

Parenting in the Digital Age

How Parents Weigh the Potential Benefits and Harms of Their Children's Technology Use



RESEARCH OVERVIEW

This report provides a great deal of detail on parents' feelings about and monitoring of their children's use of technology, which can vary with the age of their child and other factors. It is clear that parents recognize both benefits and harms of technology, and parenting in the digital age involves careful navigation of these elements.

While many parents monitor their children's online activity and are confident in their ability to do so, the degree to which parents actively oversee their children's online activities and their confidence in their ability to do so decreases the older their child is.

- Most parents (64%) are quite confident in their ability to keep track of their child's technology use, but those with younger children (73%) express greater confidence than do parents of teens (58%). Another group of parents who are among the least confident are Hispanic parents for whom Spanish is their preferred language (53%).
- Overall, 61% of parents think they know more than their child does about technology and being online, while 27% think their child knows more. Parents with younger children also are more likely to think that they (the parent) know more about technology and online activities than their child does (80%), whereas just 36% of parents with a child age 14 to 17 think they know more than their child. Spanish-dominant Hispanics are also among those least likely to believe they know more than their child does about technology (38%).
- Most parents say (95%) they monitor their child's technology use at least somewhat closely, including 55% who say they monitor it very closely. Parents of teens (41%) are notably less likely than parents of younger children age 6 to 9 (68%) to say they monitor technology usage very closely. On the other hand, Spanish-dominant parents – who are like parents of teens in their lower level of confidence in their ability to manage their child's technology use – are actually among those more likely to say they monitor their children very closely (63%).

Parents with younger children also are more likely to think that they (the parent) know more about technology and online activities than their child does (80%), whereas just 36% of parents with a child age 14 to 17 think they know more than their child.

Parents weigh the potential benefits and potential harms of their children's use of technology similarly, regardless of the age of their child. While a slight majority thinks the potential benefits outweigh the potential harms, many are ambivalent – regardless of the age of their child.

- When weighing the potential benefits and potential harms of their children using electronic devices and being online, the majority of parents (53%) feel that, overall, the potential benefits outweigh the potential harms. Many parents are ambivalent, however, feeling that the potential benefits and harms are about equal (42%). Very few feel the potential harms outweigh the benefits (5%). There are not notable differences by the age of child.
- When considering potential benefits and harms of technology, parents' top-of mind focus tends to be on the positive impacts on children's learning and ability to stay informed. They report a variety of potential harms that come to their minds, with concerns about online stalkers or predators and inappropriate content mentioned most often.



42%

Of parents think the potential benefits and potential harms are about equal.

- Parents also make different calculations on benefits vs. harms, depending on the technology.
- They are most likely to feel the benefits outweigh the harms when it comes to their child's use of apps and their playing mobile and video games offline (51% benefits outweigh) and their child using a cell phone that is NOT a smartphone (50%). They are less likely to feel the benefits trump the harms when it comes to their child using a smartphone (38%) and their playing online games (44% benefits outweigh). They are much less likely to think the benefits of their child's having a social media account outweigh the harms (26% benefits outweigh harms, 43% harms outweigh benefits, 31% about equal).
- Parents are more positive about the impact of schools' collecting data on their child's academic performance and behavior (53% benefits outweigh harms) than they are about companies' tracking their child's online activities for marketing purposes (16% benefits outweigh harms).
- Whatever concerns they may have about technologies, 93% of parents believe their child is at least somewhat safe when he/she is online, though just 37% say their child is very safe.

While many parents have talked to their children and done other things to monitor their child's online activity, fewer have used parental-control tools at their disposal. Many of those who have not used them are interested in doing so.

- Nearly all parents (94%) say they have talked to their child about the potential benefits and potential harms of being online and their rules and expectations for their children, and two in three (65%) parents say this is a recurring conversation they have with their child regularly. Most parents have reviewed their child's browsing history and set rules on the amount of time they can spend online.
- Just over half (53%) of parents say they have used parental controls to prevent their child from having access to certain types of online content and nearly as many report using controls to turn off in-app purchases (47%). Fewer parents have used other types of controls, such as GPS apps that show where kids are through their cell phone (31%). Many parents indicate an interest in using them though.

Parents place the greatest trust in their child's teachers and schools (38%) for information about how to maximize the benefits and minimize the harms of their children using technology. Smaller but notable proportions of parents also indicate that they would trust their child/children (29%), parenting websites/magazines (27%), other parents (26%), and pediatricians (22%). They tend to trust these types of people who have children or an expertise in dealing with children more than they trust entities with a direct connection to technology (e.g. technology companies, websites, and retailers).

93%

of parents believe their child is at least somewhat safe when he/she is online.

Methodology

In September and October 2014, Hart Research Associates conducted qualitative and quantitative research among parents on behalf of the Family Online Safety Institute.

The first research phase comprised three focus groups conducted in Towson, Maryland on September 4, 2014, among parents whose children access the Internet. One group was among parents of children age six to nine; one group was among parents of children age 10 to 13; and one group was among parents of 14- to 17-year-olds.

The second phase included an online national survey of 584 parents of children age six to 17 who access the Internet. In addition, we interviewed an oversample of 323 Hispanic parents (223 conducted online and 100 reached by telephone). Combining the Hispanic parents in the oversample with those from the main sample yields a total of 407 Hispanic parents of children age six to 17, which allows for detailed analysis of responses among Hispanic parents. 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. Interviewing was conducted from October 13 to 20, 2014.

The research's objective is to explore how parents weigh the potential benefits and potential harms of their child's using electronic devices and being online, which aspects of their child's being online concern them the most, and how confident they feel in their ability to oversee their child's use of online technology. This report details the research's key findings.

Key Findings

1. Connected children access the Internet using a variety of devices, and more than half of parents say their child has three or more of their own devices with which they can connect.

