role Model (parents giving themselves "C/D/F")	
Spend less time online	24%
Use my phone less	17%
Spend more time interacting with child	10%
Be more strict, set more rules	9%
Monitor child's online activity more	5%

Give myself a "D/F" **4%**

Give myself a "C" **14%**

Give myself an "A" **32%**

Give myself a "B" **50%**

Top of the Class (give myself an "A")	
African Americans	51%
Parents of 10- to 12-year-old	42%
College grads	37%

"I definitely **try to be [a good role model] but it's hard** when we live in this day and age. I work full-time outside the home, and I have to check email when I get home because I work for a really young company and most people can stay and don't have kids. So I leave at 5 o'clock and they're still working so I check my emails a lot more than I probably should."

– Parent of connected child

17. **Large proportions of parents who have living parents or elderly relatives say that these elders use technology and the Internet, and a notable proportion would like them to use technology more than they already do.**

- Among parents who have living parents or elderly relatives, 78% say that their **parents or elderly relatives use technology** such as text messaging, e-mail, or social media to communicate with them.

  - Low-income parents (66%) are less likely to communicate with elderly relatives in these ways, while parents with an income of $100,000 or more (89%) are the most likely to do so.

- Although many parents with living parents or elderly relatives feel that these elders use technology and the Internet the right amount (43%), many would like them to more than they currently do (44%). Only 13% would like their parents or elderly relatives to use technology and the Internet less than they do.

- Parents with living parents or elderly relatives express **mixed emotions** about their parents and elderly relatives using technology and the Internet more.

  - On the positive side, 64% think it would allow their parents and elderly relatives to stay in better touch with friends and family and a majority (56%) think that their parents' or elderly relatives' lives would be easier and more convenient if they used technology and the Internet more. Additionally, 52% of parents say it would make their own lives more convenient if their parents or elderly relatives used technology and the Internet more.

    » Hispanic parents (62%) in particular think their parents or elderly relatives' use of technology would make their own lives easier, compared with 48% of white parents and 44% of African Americans. Dads (60%) and parents with an income of $100,000 or more also are more likely to say so.

  - On the other hand, nearly three in five (59%) parents worry about their parents or elderly relatives getting scammed or hacked and losing money or personal information.

> **Although many parents with living parents or elderly relatives feel that these elders use technology and the Internet the right amount (43%), many would like them to more than they currently do (44%).**

18.   Technology has the power to bring families together across generations.

- Despite the aforementioned concerns, the majority of parents (57%) think that **technology has improved communication among their family members**.   Only 13% think it has made communication worse, and 30% say it has had no effect.

- Parents with an income of $100,000 or more (67%), Hispanics (65%), Millennials (64%), college graduates (63%), and dads (61%) are the most likely to say technology has made communication among family members better.

- Many parents report that both they and their parents or elderly relatives draw on a **variety of technologies to communicate with their child/grandchildren**, including via text, Facetime or Skype, social media, and e-mail.

Intergenerational Use of Technology for Communication

	Parent Communicates With Child At Least Occasionally %	Child Communicates With Grandparent At least Occasionally %
Texting	55	47
Facetime or Skype	39	45
Social media	35	33
E-mail	27	25

- Parents indicate that their **elderly relatives turn to them for help** understanding how to use technology or to troubleshoot problems: fully 94% say their elderly relative turns to them, including 58% who say their elderly relative turns to them always or often.

  - Among those who say their elderly relative has turned to them for help, by 80% to 20% they say the experience has been **more positive than frustrating**.

- Nearly two in five (38%) parents say they have had their **children help their elderly relative** who needed assistance with technology.

  - Other things that parents have had their elderly relative do include watch a video online (34%), call their Internet or cell phone provider's customer service line (24%), or go to an electronics retail store for assistance (19%).

In Closing

Online seniors and parents of connected children not only feel that technology and the Internet has had a positive effect on their lives, but they indicate that it has brought generations together.

- Most parents say that their aging parents and elderly relatives communicate with them via technology and the Internet (e.g. text, email, social media), and many parents also indicate that they use these types of platforms (especially text) to communicate with their children.

