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Parental Practices Report
Conversations on Cybersecurity

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Introduction

Parents have much to contend with; and even more so in today's digital landscape. Not only are the age-old conversations around personal safety, sex education and substance abuse a necessity, but with the amount of time children now spend online-cybersecurity is also becoming an imperative discussion point with young people. These domains hold critical significance in safeguarding both the physical and digital well-being of our children.

The *Keeper Security Parental Practices Report: Conversations on Cybersecurity* delves into parental attitudes, practices and concerns surrounding these topics, shedding light on the level of comfort and frequency parents discuss cybersecurity with their children, who they feel is most responsible for these talks and the digital platforms their children have access to.

To gather comprehensive insights, a survey was conducted by Censuswide in 2023 among a diverse group of parents, encompassing various socio-cultural backgrounds, educational levels and geographic locations including the US, UK, France and Germany. A total of 4005 responses were collected and analyzed across these regions.

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Key Findings

1 Uncomfortable Conversations for Parents

A majority (57%) of parents surveyed globally reported feeling more comfortable talking to their children about password security than sex education. However, 16% of parents expressed a higher comfort level discussing sex education and almost 1 in 5 parents (19%) stated feeling uncomfortable discussing either topic.

Almost three in ten (29%) German parents said they wouldn't be more comfortable with either topic; while in the US and UK, parents seemed the most comfortable talking about password security with 62% in both regions saying they'd be more comfortable talking to children about password security than sex education.

Globally, dads were slightly more comfortable speaking about password security than moms at 60% and 55% respectively. Though interestingly, when parents were asked who was responsible for talking to their children about cybersecurity, 56% said Mom and 52% said Dad. France had an equal split between Mom and Dad at 46% for each region. The biggest discrepancy was in the US, where 62% of parents said Mom over the 50% of parents that said Dad when it came to who was responsible for discussing cybersecurity with their children.

2 Speaking to Children About Cybersecurity

Approximately one-third (30%) of parents admitted to not having talked to their children about cybersecurity at all. Three-quarters of parents with children between the ages of 12-16 have spoken to their children about cybersecurity, while 62% of parents of children 8-11 have had the same discussions. This could potentially make younger children a bigger risk, especially considering that 44% of children have their own mobile phones and 46% have their own online gaming accounts, according to their parents.

From a regional perspective, France is the least likely to have talked to their children about cybersecurity at 34% and Germany is the most likely to have talked to their children about cybersecurity at 73%.
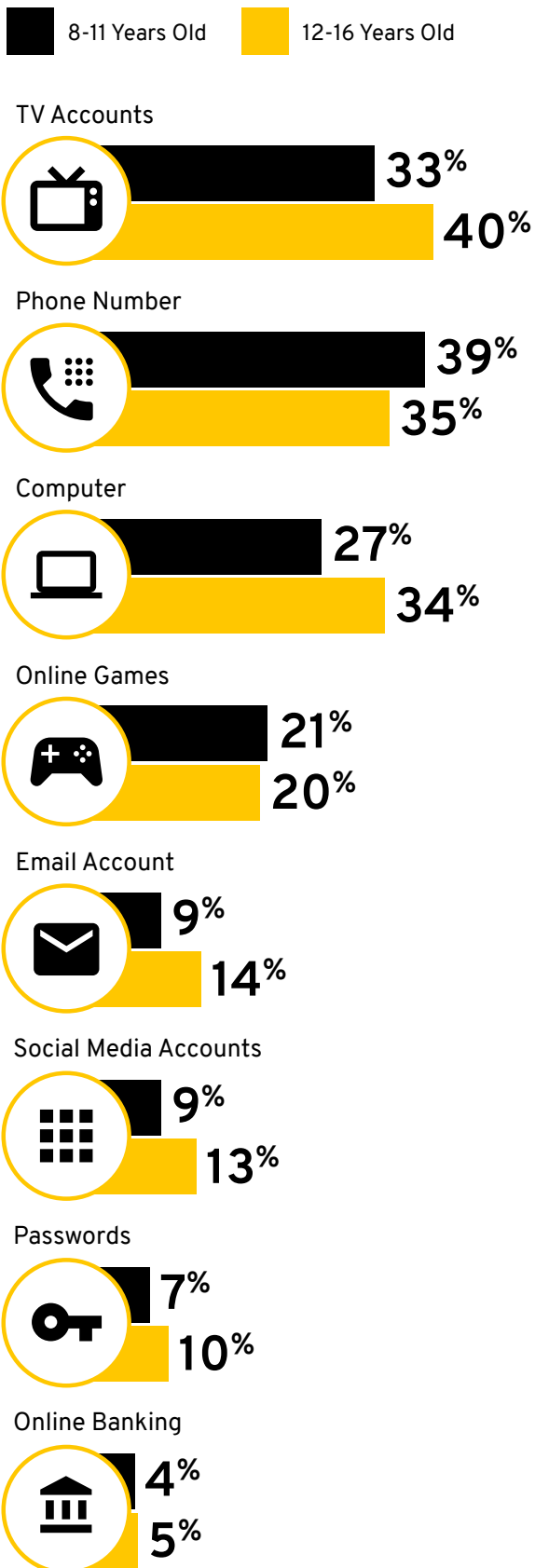
Interestingly, the UK relies the most on schools to provide education on cybersecurity, with 40% of parents saying schools take care of talking to their children about cybersecurity, while the US relies on schools the least at 21%, then Germany at 23% and France at 24%.