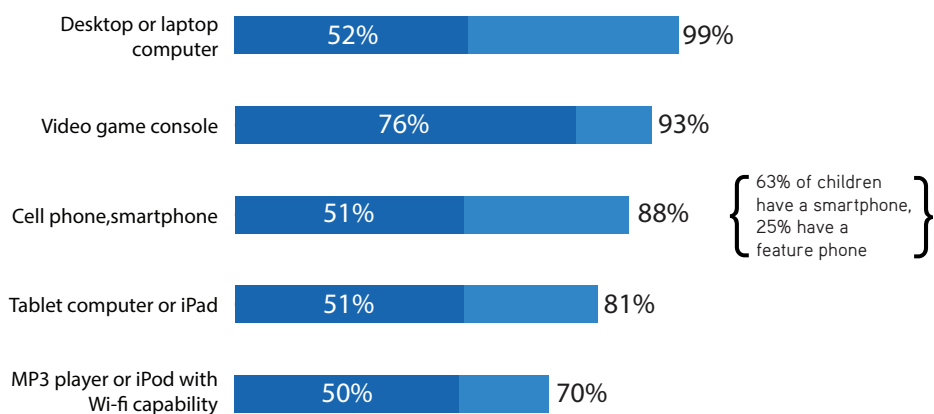
- Virtually all parents say that their child has access to a computer (99%) or video game console (93%). Most say their child has access to a cell phone (88%) or tablet (81%), and 70% say their child has access to an MP3 player. Most parents who say their child has a cell phone indicate that their child has a smartphone (63%) rather than a feature phone (25%).
- When it comes to the child personally having his or her own device, approximately half of parents say their child has his or her own computer, tablet, cell phone, or MP3 player.
- Among those who say their child personally has his or her own cell phone (51% of parents), parents on average say that their child got the phone at age 11, with 39% saying their child got it when he/she was younger than 11.
- Parents whose child does NOT have his or her own cell phone (49%) indicate that, on average, their child will be allowed to get a cell phone at age 14. One-third of this group says their child will have to wait until age 15 or older, however, and 5% of parents say they will not allow their child to have a cell phone at any point.

Among those who say their child personally has his or her own cell phone (51% of parents), parents on average say that their child got the phone at age 11.

- Fully 58% of parents say their child personally has at least three of the five devices tested. Parents with children age six to nine are the least likely to say their child has multiple devices of his or her own (27% have none of the devices, 29% have three or more). Among those with 10- to 13-year-olds, 66% say their child has three or more of the devices, and the proportion climbs to 78% among parents of 14- to 17-year-olds. Hispanic parents (69% child personally has three or more) are more likely than parents overall (58%) to say their child has three or more devices.¹

"CONNECTED" CHILDREN ARE HEAVILY CONNECTED

■ My child has this ■ Child does not have, but there is one in the household



58% of all parents say their children personally have three or more items, including 69% of Hispanic parents.

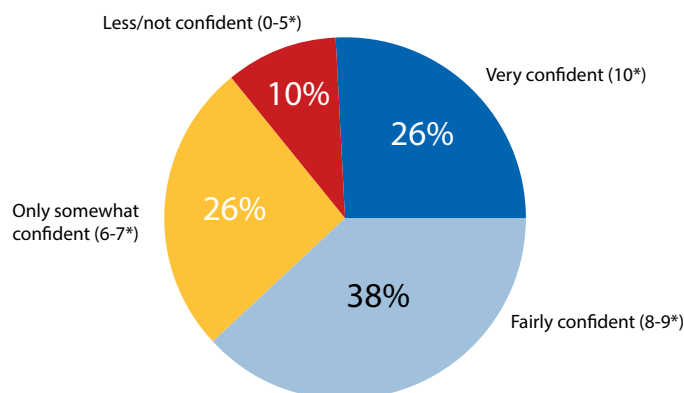
¹ Results among Hispanic parents are highlighted throughout this report. We have also included an Appendix that summarizes many of the results with this group in one place.

2. Most parents are quite confident in their ability to keep track of their child's technology use, but those with younger children express greater confidence than do parents of teens.

- When asked to rate their level of confidence on a 10-point scale, nearly two in three (64%) parents express a high level of confidence (rating of eight, nine, or 10). Very few indicate a low level of confidence.

MOST PARENTS ARE CONFIDENT IN THEIR ABILITY TO MANAGE THEIR CHILDREN'S TECHNOLOGY USE, BUT CONFIDENCE IS LOWER AMONG SOME SEGMENTS.

*How confident do you feel in your ability to keep track of and manage your child's use of technology, including electronic designs and being online?**



Very/fairly confident (8-10")

All Parents	64%
Have child age 6 to 9	73%
Have child age 10 to 13	63%
Have child age 14 to 17	58%
Whites	61%
Hispanics	60%
English-dominant	64%
Spanish-dominant	53%

*Rate on the zero-to-ten scale:
10= feel very confident,
0= feel not at all confident*

73%

of parents of six- to nine-year-olds are highly confident, whereas the proportion drops to

58%

among parents of 14- to 17-year olds

- Fully 73% of parents of six- to nine-year-olds are highly confident, whereas the proportion drops to 63% among parents of 10- to 13-year-olds and to 58% among 14- to 17-year-olds. Also, the higher their level of education, the less confident parents are: 70% of those with a high school degree or less express a high level of confidence, compared with 59% of those with post-graduate education.
- Hispanic parents' level of confidence (60% eight, nine, 10 rating) is only slightly lower than among all parents, and is on par with whites (61%). The differences in confidence levels by age of child are less pronounced among Hispanic parents (63% among those with a six- to nine-year-old and 57% among those with a 14- to 17-year-old). Hispanic parents for whom Spanish is their preferred language (53%) express a lower level of confidence than do their primarily English-speaking peers (64%)

"It's almost like an unspoken rule—and now that you've said it, we probably should make it a rule—that when you're on [a device], we're with you." – Parent of 6- to 9-year-old child