- Both parents of connected children and seniors identify adult children as the top source of help for seniors navigating the use of technology and the Internet, and they rank grandchildren as an important secondary source of aid to help seniors navigating the online world.

- Not only are parents often having conversations with their children about how to stay safe online, but many seniors have talked to children under age 13 about the importance of being safe online.

"**I would say it's awesome.** I'm on it every day and I got started into it to keep up with my kids and my grandkids with the Facebook thing. I go on their pages and I monitor what's going on, what they're posting, because I can see what they're thinking from what they're posting. So I think it's amazing." *– Online senior*

"**I'm about to [get an Instagram account].** I'm being forced into it by granddaughter. I take a lot of photographs, she's started to take a lot of photographs and she wants to show me what she's been doing, so her mother is pushing the Instagram accounts." *– Online senior*

"**My parents aren't great technology users.** I call them reluctant technology users. They pretty much realize it's inevitable, they're not thrilled about it but they realize that it's really the best way to communicate with me and with my kids. My daughter was abroad this summer and my father WhatsApp'd her, and he texted me after saying 'she replied within 10 seconds!' and I said yes welcome to the world. If you had called, never in a million years would she have answered." *– Parent of connected child*

APPENDIX A: Summary of Similarities and Differences among Key Groups of Seniors

Low-income Seniors (at or below 185% of the federal poverty level)

Interestingly, low-income seniors differ from those with higher incomes very little when it comes to attitudes about technology and the Internet. The primary, and most important, difference is in overall use of the Internet: 80% of seniors overall go online and use the Internet at least occasionally; this drops to 64% among low-income seniors. It is also worth noting that the rate of use is lower: 53% of seniors overall use the Internet on a daily basis, while just 36% of low-income seniors do so.

This difference in overall utilization aside, when we look specifically at seniors who are online, low-income seniors do not differ radically from online seniors overall.

- Low-income seniors use various devices to get online at roughly the same rates as seniors overall—desktop or laptop computers (80%), smartphones (70%), tablets (57%), and smart speakers (26%).

- They are only slightly less likely to say that technology has had a mostly positive effect on their lives (62% vs. 67% of seniors overall who say this).

- Another interesting difference about this low-income audience is that they are less likely than seniors overall to use most of the online services we asked about in the survey. The biggest gaps are for navigation services (57% use, compared to 71% of seniors overall) and submitting information to government agencies (34% vs. 54% average).

- Low-income seniors are somewhat less confident than average when it comes to using the Internet (46% vs. 58% extremely/very confident), but are equally confident when it comes specifically to keeping their personal information safe online (58% extremely/very confident, both among low-income seniors and seniors overall). This equal level of security-related confidence is interesting, considering that low-income seniors are less likely than average to take many of the online security-related steps we asked above, particularly use of different passwords for different accounts (33% of low-income seniors do this, compared to 44% of seniors overall), use of anti-virus software (31% vs. 43%), and keeping their operating system and apps updated (26% vs. 35%).

- Finally, like seniors overall, low-income seniors are most apt to turn to adult family members for help in using technology (41% vs. 47% overall). They are, however, somewhat less likely to reach out to tech support representatives (24% vs. 34%).

African-American and Hispanic Seniors

- White seniors are more likely to be online, and use the Internet more often, than their minority counterparts: 82% of white seniors are online, including 55% who use the Internet daily, compared to 63% and 36%, respectively, among African Americans and 64% and 40% among Hispanics.

- Among those who are online, seniors in all three groups are highly optimistic about the Internet's effect on their lives—two thirds of each group say the effect is positive.

- African-American seniors are somewhat more likely than their counterparts to want to do more than they currently are doing online in the abstract—30% say this is the case, compared to 19% of whites and 20% of Hispanics.

