



2020 Digital Family Poll

Results from a Survey of
Teens, Parents of Teens, and Parent of Kids
Living across the United States

Prepared by AT&T and Quadrant Strategies
August 14, 2020



SCOPE

Between July 7 and July 19, 2020, AT&T partnered with Quadrant Strategies to conduct online quantitative polling among 1500 total teens and parents nationally, including 500 teens (ages 13-18), 500 parents of teens (ages 13-18), and 500 parents of kids (ages 3-12). The margin of error is +/- 4.38 per audience, with higher margins of error for the subgroups (sample details are included at the end of the report).

This poll builds on research we conducted in 2019 among the same audiences. The following report represents key findings from the research conducted with this national audience.

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KEY FINDINGS

Teens are spending more time online, with over **75% of teens spending 3+ hours online daily just for entertainment**. Parents, meanwhile, are increasingly worried about their teen's safety online.

The differences between what parents think their kids are doing online – and what they are actually doing – are increasing. **62% of teens say they can easily hide what they are doing online from their parents**.

89% of parents of teens think parental controls are effective. Less than half have set them at all, and only 37% have set them on all devices their teens use.

Nearly 9 in 10 teens feel happy with their overall experience online, and teens with parental controls set on their devices tend to be happier with their experience online than teens without parental controls set on their devices.

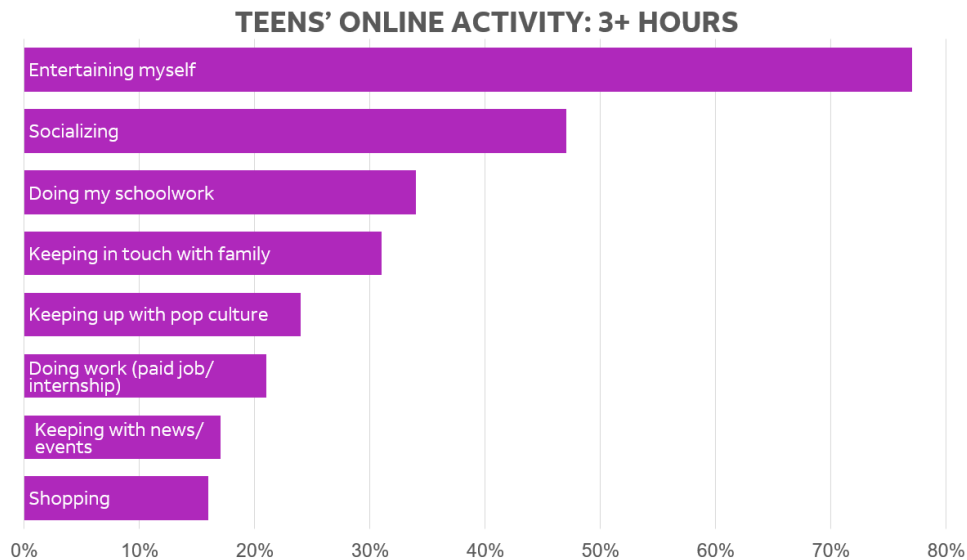
DIGITAL LANDSCAPE

The digital landscape of today’s connected families.

Device use continues to permeate the American lifestyle.

- **97%** of parents of teens report their teen has sole access to at least one internet device
- **91%** of parents of kids report their **8-12 year old child** has sole access to at least one internet device
- **85%** of parents of kids report their **3-7 year old child** has sole access to at least one internet device
- **88%** of teens have sole use of a phone, **50%** of a gaming console, and **48%** of a TV in their room
 - In 2019, **65%** of teens had sole use of a gaming console and **61%** of a TV in their room

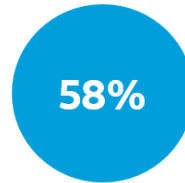
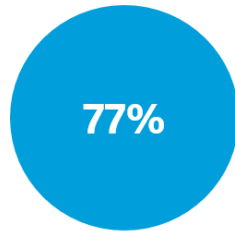
Teens are spending most of their time online entertaining themselves and socializing.