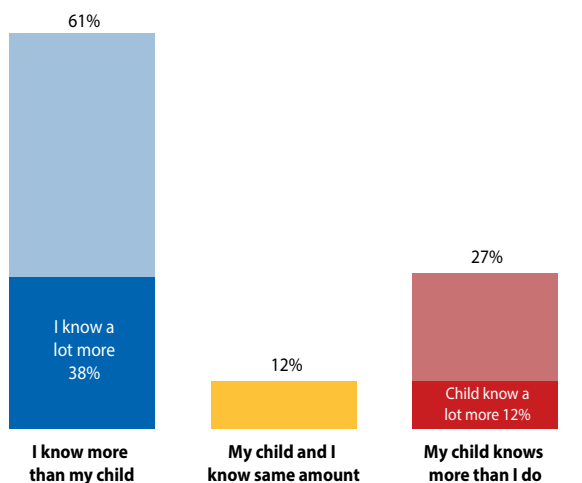
"I'm saying [rating of] nine, because we're talking about 11 years old. I don't know if I'd be a nine if we were talking about 13 years old. Right now, 11 is still under my thumb." – Parent of 10- to 13-year-old child

"We can really never be sure what our kids are accessing on the computers and when they're online, even if we feel totally comfortable with who we are and how we've raised our kids, and that they're good kids." – Parent of 14- to 17-year-old child

3. Perhaps not surprisingly, groups with the highest level of confidence in managing their child's technology use are also most likely to believe that they know more than their child does about technology and online activities.

PARENT GROUPS THAT ARE LESS CONFIDENT ARE ALSO LESS LIKELY TO THINK THAT THEY KNOW MORE THAN THEIR KIDS ABOUT TECHNOLOGY.

Who know more about technology and online activities: you or your child?



	I know more	My child knows more
All Parents	61%	27%
Have child age 6 to 9	80%	13%
Have child age 10 to 13	66%	23%
Have child age 14 to 17	36%	44%
Whites	59%	27%
Hispanics	48%	38%
English-dominant	53%	33%
Spanish-dominant	38%	47%

- Twice as many (61%) parents think they know more about technology than think their child knows more (27%), but there are notable variations by the child's age. Whereas parents of six- to nine-year-olds think they know more than their child by 80% to 13%, the plurality of parents with a 14- to 17-year-old think their child (44%) knows more than they do (36%). Similarly, 18- to 34-year-old parents (75% I know more, 20% my child knows more) are much more likely than parents age 50 and over (49% I know more, 37% my child knows more) to say they know more than their child. Additionally, parents with higher levels of education are more likely than those with lower levels to say that they know more than their child about technology.
- Overall, Hispanic parents (48% I know more, 37% my child knows more) are less likely than white parents (59% I know more, 27% child knows more) to claim they know more about technology than their child. The groups of Hispanic parents most likely to think their children know more about technology than they do are those with teenagers, those age 35 and over, those with a high school education or less, and those whose preferred language is Spanish. Hispanic parents with teenage children say their children know more than they do by 52% to 27%.

18- to 34-year-old parents

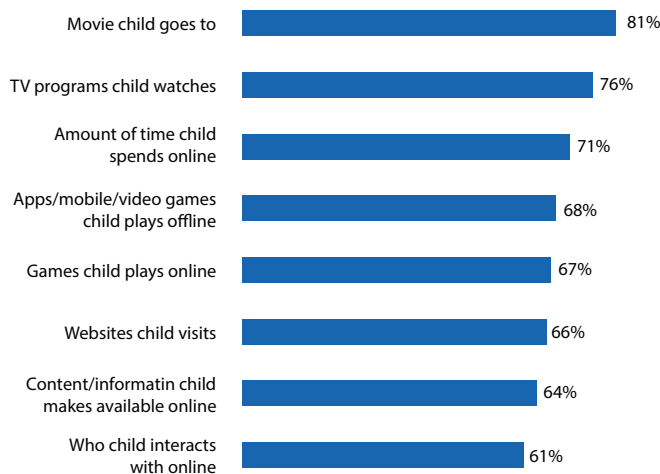
are much more likely than parents age 50 and over to say they know more than their child.

4. Parents express high levels of confidence in managing their child's media use in various forms. Nonetheless, they are more confident in their ability to keep track of and manage their child's use of "traditional" media (movies and television) than for "newer" forms of digital media. The interactive element of digital media is the area in which they feel the least confident.

- Of the types of media tested, there is no area in which parents express low levels of confidence. The differences are in the degree to which they express a high level of confidence. They are most confident in their ability to provide oversight around the movies their child goes to (81% rating of eight, nine, or 10) and the TV programs their child watches (76%).

PARENTS' CONFIDENCE LEVEL ABOUT MANAGING THEIR KIDS' USE OF "NEW" MEDIA IS BELOW THEIR CONFIDENCE ABOUT "TRADITIONAL" MEDIA.

*Proportions who feel confident in their ability to keep track of and manage this for their child
(8-10 ratings on a zero-to-ten scale: 10= feel very confident)*



On average, confidence of teens' parents is 18 points lower than that of younger kids' parents; confidence of Spanish-dominant parents is 14 points lower than that of English-dominant Hispanics.

Confidence of Spanish-dominant parents across various media is an average of 14 points lower than that of English-dominant Hispanics.

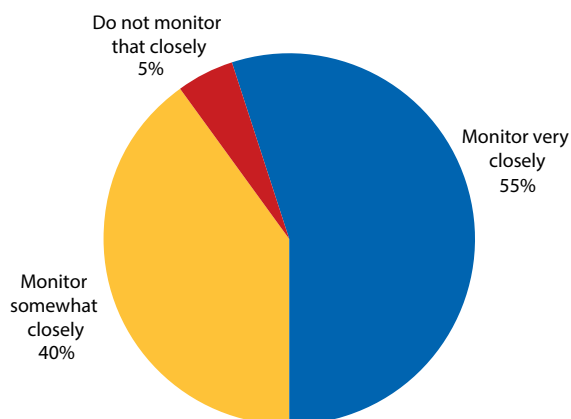
- When it comes to their online activities, parents are slightly more confident in their ability to manage the amount of time their child spends online (71%) than the content their child makes available for others to see (64%) and whom their child interacts with online (61%). Across all areas—whether new media or traditional—parents with an older child express lower levels of confidence than do those with a younger one. Hispanic parents also express lower levels of confidence than do white parents.