Somewhat worryingly, one in ten parents in France said no one was responsible for speaking to their kids about cybersecurity, with a global average of 7%; and one in twenty globally did not know if anyone was responsible for talking to their children about cybersecurity.

CYBERSECURITY?

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Parents share which of their accounts their children have access to

■ 8-11 Years Old   █ 12-16 Years Old

TV Accounts
33%
40%

Phone Number
39%
35%

Computer
27%
34%

Online Games
21%
20%

Email Account
9%
14%

Social Media Accounts
9%
13%

Passwords
7%
10%

Online Banking
4%
5%

3

Acknowledging the Password Security Knowledge Gap

Understanding how to create strong, secure passwords is a key component of personal cybersecurity, especially with so many online accounts protected with passwords, and particularly where personal information and credit card details are stored on these accounts. Overall, only 45% of parents with children 8-11 say their kids know how to create strong passwords, while 70% of those with children 12-16 said the same.
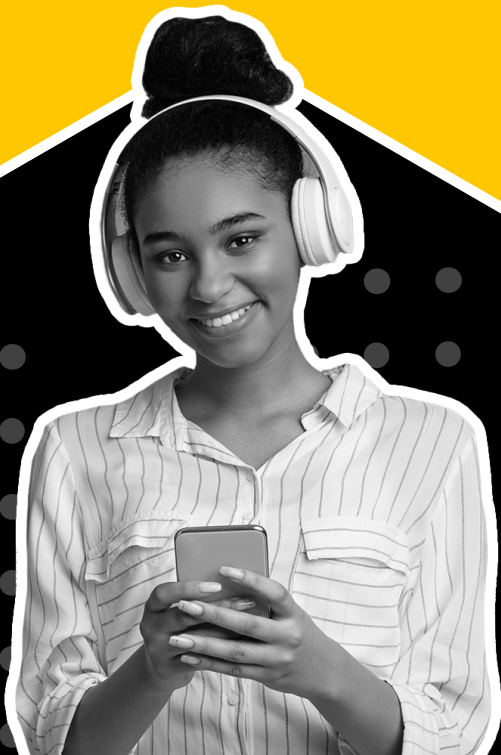
Almost half (46%) of parents of 8-11 year olds say their child does not know how to create a strong password while just over one in five parents (22%) with 12-16 year olds said the same.

US parents claimed the best understanding with 62% saying both they and their children know how to create strong passwords.
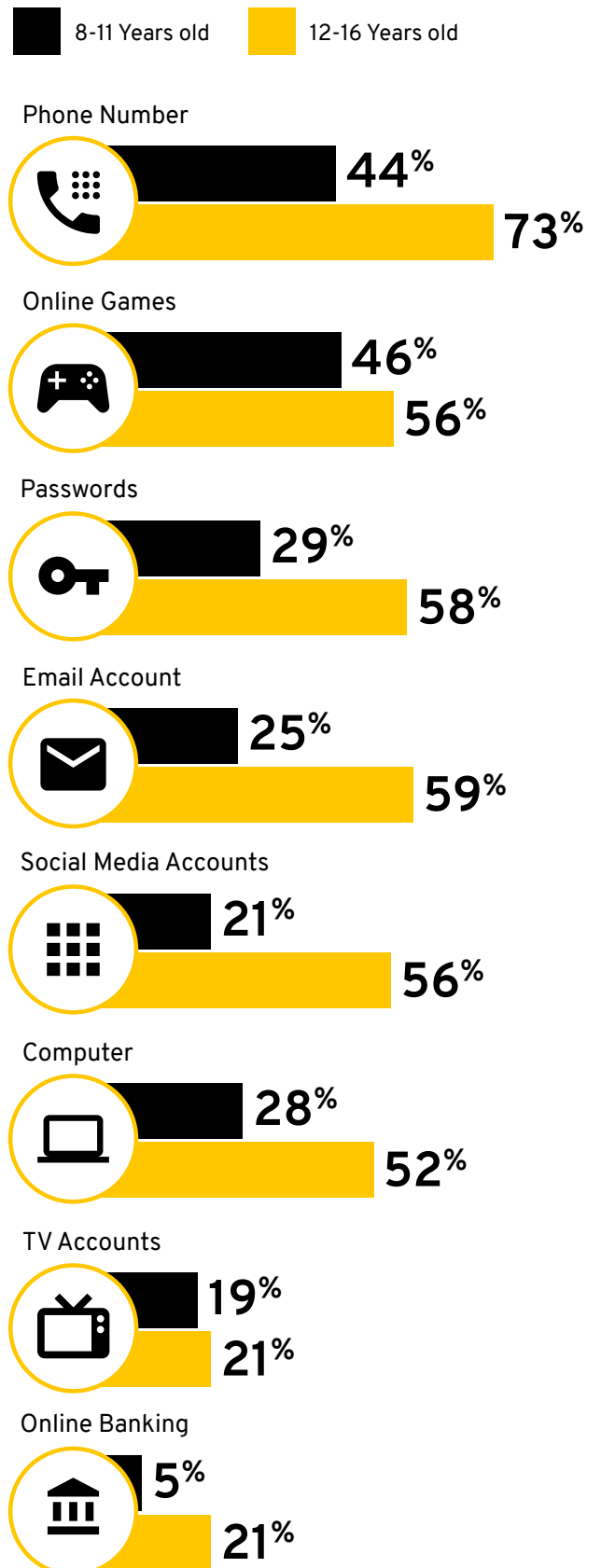
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We also compared these numbers with the parents who said they do not know how to create a strong password. Alarmingly, over two in five parents (41%) who admitted to not understanding how to create strong passwords give their child access to their mobile phones and almost a third (32%) give them access to their computers. Of the parents that admit not knowing how to create strong passwords:

