

# YOUNG CANADIANS IN A WIRED WORLD

## Life Online

Young Canadians in a Wired World, Phase III  
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# Table of Contents

Introduction .....	1
Executive Summary – Key Findings .....	2
› Online Access .....	2
› Online Activities .....	3
› Top 10 Favourite Websites .....	4
› Opinions about Online Safety .....	5
› Parental Involvement .....	5
› Unplugging .....	6
Online Access .....	7
Online Activities .....	13
The Top 10 Favourite Websites .....	25
Opinions about Online Safety .....	29
Parental Involvement .....	31
Unplugging .....	43
Methodology .....	49
Demographics of Survey Participants .....	54

# Young Canadians in a Wired World, Phase III: LIFE ONLINE

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## Introduction

*Digital natives; tech savvy; narcissistic; innovative; mean.* There are a lot of assumptions out there about kids online, but the labels we use are often misleading and out of step with what young people are actually doing with networked technologies. Take, for example, the adage that since young people post “everything” on social media, they don’t care about privacy. MediaSmarts’ *Young Canadians in a Wired World* studies have found the opposite has consistently been true, from the first time we went into the field in 2000. That’s why we do our research: to take a snapshot of what Canadian children and youth are doing and thinking to get a better understanding of how networked technologies affect their daily lives.

In 2013, MediaSmarts conducted a national survey of 5,436 Canadian students, grades 4 through 11, in every province and territory, to explore the role of networked technologies in their lives. *Life Online* is the first of a series of reports which draw on the rich data that was collected. *Life Online* touches on some of the main themes relating to students’ online use which we will explore in more depth in subsequent reports, including privacy, digital permanence, bullying, commercialization, offensive content, online relationships and digital literacy in the classroom and in the home.

## Executive Summary – Key Findings

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### What does online life look like for the average young Canadian?

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First and foremost, these are highly connected children and teens, most of who are accustomed to online access through devices that are portable and personal. This is a big shift from 2005, where the majority of students accessed the Internet through desktop computers at home. Today's youth have multiple platforms to choose from to go online.

#### ► Online Access

- Almost every student we surveyed has access to the Internet outside of school.
  - Internet access is universal, with 99 percent of students able to access the Internet outside of school.
  - When asked to indicate how they connect to the Internet when they're not in school (from a list that included a family desktop computer, their own desktop computer, a portable computer, a computer at a library or community centre, an MP3 player, cell/smart phone, game console or "I only go on the Internet when I'm at school) half of all students report using a shared family computer to go online; but these numbers drop from 64 percent in Grade 4, to 37 percent in Grade 11.
  - Six percent of students rely on computers at local libraries and community centres to connect.
  - Boys (27%) are more likely than girls (18%) to use their own desktop computer to go online, but the largest gender difference relating to how young people access the Internet is that 60 percent of boys access the Net through a gaming console compared to 27 percent of girls.
- Portable devices are used more than desktop computers to access the Internet.
  - Even in Grade 5, more students access the Internet through a tablet or laptop than through a desktop computer (62% compared to 59%).
  - Eighty percent of French language students in Quebec use a portable device to go online, compared to 67 percent of English language students in the rest of Canada.
  - Older students are more likely than younger students to go online using their own desktop computer, ranging from a low of 17 percent in Grade 4 to 27 percent in Grade 11.
  - MP3 players are commonly used to go online – especially for students in grades 4-8 – but decline in use throughout high school.
  - Access to the Internet through laptops and cell phones rises in grades 9-11.

- Cell phones and smart phones are primary devices for students to go online.
  - Close to half (49%) of students in Grade 4 have access to their own phone or someone else's phone on a regular basis.
  - There's little difference between girls and boys when it comes to accessing or owning a cell phone.
  - One-quarter (24%) of students in Grade 4, half (52%) of students in Grade 7, and 85 percent of students in Grade 11 have their own cell phone.

### ► Online Activities

Students in 2013 are confident and enthusiastic users of networked technology, although they may not always be using networked devices to their fullest potential. Online life has become increasingly social, with social networking now an integral component of many online activities. Young Canadians are also turning to the Internet as an important source of information – from sports and news to more sensitive topics such as mental and physical health.

- Creative uses of digital media, such as posting homemade videos or mash-ups are still relatively uncommon.
  - Approximately one-quarter to a third of students have used networked tools to post their own stories or artwork (38%), videos or audio clips (33%) or mash-ups (22%), but only a small number do any of these on a regular basis.
- Participatory civic uses of digital media are also relatively low.
  - Less than a third of students have posted comments on news sites, 50 percent have passed on links to people on news stories or current events and just over a third have joined or supported activist groups online.
- Digital media are a source of information on a variety of issues, with 78 percent of students using the Internet to find information about news, health issues or relationships.
  - Overall, 49 percent of students use the Internet to follow news and current events: this climbs steadily from 28 percent in Grade 4 to 65 percent in Grade 11.
  - The biggest gender differences can be seen in finding information about sports (63% of boys report this compared to 31% of girls) and looking for news relating to entertainment and celebrities (53% of girls compared to 32% of boys).
  - Girls are also more likely to seek out information about mental health issues (14% compared to 9% of boys), physical health issues (20% compared to 16% of boys) and relationship problems (18% compared to 9% of boys).
  - Close to a third of students have gone online to ask an expert or other kids for advice about personal problems.
  - Compared to students in younger grades, a higher percentage of students in grades 7-11 report looking for information on more sensitive topics such as mental health issues, sexuality, physical health issues and relationship problems.

- Online media are primarily used for entertainment and communicating with friends and family.
  - The most frequent online activities reported by students are:
    - playing online games (59%)
    - downloading or streaming music, TV shows or movies (51%)
    - reading or posting on someone else’s social network site (52%)
    - posting on the student’s own social networking site (41%)
    - posting on the student’s own Twitter site (21%)
    - following friends and family on Twitter (21%)
    - following celebrities on Twitter (20%)
    - pranking or trolling someone (20%).
  - French language students in Quebec are much less likely than English language students in the rest of Canada to use Twitter.
  - Although more boys than girls play online games, especially in the earlier grades, by Grade 9, following other people on social networking sites and downloading/streaming mainstream media content online are the most frequent activities for both genders.
- Canadian youth like socializing online, even in younger grades.
  - Almost one-third of students in grades 4-6 have a Facebook account, in spite of its terms of use agreement that bars children under the age of 13 from using the site.
  - Sixteen percent of students in grades 4-6 also have Twitter accounts, which have similar age restrictions.
  - For grades 4-6, boys (36%) are slightly more likely to have Facebook accounts than girls (30%) but there is no gender difference for Twitter accounts.
  - Overall, the number of Facebook accounts rises substantially after Grade 6, from 67 percent in Grade 7 to 95 percent in Grade 11.
  - About half of students in grades 7-11 (47%) have Twitter accounts.

### ► Top 10 Favourite Websites

When asked to name their favourite websites, predominant themes are online videos, gaming and social networking. All students enjoy watching, and sometimes posting, videos on YouTube. Generally, younger students prefer to visit game sites, while older students prefer social media sites. In younger grades, both girls and boys list numerous gaming sites and virtual worlds amongst their favourites, with social networking an integral part of much of the online play on the sites preferred by girls.

- Overall, students in 2013 listed more than 3,000 different favourite websites.
- YouTube, at 75 percent, is the top site among all students.
- Next on the list overall is Facebook (57%) followed by Google (31%).

- There is a fair degree of consensus about the Top 10 most popular sites: YouTube, Facebook, Google and Twitter appear in the Top 10 list for both boys and girls across all grades.
- For older students, Facebook is the second most popular choice for both girls and boys.
- Seven of the Top 10 favourite sites allow users to post and share information and content (YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Instagram, Minecraft and Hotmail), illustrating the need to teach young people digital literacy skills so they understand privacy, digital permanence, ethical decision-making and protecting personal information.

### › Opinions about Online Safety

When asked whether they agree or disagree with statements relating to online safety, students appear both aware of the potential risks of going online and confident in their ability to handle online risk. Feelings of safety grow with age, from a low of 50 percent in grades 4 and 7 to a high of 66 percent in Grade 11.

- The majority of students, especially girls, are aware of the risks of talking to strangers online. However, almost all students are confident in their ability to protect themselves online and a majority feel that the Internet is a safe place for them.
  - Girls are both more likely than boys to agree with the statement that they could be hurt by online strangers (82% compared to 63% of boys) and less likely to see the Internet as a safe place (51% compared to 61% of boys).
  - Comparing grades, feelings of safety rise from a low of 50 percent in grades 4 and 7 to a high of 66 percent in Grade 11.
  - But despite concerns about safety, high percentages of boys (90%) and girls (89%) agree with the statement that “I know how to protect myself online”.
  - Even the youngest students are confident in their ability to protect themselves online, with 77 percent of Grade 4 students indicating this.

### › Parental Involvement

Many of the students participating in the 2013 survey paint a picture of parents who are actively engaged in their online lives. This ranges from setting online rules (over 84% of students indicate having at least one rule), to going online with their children, to teaching their children about online issues.

- Overall, the percentage of household rules about online activities has declined dramatically from 2005 to 2013, most notably in rules relating to meeting online acquaintances in person (30% fewer students have rules on this) and sites you are not supposed to visit (28% fewer students have rules on this).



- Girls are more likely than boys to have household rules in place regarding online activities. This suggests that girls are more regulated than boys and may carry additional burdens with respect to their own online safety and the tone of their online interactions.
- At the same time, students with household rules are less likely to engage in activities that adults consider risky, such as posting their contact information, visiting gambling sites, seeking out online pornography or talking to strangers online.
- Overall, the percentage of students who are “usually” online at home with a parent or other adult increased from 2005 to 2013, and the percentage that are “never” online at home with a parent or adult decreased from 2005 to 2013.
  - Although parental supervision is much higher for younger students than for older students, a substantial percentage of students in grades 4-6, nearly one-third, never sit with an adult or parents when online.
- The good news is that along with teachers, young people report learning about a wide range of online issues from their parents.
  - Almost half (45%) of students of all ages report that they’ve learned about online issues from their parents and 41 percent report learning this from teachers.

### ► Unplugging

A few questions were asked to gauge just how connected young Canadians are – and how they feel about this.

- Thirty-nine percent of students who have cell phones sleep with them in case they get calls or messages during the night.
  - This peaks at just over half of students by Grade 11, but one-fifth of Grade 4 students also report sleeping with their phones.
- Although one-third of students worry that they spend too much time online, only half say they would be upset or unhappy if they had to unplug for anything other than school work for a week.
- Ninety-four percent of students choose to go offline to do other things like spending more time with friends or family, enjoying some quiet time by themselves or going outside.

## Online Access

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***Almost every student we surveyed (99%) has access to the Internet outside of school, from a variety of (mostly portable) platforms and devices.***

When we talked to parents in 2000 and 2004, a number of them told us that they put the family computer in the family room or kitchen so they could keep a benevolent eye on their kids as they surfed. Those days of single, supervised access points have been replaced with multiple – and portable – points of entry, especially for teenagers.

Although half of all students tell us that they use a shared family computer to go online (Table 1), the numbers drop from a high of 64 percent in Grade 4 to a low of 37 percent in Grade 11 (Figure 1). Access through a personal desktop, on the other hand, increases from 17 percent in Grade 4 to 27 percent in Grade 11. This trend is most marked for French language students in Quebec. Thirty-one percent of them access the Internet through a personal desktop, compared to 24 percent of English language students in the rest of Canada.

***Portable devices are used more to access the Internet than desktop computers. Even in Grade 5, access through a tablet or laptop is higher than access through a desktop computer.***

Portable devices, especially laptops, tablets and cell phones, are the most common way to connect for all students. Again, this trend is more pronounced in Quebec, where 80 percent of French language students use a laptop or a tablet to go online, compared to 67 percent of English language students in the rest of Canada. Even in Grade 5, access through a laptop or tablet (62%) for all students (both French language and English language students) is higher than access using a shared family desktop computer (59%), and almost half of the students (47%) surf on a portable MP3 player. MP3 player access remains fairly constant for younger students in grades 4 through 8, but drops off as access over a laptop or cell phone rises in grades 9, 10 and 11.

This suggests that, although a significant percentage of students in the early grades gain access using portable devices like cell phones (12% in Grade 4), MP3 players (47% in Grade 4) and laptops (56% in Grade 4), older students in particular are likely to be using the Internet with more independence and less adult supervision than younger students. However, affluence plays a role in access. Higher numbers of high affluence students compared to medium affluence students have access to portable computers (74% compared to 61% of medium affluence students), MP3 players (50% compared to 43% of medium affluence students), cell phones (49% compared to 41% of medium affluence students) and game consoles (45% compared to 38% of medium affluence students) (Figure 2).

There are also interesting gender differences in how young people access the Internet outside of school (Figure 3). A larger percentage of boys (27%) than girls (18%) access the Internet over their own desktop, and slightly more girls (71%) than boys (66%) go online using a laptop. But the largest difference involves gaming: 60 percent of boys access the Internet through a gaming console compared to 27 percent of girls. This suggests that boys are more likely to be using the Internet from a fixed location, whereas girls are more likely to be using a portable device.

There is also a small but significant number of students (6%) who access the Internet at a library or community centre. This is fairly constant across the grades, suggesting that continued government support for community access points may be an important way to ensure that all Canadian youth have access to online resources.

Table 1: Connecting to the Internet outside of school<sup>1</sup>

How do you connect to the Internet when you are NOT at school?	Percentage
A desktop computer I share with my family (for example, in the kitchen or family room) <sup>Grade</sup>	50%
My own desktop computer ♂♀	22%
A portable computer (for example, laptop, netbook, iPad) ♂♀ <sup>Grade</sup>	68%
A computer at the library or a community centre (for example, Boys and Girls Club)	6%
MP3 player (for example, iPod Touch) <sup>Grade</sup>	47%
Cell phone / smart phone <sup>Grade</sup>	45%
Game console (for example, Wii, Xbox, PlayStation) ♂♀ <sup>Grade</sup>	42%
I only go on the Internet when I'm at school	1%

<sup>1</sup> In the results presented in tables in this report, statistically significant differences by gender are indicated next to the question by ♂♀ and statistically significant differences by grade are indicated next to the question by <sup>Grade</sup>