5. More than nine in 10 parents say they monitor their child's technology use at least somewhat closely. There are some notable differences by subgroups, however, and the two least confident parent groups—parents of teens and Spanish-dominant Hispanic parents—take differing approaches to monitoring.

- The intensity with which parents report monitoring their children's use of technology is lowest among parents with a 14- to 17-year-old (41% monitor very closely), and increases to 55% among those with a 10- to 13-year-old and to 68% among those with a six- to nine-year-old. Thus, parents of teens are not only less confident in their ability to keep track of their child's technology use, but they are less likely to say they are following their child's technology use very closely.

TWO LESS-CONFIDENT PARENT GROUPS—PARENTS OF TEENS AND SPANISH-DOMINANT HISPANIC PARENTS—TAKE DIFFERING APPROACHES TO MONITORING.

How closely do you follow or monitor your child's use of technology, including (his/her) use of electronic devices and what (he/she) does online?



Monitor very closely

All Parents	55%
Have child age 6 to 9	68%
Have child age 10 to 13	55%
Have child age 14 to 17	41%
Whites	53%
Hispanics	57%
English-speaking	55%
Spanish-speaking	63%

"I kind of ration out the devices with my kids, and they don't own theirs either, just like a couple people said. I'm with them the whole time—they're only six and seven. They don't have enough time with the devices to learn any tricks." – Parent of 6- to 9-year-old child

"He's 17 and a half—I've done my job. I'm still doing it, don't get me wrong...but I raised my son and I trust him." – Parent of 14- to 17-year-old child

- On the other hand, the other group that is least confident in their ability to monitor their children's technology use actually indicates that they are following it more closely than are other groups. Fully 63% of Spanish-dominant Hispanic parents say they monitor their child's use of technology very closely, compared with 55% among parents overall and 55% of English-dominant Hispanics.
- Overall, two-thirds (67%) of parents say that they know the usernames and passwords to all of their children's online accounts. This varies considerably by age of child: 86% among those with a six- to nine-year-old, 67% among those with a 10- to 13-year-old, and 49% among those with 14- to 17-year-old. Hispanic parents (57%) are less likely than white parents (69%) to say they know the usernames and passwords for all of their child's accounts, and Spanish-dominant parents (52%) are even less likely to know them all.

"She's got so many e-mails and code names, I don't know what's going on." – Parent of 14- to 17-year-old child

Know username and password to all of my child's accounts:

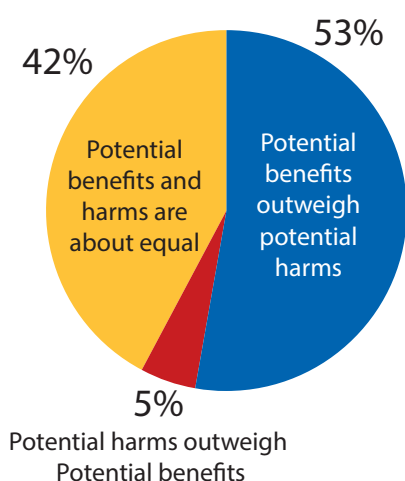
All Parents	67%
Have child age 6 to 9	86%
Have child age 10 to 13	67%
Have child age 14 to 17	49%

6. The majority of parents feel that the potential benefits of their child's use of electronic devices and being online outweigh the potential harms, but many are ambivalent about the benefits vs. harms. Very few think that the harms outweigh the benefits.

- Fifty-three percent (53%) of parents feel that the potential benefits of their child's technology use outweigh the potential harms. Most of the remaining parents think that the potential benefits and harms are about equal (42%). Very few believe that the potential harms outweigh the potential benefits (5%).

WHILE THE MAJORITY OF PARENTS THINK THAT POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TECHNOLOGY AND INTERNET USE OUTWEIGH POTENTIAL HARMS, MANY PARENTS ARE AMBIVALENT.

Concerning my child using technology, including using electronic devices and being online, I think that:



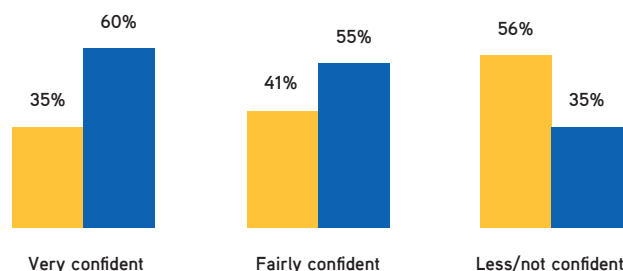
- As illustrated in the preceding table, lower confidence in the ability to manage children's technology use aligns with smaller proportions thinking the benefits outweigh the harms. Indeed, Spanish-dominant Hispanic parents (39% benefits outweigh, 18% harms outweigh, 41% equal), who are also among the least confident in their ability to keep track of their children's technology use, are less likely than parents overall (53%) to think benefits outweigh harms.
- On the other hand, even though parents of teenagers are less confident than those with young children in their ability to manage and monitor their child's technology use, there is not a similarly notable difference in the way parents weigh benefits and harms. Majorities or pluralities of parents think the benefits outweigh the harms, whether they have a six- to nine-year-old (56% benefits outweigh harms), a 10- to 13-year-old (49% benefits outweigh harms), or a teenager (54% benefits outweigh harms). This leaves substantial proportions of parents with children in each age group who are ambivalent about the benefits vs. the harms.

"You have to put parental controls on the Internet for them so they cannot go to sites that can expose them to things you don't want them to be exposed to, but the information is unbelievable."
– Parent of 6- to 9-year-old child

"I think the benefits outweigh [the harms] because there's a whole boatload of information out there. I think it's all in what you have to monitor...still we have to be parents and have to monitor certain things. It just depends on the person, you and your ability to monitor, as a parent." – Parent of 6- to 9-year-old child

"It goes both ways. Modern technology is a wonderful thing if you use it in a good way, but then it also is a bad thing because it brings up the trust value. Children are so trustworthy [of] these modern technologies, that they sometimes neglect the fact that it can cause harm to them." – Parent of 10- to 13-year-old child

By parents' confidence in their ability to manage their child's use of technology



7. Parents identify educational and informational benefits as the ways in which their child can benefit most from his or her technology use. The ways in which they think their child could be harmed by technology use are more varied, with the attraction of stalkers or predators being the most-often-mentioned potential harm.