Question for chart: Which of these is closest to the amount of time you typically spend per day doing each of the following activities online, if at all? Showing 3+ hours

Teens are spending more time on their phones and entertaining themselves online than their parents are aware of.

% of TEENS who spend 3+ hours entertaining self online





% of PARENTS OF TEENS who say their teen spends 3+ hours entertaining self online

TIME SPENT ONLINE: 3 OR MORE HOURS SPENT ON <i>Which of these is closest to the amount of time that you/your teen typically spend per day doing each of the following activities online, if at all?</i>	2020	2019
TEENS: Entertaining myself with videos, movies, music, games or hobbies	77%	71%
PARENTS OF TEENS: Entertaining himself/herself with videos, movies, music, games or hobbies	58%	48%

TIME SPENT ONLINE: 3 OR MORE HOURS SPENT ON <i>Which of these is closest to the amount of time that you typically spend per day on the following devices, if at all?</i>	Teens 	Parents of teens
Phone	78%	55%
TV	17%	54%
Computer / laptop	46%	41%
Tablet	39%	27%

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, the majority of parents have allowed their children to have more screen time.

RESTRICTIONS SINCE COVID-19 <i>Parents: thinking about the limits you place on what your teen / child sees and does since COVID began (since about mid-March 2020), which of the following have you done?</i>	Parents of teens 	Parents of kids 
I have allowed my teen / child to have more screen time	61%	57%
I have allowed my teen / child to view content like television shows, movies, or websites that I didn't before	32%	33%
I have stopped bothering my teen / child as much about their screen usage	31%	25%
I have changed the screen time limits or content restrictions on my teen's / child's devices	20%	27%
I have created new rules for screen time and device use	20%	22%

However, most parents of teens still worry about their teen's safety and security online.



37% of parents of teens say they **worry a great deal** about the safety and security of their teen online

- 2019: **33%**

81% of parents of teens are **at least somewhat worried** about the safety and security of their teen online

- 2019: **77%**

Parents of teens and teens are most worried about digital distractions.

WORRIES <i>Regarding your online activity, how much do you worry about: / Regarding his/her online activity, how much do you worry about your teen: Showing % somewhat + a great deal</i>	Teens 	Parents of teens 
Compromising your/his/her privacy (e.g. by sharing your/his/her name, location or other personal information)	59%	70%
Getting distracted and not getting enough sleep	57%	73%
Spending too much time on your/their device(s)	56%	77%
Getting distracted from doing schoolwork or homework	55%	74%
Spending less time than you/they should on outdoor or physical activities	54%	77%
Compromising the security of your/their device through accepting an unexpected pop-up	50%	67%
Spending too much time online in games and not enough in educational activities	49%	68%
Making a purchase by mistake (e.g. through subscribing to an app or a game or a download)	42%	53%
Compromising my parents'/my security by accidentally providing my parents' information to unsafe sites	42%	63%
Experiencing conflict or friction in their relationships with your parents/you or your/their friends	42%	57%
Sharing personal photos of yourself/himself/herself or your family	41%	59%
Encountering violent or sexual content	39%	68%
Failing to develop sensitivity to the feelings of others online	38%	56%
Coming into contact with strangers	35%	71%
Becoming the target of online meanness or bullying	35%	66%
Saying mean things online	33%	50%

DIGITAL GENERATION GAP

The disconnect between what parents think their kids see and do online and what they actually see and do.

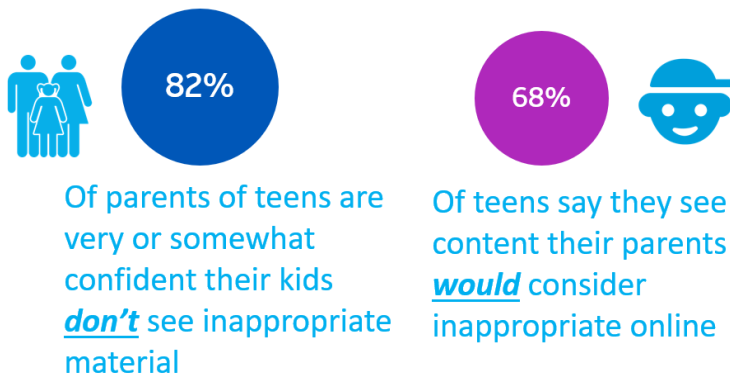
There's conflict in the parent teen dynamic when it comes to digital device usage