Figure 1: Connecting to the Internet outside of school: Grade

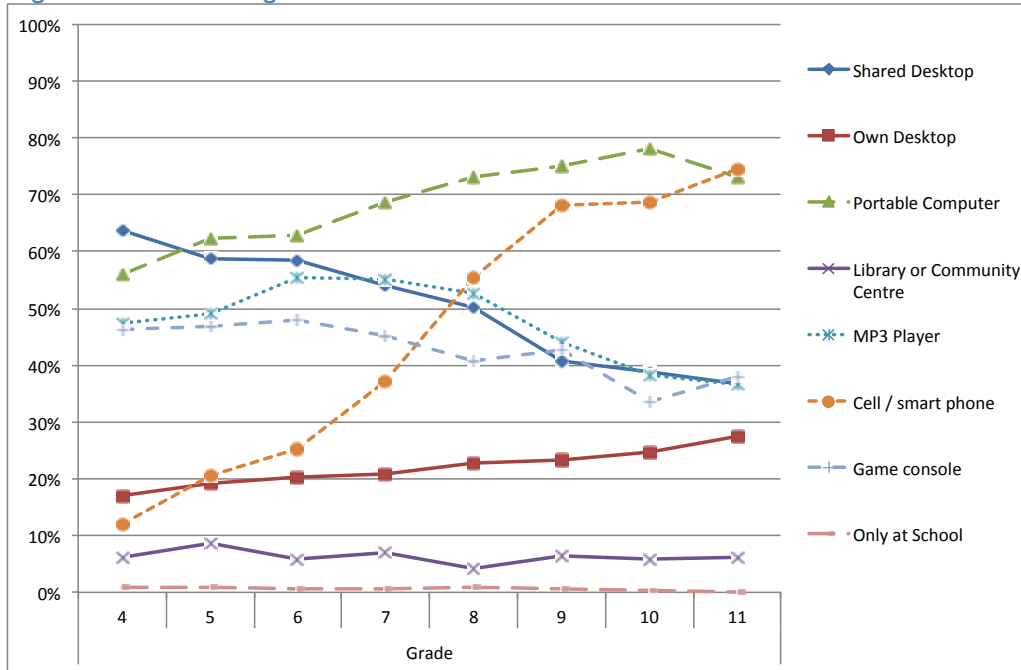
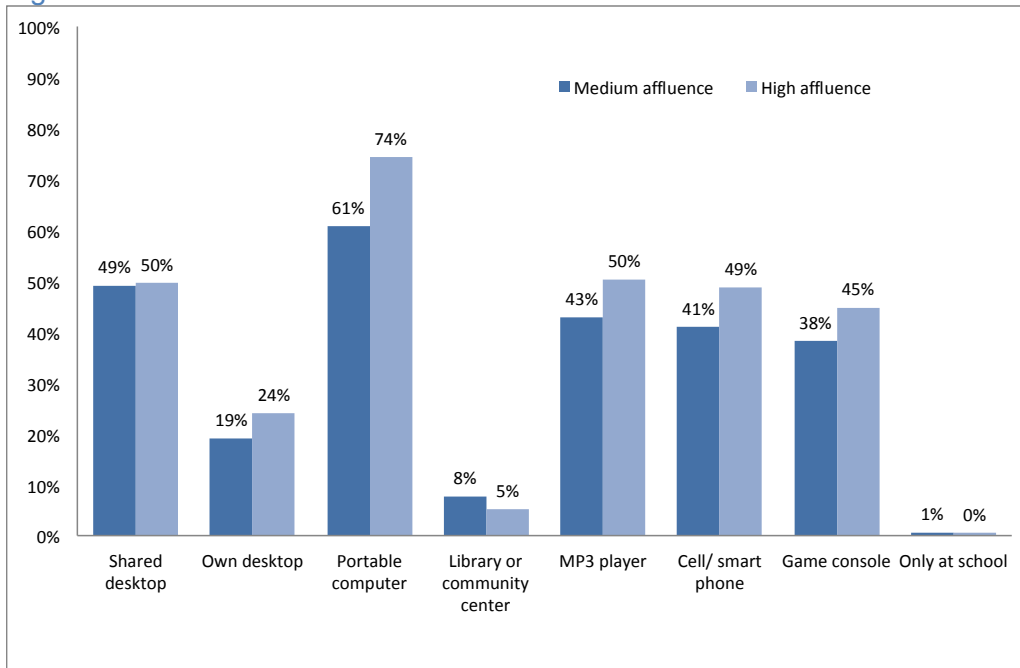
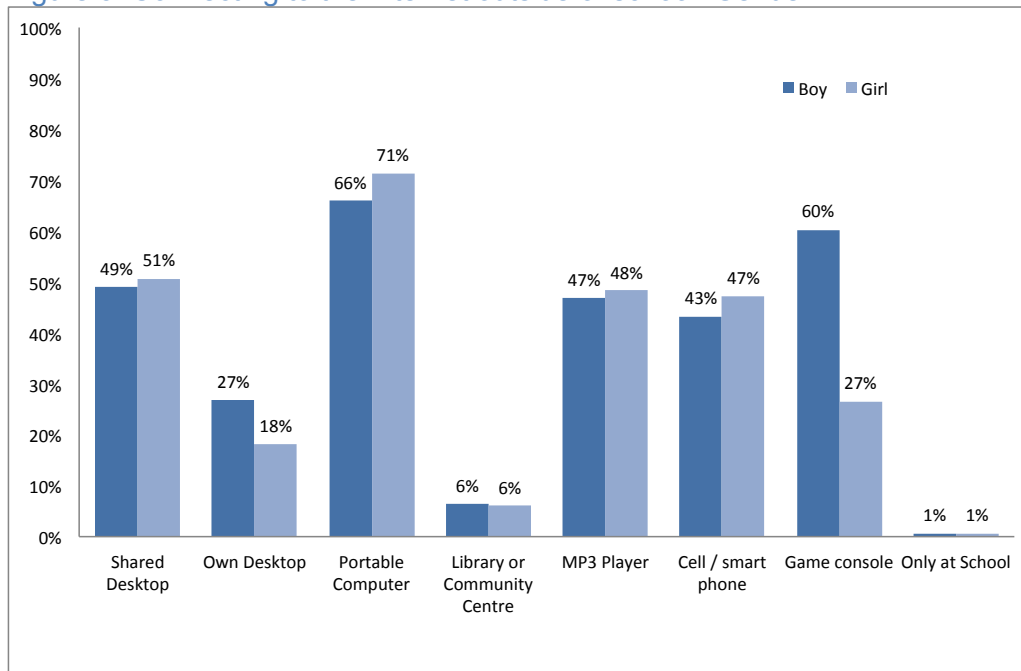


Figure 2: Access to networked devices outside of school: Affluence<sup>2</sup>



<sup>2</sup> A modified version of the Family Affluence Scale was used to measure students' socioeconomic status. More information can be found under *Comparing High Affluence Students and Medium Affluence Students* in the Methodology section of this report.

Figure 3: Connecting to the Internet outside of school: Gender



**One-quarter (24%) of students in Grade 4, half (52%) of students in Grade 7, and 85 percent of students in Grade 11 have their own cell phone.**

The trend towards portable communications is perhaps best illustrated by the rise in children’s cell phone use over the past eight years. In our 2005 survey, only 6 percent of students in Grade 4 and 46 percent of students in Grade 11 had their own phone. In the current survey, almost one-quarter (24%) of students in Grade 4 have their own phone and a third (31%) regularly use a phone belonging to someone else. Combined, just under half (49%) have access to their own phone or to someone else’s phone on a regular basis. By Grade 11, personal cell phones largely replace sharing a phone with someone else and a large majority of students (85%) have their own phone. There are no differences between boys and girls in this regard.

However, affluence again plays a role. Sixty-two percent of high affluence students report that they have their own cell phone, compared to 56 percent of medium affluence students, but there is no difference between the two groups when it comes to using a cell phone that belongs to someone else (Figure 6).

Table 2: Cell/Smart phone access

	Percentage Yes
Do you have your own cell phone? <sup>Grade</sup>	59%
Do you have a cell phone that belongs to someone else (for example, your mom or dad) that you use regularly? <sup>Grade</sup>	15%
Cell phone access (Yes to own phone or using someone else's phone) <sup>Grade</sup>	69%

Figure 4: Cell/Smart phone access: Grade

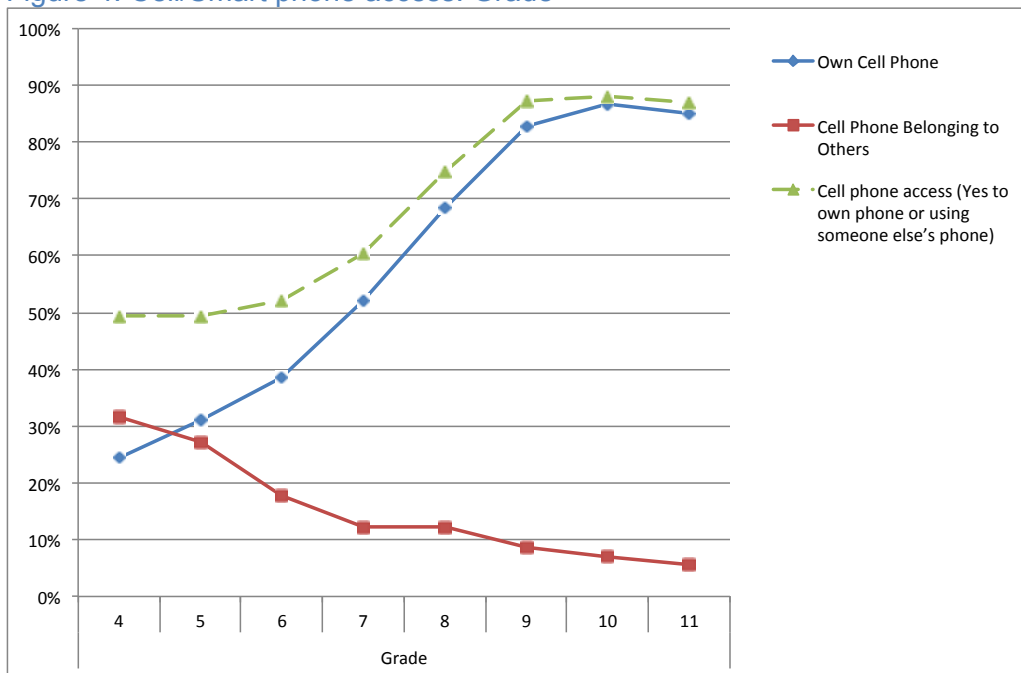


Figure 5: Cell/Smart phone access: Gender

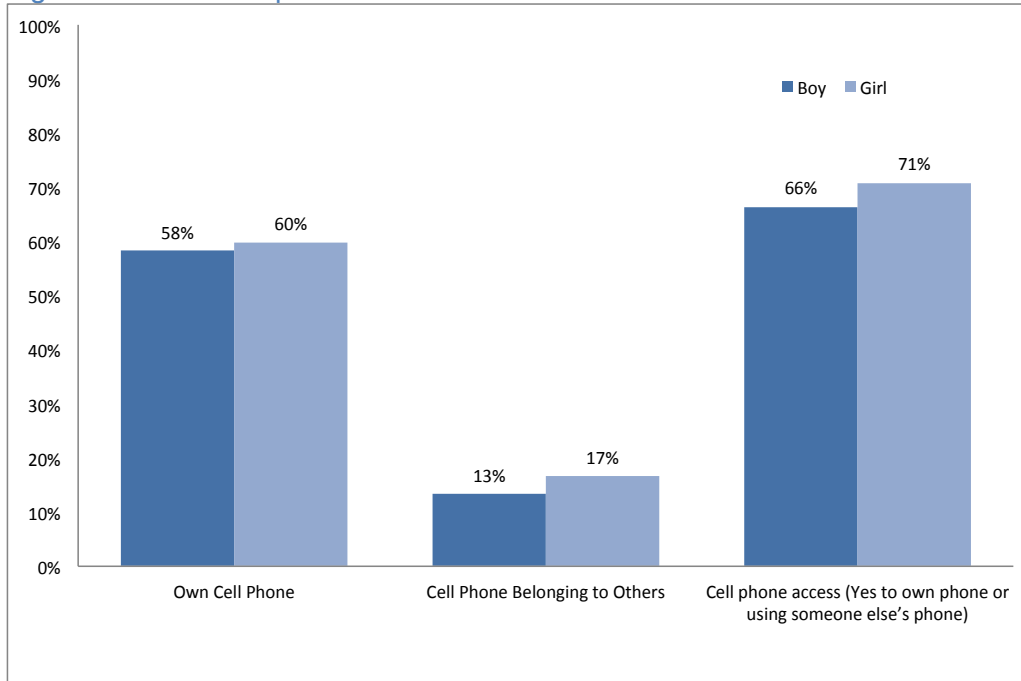
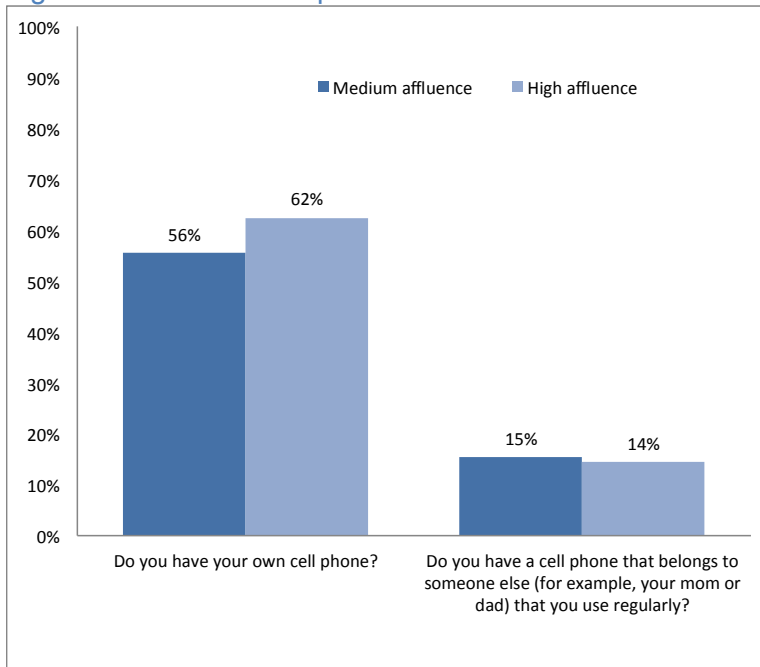


Figure 6: Access to cell phones: Affluence



## Online Activities

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The survey results around access suggest that we have made significant progress in engaging young Canadians in networked communications. But access to computers and cell phones is the relatively easy part: it is much harder to ensure that young people acquire all the skills they need not only to use networked technologies, but to use them well. Experts suggest that digital literacy rests on three pillars: the technical skills to operate digital devices, the critical thinking skills to understand how those devices affect our behaviour and perceptions and the ability to create digital content in order to actively participate in digital society<sup>3</sup>.

***Creative uses of digital media, such as posting a homemade video or mash-up are still relatively uncommon.***

Approximately one-quarter to a third of students have used networked tools to post a story or artwork they created themselves (38%), a video or audio clip of themselves (33%) or a mash-up file such as a fan tribute (22%) at some point in time (Table 3). However, the percentage who do so frequently, i.e. at least once a day or once a week, is much lower (story/artwork 9%, video/audio of themselves 5%, mash-up 4%).

The numbers around civic engagement are more encouraging. For example, 49 percent of students in all grades have gone online to find information about news and current events (Table 5) and half of students in grades 7-11 have sent links to news stories or current events to others (Table 4)<sup>4</sup>. But most have never participated in online debate, either by posting comments in a news site (71% of grades 7-11 have never done so) or joining an activist group (65% of all grades have never done so). Like creative uses, frequent engagement in these two activities is much lower (sending links, 14% of grades 7-11; posting comments, 7% of grades 7-11; activism, 7% of all grades), suggesting that there is continued work to be done in helping young Canadians develop skills and competencies for becoming more civically engaged online.

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<sup>3</sup> See MediaSmarts' Digital Literacy Fundamentals at: <http://mediasmarts.ca/digital-media-literacy-fundamentals/digital-literacy-fundamentals#what>

<sup>4</sup> French language students in Quebec were more likely to use the Internet to find information about current affairs/news (58% compared to 49% of English language students in the rest of Canada).



Table 3: What are students doing online?

Do you do the following things online?	At least once a day	At least once a week	At least once a month	At least once a year	Less than once a year	Never
Post a story or artwork you created yourself <sup>Grade</sup>	3%	6%	9%	9%	11%	62%
Post a video or audio file of you doing something (for example, singing, dancing, how-to video) ♂♀ <sup>Grade</sup>	2%	3%	8%	9%	11%	67%
Post a video you made using music or clips you found online (for example, fan tribute, mash-up video) ♂♀ <sup>Grade</sup>	2%	2%	5%	6%	8%	78%

Table 4: What are students doing online?

Do you do the following things online?	At least once a day	At least once a week	At least once a month	At least once a year	Less than once a year	Never
Post comments on news sites (grade 7-11 only)	3%	4%	6%	6%	9%	71%
Send people links to news stories or information about current events (grade 7-11 only) <sup>Grade</sup>	4%	10%	14%	11%	12%	50%
Join or support an activist group (for example, Greenpeace, Students Against Bullying, Free the Children) <sup>Grade</sup>	3%	4%	7%	10%	11%	65%

**Digital media are a source of information on a variety of issues.**

Seventy-eight percent of students use the Internet to find information about news, health issues or relationships (Table 5). Girls are primarily looking for entertainment news and information about celebrities (53% compared to 32% of boys), whereas boys tend to look for information about sports (63% compared to 31% of girls). Girls are also slightly more likely than boys to seek out information about mental health issues (14% compared to 9% of boys), physical health

issues (20% compared to 16% of boys) and relationship problems (18% compared to 9% of boys). The percentage of students who use the Internet as an information source increases from Grade 4 through to Grade 11, with the exception of looking for information about sports which remains fairly constant across the grades.