- Parents were asked in an open-ended question to indicate in what ways they think their child can benefit from technology. The most volunteered benefits focus on the educational, learning, and informational benefits of technology.

	%
To do school work/reports, helps with school, education, educational benefits	39
Great way of learning, access to a wealth of knowledge, gain knowledge	18
For research/ability to do extensive research/better access to research	12
Access to more information, everything is accessible, unlimited access	10
Communication connection with friends, parents, social skills	10
New way of learning, doing things, have to keep up, can't stay ahead	8
Games, learning while playing games, videos	6

"All of that information that may have existed in my head, in my imagination, when I was reading 20 years ago, there's a concrete image that my kids can lock onto to reinforce the story they're reading with the subject they're learning."

– Parent of 6- to 9-year-old child

"... All of the information they get as far as learning-wise, like he said, you couldn't go to an encyclopedia back then and get up-to-date, current information on things, and now you can...which makes them more eager to learn because it's right there, it's accessible to them."

– Parent of 6- to 9-year-old child

"As far as learning, those apps are definitely beneficial. We do Times Attack on the computer, as a game, how fast can you go to do multiplication. My daughters really love doing that and really learn their multiplication that way."

– Parent of 14- to 17-year-old child

"Social media websites allow him to use his interpersonal skills. You're not going to get too many words out of him if you're sitting face-to-face, but this is his avenue to interact with people."

– Parent of 14- to 17-year-old child

- On the other side of the coin, parents also were asked in what ways they thought their child could be harmed by his or her technology use, and they offer a variety of negative consequences that could occur, from online predators to inappropriate content to being sedentary to cyber bullying.

	%
Stalkers, child molester, predators, bad people lurking online	22
Inappropriate material, things he/she is too young to see	13
Access to websites that are not appropriate for his/her ages, nasty sites	10
Being sedentary, spending too much time, not playing, exercising	9
Cyber bullying, online bullying	8
Contact with strangers, people we don't know	6
Porn/sexual material	5
Harmful to the brain, to the eyes, to health	5
Not enough time being social, social contacts, lack of social interaction	5

"So many crazy people in the world. I agree with everybody, I think social media can be a great tool, or it can be a tool to harm you."

– Parent of 10- to 13-year-old child

"I did have to shut my son's [online gaming] account down for a while because I recognized that he was playing adult people, and their language was very adult. So I had to shut it down until I could have more confidence that he would play with children that I knew, not adults."

– Parent of 14- to 17-year-old child

"I fear for what kids in this generation are going to be like. They're not going to know how to hold a conversation with other people, and there are still many dangers on the Internet. I think there's too much media stuff with kids, and not enough old-fashioned play."

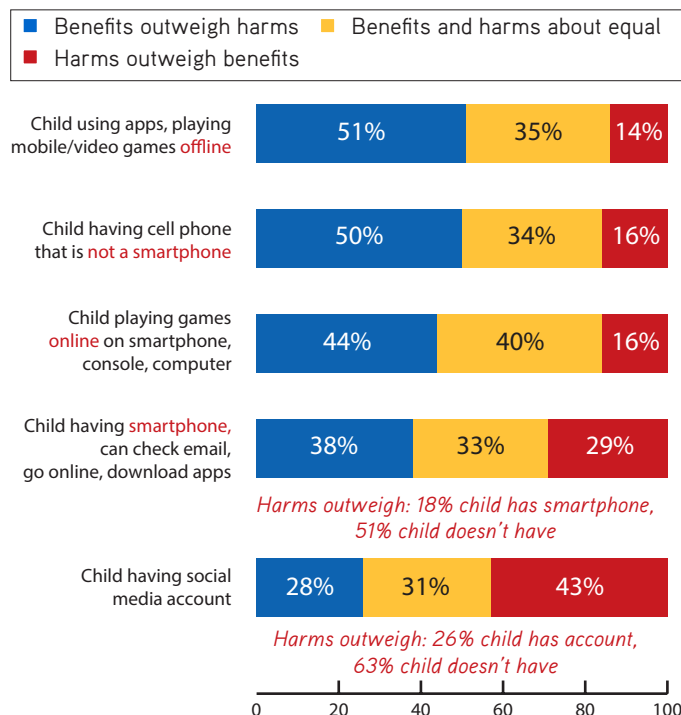
– Parent of 6- to 9-year-old child

8. Parents differentiate among various online activities when weighing the potential benefits and potential harms of their child's technology use.

- When parents are asked about their child having or using various types of technology, regardless of whether their child has them, parents make some clear distinctions on the potential benefits and harms. For instance, parents are more likely to think the benefits outweigh the harms when it comes to their child using a cell phone that is NOT a smartphone (50%) than when using a smartphone (38%). (Among parents whose child does not have a smartphone, 51% think the potential harms outweigh the benefits, compared with just 18% among those whose child has a smartphone.)
- The gap is less pronounced when it comes to parents' perceptions of the benefits vs. harms their child's use of apps and their playing mobile and video games offline (51% benefits outweigh) than online (44% benefits outweigh).

PARENTS DRAW DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND HARMS OF DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF TECHNOLOGY.

Whether your child has this technology or not, what is your view of its benefits vs. its harms?



53%

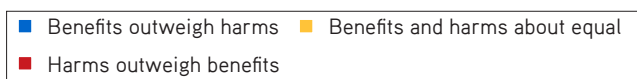
of parents are positive about the impact of schools' collecting data on their child's academic performance and behavior.

