

2006 Safe Steps Child Safety Poll Summary

- Who:** 625 households of Florida parents with children between the ages of 5 and 17
- When:** Interviewed by telephone June 19 – 22, 2006
- By:** Mason-Dixon Polling & Research, Inc. of Washington, D.C.
- Margin of error:** +/- 4%

Florida's Children and Internet Use...

- 84 percent of children use the Internet at home and nearly half use the Internet everyday.
- 43 percent of parents are unaware of how and when their child uses the Internet.
- 31 percent of parents allow children twelve and under to use instant messenger and email.
- 33 percent of parents allow children eight years or younger to have Internet access

What Parents do/don't do...

- 93 percent of parents say they are aware of their children's Internet activities all or most of the time, when in fact half the parents also report allowing their children to use the Internet when adults are not at home.
- 63 percent of parents recognize the family room is the best location for their children to use a computer yet 57 percent allow their children to use computers in remote areas of the house.
- 1 percent of parents believe placing computers in their children's bedroom is a good idea, yet 14 percent of parents report doing so. High traffic rooms, like the family room, offer the greatest supervision of children's activities.

Parental Gaps in Knowledge...

- More than one-third of parents, 37 percent, do not monitor their children's use of Internet chat rooms.
- More than half of parents report they are familiar with the latest chat acronyms and abbreviations.
- 47 percent admit they don't know the latest Internet codes and abbreviations and even those who think they do can't recognize frequently used codes. For instance, 85 percent of parents who believe they are familiar with chat acronyms could not correctly say what A/S/L stood for. A/S/L is a frequently used acronym for age/sex/location used in chat rooms and instant messaging conversations.

- 88 percent of parents believe their children are likely to tell them of a sexual solicitation but according to a study by the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC), only around 25 percent of solicitations are actually reported to parents.¹
- 8 percent of parents polled were aware their children had a threatening or disturbing experience on the Internet.
 - 51 percent involved exposure to obscene emails or Web sites.
 - 35 percent involved contact with someone they did not know.
 - 2 percent involved requests to meet someone they did not know.
- Nearly one third of parents polled report their children maintain an online journal, blog, or personal page on a site such as "myspace.com."
 - 66 percent of these children post photos, videos or other personal identifying information including their name, school, and town on the site.
 - Of these parents polled, one in five parents do not regularly read their children's posts on "myspace," a blog, or an online journal.

Perception of Risk...

- 45 percent of parents believe children are at greater risk of suffering harm at the hands of a predator or offender than five years ago.
- Nearly half of parents believe the risk is the same as five years ago.
- 5 percent of parents believe the risk has decreased.

Other Findings...

- Almost all the parents surveyed, (97 percent) have instructed their children on how to deal with someone they don't know (in person). 11 percent have never instructed their children on how to deal with someone they don't know on the Internet.
- 47 percent of parents believe that children are more likely to be abducted by someone they don't know than someone they know, when statistics from the U.S. Department of Justice² show children are most likely to be abducted by someone the child knows.
- During the summer time, one-third of parents cannot account for their children's whereabouts at all times. Even during the school year, 29 percent of parents cannot account for their children's whereabouts at all times.
- Of those parents who send their children to camp, nearly one-third are unsure if their children's summer camp performs background checks on employees.

For more information on the methodology of the poll, please contact Brad Coker, Executive Director, Mason-Dixon Polling and Research, Inc., at 904-261-2444 or bcoker@mason-dixon.com

¹ . Finkelhor, David, Kimberly J. Mitchell, and Janis Wolak, 2000, Online Victimization: A Report on the Nation's Youth, Pg 9, National Center for Missing & Exploited Children: Arlington, VA

² http://www.missingkids.com/missingkids/servlet/PageServlet?LanguageCountry=en_US&PageId=242