Table 5: Finding information online

Do you use the Internet to find information about these?	Percentage
News and current events <sup>Grade</sup>	49%
Sports ♂♀	47%
Entertainment news and celebrities ♂♀ <sup>Grade</sup>	43%
Mental health issues ♂♀ <sup>Grade</sup>	11%
Sexuality ♂♀ <sup>Grade</sup>	8%
Physical health issues ♂♀ <sup>Grade</sup>	18%
Relationship problems (for example, advice on dating, getting along with family or friends, dealing with bullies) ♂♀ <sup>Grade</sup>	14%
I do not use the Internet to find information about any of these ♂♀ <sup>Grade</sup>	22%

Figure 7: Finding information online: Gender

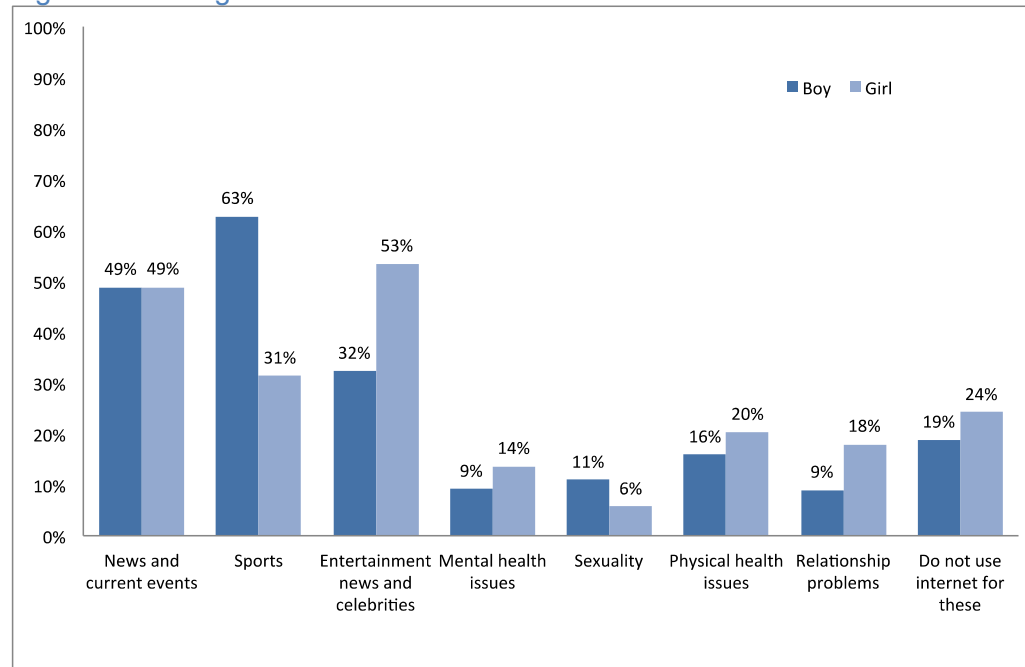
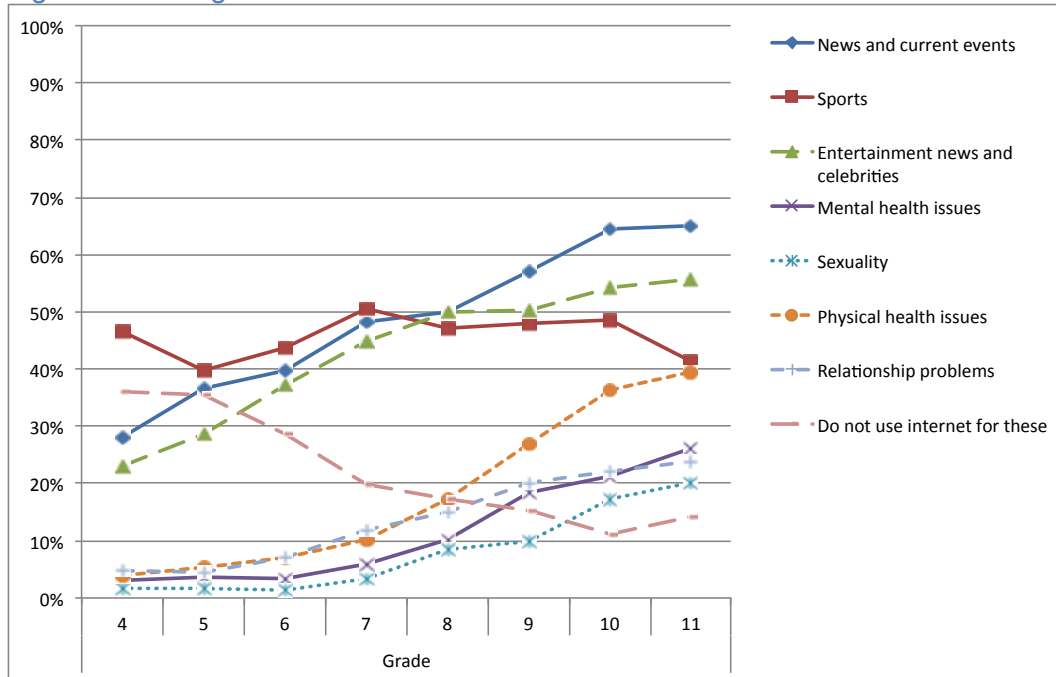


Figure 8: Finding information online: Grade



Compared to students in younger grades, a higher percentage of students in grades 7-11 report looking for information on more sensitive topics such as mental health issues, sexuality, physical health issues and relationship problems.

Table 6: Finding information online: Sensitive issues

Grade	Gender	Mental health issues	Sexuality	Physical health issues	Relationship problems
7	Boy	3%	4%	9%	5%
	Girl	9%	2%	12%	19%
8	Boy	7%	12%	16%	9%
	Girl	13%	6%	19%	20%
9	Boy	15%	16%	23%	13%
	Girl	23%	4%	32%	27%
10	Boy	19%	24%	31%	16%
	Girl	24%	12%	40%	27%
11	Boy	22%	22%	34%	18%
	Girl	30%	19%	44%	29%

Close to a third of students have gone online to ask an expert (30%) or other kids (33%) for advice about a personal problem, although only a small percentage do so frequently (Table 7).

Table 7: What are students doing online? Advice-seeking

Do you do the following things online?	At least once a day	At least once a week	At least once a month	At least once a year	Less than once a year	Never
Ask an expert for advice about a personal problem <sup>Grade</sup>	2%	4%	7%	7%	10%	70%
Ask kids for advice about a personal problem <sup>Grade</sup>	2%	6%	9%	7%	9%	67%

**Online media are primarily used for entertainment and communicating with friends and family.**

When asked to indicate, from a list of 20 choices, how often students participate in various online activities the most frequent activities<sup>5</sup> reported by students are:

- playing online games (59%)
- downloading or streaming music, TV shows or movies (51%)
- reading or posting on someone else’s social network site (52%)
- posting on the student’s own social networking site (41%)
- posting on the student’s own Twitter site (21%)
- following friends and family on Twitter (21%)
- following celebrities on Twitter (20%)
- pranking or trolling someone<sup>6</sup> (20%) (Table 8).

All of these activities increase across the grades with the exception of playing online games, which drops from a high of 77 percent in Grade 5 to a low of 42 percent in Grade 10 (Figure 9).

Interestingly, the increase from Grade 4 to Grade 11 with respect to downloading/streaming is relatively small (17%), and downloading/streaming remains one of the most common activities for all grades (e.g. 50% in Grade 4). This contrasts with participating in social media-related

<sup>5</sup> For the purposes of analysis, Directions defined the most frequent online activities as those activities that 20 percent or more of students reported as doing at least once a day or once a week.

<sup>6</sup> Youth participants in the focus groups we held prior to this survey used the terms pranking or trolling to describe playing tricks or jokes on people online or using a cell phone. Examples included getting someone to click on a link to a joke site, sending someone a message that captures his or her device in a loop that he or she can only exit by restarting the device, and anonymously posting something online to get a rise out of the recipient (Steeves, V. (2012). *Young Canadians in a Wired World, Phase III: Talking to Youth and Parents about Life Online*. Ottawa: MediaSmarts).

activities, which is low in Grade 4 (ranging from 5% to 18%) but increases substantially by Grade 11, as follows:

- reading others' sites increases by 54%
- tweeting increases by 39%
- following friends/family on Twitter increases by 33%
- posting on one's own site increases by 32%
- following celebrities on Twitter increases by 28%

This is consistent with developmental literature that suggests that social connection becomes more important as young people move from childhood to their teen years.

French language students in Quebec are less likely than English language students in the rest of Canada to use Twitter to post their own tweets (8% compared to 22% of English language students), or follow friends or family on a daily or weekly basis (14% compared to 22% of English language students).<sup>7</sup>

Perhaps not surprisingly, more boys (71%) than girls (47%) report frequently playing online games (Figure 10), but participation for boys drops off substantially in the higher grades (Figure 9). Boys are also more likely than girls to prank or troll someone (31% compared to 9% of girls) and download or stream mainstream media content (55% compared to 49% of girls). Girls, on the other hand, are more likely than boys to use social media to communicate with family and friends (e.g. 45% posted on their own social networking site compared to 36% of boys) and to follow celebrities (26% compared to 14% of boys).

Although more boys than girls play online games, especially in the earlier grades, by Grade 8, following other people on social networking sites and downloading/streaming mainstream media content online are the most frequent activities for both genders. The popularity of both activities (following others on social networking sites and downloading/streaming) continues to rise in grades 9, 10 and 11.

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<sup>7</sup> However, there was no significant difference between the groups with respect to having a Twitter account (40% of French language students, compared to 44% of English language students).

Table 8: What are students doing online?

Do you do the following things online?	At least once a day	At least once a week	At least once a month	At least once a year	Less than once a year	Never
Post comments or pictures on your own social network site (for example, your Facebook profile) ♂♀ Grade	17%	24%	20%	7%	4%	28%
Read or post on other people's social network sites (for example, Facebook) ♂♀ Grade	30%	22%	12%	4%	3%	28%
Prank or troll someone ♂♀ Grade	10%	10%	12%	9%	9%	51%
Post your own tweets on Twitter ♂♀ Grade	12%	9%	7%	3%	4%	66%
Follow friends or family on Twitter ♂♀ Grade	12%	9%	7%	4%	3%	65%
Follow celebrities on Twitter ♂♀ Grade	12%	8%	8%	4%	3%	64%
Play online games ♂♀ Grade	31%	28%	19%	8%	5%	9%
Download or stream music, TV shows or movies (grade 7-11 only) ♂♀ Grade	24%	27%	21%	8%	5%	15%

Figure 9: What are students doing online? Grade

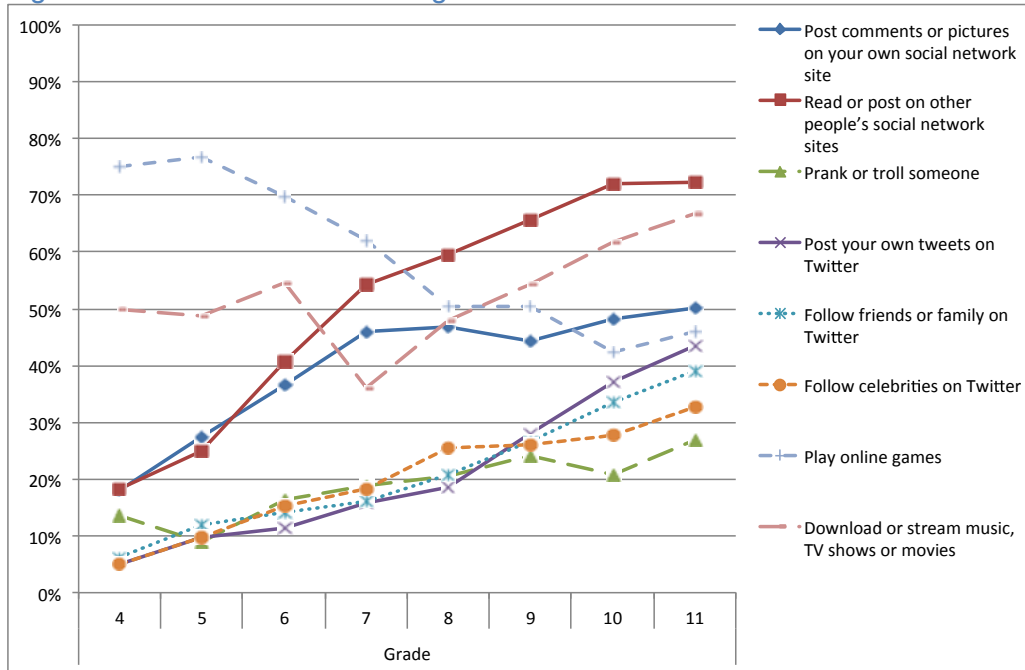
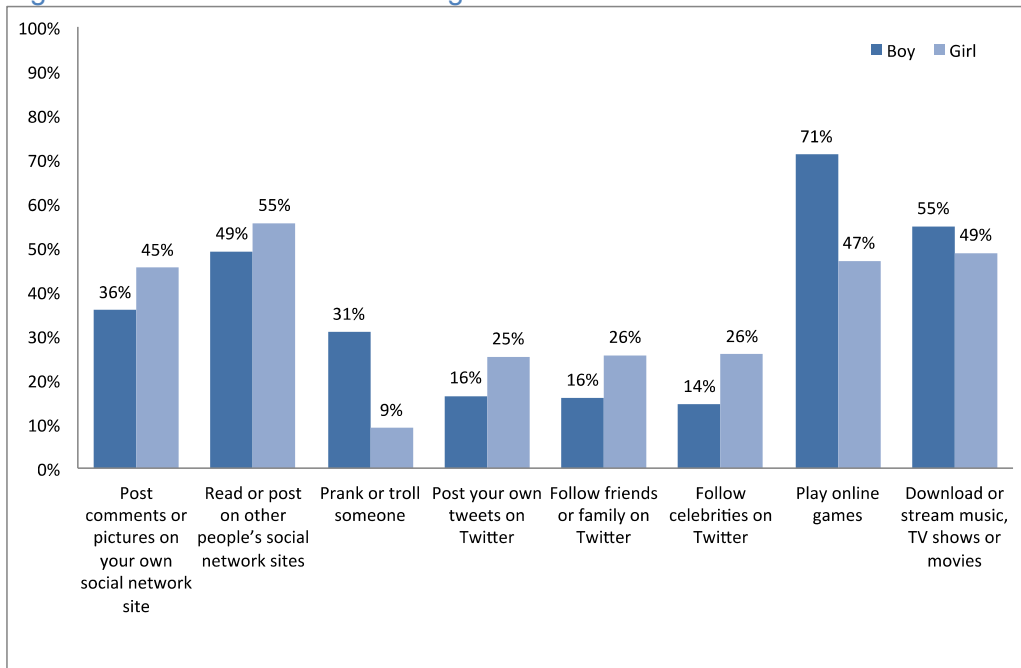


Figure 10: What are students doing online? Gender



***Almost one-third of students in grades 4-6 have a Facebook account in spite of its terms of use agreement that bars children under the age of 13 from using the site.***

Thirty-two percent of students in grades 4-6 have a Facebook account and 16 percent have a Twitter account (Table 9), in spite of terms of use agreements that bar children under the age of 13 from using these sites. Boys are slightly more likely than girls to have a Facebook account (36% compared to 30% of girls), but there is no gender difference regarding Twitter (17% for both boys and girls) (Figure 12).

About one-third of students in grades 4-6 also indicate that they have accounts on a variety of websites that are listed in the survey (Table 9). The most popular of the sites queried are Club Penguin (38%), Webkinz (35%), Moshi Monsters (33%) and PopTropica (28%), although no French language students in Quebec have an account on Club Penguin and only five percent have an account on Webkinz<sup>8</sup>.

With the exception of Club Penguin, girls are more likely than boys to have accounts on these sites, especially Webkinz (difference of 26%) and Moshi Monsters (difference of 22%). Nonetheless, interest wanes in Grade 6, as fewer students in this grade have an account on these sites than students in Grade 4. The exception is StarDoll, which is almost twice as popular with students in grades 5 and 6 (9%) than it is for students in Grade 4 (5%) (Figure 13). StarDoll is a play site where girls dress “dolls” who resemble stylized pictures of popular actors and musicians.

The number of Facebook accounts rises substantially after Grade 6, from 67 percent in Grade 7 to 95 percent in Grade 11. About half of students in grades 7-11 also have accounts on Twitter (47%), rising from about one-third (31%) in Grade 7 to almost two-thirds (63%) by Grade 11. The number of Instagram accounts stays fairly level at about 42 percent, and a smaller percent have accounts on Tumblr (27%) and Pinterest (13%) (Figure 13).