- Of the activities and technologies tested, the only one for which a plurality of parents think the potential harms dominate is their child's having a social media account: 26% benefits outweigh harms, 43% harms outweigh benefits, 31% about equal. Parents who say their children do NOT have a social media account (63% harms outweigh benefits) are much less sanguine about their impact than are those parents who say their children has one (26% harms outweigh benefits).
- Parents also have very different perspectives on the harm-benefit equation of third parties' collecting data on their children. They are much more optimistic about the impact of schools' collecting data on their child's academic performance and behavior (53% benefits outweigh harms, 17% harms outweigh benefits, 30% about equal) than about companies' tracking their child's online activities for marketing purposes (16% benefits outweigh harms, 57% harms outweigh benefits, 27% about equal).

"This technology allows them [schools] to better get information into parents' hands in a format that's easy for parents to look at, that doesn't involve the kids bringing it home ... All of that is an immense reward for the parents who are trying to be more involved with their kids, the kids who need that parental involvement, and the school systems that are trying to find ways to better teach kids." – Parent of 10- to 13-year-old child

PARENTS ALSO DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN THE ACTIONS OF DIFFERENT OUTSIDE ENTITIES.

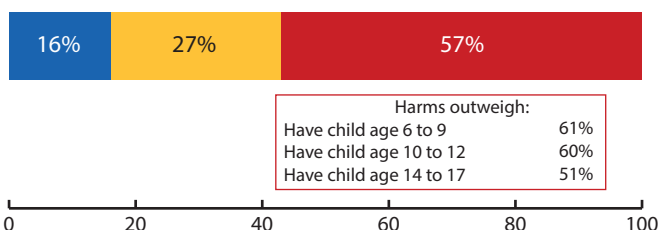
What is your view of the benefits vs. the harms of this?



K-12 schools collecting data on your child's academic performance, attendance, and behavior, and tracking that data over time



A company tracking your child's online activities for marketing purposes



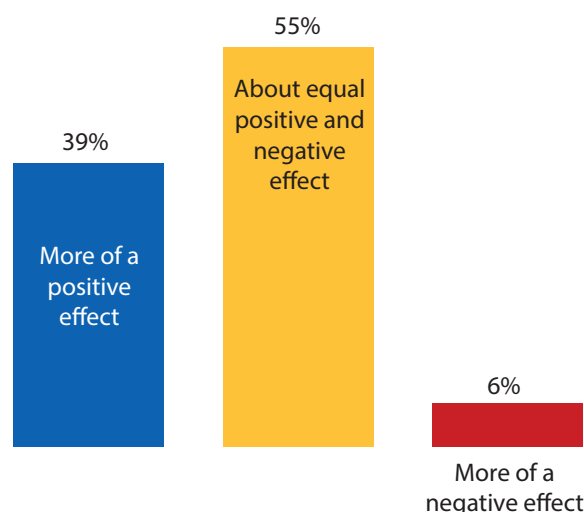
- A comparison of responses across subgroups of parents reveals that there are not notable differences in parents' perceptions of schools collecting and tracking data on children by age of child or parents' educational attainment. On the other hand, parents with post-graduate education are notably more likely than those with a high school degree to think that the harms outweigh the benefits when it comes to a company tracking their child's online activity. Pluralities of all groups think that the harms of companies' tracking children's online activities outweigh the benefits, and parents of 14- to 17-year-olds are only marginally less likely than parents of younger children to feel that way.

9. Many parents also are ambivalent about the effect that technology has on their parenting.

- The majority (55%) of parents believe that the positive and negative effects that technology has on their parenting are about equal, while 39% think the positive effects outweigh the negative ones. Only 6% think the negative effects prevail.

AMBIGUENCE EXTENDS TO THE EFFECT THAT PARENTS FEEL TECHNOLOGY HAS ON THEIR PARENTING, ESPECIALLY AMONG MOTHERS.

Overall, what impact do you feel that technology, including electronic devices and being online, has on your parenting?



	Postive effect	Equally postive/negative
All Parents	39%	55%
Parents age 18 to 34	39%	57%
Parents age 35 to 49	39%	52%
Parents age 50/over	40%	56%
Fathers	45%	49%
Mothers	35%	59%

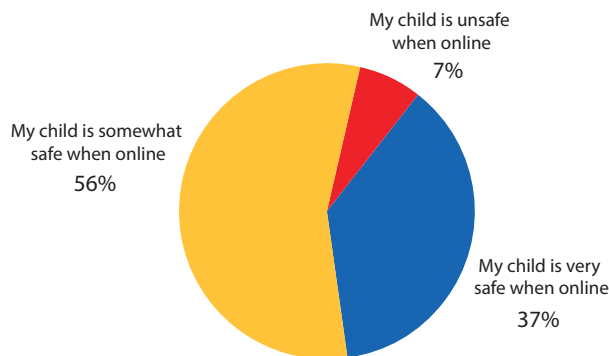
- There are few distinctions by age of parent, though fathers are slightly more likely to perceive a positive impact than are mothers. Hispanic parents (45% more of positive effect) are slightly more hopeful about the impact that technology has on their parenting than are parents overall (39%) and white parents (34%).

10. Parents generally feel that their child is safe online, but perception of a child's online safety varies by age of child.

- Fully 93% of parents think their child is very safe (37%) or somewhat safe (56%) when he or she is online. Just 7% think their child is unsafe.

FEW SAY THAT CHILDREN ARE UNSAFE ONLINE.

How safe do you feel your child is when (he/she) is online?