- However, it is Hispanic seniors who are most likely to express interest in specific online services and activities, especially:

  - Remote health monitoring devices (Hispanics 48%, African Americans 39%, whites 32%)

  - Communicating online with health professionals (Hispanics 39%, African Americans 35%, whites 28%)

  - Submitting government forms online (Hispanics 33%, African Americans 15%, whites 12%)

  - Video calls with family members (Hispanics 30%, African Americans 17%, whites 17%)

  - Ridesharing services and apps (Hispanics 28%, African Americans 11%, whites 18%)

  - Shopping for everyday goods (Hispanics 28%, African Americans 10%, whites 14%)

- African-American and Hispanic seniors are more likely than whites to worry about nearly every concern about online safety that we asked about in the survey. Identity theft, computer viruses, and financial hacking are significant concerns for all three groups; after those three items whites' concern drops off to some degree while that of Hispanics and African Americans remains high. The especially large gaps on the four starred (*) items below suggests a lower level of trust of the online world among minority seniors than among white seniors:

  - Identity theft (whites 76% worry a lot or some, African Americans 80%, Hispanics 76%)

  - Computer viruses, spyware, and malware (whites 70%, African Americans 77%, Hispanics 65%)

  - Having your bank account hacked into (whites 68%, African Americans 68%, Hispanics 74%)

  - Losing stored data if something goes wrong with your computer (whites 58%, African Americans 75%, Hispanics 66%)

  - * Being tricked into giving away personal information to someone misrepresenting themselves online (whites 55%, African Americans 61%, Hispanics 71%)

  - * Companies tracking your online activity (whites 50%, African Americans 62%, Hispanics 73%)

  - * Having your location tracked (whites 50%, African Americans 65%, Hispanics 61%)

  - * People learning too much about you from social media (whites 40%, African Americans 55%, Hispanics 61%)

  - Encountering inappropriate content (whites 37%, African Americans 56%, Hispanics 57%)

- Despite this "trust gap"—or possibly because of it—minority seniors are no less likely than whites to express confidence that they are appropriately protecting themselves online: 58% of white seniors are extremely or very confident as are 58% of Hispanic seniors, and confidence actually increases appreciably among African-American seniors (68%).

- And, indeed, African-American and Hispanic seniors report equal, and sometimes nominally higher, rates of taking most specific online safety steps. The only areas where they fall noticeably behind their white counterparts are in keeping their operating systems and apps updated (37% of whites do so, compared to 24% of African Americans and 22% of Hispanics) and using multifactor authentication (whites 25%, African Americans 18%, Hispanics 19%).

- Adult family members are paramount for all three groups of seniors when it comes to troubleshooting technology-related problems. Reminiscent of the income gap noted earlier, African-American and Hispanic seniors are less apt to use tech support representatives (16% and 19%, respectively) than white seniors (38%).

APPENDIX B: Summary of Similarities and Differences among Key Groups of Parents

Low-income Parents (at or below 185% of the federal poverty level)

- Low-income parents are nearly as likely as parents overall to say their child has access to various types of connected devices, though there is a notable income gap in children's access to an Internet-connected speaker: 29% of low-income parents say their child has access to one compared 41% of parents overall. Low-income parents are just as likely to say their child has access to a smartphone (91%) as are parents overall (91%), and just as many say their child has his or her own smartphone (53% of low-income parents, 54% of all parents). When it comes to children having their own laptop, the gap is most pronounced between low-income parents (32%) and upper-income parents with household incomes over $100,000 (53%).

	Low-income parents		All parents	
	Child Has Own %	Child Has Own/ Access %	Child Has Own %	Child Has Own/ Access %
Smartphone	53	91	54	91
Desktop/Laptop	32	83	40	89
Tablet	60	82	65	88
Video game console	55	81	59	83
MP3 player	27	45	30	51
Internet-connected speaker	8	29	14	41

- Low-income parents weigh the potential benefits and potential harms of social media (-32 harms outweigh benefits) similarly to parents overall (-32), with upper-income parents more negative (-42). There is no notable difference in the way low-income parents (+2) and parents overall (+5) weigh the benefits vs. the harms of their child having a smartphone, though, in this case, upper-income parents are more positive (+15).

- There are many areas in which low-income parents' attitudes and self-reported behaviors are not notably different than parents overall (or than upper-income parents). These areas without appreciable differences by income include parents' level of confidence in managing their child's technology use, their employment of rules for their child's technology use, their use of at least one parental control, the frequency with which they report talking to their children about being safe online, and their sense of how good of a role model they are for their children when it comes to using technology.