Although equal numbers of boys and girls have Facebook accounts, there are fairly large gender differences in the other websites that were listed. Girls outnumber boys by 12 percent on Twitter, by 18 percent on Pinterest, by 23 percent on Instagram and by 25 percent on Tumblr (Figure 11).

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<sup>8</sup> There were no differences between French language students in Quebec and English language students in the rest of Canada with respect to the other queried sites, even though they were English sites, with the exception of Facebook. Ninety-one percent of French language students had a Facebook account, compared to 75% of English language students. Facebook enables users to change the default language, so francophone users may choose to use it in French.



Table 9: Do you have an account on the following sites?

Do you have an account on the following sites?	
Grades 4-6	
Facebook ♂♀ Grade	32%
Twitter ♂♀ Grade	16%
Club Penguin	38%
Fantage ♂♀	13%
Moshi Monsters ♂♀ Grade	33%
PopTropica	28%
StarDoll ♂	8%
Webkinz ♂♀	35%
Grades 7-11	
Facebook ♂♀ Grade	82%
Twitter ♂♀ Grade	47%
Instagram ♂♀	42%
Pinterest ♂♀	13%
Tumblr ♂♀ Grade	27%

Figure 11: Grades 7-11: Do you have an account on the following sites? Gender

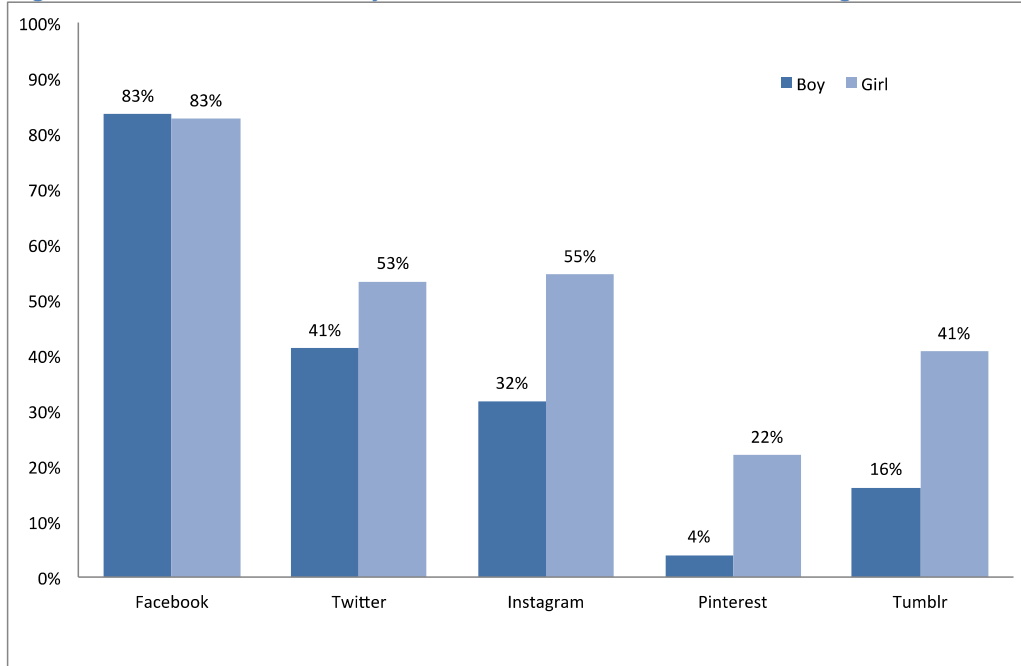


Figure 12: Grades 4-6: Do you have an account on the following sites? Gender

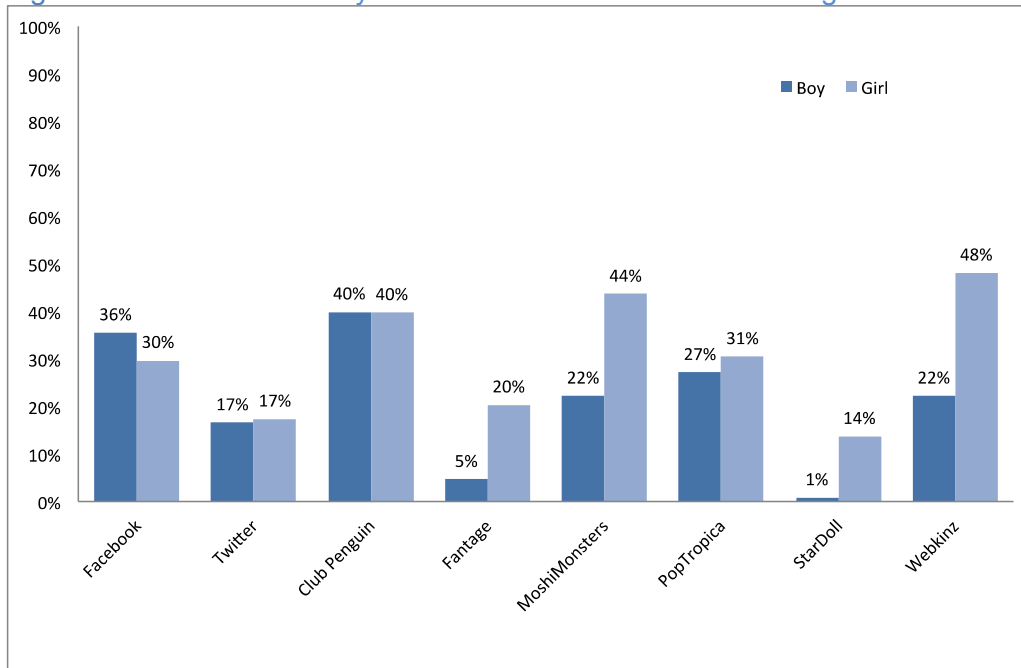
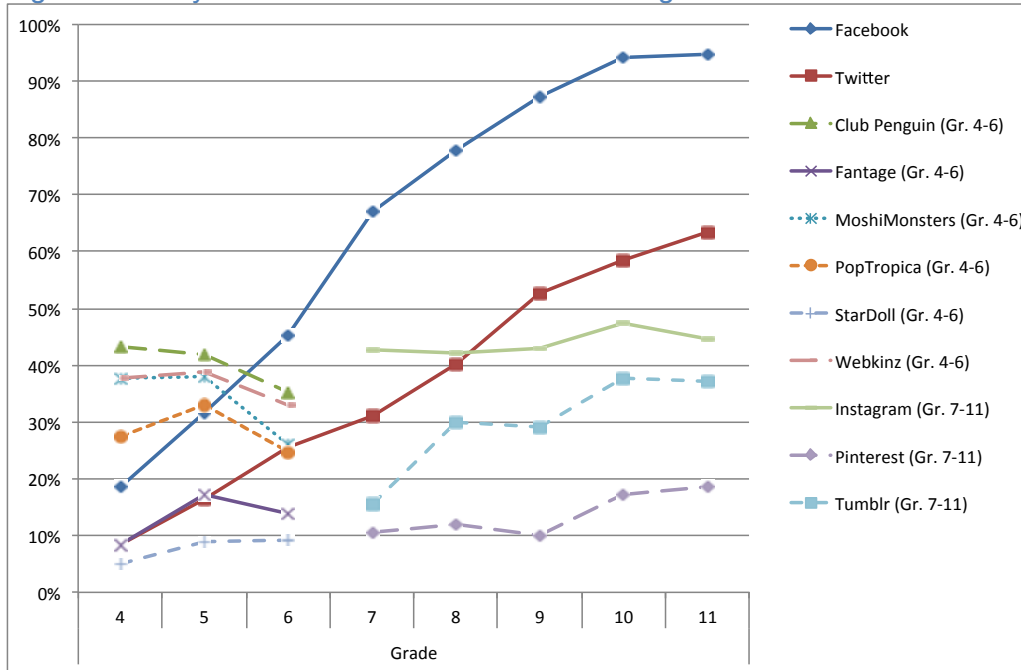


Figure 13: Do you have an account on the following sites? Grade



## The Top 10 Favourite Websites

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*Young people’s favourite websites are primarily places where students can chat with friends and share photos and videos.*

In order to get a sense of where young people go online, we asked students to list their five favourite websites. As in our 2005 survey, the variety of favourites is impressive: students in 2013 listed more than 3,000 sites. However, there is also a fair degree of consensus about the Top 10 most popular sites (Table 10).

The significant change from 2005 is the emergence of social networking platforms. Facebook – which wasn’t widely available in 2005 – is the second most popular site (57%). Twitter is number four (24%), followed by Tumblr (12%) and Instagram (10%).

All of the top 10 sites, with the exception of Wikipedia (number 10), are commercial sites. Because the majority of the top 10 sites are places where students can create and share information and content, this underscores the importance of teaching young people critical thinking skills regarding online sharing, digital permanence and the protection of personal privacy.

Table 10: Top 10 favourite websites: All respondents<sup>9</sup>

What are your five favourite websites?		
Site	Content	Percent of respondents
YouTube.com	Video sharing	75%
Facebook.com	Social networking	57%
Google.ca	Search engine	31%
Twitter.com	Microblogging / Social networking	24%
Tumblr.com	Blogging / Social networking	12%
Instagram.com	Media sharing / Social networking	10%
Minecraft.com	Gaming	8%
Miniclip.com	Gaming	7%
Hotmail.com	Email	6%
Wikipedia.org	Reference	5%

<sup>9</sup> Note: Because the question “What are your five favourite websites?” was open-ended, numbers in Tables 10, 11 and 12 will add up to more than 100% percent.

### *YouTube is the favourite site among all age groups and genders.*

Although there are interesting gender differences in Top 10 preferences, YouTube is the number one site for boys and girls across all grades (Tables 11 and 12). YouTube holds first place among students in grades 4-6 by a significant margin. Seventy percent of boys and 61 percent of girls in those grades selected YouTube; Minecraft, an online game in which players build virtual environments, came in second for boys in this age group at 31 percent while Facebook came in second for girls this age at 22 percent.

Among students in grades 4-6, Google and Facebook took up the third and fourth spot with boys and the second and third with girls. Nearly all of the remaining top ten sites for boys this age are sites such as Miniclip (19%), Y8 (9%), Andkon (8%) and Friv (7%) which house collections of short games. Roblox (9%), a multiplayer game similar to Minecraft, is also popular among boys this age at nine percent, while Twitter took the number ten spot with seven percent.

While girls also like gaming sites, aside from Friv (9%) their favourite destinations are more likely to be virtual worlds: Webkinz (11%), Moshi Monsters (10%) and Poptropica (9%) are all multiplayer sites where players create a consistent avatar and interact with each other in a playful environment. However, these sites also enable players to chat and share content, suggesting that the line between play/game sites and social media is becoming blurred. Twitter is somewhat more popular among girls at nine percent, while the tenth spot is held by Family.ca, the only site connected to a media outlet and the only Canadian site on the list.

Students in later grades tend to prefer video sharing and social media sites over game sites, although Miniclip (number 6) and Minecraft (number 9) remain favourite sites for boys in grades 7-11. The preference for Facebook rises from 22 percent for boys and girls in grades 4-6 to 72 percent of boys and 77 percent of girls in grades 7-11. Twitter, likewise, rises from last place for boys in grades 4-6 (at 7%) and sixth place for girls in grades 4-6 (at 9%), to fourth place for boys in grades 7-11 (at 24%) and third place for girls in grades 7-11 (at 43%). Girls in grades 7-11 have a particular interest in social media, as Tumblr (number 5), Instagram (number 6) and Pinterest (number 7) appear on their Top 10. Of these sites, only Tumblr (number 7) appear on the boys' Top 10.

Table 11: Top 10 favourite websites grades 4-6: Gender

What are your five favourite websites: Grades 4-6					
Boys (Grades 4-6)			Girls (Grades 4-6)		
Site	Content	Percent of respondents	Site	Content	Percent of respondents
YouTube.com	Video sharing	70%	YouTube.com	Video sharing	61%
Minecraft.net	Gaming	31%	Facebook.com	Social networking	22%
Google.ca	Search engine	27%	Google.ca	Search engine	20%
Facebook.com	Social networking	22%	Webkinz.com	Gaming / Virtual pets	11%
Miniclip.com	Gaming	19%	MoshiMonsters.com	Gaming / Social networking / Virtual pets	10%
Y8.com	Gaming	9%	Friv.com	Gaming	9%
Roblox.com	Gaming	9%	Twitter.com	Microblogging / Social networking	9%
Andkon.com	Gaming	8%	Poptropica.com	Gaming	9%
Friv.com	Gaming	7%	Y8.com	Gaming	8%
Twitter.com	Microblogging / Social networking	7%	Family.ca	TV / Entertainment news / Gaming	8%

Table 12: Top 10 favourite websites grades 7-11: Gender

What are your five favourite websites: Grades 7-11					
Boys (Grades 7-11)			Girls (Grades 7-11)		
Site	Content	Percent of respondents	Site	Content	Percent of respondents
YouTube.com	Video sharing	83%	YouTube.com	Video sharing	77%
Facebook.com	Social networking	72%	Facebook.com	Social networking	77%
Google.ca	Search engine	40%	Twitter.com	Microblogging / Social networking	43%
Twitter.com	Microblogging / Social networking	24%	Google.ca	Search engine	36%
Wikipedia.org	Reference	9%	Tumblr.com	Bloggng / Social networking	31%
Miniclip.com	Gaming	7%	Instagram.com	Photo / Video sharing / Social networking	21%
Tumblr.com	Bloggng / Social networking	7%	Pinterest.com	Photo-oriented discovery and collection	10%
Reddit.com	Social news and entertainment	6%	Hotmail.com	Email	8%
Minecraft.net	Gaming	5%	Netflix.com	Media streaming	5%
Hotmail.com	Email	5%	Wikipedia.org	Reference	5%

## Opinions about Online Safety

*The majority of students, especially girls, are aware of the dangers of talking to strangers online. However, almost all students are confident in their ability to protect themselves online and a majority feel that the Internet is a safe place for them.*

Almost three-quarters (73%) of students in all grades agree with the statement that “I could be hurt if I talk to someone I don’t know on the Internet” (Table 13); with girls more likely than boys to feel that they could be hurt by online strangers (82% compared to 63% of boys) (Figure 15). However, in general, concerns about talking to strangers are lower in the later grades, peaking at 80 percent in Grade 8 and dropping to a low of 63 percent in Grade 11 (Figure 14).

Regardless, a majority of students (56%) agree with the statement that “The Internet is a safe place for me.” Again, gender and grade play a role. Girls are less likely to see the Internet as a safe place (51% compared to 61% of boys), although feelings of safety rise from a low of 50 percent in grades 4 and 7 to a high of 66 percent in Grade 11. Nonetheless, almost all boys (90%) and girls (89%) agree with the statement that “I know how to protect myself online.”