- Almost **3 in 10** (29%) give their child access to their TV accounts

- Almost a **fifth** (19%) give their child access to their online games

- **1 in 7** (14%) give their child access to their email account

- Just over **1 in 8** (13%) give their child access to their social media accounts

- Just over **1 in 8** (13%) give their child access to their passwords

- **1 in 14** (7%) give their child access to their online banking

Children have access to their own accounts as well, as shown below

■ 8-11 Years old   ■ 12-16 Years old

Phone Number
44%
73%

Online Games
46%
56%

Passwords
29%
58%

Email Account
25%
59%

Social Media Accounts
21%
56%

Computer
28%
52%

TV Accounts
19%
21%

Online Banking
5%
21%

**Of the parents that said their
child does not understand how to create a secure password**

48%

Have their own phone
and their own online
gaming accounts (44%)

29%

Have their own email address
or own computer

27%

Have their own social
media accounts

18%

Have their
own TV accounts

9%

Have their own online
banking accounts

Comparing these data sets allows us to identify cybersecurity gaps that could be arising in our homes and lives, particularly as scams and fraud continue to grow.

The results also indicate a gap in discussions about cybersecurity, with nearly one-third of parents admitting to not addressing this crucial conversation with their children. This highlights the need for increased awareness and education on digital safety among parents, as well as the importance of schools playing a role in filling this gap, and perhaps, taking action at an earlier age.

Furthermore, the fact that a substantial number of parents who do not understand how to create strong passwords grant their children access to their phones, raises concerns about potential cybersecurity risks within households. This highlights the importance of parental education as well, and empowerment regarding password security practices.

Implications and Recommendations

Parental Education

Our children are growing up in a world that is more digitized and interconnected than ever before. While this brings great opportunities for learning, growth and entertainment online, the risk to our childrens' mental and physical health and wellbeing are serious, and should be a priority for all parents.

There is a need for comprehensive parental education programs that address password security, ensuring parents are equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to discuss these topics confidently with their children - before they give children access to their devices and online accounts.

Privacy Guidance

Children are faced with threats to their cybersecurity, safety, privacy and identity online. Children should never provide their personal information to people or websites without their parents' explicit permission. The old adage, "don't talk to strangers" also applies in the digital world. This extends to screen names as well. Any personal information that falls into the hands of a bad actor can be used to launch cyberattacks, steal a victim's identity, leveraged for financial gain or even lead to physical threats and attacks.

Digital Literacy Initiatives

Governments and organizations should invest in initiatives aimed at enhancing digital literacy among parents, providing resources, workshops and support to help them navigate the challenges of raising digitally-aware and responsible children.

School Involvement

Schools play a vital role in bridging the gap in cybersecurity discussions. Increased collaboration between parents and schools can help ensure that children receive appropriate education and guidance on digital safety.

Password Security Guidance

Efforts should be made to educate parents on best practices for creating strong passwords and managing access to devices, to mitigate cybersecurity risks in their households. Password managers can also help decrease risks and increase cybersecurity for the entire family.

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Conclusion

Cybersecurity best practices must be taught and enforced starting at an early age. Children should learn how to create strong and unique passwords for each of their online accounts, store them in an encrypted password manager and never share them with others. Just as businesses must educate and train their employees, basic cybersecurity tips such as "think before you click" should also be regularly discussed with children. Just one risky click can lead to a dangerous spoofed website that can harvest your credentials or download malware onto your device.

Safety and well-being must be front-and-center for both children and parents alike. Children should be encouraged to report bullying, be skeptical about friends they meet online, limit exposure to content that is not age-appropriate and keep tabs on daily screen time. Tools are available that can help parents control their kids' access to inappropriate content and limit the amount of time children spend on devices. Our best advice? Take an active role in your child's online experience. An open dialogue with your child will help foster a safer and healthier future on the internet.