

Child Identity Theft: A Parenting Blind Spot

A study of parental awareness and response to the growing issue of child identity theft

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SUMMARY

Warnings about adult identity theft are commonplace, and protection and monitoring tools are in use every day. But increasingly, thieves have a different target in their crosshairs: our children. Most children's Social Security numbers and personal information remain unused until they turn 18, leaving years for thieves to do serious damage. In fact, a recent report from Carnegie Mellon's CyLab revealed that the rate of identity theft for children is 51 times higher than the rate for adults.

Ripening the opportunity for hackers, more and more children are online, leaving trails of personal information that could provide the opportunity for identity theft. So what about Mom and Dad? Do they know this? Are they doing something to prevent it? What can be done?

CSID, a part of Experian, enlisted the help of research firm Research Now to conduct a survey of 1,062 parents about their awareness, concern and actions surrounding child identity theft and their kids' online activity.

The survey revealed that more than half of parents are aware that child identity theft is a growing issue, and more than three-fourths are concerned that their child's identity might be stolen. However, the results revealed that even though parents are aware and concerned about this issue, more than half are not currently taking measures to prevent misuse of their child's information.

Additionally, of parents who reported concern about their child's online information being misused, 82 percent did not list identity theft as the risk that most concerns them, instead identifying that information they share could lead to their child's physical whereabouts and their photos could be altered or misused, among other risks. This response suggests that although parents are aware that child identity theft is an issue, it is low on a long list of items that concern them.

The results do demonstrate willingness to take action, with 88 percent of parents who aren't currently taking preventative measures reporting they would be willing to do so. In fact, a large majority (93 percent) stated that they support local governments making regulations to protect children's online activity and identity information,

and 79 percent feel positively about programs that allow parents to freeze their child's credit until they are ready to use it.

Child identity theft can impact families and businesses. While families can be left with large amounts of debt to clear from a child's name, it also poses the risk of personal information being exposed, leaving the entire family vulnerable.

Even though parents are aware and concerned about this issue, more than half are not currently taking measures to prevent misuse of their child's information.

Parents' knowledge of the potential of child identity theft and their willingness to take measures to protect against it provide a clear opportunity for education on action items parents can take. Similarly, it provides an opportunity for businesses to provide services that will help parents protect their child's identity.

This report outlines CSID's survey results, providing a glimpse into how parents feel about child identity theft, and presents recommendations about how parents can protect their children against this growing trend and how businesses can provide parents with the tools they need to do so.

KEY FINDINGS



87%

of parents are involved in monitoring their child's online activity

56%

of parents are aware that child identity theft is a growing trend

76%

of parents are concerned that their child's identity might be stolen

52%

of parents are not currently taking measures to prevent the misuse of their child's online information

88%

of parents who are not currently taking measures to prevent the misuse of their child's information would be willing to do so

14%

of parents who are currently taking preventative measures are using a monitoring service to watch for fraudulent activity

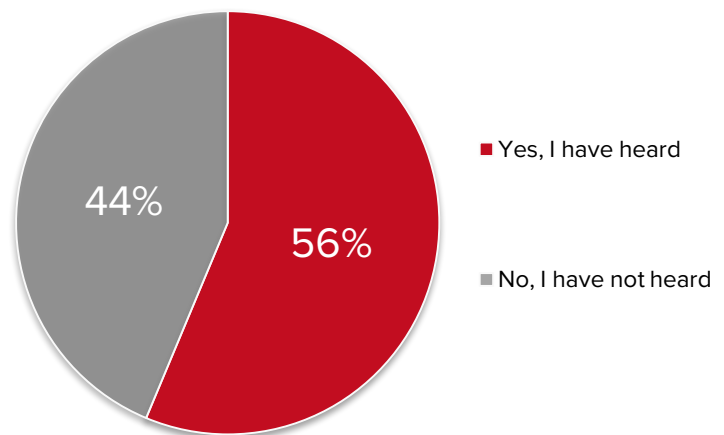
GRAPHS & CHARTS

AWARENESS

MORE THAN HALF OF PARENTS ARE AWARE THAT CHILD IDENTITY THEFT IS A GROWING ISSUE.

56% of respondents have heard that child identity theft is a growing issue.