Table 13: Opinions: Online safety

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?	Agree Percentage
My parent(s) are worried that I can get hurt online. ♂♀ Grade	48%
The Internet is a safe place for me. ♂♀ Grade	56%
I know how to protect myself online. Grade	89%
I could be hurt if I talk to someone I don’t know online. ♂♀ Grade	73%



Figure 14: Opinions: Online safety: Grade

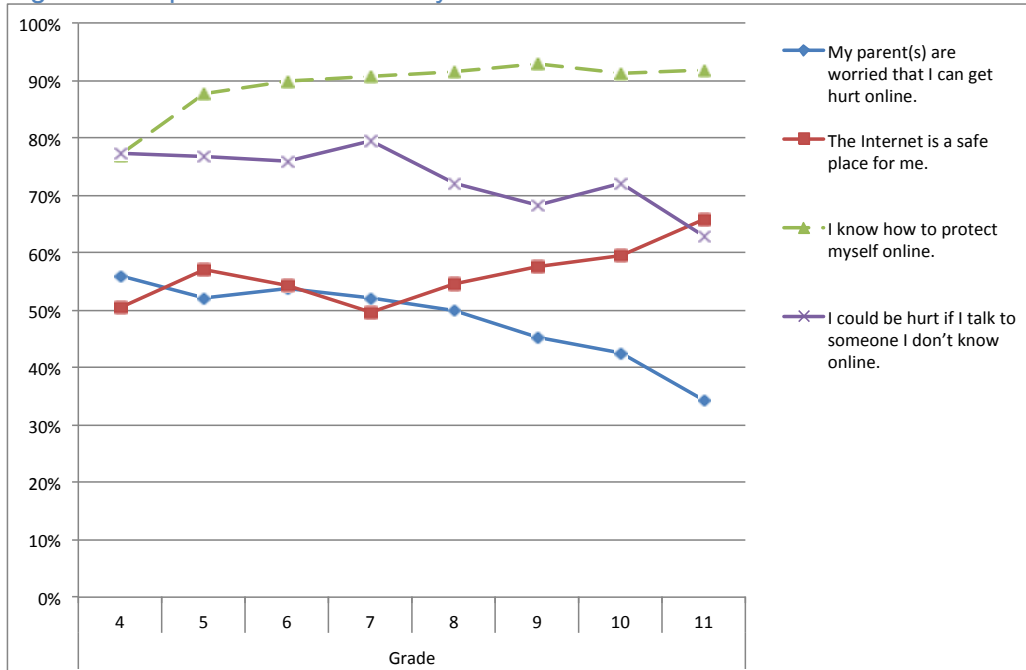
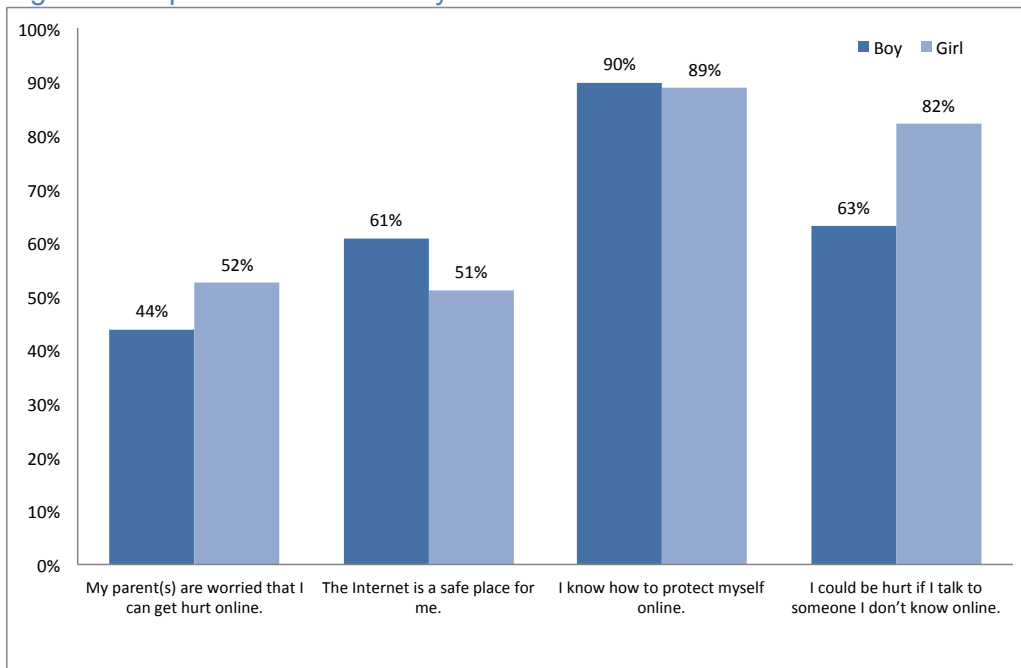


Figure 15: Opinions: Online safety: Gender



## Parental Involvement

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Eighty-four percent of students report that they have household rules about their online activity (Table 14). The most common rules are about posting contact information online (55%), talking to strangers online or on a cell phone (52%), avoiding certain sites (48%), treating people online with respect (47%) and getting together with online acquaintances (44%). High affluence students are more likely than medium affluence students to have a household rule about getting together with online acquaintances (46% compared to 39% of medium affluence students), but there are no differences between the two groups regarding the other rules.

### ***Girls are more likely than boys to have household rules in place.***

This is especially true regarding talking to strangers (21% difference), posting contact information (19% difference), getting together with someone they've met online (17% difference), telling parents about anything that makes them uncomfortable online (16% difference) and treating people online with respect (14% difference) (Figure 16).

### ***This suggests that girls are more regulated than boys, and may carry additional burdens with respect to their own online safety and the tone of their online interactions.***

In general, the average number of household rules drops off across the grades (Figures 17 and 18). In particular, fewer students in Grade 11, compared to Grade 4, report having a household rule for telling parents about anything that makes them uncomfortable (45% difference), avoiding certain sites (40% difference) and downloading music, videos, TV shows, movies or software (35% difference). Rules regarding talking to strangers, getting together with online acquaintances and treating people online with respect all peak in grades 7 and 8 (Figure 18). These are the same grades in which students report a growing interest in social media, as opposed to games.

Table 14: Household rules about online activity

Are there rules in your house about any of these?	Percentage Yes
Downloading music, videos, TV shows, movies, or software <sup>Grade</sup>	32%
Posting contact information on the Internet (for example, home address, email) ♂♀ <sup>Grade</sup>	55%
Sites you are not supposed to visit ♂♀ <sup>Grade</sup>	48%
Telling your parent(s) about anything that makes you uncomfortable online ♂♀ <sup>Grade</sup>	38%
Talking to strangers online or on your cell phone ♂♀ <sup>Grade</sup>	52%
How much time you are allowed to spend online or on your cell <sup>Grade</sup>	31%
Getting together with someone you met online ♂♀ <sup>Grade</sup>	44%
Treating people online with respect ♂♀ <sup>Grade</sup>	47%
There are no rules in my house about these things ♂♀ <sup>Grade</sup>	16%

Figure 16: Household rules about online activity: Gender

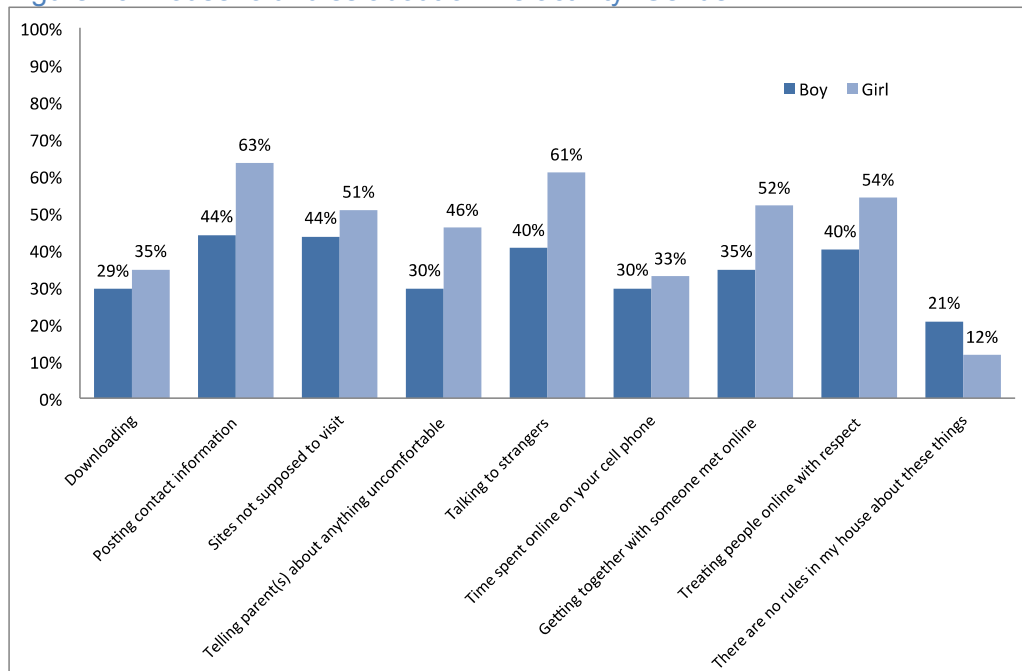


Figure 17: Average number of household rules: Grade

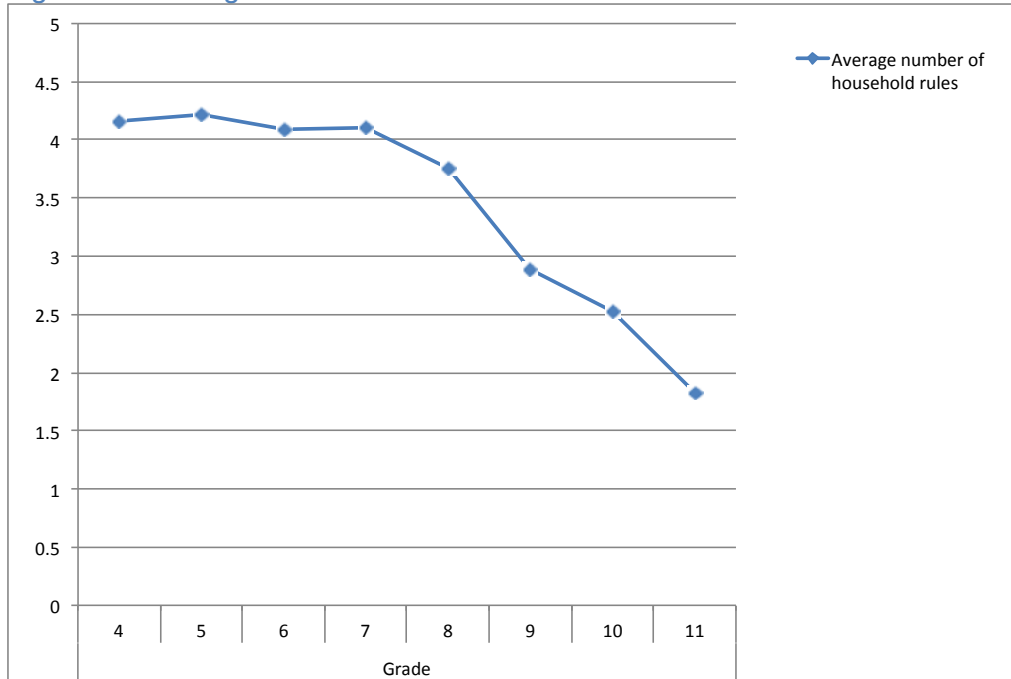
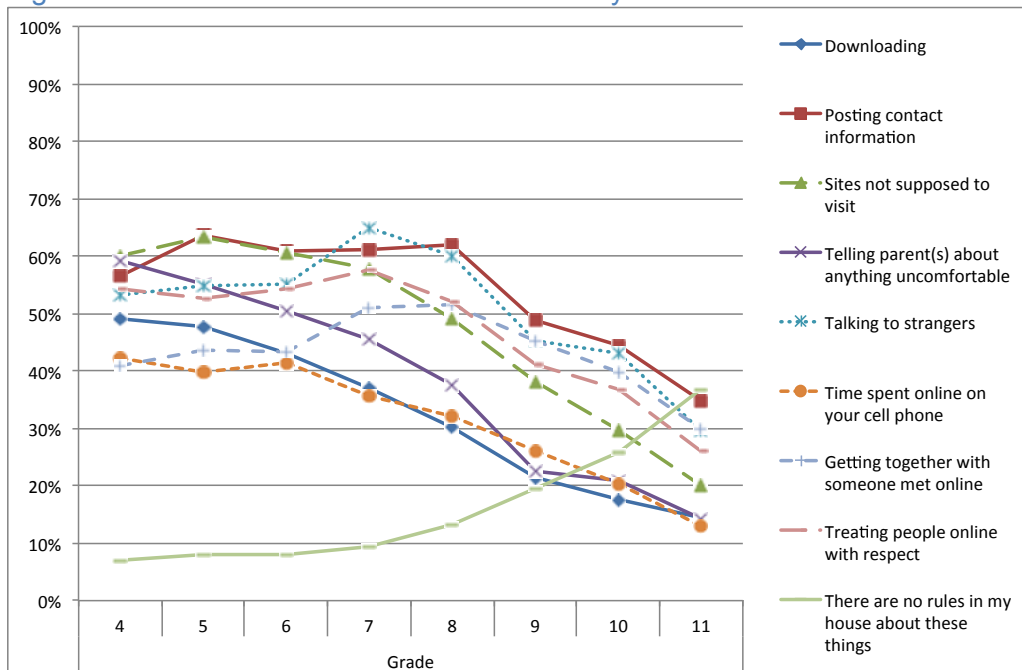


Figure 18: Household rules about online activity: Grade



**The percentage of household rules about online activities has declined from 2005 to 2013.**

In our 2005 survey, we also asked students about household rules. With the exception of the rule about treating people with respect, which was only asked in 2013, the percentage of students who report having a household rule (of the rules queried in both surveys) in 2013 is lower than the percentage of students who reported having a rule in 2005 (Table 15).

**Table 15: Household rules about online activity in 2005 and 2013**

Are there rules about any of these in your house?	Percentage in 2005	Percentage in 2013
Meeting someone in person whom you got to know online (2005) / Getting together with someone you met online (2013)	74% Girls: 85% Boys: 65%	44% Girls: 52% Boys: 35%
Sites that you are not supposed to visit (2005) / Sites you are not supposed to visit (2013)	70% Girls: 74% Boys: 67%	48% Girls: 51% Boys: 44%
Talking to strangers on the Internet (2005) / Talking to strangers online or on your cell phone (2013)	69% Girls: 78% Boys: 61%	52% Girls: 61% Boys: 40%
Giving personal information on the Net (2005) / Posting contact information on the Internet (2013)	69% Girls: 79% Boys: 62%	55% Girls: 63% Boys: 44%
Telling your parents if you find something that makes you feel uncomfortable (2005) / Telling your parent(s) about anything that makes you uncomfortable online (2013)	49% Girls: 55% Boys: 44%	38% Girls: 46% Boys: 30%
How much time you are allowed to spend on the Internet (2005) / How much time you are allowed to spend online or on your cell (2013)	36% Girls: 39% Boys: 32%	31% Girls: 33% Boys: 30%
Downloading music, videos or software that you are supposed to pay for (2005) / Downloading music, videos, TV shows, movies or software (2013)	46% Girls: 51% Boys: 41%	32% Girls: 35% Boys: 29%

**Students with household rules are less likely to post their contact information, visit gambling sites, seek out online pornography or talk to strangers online.**

Some students report that they take part in online activities that many adults consider to be risky, including posting contact information, visiting gambling sites, seeking out online pornography and talking to people they have met online but have never met in person (Table 16). Although the majority of students do not participate in any of the four activities, a fairly large number talk to online acquaintances (43%) or post their contact information (29%). Boys are more likely to do so than girls and both behaviours are more common in the later grades. Because these activities increase as more students report feeling safe online, and the vast majority of students in all grades feel that they know how to protect themselves online, this suggests that students may have different ideas from adults of what is and is not risky online behaviour. It is also possible that some students engage in activities they consider risky because they enjoy risk-taking behaviour.

Table 16: What are students doing online?

Do you do the following things online?	At least once a day	At least once a week	At least once a month	At least once a year	Less than once a year	Never
Talk to people you have met online but have never met in person ♂♀ <sup>Grade</sup>	9%	8%	9%	7%	9%	57%
Play online games that involve betting with real money (for example, slot machine, poker) ♂♀ <sup>Grade</sup>	2%	2%	2%	2%	3%	89%
Look for pornography (Grade 7-11 only) ♂♀ <sup>Grade</sup>	8%	7%	4%	2%	2%	77%
Post your contact information (for example, your home address, email) Grade	2%	3%	6%	7%	12%	71%

However, as we found in 2005, the presence of household rules in 2013 correlates with less risky online behaviour on the part of students. More students with rules about not posting contact information on the Internet report that they never post contact information (78% compared to 64% without this rule) (Figure 19); more students with rules about sites they are not supposed to go to never visit online gambling sites (94% compared to 88% without this rule) (Figure 20) or look for pornography online (86% compared to 72% without this rule) (Figure 21); and more students with rules about talking to strangers online never do this (68% compared to 48% without this rule) (Figure 22).