- Parents of teens are more likely to say they argue with their teens than they were in 2019

PARENT TEEN DYNAMICS Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following: Showing Strongly agree + Somewhat agree	Teens 		Parents of teens 	
	2020	2019	2020	2019
My parents/my teen and I argue about how much time I/he/she spend on my/their phone or other devices	47%	49%	54%	47%
My parents/my teen and I argue about what I am/he/she is doing online	23%	23%	43%	29%

There is a disconnect between what parents think their kids see online and what teens see online.

- 25%** of teens see material that they think their parents would consider inappropriate almost **every day**



Question for teens: Do you see material online that you think your parents or guardians would consider inappropriate for you? Showing % Yes, probably almost every day + Yes, from time to time
Question for parents of teens: How confident are you that your teen does not have access to material that you consider inappropriate or harmful material online? Showing % Very + Somewhat confident

There is a disconnect between what parents think their kids see online and what teens see online.



HIDING ACTIVITIES <i>Which of the following have you done without your parents' knowledge? / Which of the following has your teen done without your knowledge? Select all that apply.</i>	Teens		Parents of teens	
	2020	2019	2020	2019
At least one of the following	71%	68%	54%	55%
Deleted messages so that parents would not see them	38%	41%	20%	24%
Messaged (Snapchat, Instagram direct message, Tinder) with someone you had never talked to in person	34%	37%	26%	27%
Lied about your age online or in an app	34%	32%	15%	15%
Created additional social media accounts (e.g. Finsta)	27%	19%	18%	15%
Hidden photos in an app separate from "Photos"	19%	18%	12%	7%
Met strangers via apps (e.g. Facebook, Omegle, Instagram)	17%	14%	12%	8%
Purchased something online using my parents' credit card without their consent	8%	7%	15%	9%
Ordered something online and had it shipped to a friend's house	7%	6%	10%	5%
Used someone else's information or identity to create a social media account	7%	7%	7%	3%
Bought something illegal online	1%	3%	5%	3%

The differences between what parents think their kids are doing online – and what they’re actually doing – are increasing.

- **71%** of parents of teens say they can see what their teen is doing online whenever they want
 - Compared to **67%** in 2019
- **62%** of teens say they can easily hide what they do online from their parents whenever they want
 - Compared to **52%** in 2019

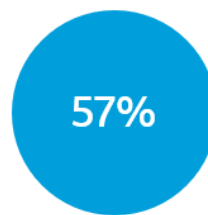


Teens are more worried about their parents seeing their activity than in 2019.

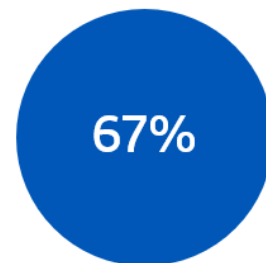
- Teens are most worried about their parents seeing their texts, the websites they visit, and the messages they receive on social media sites

TERRIFIED IF...

Please complete the following sentence, "I would be terrified if my parents saw [at least one of my pictures, emails, music, text conversations, websites, social media, messages on Snapchat/Instagram] on my smartphone." Select all that apply. Showing % of teens who selected at least one



2019



2020

Teens are more concerned about their parents seeing their online behaviors, and parents have felt that deterioration of trust.



Teens Say

TERRIFIED IF <i>Please complete the following sentence, "I would be terrified if my parents saw [blank] on my smartphone."</i>	Teens	Change since 2019
My text conversations	33%	+3
The websites I've visited	30%	+8
My pictures	21%	+6
My social media feeds	20%	+7