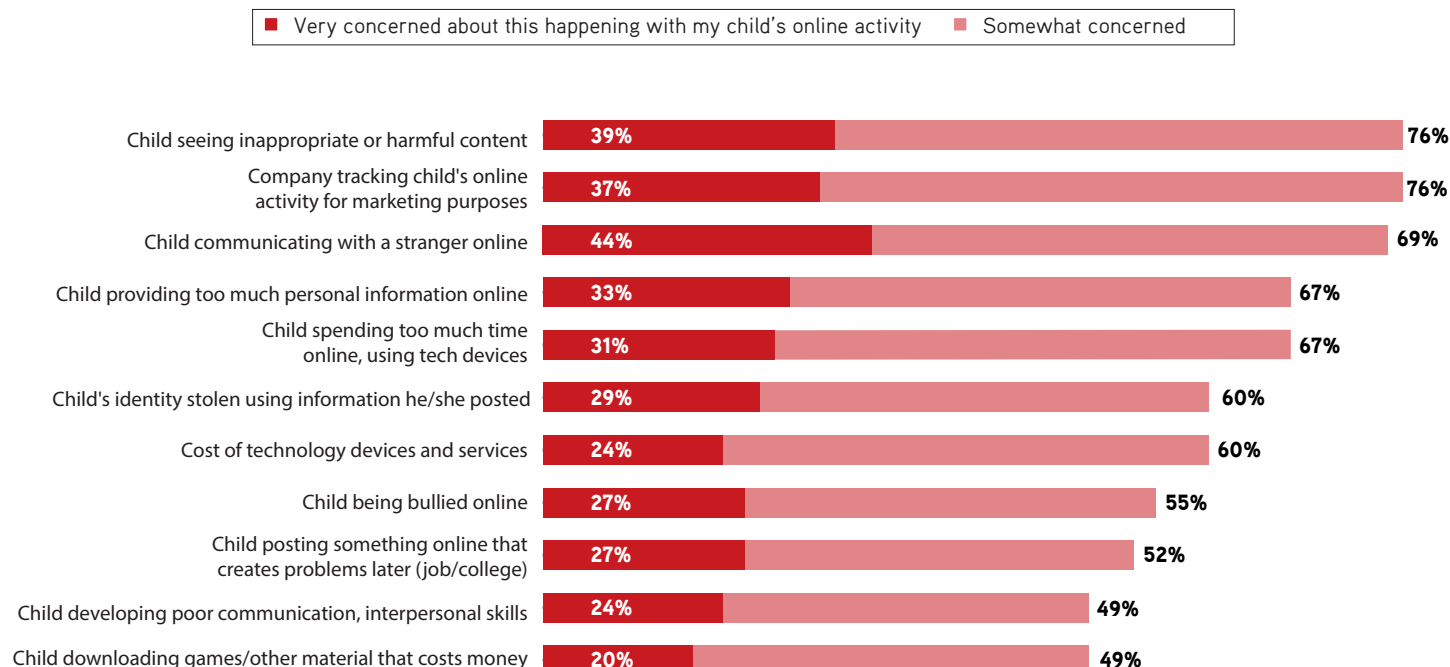
Fully 93% of parents think their child is very safe (37%) or somewhat safe (56%) when he or she is online.

- There is a notable difference in parents' feelings about their child's online safety by age of child: nearly half of those with younger children (six to nine—48%) think their child is very safe. This drops slightly to 36% among parents of a 10- to 13-year-olds, and declines even more among parents with a teenager (27%).
- Hispanic parents' perceptions are not very different from those of white parents. However, Spanish-dominant parents are the most likely to think their child is unsafe online—fully one in five feels this way.

11. Parents' top concerns about their child's online activity center on harmful content, companies' tracking of online activity for marketing purposes, stranger danger, and their child sharing too much personal information.

- Parents express more concern about some things that can happen to their child online than about others. The elements in the top tier of parental concern are those related to the child's personal safety: exposure to inappropriate or harmful content (76% very or somewhat concerned), the child communicating with a stranger online (69%), a stranger learning about their child from online postings (67%), and their child providing too much personal information (67%). A similar proportion of parents also express concern about their child spending too much time using electronic devices (67%) or too much time online (62%).
- Parents are just as concerned about someone stealing their child's identity using information posted online (60%) as they are about the cost of technology and devices (60%).
- They are slightly less concerned about their child being bullied online (55%) and their child's postings creating problems for them down the line (52%). The only two about which less than half of parents express concern are their child's potential development of poor communication skills (49%) and their child downloading games or other material that costs money (49%).
- Hispanic parents express higher levels of concern than do white parents and parents overall about each of the potential negative outcomes of their child's technology use.

HARMFUL CONTENT, TRACKING FOR MARKETING, STRANGER DANGER, AND PRIVACY TOP PARENTS' LIST OF TECHNOLOGY CONCERNS.



12. Parents have taken a variety of steps to monitor their child's online activity at some point. There are many parental-control tools at their disposal that they have not used, however, and many are interested in doing so.

- Nearly all parents (94%) say they have talked to their child about the potential benefits and potential harms of being online and their rules and expectations for their children, and two in three (65%) parents say this is a recurring conversation they have with their child regularly. Parents who are the least confident in their ability to manage their child's technology are less likely to have this conversation regularly.
- More than four in five (84%) parents say they have reviewed their child's browsing history and set rules or limits on the amount of time their child can spend online in a given day (83%).
 - Among the 88% of parents who say their child has access to a cell phone or smartphone, 73% have time limits for phone use, 72% have reviewed incoming and outgoing phone numbers on the phone, 71% have reviewed sent and received text messages, and 45% have set limits on the number of texts their child can send and receive.
 - Among the 53% of parents whose child has a social networking account, 78% say they have logged on to their child's account to check their posts.
- Just over half (53%) of parents say they have used parental controls to prevent their child from having access to certain types of online content and nearly as many report using controls to turn off in-app purchases (47%).
- Fewer parents have used other types of parental controls listed in the following table. The option parents are the least likely to have used are apps that use GPS to show where children are through their cell phones—31% have used this technology. However, many parents indicate an interest in using the mobile phone GPS option.

Among the 53% of parents whose child has a social networking account, 78% say they have logged on to their child's account to check their posts.

MANY PARENTS ARE NOT USING THE TOOLS AT THEIR DISPOSAL, BUT ARE INTERESTED IN DOING SO.