Figure 19: Posting rule and frequency of posting information online

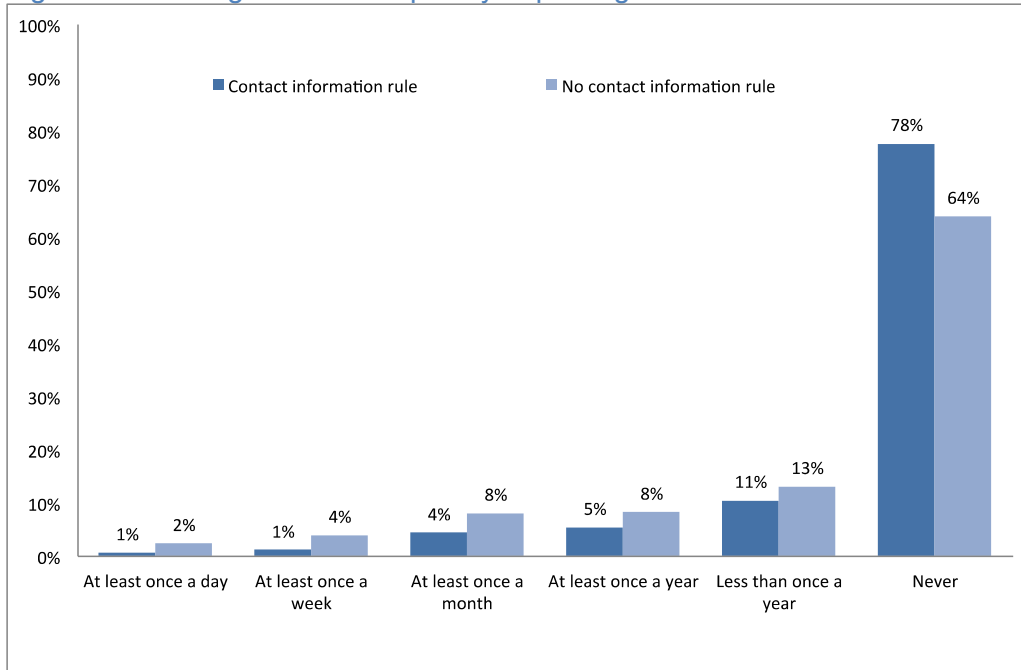


Figure 20: Site rules and visiting online gambling sites

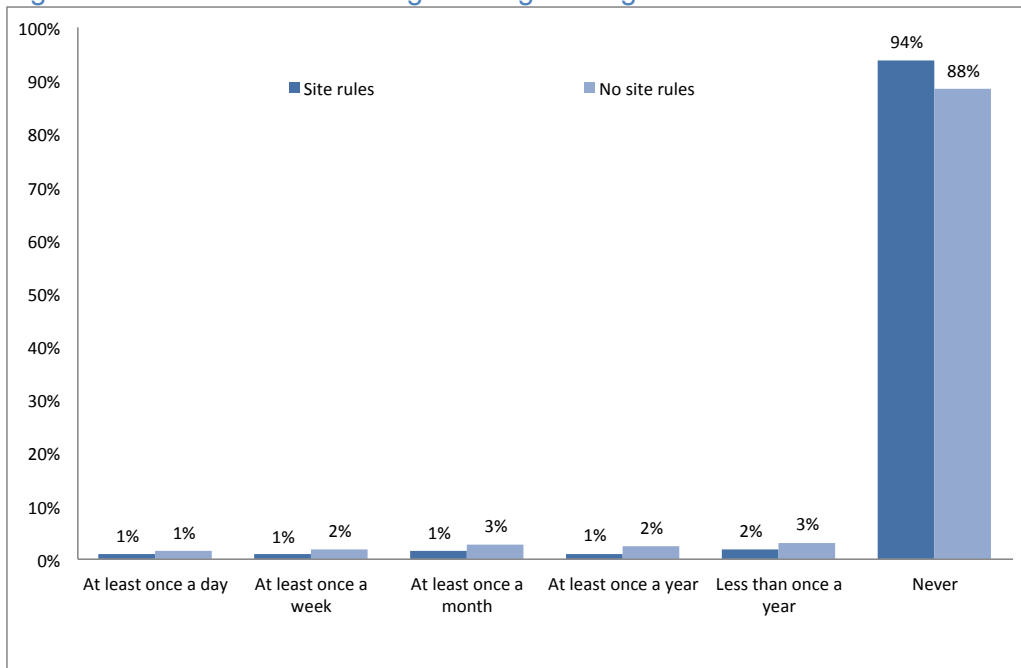


Figure 21: Site rules and looking for pornography online

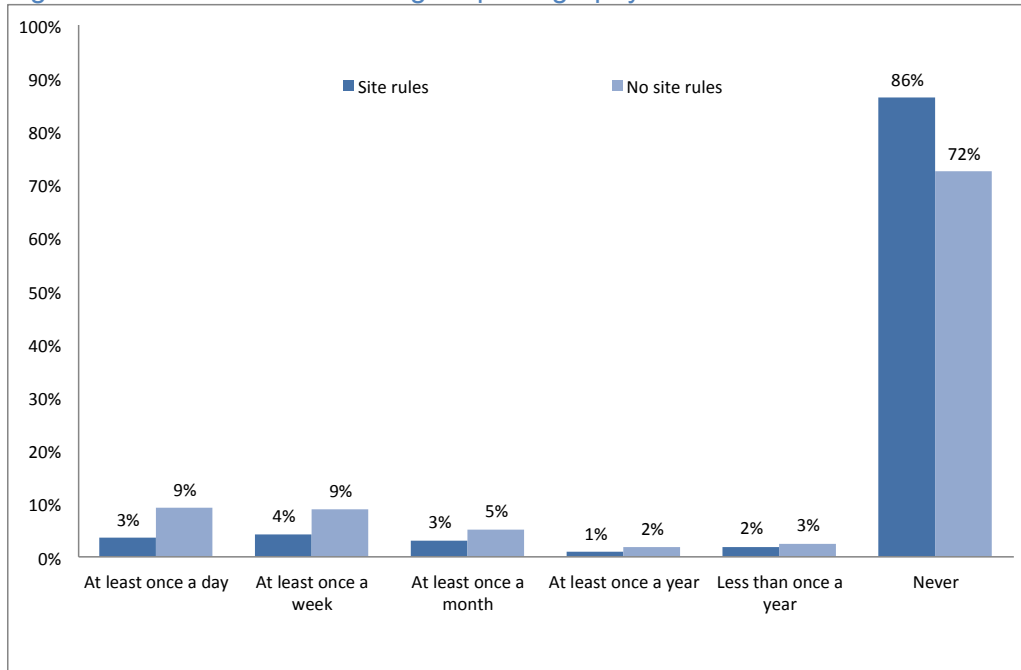
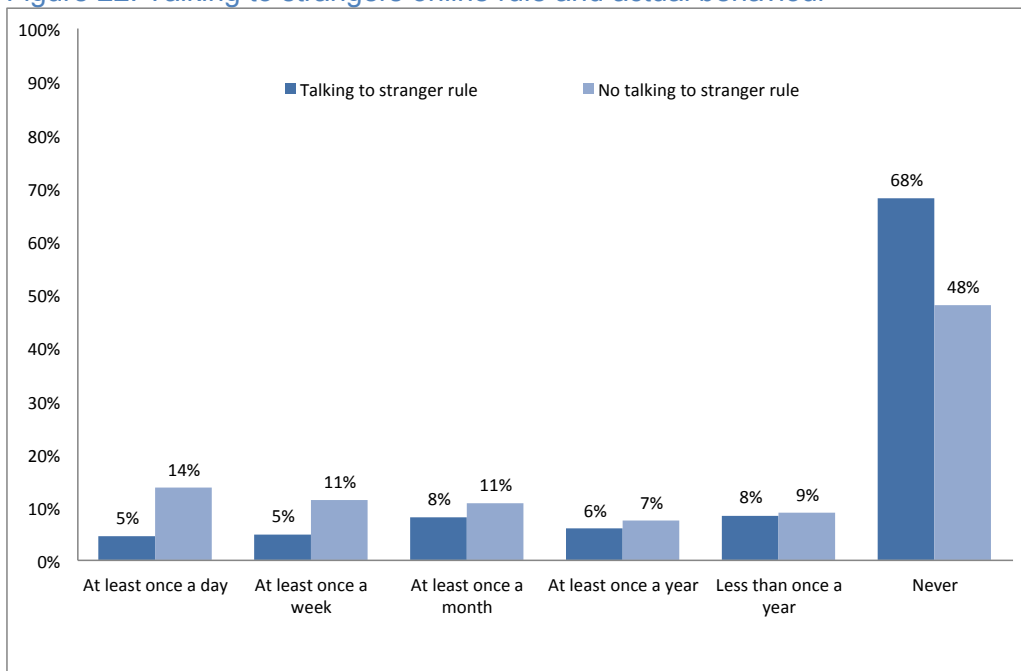


Figure 22: Talking to strangers online rule and actual behaviour





**The percentage of students who are “usually” online at home with a parent or other adult increased from 2005 to 2013, and the percentage who are “never” online at home with a parent or adult decreased from 2005 to 2013.**

While rules about Internet use have decreased in Canadian homes, the percentage of kids spending time online with a parent or other adult has actually increased slightly since 2005.

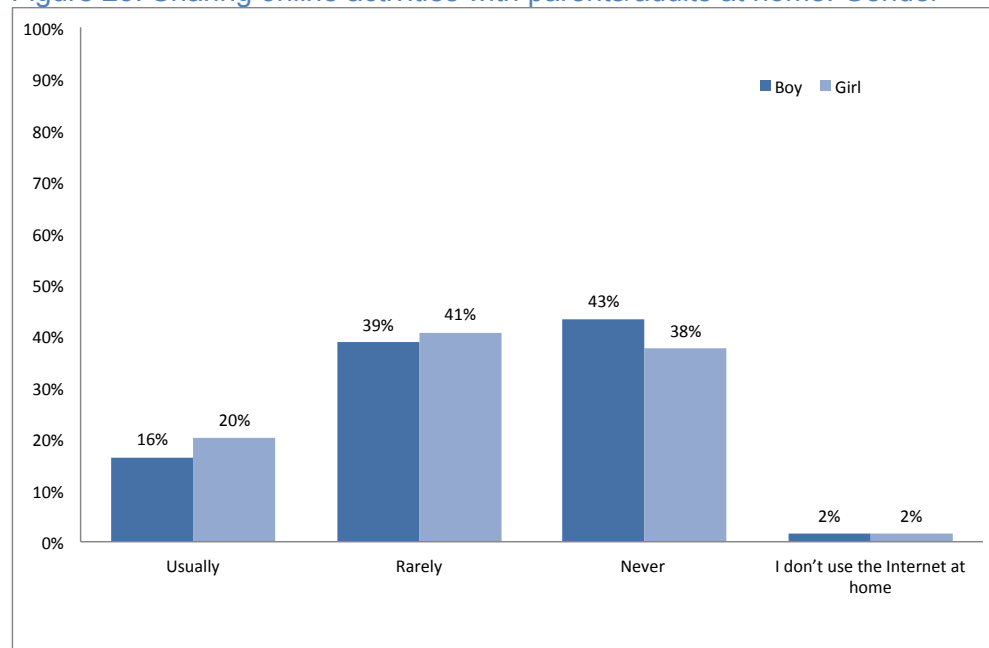
Overall, 18 percent of students say they are “usually” with a parent or other adult when they surf at home. Forty percent say they are “rarely” and 40 percent are “never” with a parent (Table 17). This contrasts with the findings of our 2001 and 2005 surveys. On average across 2001 and 2005, 10 percent were “mostly” with a parent, 38 percent were “sometimes” with a parent, and 52 percent were “never” with a parent when they were online at home.

This suggests that many students seem to be sharing their online activities with their parents.

Table 17: Sharing online activities with parents/adults at home

When you use the Internet at home, are you with a parent or other adult? <sup>Grade</sup>	Percentage in 2013
Usually	18%
Rarely	40%
Never	40%
I don't use the Internet at home	2%

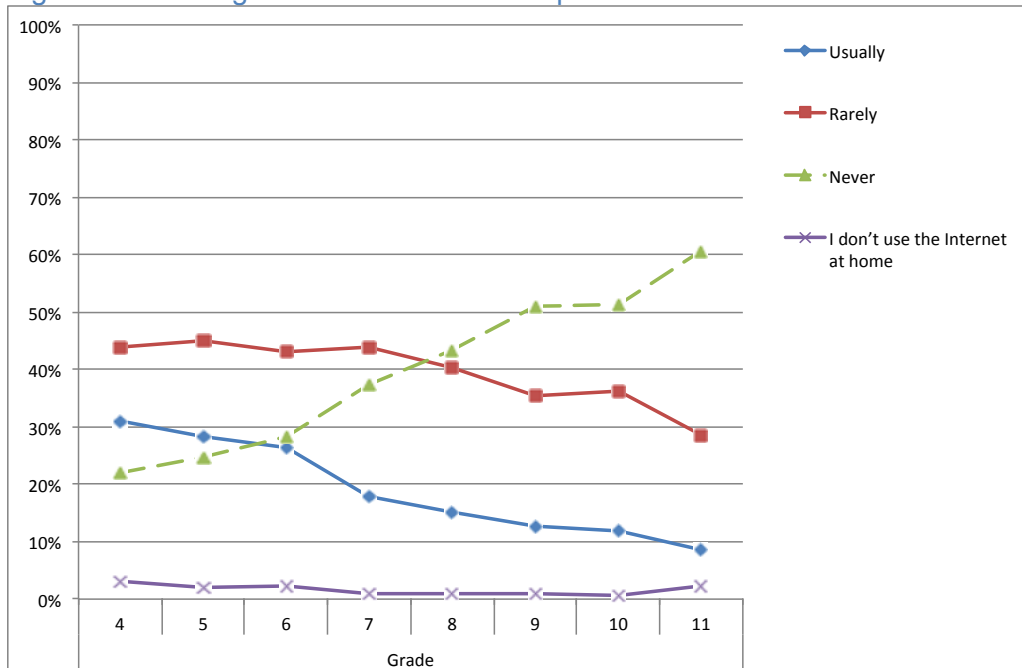
Figure 23: Sharing online activities with parents/adults at home: Gender



Not surprisingly, co-presence with a parent or other adult is much higher for younger students than for older students: 31 percent (“usually”) and 44 percent (“rarely”) for Grade 4, dropping to 9 percent (“usually”) and 29 percent (“rarely”) by Grade 11 (Figure 24).

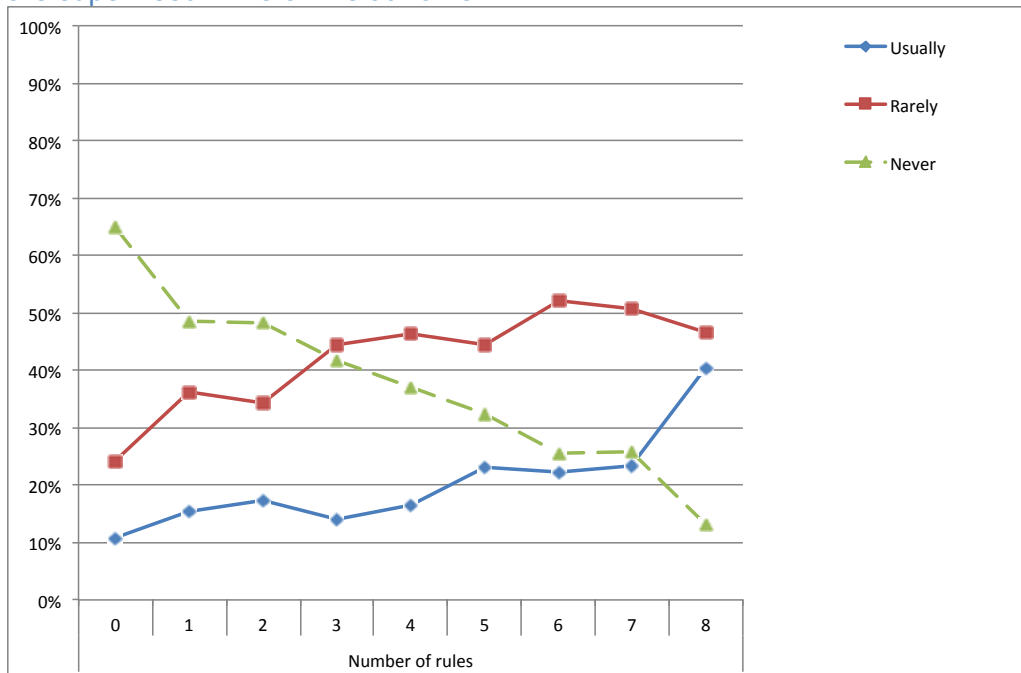
However, it is concerning that a substantial percentage of younger students “never” sit with an adult or parents when online – almost one third of students in grades 4-6. This reinforces the need for education interventions to teach children digital literacy skills so they can make wise and healthy decisions about their online activities.