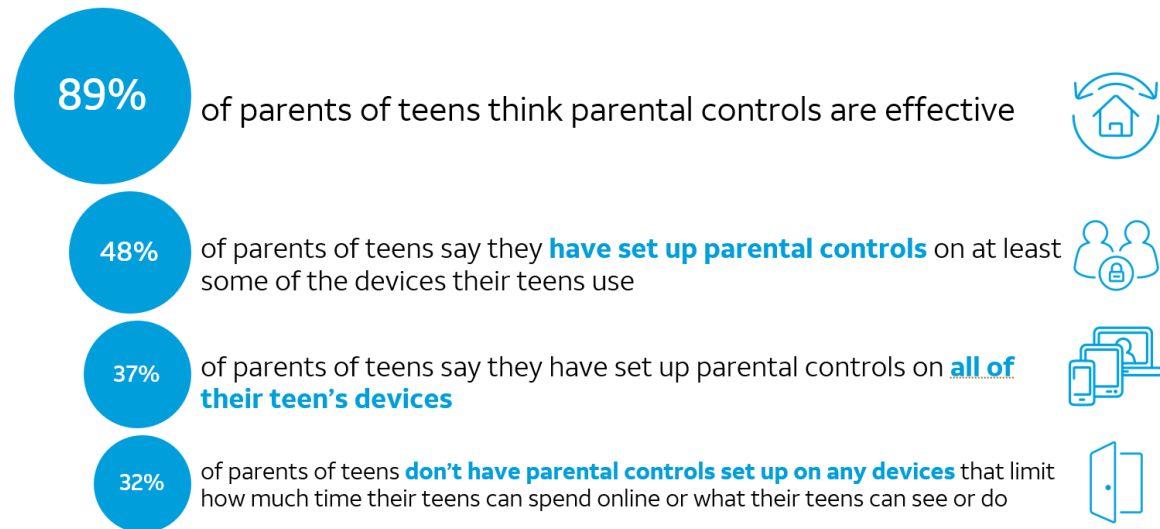
Parents Say

COMFORTABLE IF <i>Please complete the following sentence, "My teen would be totally comfortable if I looked at [blank] on his/her smartphone."</i>	Parents of teens	Change since 2019
Text conversations	44%	-11
The websites he/she visited	51%	-6
Pictures	58%	-3
Social media feeds	54%	-7

DIGITAL PARENTING

The use of parental controls in today's connected households.

Parents think parental controls are effective, but are not consistently using them.



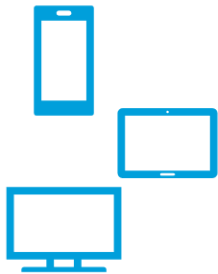
Bubble 1 question: How much do you agree or disagree with the following: I consider parental controls an effective tool to help manage teen's digital experience and safety.



Bubble 2 question: Which of the following approaches do you take to monitor or manage your teen's online experience?

Bubble 3&4 question: Of the internet devices your teen uses, how many have parental controls that are set up on them that place limits on how much time they can spend on them or what they can see or do?

Phones are the most common device to have parental controls set, followed by computer and tablet



- However, less than one third of teens say their parents have set parental controls on their TV



MONITORED DEVICES <i>For which of the following internet devices have you set up parental controls that place limits on how much time your teen can spend on them or what your teen can see or do?</i>	Parents of teens 	Teens 
Phone	71%	58%
Computer	62%	39%
Tablet	52%	35%
Television	43%	28%
Video Game console	42%	36%
Voice-controlled virtual assistant	15%	10%

A fifth of parents of teens and more than a third of parents of kids are not using parental controls because they are too complicated or they're not sure which tools to use.



MONITORED DEVICES – WHY NOT <i>You said you have not set up parental controls on all of the internet devices your teen / child is using on his or her own. Why not? Select all that apply.</i>	Parents of teens 	Parents of kids 
They are not needed	53%	43%
There are too many options, and I'm not sure which tools to use or they are too complicated to set up	22%	37%
They are not effective	15%	14%