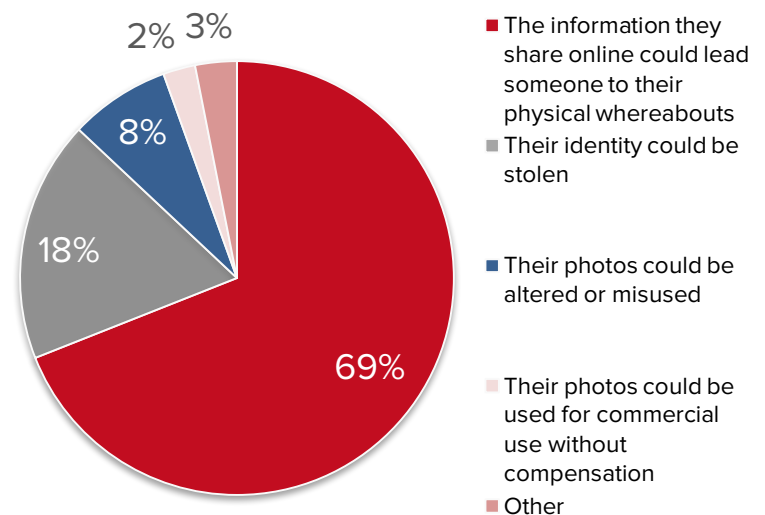
PARENTS WHO HAVE HEARD VS. HAVE NOT HEARD THAT CHILD ID THEFT IS A GROWING ISSUE



MOST PARENTS DISREGARD CHILD IDENTITY THEFT AS A MAIN CONCERN OF MISUSE OF THEIR CHILD'S ONLINE INFORMATION.

Of respondents who are concerned about their child's online information being misused, only 18% are concerned that the misuse might result in identity theft. The top concern of parents, representing 69% of respondents, is that the information their child shares online could lead to someone finding their physical whereabouts.

MAIN CONCERNS OF PARENTS WHO ARE WARY OF CHILD'S ONLINE INFO BEING MISUSED

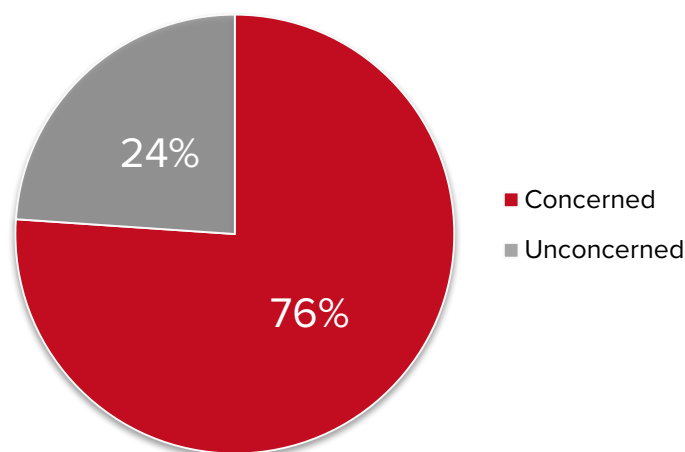


CONCERN

THREE IN FOUR PARENTS ARE CONCERNED THAT THEIR CHILD'S IDENTITY COULD BE STOLEN.

76% of respondents report having concern that their child's identity could be stolen.