Figure 24: Sharing of online activities with parents/adults: Grade



Sharing at-home online activities with parents is linked to the number of household rules (Figure 25). Students who report a lower number of household rules are more often surfing alone. Conversely, students reporting more household rules are more often surfing (either usually or rarely) with a parent present.

Figure 25: Relationship between number of household rules and percentage of students who are supervised while online at home



***The good news is that along with teachers, parents are teaching young people about online issues.***

Almost half (45%) of students of all ages report that they have learned about online issues (including authentication of online information, privacy, offensive content, cyberbullying, online safety and online legality) from their parents, compared to 41 percent who have learned this from teachers, 18 percent who have learned from friends and 19 percent who have learned from reading about the issues online (Table 18)<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> French language students in Quebec were more likely to respond that they had never learned how to search for information online (18% compared to 6% of English language students), how companies collect and use personal information online (51% compared to 33% of English language students) or how to use privacy settings (42% compared to 17% of English language students) than English language students in the rest of Canada.

Table 18: Learning about online activities

I have learned about the following activities	From my parent(s)	From teachers	From friends	From reading about it online	I have never learned about this
How to search for information online	Grade 47%	♂♀ Grade 45%	Grade 28%	♂♀ Grade 21%	8%
How to tell if online information is true	Grade 37%	♂♀ Grade 45%	Grade 15%	♂♀ Grade 17%	Grade 20%
How to use privacy settings	♂♀ Grade 41%	Grade 15%	♂♀ Grade 27%	Grade 24%	Grade 18%
How companies collect and use personal information online	Grade 35%	Grade 24%	Grade 10%	♂♀ Grade 20%	♂♀ Grade 34%
How to deal with hateful, racist or sexist online information (grades 7-11 only)	♂♀ Grade 39%	♂♀ 39%	21%	♂♀ Grade 17%	24%
How to deal with cyberbullying	♂♀ Grade 43%	♂♀ Grade 62%	Grade 15%	Grade 13%	Grade 14%
How to be safe online	♂♀ Grade 64%	♂♀ Grade 53%	Grade 14%	♂♀ Grade 16%	♂♀ 9%
How to know what is legal and illegal to do online	♂♀ Grade 58%	♂♀ Grade 42%	Grade 15%	♂♀ Grade 20%	17%
Average	45%	41%	18%	19%	18%

Parents and teachers play a primary role in helping children and teens develop digital literacy skills. Students in grades 4-6 are on average more likely to learn from parents than from teachers with respect to all issues, with the exception of cyberbullying (Table 19). This stresses the importance of providing parents as well as teachers with resources and tools to address various online issues.

Table 19: Learning about online issues from parents and teachers (Grades 4-6)

I learned about the following activities	From my parent(s)	From my teachers
How to search for information online	61%	40%
How to tell if online information is true	48%	40%
How to use privacy settings	50%	14%
How companies collect and use personal information online	39%	16%
How to deal with hateful, racist or sexist online information	44%	40%
How to deal with cyberbullying	51%	58%
How to be safe online	75%	50%
How to know what is legal and illegal to do online	70%	38%

## Unplugging

There are a number of indications that young Canadians are more plugged into online media than ever before: a virtually universal rate of access; the high penetration of social media, especially in high school; and the proliferation of portable networked devices like cell phones and tablets. The extent to which many young people feel the need to be connected at all times is perhaps best reflected in the finding that **39 percent of students who have cell phones (37% of boys and 39% of girls) sleep with their cell phone in case they get calls or messages in the night** (Table 20). The trend increases across grades to a peak at just over half (51%) of Grade 11 students, but one-fifth of all students in Grade 4 also report that they do the same thing (Figure 27).

Table 20: Sleeping with cell phone

	Percentage Yes
Do you sleep with your cell phone in case you get calls or messages in the night? <sup>Grade</sup>	39%

Figure 26: Sleeping with cell phone: Gender

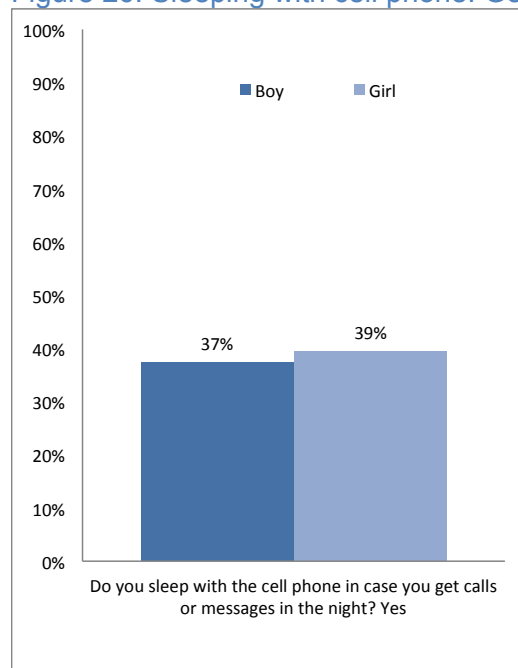
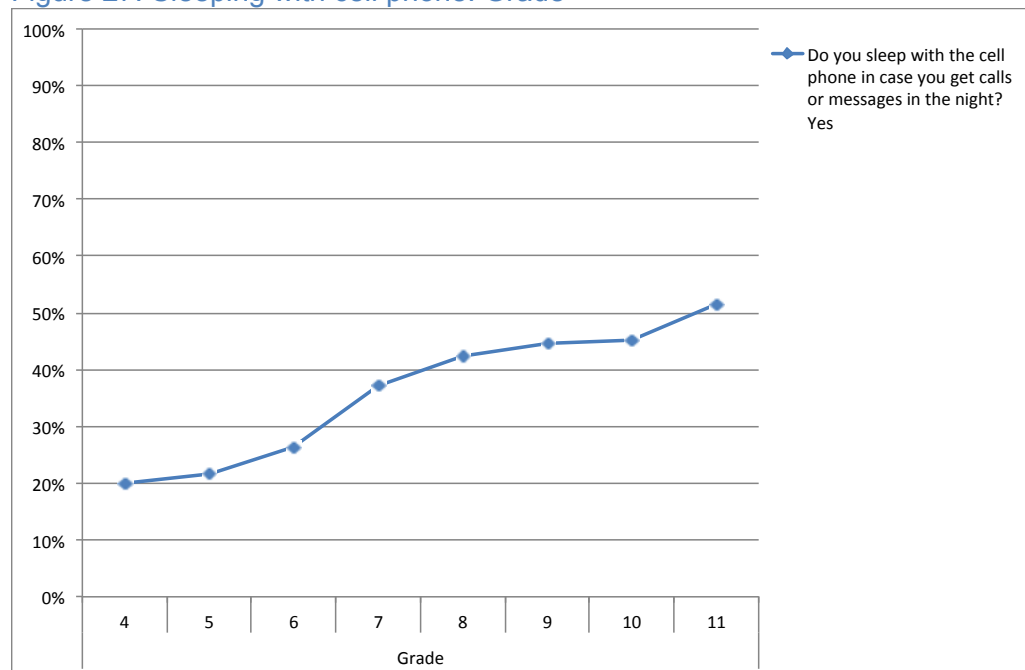


Figure 27: Sleeping with cell phone: Grade



At the same time, there are some interesting counterpoints, suggesting that young people may be less plugged in than many adults assume. For example, just over one-third (35%) of students worry that they spend too much time online (Table 21). Although girls are more likely than boys to worry about this (40% compared to 31% of boys) (Figure 28), the percentage of students as a whole is fairly consistent across the grades (Figure 29).

Table 21: Concerns over time online

Do you ever worry that you spend too much time online? ♂♀	Percentage Yes
Yes	35%
No	65%

Figure 28: Concerns over time online: Gender

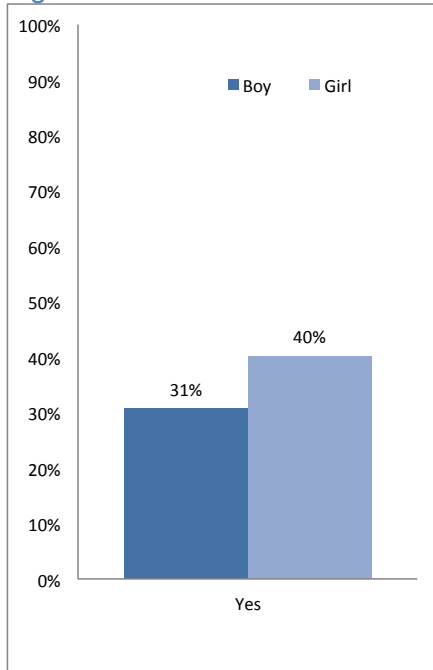
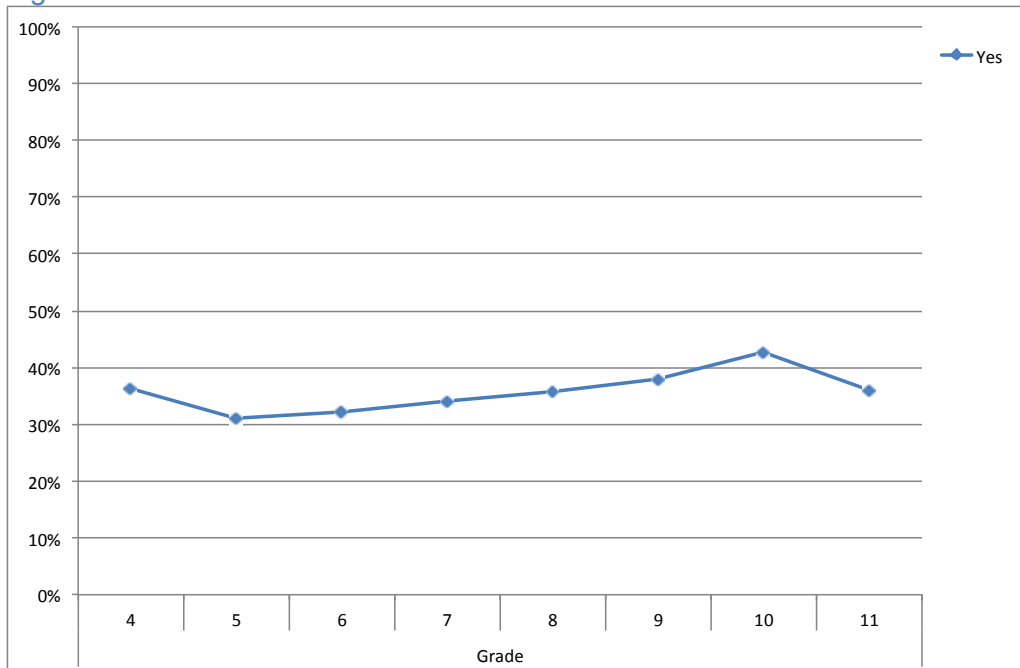


Figure 29: Concerns over time online: Grade



In addition, when asked how they would feel if they could not go online for anything other than school work for a week, just under half (49%) say they would be upset or unhappy (Table 22). English language students outside of Quebec are more likely to be upset than French language students in Quebec (51% compared to 40% of French language students). However, 46 percent

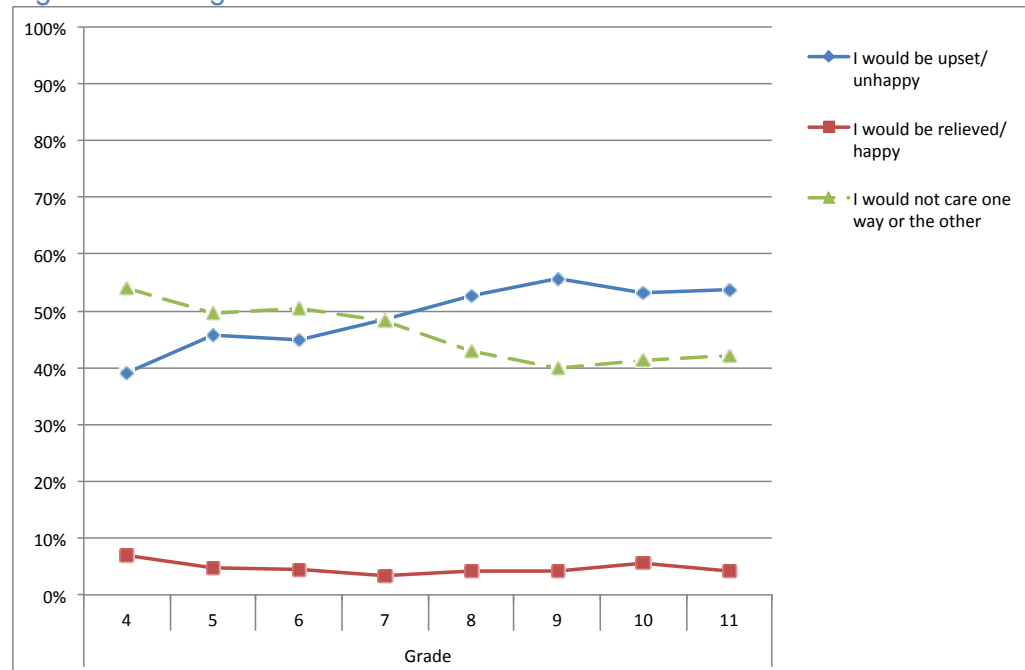


of all students indicate they would not care one way or the other and five percent report that they would be relieved or happy to go offline. Responses are practically identical between genders and students in grades 9-12 are more likely to feel upset/unhappy than students in grades 4-6 (Figure 30).

Table 22: Being offline for a week

How would you feel if you could not go online FOR ANYTHING OTHER THAN SCHOOL WORK for a week? <sup>Grade</sup>	Percentage
I would be upset/unhappy	49%
I would be relieved/happy	5%
I would not care one way or the other	46%

Figure 30: Being offline for a week: Grade



***Ninety-four percent of students choose to go offline to do other things, like spend more time with friends or family, enjoy some quiet time by themselves or go outside.***

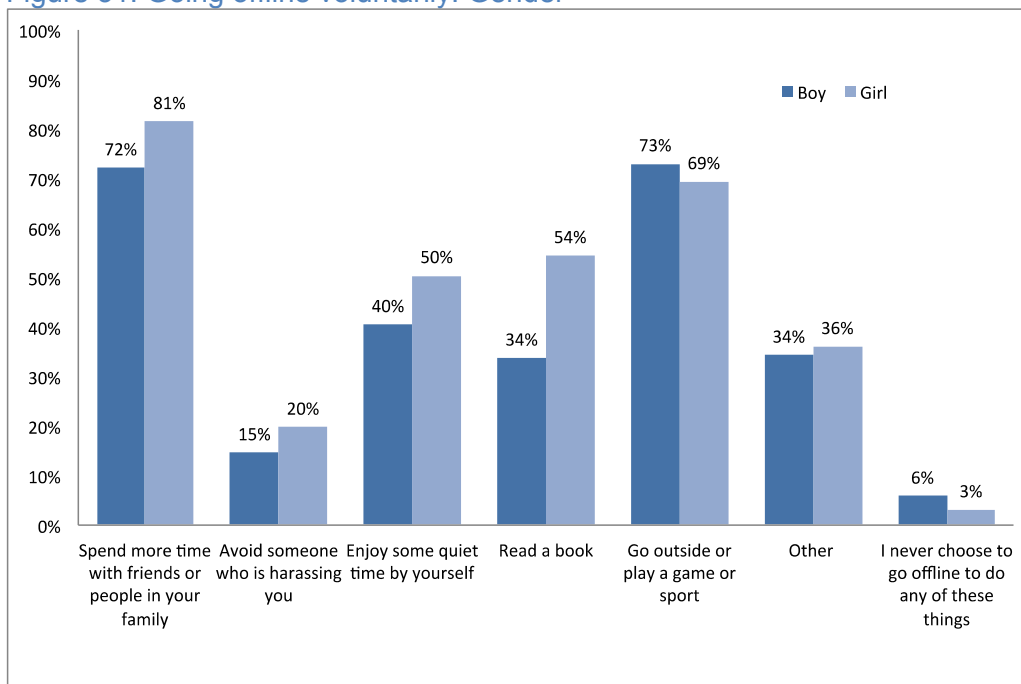
Almost all (94%) students report that they have chosen to unplug in order to enjoy other aspects of their lives, including spending more time with friends or people in their family (77%), going outside or playing a game or sport (71%) or to avoid online conflict (17%) (Table 23). More girls than boys report that they have chosen to go offline, with the exception of going offline to go outside or play a game or sport (69% compared to 73% of boys). Although students in the early

grades are more likely to go outside or read a book, students in grades 8-11 are more likely to go offline to enjoy some quiet time by themselves.<sup>11</sup>

