

Cyberbullying among connected teens and tweens rises 56 per cent in 12 months

Findings from McAfee study reveal that young people must re-commit to online safety

Sydney, Australia: 28 July 2014 – McAfee, part of Intel Security, has released findings from its Teens, Tweens and Technology research today, which found that 81 per cent of Australia's youth have witnessed cyberbullying – a huge increase of 56 per cent from 2013.

The annual research, which was first undertaken last year, examines the online behaviour and social networking habits of Australian tweens and teens and aims to educate on the impact that risky behaviour has on their privacy, reputation and social media experiences.

According to the research, YouTube is the number one social site across all age groups, with Facebook the most likely to be visited daily. In 2013, Skype was the most popular social website among tweens. New social media sites, such as Keek, a video-based social networking site, and Yik Yak, an anonymous messaging app, have gained quick acceptance across all age groups.

Facebook has seen a spike in underage users, with 31 per cent of 8-9 year olds and 60 per cent of 10-12 year olds admitting to having a Facebook profile, despite the legal age being 13 years old. This is a big rise from 2013, where 26 per cent of tweens were using Facebook.

Melanie Duca, APAC Consumer Marketing Director, McAfee, part of Intel Security says, "Teens and tweens are very comfortable operating in the online world, yet the risks have never been greater. Young people are often the pioneers for new technologies so they need to understand the consequences of their online behaviour."

The survey also revealed that 40 per cent of teens and tweens are experiencing cyberbullying.

"For the second year running, we have uncovered findings about how vulnerable our young people are online. While the figures on cyberbullying are confronting, we know that continued efforts to educate on cyber safety, cyber security and responsible online behaviour among this audience is critical," says Melanie.

According to long-time partner of McAfee, Life Education Australia, it's concerning that the research found that a quarter of teens and tweens don't know where to report incidences of cyberbullying.

Life Education National Program Development Manager Robyn Richardson, says, "Our bCyberwise and It's Your Call programs, which were developed in conjunction with McAfee, teach teens and tweens about how to be safe cyber citizens and how to respect others online.

"We understand that with the rise in the number of young people online, and at younger ages, cyberbullying is an unfortunate factor in online interaction. There is still a lot to be done in educating about the negative consequences for victims, witnesses and those who display bullying behaviour," Robyn continued.

"The focus of the program is prevention; teaching valuable skills that promote social and emotional development, positive relationships, self-respect and safe decision-making to help combat and minimise the risks young people are facing online," said Robyn.

The Australian government has made a significant investment to create resources to curb cyberbullying and make reporting of cyberbullying incidences more streamlined. A key initiative is the appointment of an e-Safety Commissioner, which McAfee, part of Intel Security, fully supports.

Risk vs. reward on social media

What the research also found is that the drive for attention and acceptance, as well as the growing comfort level of young people with digital media, is leading to young people letting their guard down and engaging in behaviours that place them at risk.

Half of teens and tweens say they have done or posted something risky online and one in five have tried to reinvent themselves online by creating a

fake profile (12 per cent).

Nearly half (48 per cent) have chatted online with or live tweeted someone they don't know, a jump from 19 per cent in 2013. And one in five (18 per cent) have met someone in person that they first met online.

Parenting expert, Dr Justin Coulson, says, "We know that teens and tweens are willing to sacrifice privacy and cyber safety for the gratification they feel when their social network responds positively – they weigh up risk and reward on a daily basis – and far too many are choosing to take the risk and get the reward, even if it endangers them.

"Our children may even have multiple identities on the one platform – one that is 'parent friendly', and another that parents don't know about that might feature more concerning content.

"We need to understand that kids are still posting private information online or sharing too much in order to get 'likes', and continue to educate them about the risks," concluded Dr Coulson.

Parental guidance respected, but parents are in the dark

Over eight in 10 teens and tweens say they respect guidance on personal decisions regarding social media from their parents, and nine in 10 say their parents trust them to make the right decisions online.

Most say their parents have taken steps to monitor or control their online behaviour, up 11 per cent from 2013 when 80 per cent of parents were placing controls on online activity.

However, parents are not fully across their children's online activity with 70 per cent saying their parents know only some of what they do online. Half say their parents can't keep up with the technology and 70 per cent admit to proactively hiding what they do online from their parents.

"It's heartening to know that many kids respect the advice from a parent, and that parents are trying to be more active about monitoring and restricting inappropriate content," says Alex Merton-McCann, McAfee Cybermum, and mother of four.

"But the fact that they admit their parents do not know everything they do online and proactively hide their online activity is cause for concern.

"Parents should establish an ongoing non-confrontational dialogue with their children about this topic and continue to monitor their activities. Parents also need to stay up-to-date with advancements in technology and social networking so that they increasingly speak to their children with an insider's point-of-view.

"Our aim is to keep the risks top-of-mind, educate young people about safety precautions and align with parents in their ongoing efforts to keep their children safe," says Alex.

McAfee will continue to work with partners such as Life Education Australia to educate young people and their parents on the issue of internet safety. In fact, Life Education, in conjunction with McAfee, has developed the Parent Hub, an online portal that provides accessible cyber safety advice for parents.

Other Survey Highlights:

Online fears

Younger kids mostly fear being cyberbullied online (27%), whereas teens are more fearful of losing their information (21%), being hacked (31%) and losing their privacy (23%) Parental geotracking

74% would agree to their parents receiving alerts about their location

Sibling protection

· Over a quarter (28%) of teens and tweens keep an eye on their younger siblings' social pages, and actively providing advice on what's

appropriate

Top 5 Tips for parents to help educate their kids:

1. Connect with your kids. Talk to them about the risks of being online and make sure the communication lines are always open.
2. Learn their technology. Stay one step ahead and take the time to research the various devices your kids use. You want to know more about their devices than they do.
3. Get social. Stay knowledgeable about the newest and latest social networks. Join whatever networks or sites your kids are into so you understand how it all works.
4. Reputation management. Make sure your kids are aware that anything they post online is permanent.
5. Stay calm. If your kids come to you with an online problem, it's important not to overreact. Deal with it calmly and don't threaten to take devices away, or they may not feel confident about seeking your help again.

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Quantitative Methodology

The Futures Company conducted a survey among 1,033 children and teenagers aged 8 to 17 in Australia. The survey was split evenly among age and gender. The interviews were conducted from June 16 to June 27, 2014.

About McAfee

McAfee, part of Intel Security and a wholly owned subsidiary of Intel Corporation (NASDAQ: INTC), empowers businesses, the public sector, and home users to safely experience the benefits of the Internet. The company delivers proactive and proven security solutions and services for systems, networks, and mobile devices around the world. With its visionary Security Connected strategy, innovative approach to hardware-enhanced security, and unique global threat intelligence network, McAfee is relentlessly focused on keeping its customers safe. <http://www.mcafee.com>

About Life Education Australia

Life Education, as the largest non-government provider of health education to children and young people in Australia, has been a valued partner of Australian schools for over 35 years. It has 100 plus mobile learning centres and qualified educators across the country and reaches 620,000 children nationally. A registered charity, independent of both government and religion, Life Education aims to empower children to make safe and healthy decisions. It continues to do so by expanding its national health and wellbeing program in Australia to include cyber safety content with the support of McAfee. The bCyberwise and It's Your Call modules have reached 177,000 children since launching in 2013.

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