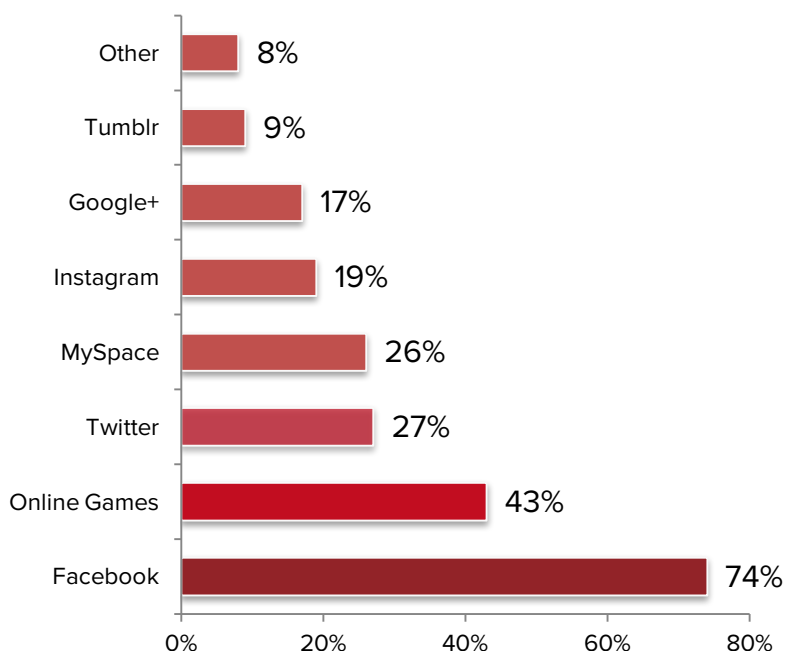
PARENTS WHO ARE CONCERNED VS. UNCONCERNED THAT THEIR CHILD'S ID COULD BE STOLEN



PARENTS CHOOSE FACEBOOK AS THE WEBSITE WITH THE HIGHEST RISK FOR CHILD IDENTITY THEFT.

74% of respondents regard Facebook as the website that puts their child at the highest risk for identity theft, followed by online gaming sites (43%), Twitter (27%) and MySpace (26%).

WEBSITES VS. PARENTS' CONCERN FOR RISK OF CHILD IDENTITY THEFT

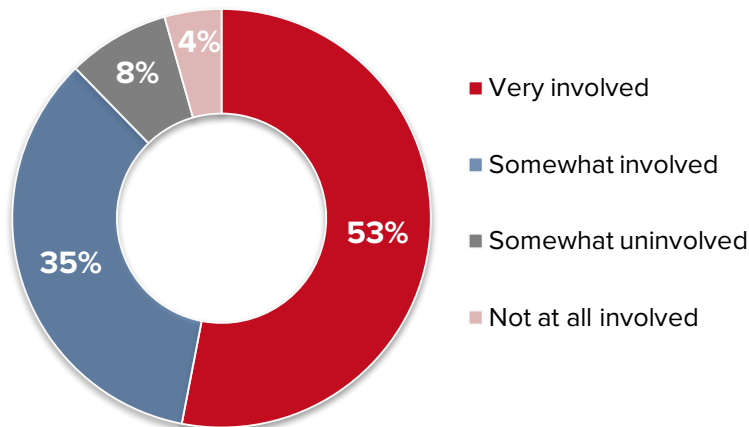


INVOLVEMENT

NEARLY 9 IN 10 PARENTS MONITOR THEIR CHILD'S ONLINE ACTIVITY.

88% of respondents report being involved—either somewhat or very—in monitoring their child's online activity.

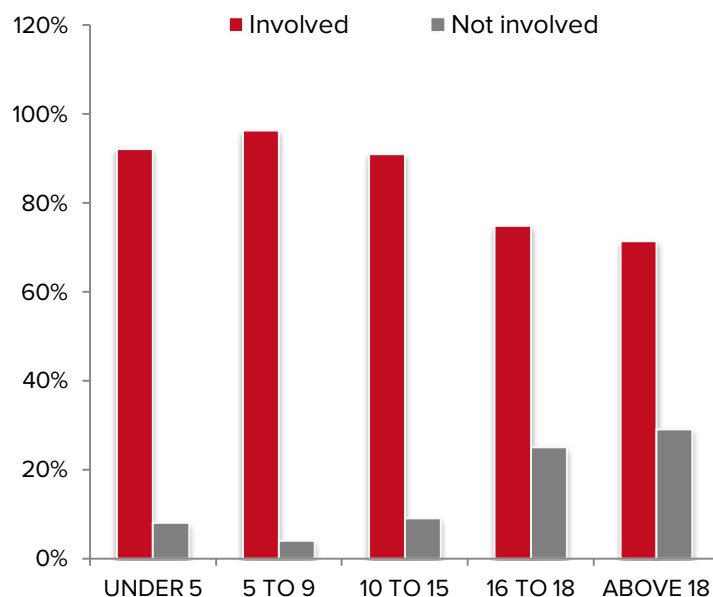
PARENTS' LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT IN MONITORING THEIR CHILD'S ONLINE ACTIVITIES



MANY PARENTS STOP MONITORING THEIR CHILD'S ONLINE ACTIVITY WHEN THE CHILD REACHES 16.