- Low-income parents (54%) are nearly as likely as parents overall (57%) to think that technology has made communication among their family members better; though upper-income parents (67%) are even more positive.

- Low-income parents are nearly as likely as parents overall to say they communicate with their child often via text (37% of low-income parents vs. 42% of all parents), Facetime or Skype (20% vs. 24%), or social media (20% vs. 23%); they are just as likely to say they communicate via email (15% vs. 15%). Upper-income parents are the most likely to say they communicate with their children in these ways.

- Among parents who have living parents or elderly relatives, low-income parents (66%) are less likely than parents overall (78%) to say their elderly relatives/parents use technology and the Internet to communicate with them; and the gap with upper-income parents (89%) is even larger. Nonetheless, they express the same mixed emotions about their parents using technology and the Internet more – it will allow their parents/elderly relatives to stay in better touch with friends and family and would make their lives easier, but they also worry about their parents/elderly relatives being scammed or hacked.

African-American and Hispanic Parents

- Across racial and ethnic groups, parents report that their children have similar levels of access to various Internet-connected devices. Hispanic parents are slightly more likely than white parents and African-American parents to say their child has his or her own tablet or video game console, but none of the differences in reported child ownership of devices are particularly large.

	White Parents		Hispanic Parents		African-American Parents	
	Child Has Own %	Child Has Own/ Access %	Child Has Own %	Child Has Own/ Access %	Child Has Own %	Child Has Own/ Access %
Smartphone	54	92	56	86	59	92
Desktop/Laptop	40	89	42	84	39	87
Tablet	64	87	72	90	62	84
Video game console	57	81	68	93	60	80
MP3 player	35	55	30	49	27	46
Internet-connected speaker	15	42	15	39	18	41

- African-American parents express more optimism about technology and their ability to manage their child's use.

  - When it comes to the impact that technology and the Internet has had on their job as parents, African-American parents (60% easier) are more optimistic than white parents (50%), with Hispanic parents (55%) in between.

  - While parents across the board think that the potential harms of social media outweigh the potential benefits, African-American parents (-23 harms outweigh benefits) are slightly less pessimistic than white parents (-39), with Hispanic parents (-27) in between. African-American parents (+16) are more positive about their child having a smartphone than are Hispanic (+2) and white parents (+2).

  - African-American parents (68% highly confident) are also more confident in their ability to keep track of and manage their child's technology use than are white parents (54%) and Hispanic parents (57%).

  - African-American parents (51% A, 91% A/B grade) also give themselves higher grades for being a good role model for technology use than do Hispanic parents (31% A, 84% A/B) and white parents (31% A, 80% A/B).

- Most parents say they have rules for their child's technology and many use parental controls and talk to their child about being safe online, but there are some small differences by race and ethnicity.

  - Nearly nine in ten white parents (89%), 90% of African-American parents, and 95% of Hispanic parents have technology rules for their child.

  - Hispanic parents (70%) are slightly more likely than white parents (61%) and African-American parents (62%) to say they have used at least one parental control.

  - Hispanic parents (72% few times a month or more) and African-American parents (70%) report having conversations with their child about being safe online more often than white parents do (59%).

  - African-American parents (66% very or fairly often) and Hispanic parents (61%) say they use technology together with their child more often than white parents (51%) do.

- Hispanic parents (65% better) are the most positive about the impact that technology has had on communication among family members, though majorities of white parents (54%) and African-American parents (56%) are also positive.

  - Hispanic parents are also slightly more likely than white parents and African-American parents to say they use various technologies to communicate with their child.

- Among parents who have living parents or elderly relatives, Hispanic parents (82%) are more likely than white parents (76%) and African-Americans parents (72%) to say their elderly relatives/parents use technology and the Internet to communicate with them.

  - They express mixed emotions about their parents using technology and the Internet more – it will allow their parents/elderly relatives to stay in better touch with friends and family and would make their lives easier, but they also worry about their parents/elderly relatives being scammed or hacked.

  - Hispanic parents (62%) in particular think their parents or elderly relatives' use of technology would make their own lives easier, compared with 48% of white parents and 44% of African-American parents who feel this way.