Proportions saying they have used each product/service

		Have not used but interested in using
Parental controls for content	53%	31%
Parental controls for in-app purchases	47%	36%
Parental controls restricting access to multi-player online games	38%	38%
Apps to monitor usage/set controls on devices	38%	41%
Software to monitor where child goes online	34%	46%
Parental controls that set timers for using particular devices	34%	38%
GPS apps to show where kids are through their cell phones	31%	45%



13. Parents place the greatest trust in their child's teachers and schools for information about how to maximize the benefits and minimize the harms of their child using technology. Smaller but notable proportions of parents also indicate that they would trust their child/children, parenting websites/magazines, other parents, and pediatricians.

TEACHERS/SCHOOLS ARE THE MOST TRUSTED SOURCE FOR INFORMATION ABOUT KIDS' USE OF TECHNOLOGY.

Of these people and groups that could provide information about how to best maximize benefits and minimize harms of children using technology, including use of electronic devices and being online, which TWO would you trust the most?

Child's/children's school or teachers	38%
My child/children	29%
Parenting websites and magazines	27%
Other parents	26%
Pediatricians and other health professionals	22%
Technology websites/magazines (Wired, C-NET)	18%
Technology companies (search engines, Internet service providers, mobile phone companies)	17%
Technology retailers (Best Buy, Costco, Walmart)	8%
General news media	7%
Teenagers, children older than my kids	7%

- The groups whom parents say they would trust most are those who know their own children well and/or who have professional expertise dealing with children. This connection seems to trump the more direct connection to technology that technology websites, companies, and retailers have.
- General news media, other teenagers they know, and technology retailers are the least-trusted sources. Parents trust technology websites and companies at a slightly higher degree than they do technology retailers.

Parents are most likely to select their child/children's school or teachers as the most trusted source of information about kids' use of technology.

"Teachers—they have experience with these kids in that age group more than anybody does" – Parent of 6- to 9-year-old child

"My kids—ultimately they're the users. They may not give me the whole story but they'll give me enough to get started. By the time you hear about it on the news, or by the time you hear about it someplace else, it's had to come to their attention, then they had to look into it." – Parent of 10- to 13-year-old child



14. Organizations that want to provide tools and information to parents informing them about how to maximize the benefits and minimize the harms of technology use would do well to focus on e-mails with tips and alerts and tip sheets posted on their website.

	%
E-mails with tips and alerts	47
Tip sheets for parents on the organization's website	36
Online videos on the organization's website	28
Forums hosted by the organization in your community with experts and other parents	28
Information, videos, and tip sheets that the organization would post on social media, such as Facebook or Twitter	24
Blog posts and online articles	21
Text messages with tips and alerts	16

- An organization also could communicate effectively with some parents virtually (online videos, social media postings) and in person, via forums.

"The other thing I'll do from time to time is I'll sit down and I'll go to Google Play or the iTunes app store and filter it by top free downloads. I'm not going through my daughter's phone, I'm just looking in general, and this is giving me the top 50 or top 100 worldwide. And if there's something on there I don't know what it is or what it does, I'll click on it and figure out what kind of app it is."

– Parent of 10- to 13-year-old child

Appendix: Summary of Findings among Hispanic Parents

As noted at the beginning of this report, this research project included a total of 407 Hispanic parents to ensure that we had a large enough sample of this population to conduct reliable analyses. This addendum summarizes the key findings of the research among Hispanic parents.

Hispanic parents' children are highly technologically engaged: seven in 10 of these parents (69%) say their children personally have three or more devices that can access the Internet. Fully 71% of these parents say their child has a smartphone, which is well above the percentage of white parents who say this (59%).

Despite this higher level of technology use, Hispanic parents feel no more confident than whites in their ability to track and manage their children's technology use (60% versus 61%). And it is important to note that the confidence among Hispanic parents who are Spanish-dominant (53%) is appreciably lower than that of those who are English-dominant (64%).

Hispanic parents express lower levels of confidence in managing their children's use and consumption of specific types of media. Whether it is movies and television (68% and 67% confident, respectively), the amount of time their child spends online (60%), the websites their child visits (57%), or any of the other media consumption habits we asked about, Hispanic parents' confidence is consistently lower than that of white parents.

There is an additional discrepancy in Hispanic parents' self-described knowledge base when it comes to technology. Less than half (48%) of Hispanic parents feel that they know more about technology than their child, compared with 59% of white parents who feel this way. And the discrepancy widens significantly between English-dominant Hispanic parents (53% of whom say they know more than their children) and Spanish-dominant Hispanic parents (38%).

Hispanic parents appear to be compensating at least somewhat for their lower level of knowledge by trying to pay greater attention to their child's use of technology. Fifty-seven percent (57%) of Hispanic parents say they monitor their child's use of technology very closely, a bit higher than the proportion of white parents who say this (53%). And Spanish-dominant parents are even more adamant in this regard—63% say they monitor their child's use of technology very closely, compared with 55% of those who are English-dominant. However, this assertion may be belied by the fact that Hispanic parents are quite a bit less likely to know all of their children's online usernames and passwords (57%) than are white parents (69%).

The knowledge gaps that many Hispanic parents believe they have correspond to ambivalence about the value of technology for their children. While a majority of white parents (55%) say they believe the benefits of technology outweigh the harms, this drops to 41% among Hispanic parents. Indeed, 46% of Hispanic parents say the potential benefits and harms of technology are about equal. And 18% of Spanish-dominant parents say the potential harms outweigh the potential benefits—twice the rate of English-dominant Hispanic parents who say this (9%) and more than three times the rate of white parents (5%).

Spanish-dominant parents are similarly somewhat more cautious about their children's online safety than other parents. While an overwhelming majority (79%) say that their children are very or somewhat safe online, 21% of Spanish-dominant parents say their children are very or somewhat unsafe—well above the proportions of English-dominant Hispanic (9%) or white (8%) parents who say this.

At the same time, Hispanic parents' increased negativity about their children's use of technology is counterbalanced somewhat by greater sanguinity about how technology can help them as parents. While just 34% of white parents say that technology has a positive effect on their parenting, 45% of Hispanic parents feel this way, including 43% of those who are English-dominant, and 50% of those who are Spanish-dominant.

To learn more, visit:
<https://www.fosi.org/policy-research>



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