Table 23: Going offline voluntarily

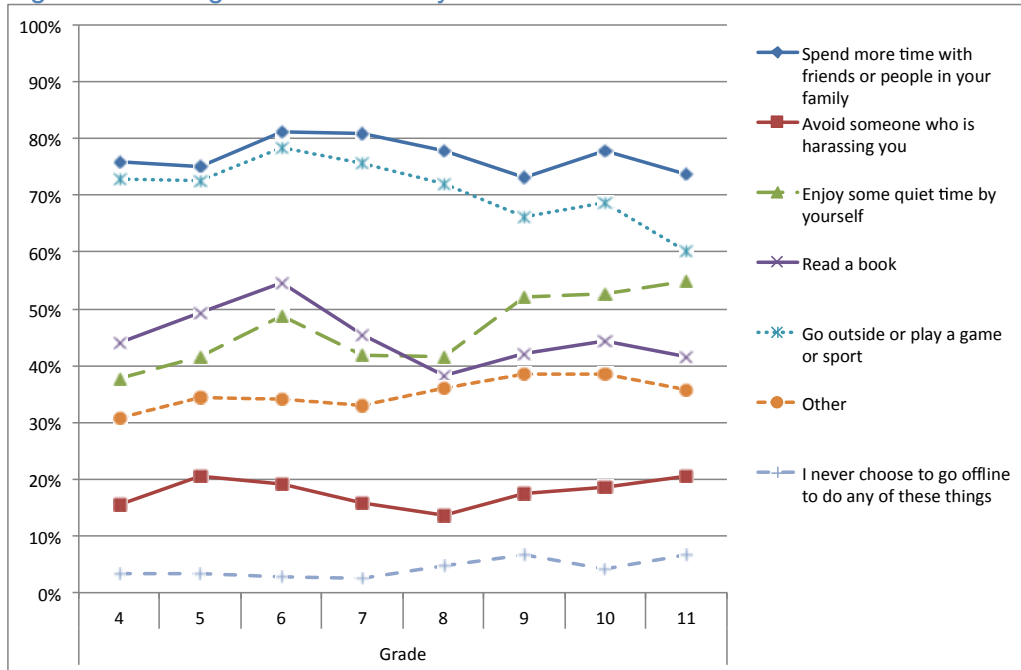
Do you ever choose to go offline so you will have more time to do any of these things?	Percentage
Spend more time with friends or people in your family ♂♀	77%
Avoid someone who is harassing you ♂♀	17%
Enjoy some quiet time by yourself ♂♀ Grade	45%
Read a book ♂♀ Grade	44%
Go outside or play a game or sport Grade	71%
Other	35%
I never choose to go offline to do any of these things ♂♀	4%

Figure 31: Going offline voluntarily: Gender



<sup>11</sup> English language students outside Quebec report in larger numbers than French language students in Quebec that they chose to go offline to enjoy quiet time by themselves (48% compared to 20% of French language students).

Figure 32: Going offline voluntarily: Grade



## Methodology

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This report is based on the findings of a survey that was administered in 2013 to 5,436 Canadian students in grades 4 through 11. The purpose of the survey was to explore the benefits and challenges children experience when they use networked devices such as computers, tablets, cell phones and iPods. The survey explored the social codes young people develop with respect to their online social interactions and their attitudes about online issues such as privacy, cyberbullying, sexting and offensive and hateful content. It also explored the ways young people use online media to support their learning (both in and out of school) and to create new content.

The survey instrument, consent documents, recruitment text, instructions and method of analysis were approved by the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board.

### ► **Recruitment**

Students were recruited through school boards and schools in all 10 provinces and three territories.

MediaSmarts contacted school boards that had participated in its 2005 survey. Additional school boards were also contacted. In total, 51 school boards (44 English and 7 French) agreed to assist in recruitment and all requisite board approvals were then obtained. In Nunavut and the Northwest Territories approval was also obtained from territorial research institutes and the school boards' district education councils.

MediaSmarts then contacted principals of schools within participating school boards. The principals of schools that had participated in the 2005 survey were asked to provide access to the same number of classes and grade levels for the 2013 survey. Principals of new schools were asked to provide access to classes with teachers who were willing and able to assist with recruitment. In total, 140 schools (126 English and 14 French) agreed to assist with recruitment. The schools included a representative selection of urban and rural and public and Catholic schools.

Principals then approached teachers and asked them to assist with student recruitment. Teachers who agreed to do so received the survey documents from Directions Evidence and Policy Research Group (*Directions*). Survey documents included: student information letters; detailed parental consent forms; instructions for teachers; and (where applicable) paper copies of the survey. Teachers distributed the student information letters and parental consent forms to students in specific classes approved by the principal. Students interested in participating were asked to take the information home to their parents. Parental consent forms for all participating students were signed and returned to the teacher by the students.

### ► *Administration of the Survey*

The survey instrument was developed by Valerie Steeves, with input from MediaSmarts and an advisory committee of experts in the field of children and technology, including Jacquelyn Burkell (Faculty of Information & Media Studies, University of Western Ontario), Wendy Craig (Department of Psychology, Queen's University), Bernard Froese-Germain (Researcher, Canadian Teachers' Federation), Sara Grimes (Faculty of Information, University of Toronto), Phillip McRae (Executive Staff Officer, Alberta Teachers' Association, University of Alberta, Faculty of Education) and Leslie Regan Shade (Faculty of Information, University of Toronto).

The survey was open from February to June of 2013. Students in grades 7 through 11 responded to 57 questions in total. However, since some of the questions dealt with age-sensitive content – including sexting, sexism, racism, romantic relationships, gambling, pornography, future employers and more complex digital tools (e.g. advanced search functions) — a shorter version of the survey without these questions was created for students in grades 4 through 6 . Accordingly, those students responded to 52 questions in total.

Students in schools where the language of instruction was English completed the survey in English. Students in schools where the language of instruction was French completed the survey in French.

The surveys were completed during class time and administered by the classroom teacher, teacher-librarian, vice-principal or the principal. Participating students either completed the survey electronically or filled out a paper version, depending on the availability of Internet access and the preference of the teacher. Students were advised that: neither the teacher nor the school would see their responses; their answers would be kept anonymous; they could skip any question they did not want to answer; and they could stop filling out the survey at any time. Surveys completed on paper were placed in an envelope and sealed in the students' presence. The envelope was then mailed to Directions by express post. Surveys completed electronically were administered by Directions using Fluidsurveys online survey software.

In total, 5,776 surveys were received in paper and electronic formats. Data cleaning left 5,436 surveys (1,721 paper and 3,715 electronic) for analysis. Some students skipped questions and/or did not complete the entire survey. Accordingly, to minimize the loss of data, the analysis was conducted on a question by question basis. The results reported are therefore based on the number of students who completed each question and not on the number of students who completed the survey as a whole.

### ► *Notes on Statistical Analysis*<sup>12</sup>

Statistical analysis was conducted by Directions and the tables and graphs included in this report were prepared by Directions.

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<sup>12</sup> The paragraphs on Chi-squared tests and on interpretive and inferential caution were written by Directions and were included with the permission of the author.

Chi-squared tests were used to identify statistically significant differences in responses by gender, grade, primary language of instruction (French, English) or affluence. To compensate for the possibility that errors may be correlated with one another in some way when making multiple comparisons from the same data set, it is often helpful to establish a more stringent significance level. Thus, instead of the commonly used significance/alpha level of .05, it is sometimes recommended that one perform a Bonferroni Correction by dividing the alpha level (.05) by the number of items being compared, therefore establishing a higher and more stringent threshold for significance. For the current analysis, for each factor of gender or grade, 400 tests were run, thus, the significance/alpha level was calculated as  $= .05/400 = 0.000125$  and applied to all of the tests.

In the results presented in this report, statistically significant differences by gender are indicated next to the question by ♀♂ and statistically significant differences by grade are indicated next to the question by <sup>Grade</sup>.

### ► **Comparing French language Students in Quebec and English language Students in the Rest of Canada**

Throughout the report, we compare the responses of French language and English language students in the sample. Because the number of students in English language schools in Quebec (124) and the number of French language students outside of Quebec (204) was very low, comparisons between students on the basis of language of instruction alone would have made statistical comparisons difficult. To explore any differences between French language students and English language students, we therefore compared the responses of students in Quebec whose primary language of instruction was French with the responses of students in the rest of Canada whose primary language of instruction was English.

There were statistically significant differences between the two groups regarding access to technologies, privacy-related behaviours, the role of adults in students' online lives, cyberbullying and racism/sexism. However, interpretative and inferential caution is warranted, because there were approximately eight times more English language students than French language students in the sample. Even though the analysis applied very stringent criteria (significance level of 0.000125), making strong inferences about the differences observed or generalizing the findings beyond the sample is not warranted.

### ► **Comparing High Affluence Students and Medium Affluence Students**

A modified version of the Family Affluence Scale<sup>13</sup> was used to measure students' socioeconomic status. The scale is widely used in research with children because it enables researchers to solicit information about socioeconomic status directly from the children themselves and the scale shows some construct validity<sup>14</sup>. Although reports in regard to

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<sup>13</sup> Currie, Candace E., Rob A. Elton, Joanna Todd and Stephen Platt. (1997). Indicators of socioeconomic status for adolescents: The WHO health behavior in school-aged survey. *Health Education Research*. 12(3), 385.

<sup>14</sup> Kehoe, Susan and Liam O'Hare. (2010). The reliability and validity of the Family Affluence Scale. *Effective Education*. 2(2), 155-164

reliability are mixed, we opted to use the scale instead of relying on postal codes as a proxy for socioeconomic status because of the number of rural schools with large catchment areas in the recruitment pool and the variability of socioeconomic status within individual Canadian schools.

The scale is based on responses to the following four questions:

1. Does your family own a car, van or truck?  
(No, we don't own a car, van or truck = 0; Yes, one car, van or truck = 1; Yes, more than one car, van or truck =2)
2. During the past 12 months, how many times did you travel away with your family?  
(Not at all = 0; Once = 1; Twice = 2; More than twice = 3)
3. How many computers does your family have?  
(None = 0; One = 1; Two = 2; More than two = 3)
4. How well off do you think your family is?  
(Very well off = 4; Quite well off = 3; Average = 2; Not very well off = 1; Not at all well off = 0)

We created a composite score for each student who responded to all four questions. The composite scores were then divided into categories of low affluence (including composite scores of 0, 1, 2 and 3), medium affluence (including composite scores of 4, 5, 6 and 7) and high affluence (including composite scores of 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12).

Only two percent of the sample fell into the low affluence category. Because the numbers of students (65) in this category was so low, statistical comparison between the low affluence group and the medium and high affluence groups was not possible. Accordingly, students on the low affluence category were not included in the analysis of socioeconomic status, and the results reported in this report are based on a comparison of the medium and high affluence groups only.

► ***Limitations: Interpretive and Inferential Caution is Recommended***

As with all survey data, readers should be cautious about the interpretations or inferences they draw from these findings. Regardless of the age of the respondents, answers from self-reports are typically less reliable than direct observation of a behaviour. All respondents manage the impression that they convey with their answers. Answers may represent what the respondent wants us to know or think about their behaviour, rather than how they actually behaved. In addition, differences in the percentage reporting behaviour between groups may reflect differences in how comfortable each group is in reporting the behaviour, rather than differences in how much each group actually engages in the behaviour.

When data are collected from different age groups in the same survey, it is tempting to want to interpret the differences in the percentages as increases or decreases from one age group to another. These data do not support such claims. The most that can be said is that a larger or smaller percentage of respondents in one or another age group said this or that. Moreover,

when there are differences between age groups it is also tempting to infer that the differences are attributable to maturity when they might simply reflect differences in the frame of reference or experiences that younger and older students have about the object of the question.

One should be cautious about comparing the findings from this survey to the findings in previous surveys for several reasons. First, technology has changed dramatically; online accessibility and content in 2013 is very different from that of 2005 or 2001. Second, in addition to the technological changes that have occurred the rapid nature of social and cultural changes occurring in the eight years since the last survey may mean that the Grade 4 students today are different from the Grade 4 students surveyed eight or 12 years ago.



## Demographics of Survey Participants

Forty-one percent of survey participants were boys and 46 percent were girls. An additional 13 percent did not report a gender. The number of students per grade ranged from 424 for Grade 11 to 745 for Grade 7.

Table 24: Demographics: Number of survey responses by gender and grade

Gender	Grade									Total
	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Not provided / other <sup>15</sup>	
Boy	226	213	271	356	322	249	304	194	96	2231 (41%)
Girl	272	296	288	368	376	252	347	229	73	2501 (46%)
Not Provided	13	12	24	21	14	17	8	1	594	704 (13%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>511</b> (9%)	<b>521</b> (10%)	<b>583</b> (11%)	<b>745</b> (14%)	<b>712</b> (13%)	<b>518</b> (10%)	<b>659</b> (12%)	<b>424</b> (8%)	<b>763</b> (14%)	<b>5436</b>

Survey participants were drawn from all 10 provinces and three territories. Eighty-six percent of students were enrolled in schools in which English was the primary language of instruction. The remaining 14 percent of students were enrolled in schools where the primary language of instruction was French. Seventy-three percent of the students enrolled in French schools were from Quebec; the remaining students enrolled in French schools were from Manitoba (20%), Ontario (3%), Prince Edward Island (2%) and New Brunswick (2%).

<sup>15</sup> 16 students from Grade 3 participated and 44 students from Grade 12 participated. This is likely because some classes are split Grade 3/4 and 11/12 and these classes participated as a whole.

Table 25: Demographics: Number of responses by language of instruction and province

Primary Language of Instruction			
	English	French	Total
British Columbia	513		513 (9%)
Alberta	560		560 (10%)
Saskatchewan	382		382 (7%)
Manitoba	171	152	323 (6%)
Ontario	1992	24	2016 (37%)
Québec	12416	557	681 (13%)
Newfoundland and Labrador	162		162 (3%)
Prince Edward Island	106	16	122 (2%)
New Brunswick	373	12	385 (7%)
Nova Scotia	180		180 (3%)
Yukon	32		32 (1%)
Northwest Territories	24		24 (<1%)
Nunavut	29		29 (1%)
Unknown	26	1	27 (<1%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>4674 (86%)</b>	<b>762 (14%)</b>	<b>5436</b>

The survey asked students to indicate what languages they spoke at home. Ninety-one percent spoke English at home and 28 percent spoke French at home. Two percent to 6 percent also reported speaking a language at home other than French or English.

<sup>16</sup> Eight students in an English language school took the survey in French as the survey was administered in their French Second Language class.

Table 26: Demographics: Languages spoken at home

What languages do you speak at home? <sup>17</sup>	% Speaking
English	91%
French	28%
Arabic	3%
Chinese (Cantonese, Mandarin, other dialect)	6%
German	3%
Greek	2%
Italian	5%
Korean	2%
Panjabi (Punjabi)	3%
Persian (Farsi)	1%
Polish	2%
Portuguese	2%
Russian	2%
Spanish	4%
Tagalog (Pilipino, Filipino)	3%
Tamil	2%
Urdu	2%
Vietnamese	2%
<b>Other</b>	<b>11%</b>

A large majority of the students who completed the survey in one of the official languages reported that they spoke that language at home (96% English and 92% French).

Table 27: Demographics: Languages spoken at home by students taking survey in English or French

What languages do you speak at home?	English survey	French survey
English	96%	57%
French	19%	92%

Students were asked a series of questions to determine their socioeconomic status based on the Family Affluence Scale<sup>18</sup>. Only two percent of the sample scored in the low affluence category. Approximately two-thirds self-reported as being high affluence.

<sup>17</sup> Twelve percent of respondents did not provide language information. In addition, some students reported an improbable number of languages spoken at home; however, these numbers were very low and these students' responses were included in the analysis.

<sup>18</sup> See [Methodology](#) for more information about the Family Affluence Scale.

Table 28: Demographics: Affluence

Affluence Level	Percent Respondents
Low	2%
Medium	32%
High	66%

Figure 33. Demographics: Frequency distribution of composite affluence scores