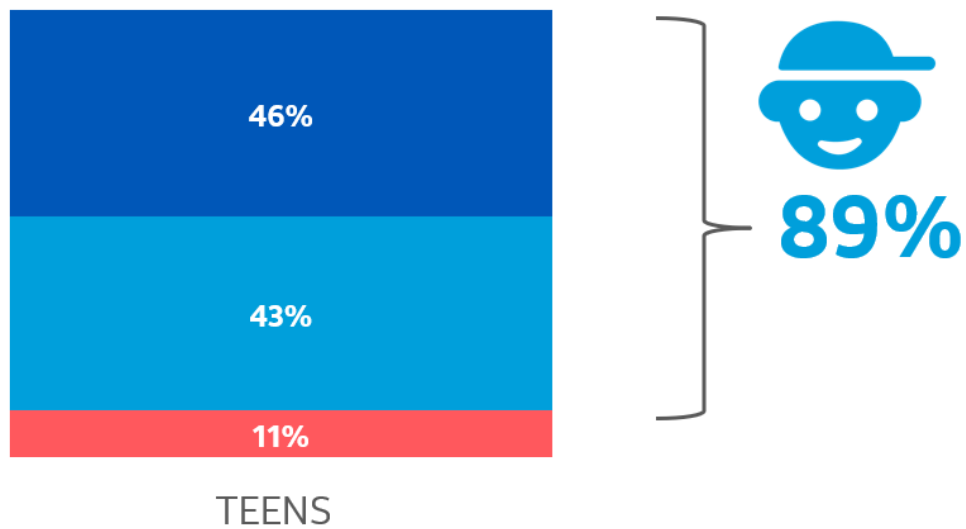
DIGITAL WELLBEING

Parent and teen attitudes about their relationship with technology and how it impacts their lives.

Teens are largely happy with their online experience.

I FEEL HAPPY WITH MY ONLINE EXPERIENCE

■ Disagree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Strongly agree

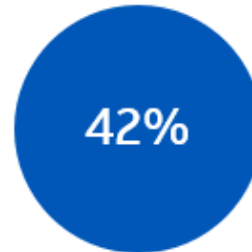


Question: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Overall, I feel happy with my online experience

Teens are more likely to be happier with their experience online if they have parental controls in place on their devices.



Of teens **with parental controls** strongly agree they are happy with their online experience



Of teens **without parental controls** strongly agree they are happy with their online experience

Question: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: I feel happy with my online experience. Showing % strongly agree.

Teens say digital devices have a positive impact on their safety, relationships, productivity, and hobbies.



72% say their digital devices make them **feel safer**

70% say their digital devices **improve** their relationships (with family and friends)

57% say their digital devices make them feel **more productive** at work, in the classroom, or doing homework

71% say their digital devices **help them pursue their hobbies and passions**



7% say their digital devices make them **feel less safe**

16% say their digital devices **interfere** with their relationships (with family and friends)

29% say their digital devices make them **feel less productive** at work, in the classroom, or doing homework

17% say their digital devices **distract them** from pursuing their hobbies and passions



Question: Which of the following is closer to your view:

Parents of teens for the most part agree that digital devices have a positive impact on their teens.



63% say their digital devices make their teen **feel safer**

62% say digital devices **improve** their teen's relationships (with family and friends)

59% say their digital devices make their teen feel **more productive** at work, in the classroom, or doing homework

63% say their digital devices **help them pursue their hobbies and passions**



14% say their digital devices make their teen **feel less safe**

28% say their digital devices **interfere** with their teen's relationships (with family and friends)

28% say their digital devices make them **feel less productive** at work, in the classroom, or doing homework

28% say their digital devices **distract them** from pursuing their hobbies and passions



Question: Which of the following is closer to your view:

Teens with parental controls report that their devices make them feel safer, more productive, and able to pursue their passions at higher rates than those without parental controls.

DEVICE ATTITUDES: <i>Which of the following is closer to your view: showing % positive choice</i>	Teens	Teens with parental controls	Teens without parental controls
My digital devices make me feel safer	72%	79%	67%
My digital devices help me pursue my hobbies and passions	72%	75%	67%
My devices make me feel more productive at work, in the classroom, or doing homework	57%	61%	54%

SAMPLE DETAILS

Audience		Sample Size	Margin of error
Teens	Teens aged 13-18 living in the United States	500	+/- 4.38
	Teens with parental controls	208	+/-6.80
	Teens without parental controls	292	+/-5.73
Parents of kids	Parents aged 25-37 of children age under 12 living in the United States	500	+/- 4.38
Parents of teens	Parents of teens age 13-18, 30+ living in the United States	500	+/- 4.38