Of respondents who monitor their children's online activity, more than 90% do so when the child is 15 and under, while only 75% do so when the child is 16 to 18, and only 71% do so when the child is older than 18.

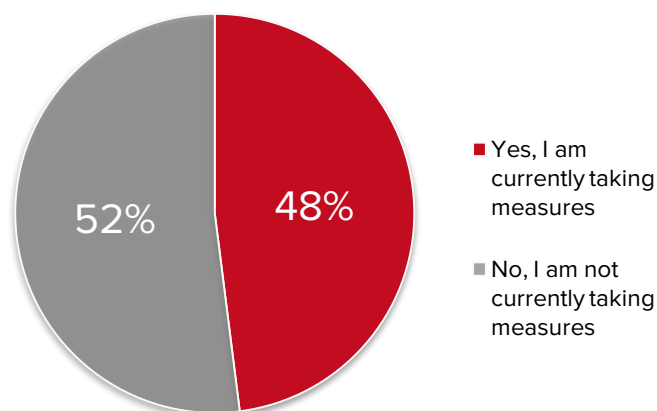
PARENTS WHO MONITOR CHILDREN'S ONLINE ACTIVITY VS. AGE OF CHILDREN



HALF OF PARENTS ARE NOT TAKING ACTIVE MEASURES TO PREVENT THE MISUSE OF THEIR CHILD'S INFORMATION.

52% of respondents are not currently taking measures to prevent the misuse of their child's online information.

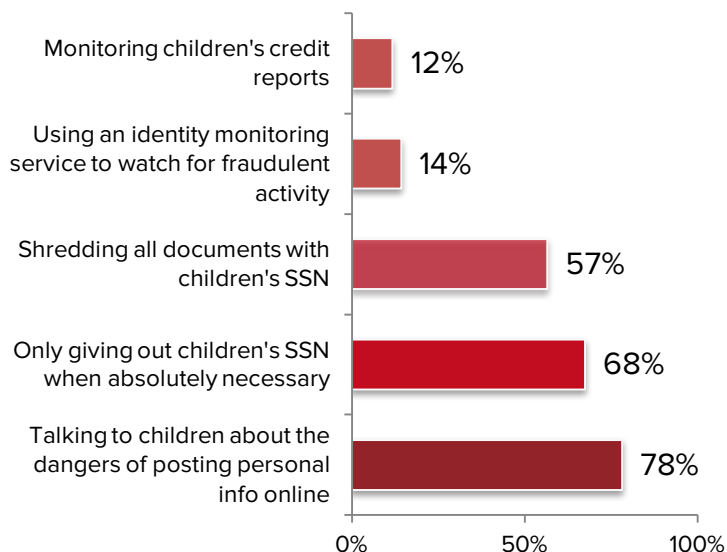
PARENTS WHO ARE VS. ARE NOT TAKING MEASURES TO PREVENT MISUSE OF CHILD'S INFO



OF PARENTS WHO ARE TAKING ACTION, MOST DON'T EMPLOY A MONITORING SERVICE TO HELP THEM.

78% of respondents who are taking measures to prevent misuse of their child's information are doing so simply by talking to their children about the dangers of posting personal information online. Only 12% are looking at their child's credit reports and only 14% are using an identity monitoring service.

PERCENTAGE OF ACTIVE PARENTS VS. THE MEASURES THAT THEY ARE TAKING TO COMBAT MISUSE OF CHILD INFO

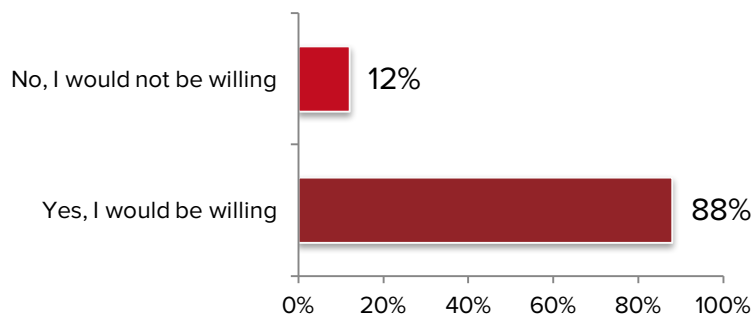


ACTION

NEARLY 9 IN 10 PARENTS WHO ARE NOT CURRENTLY TAKING ACTION ARE WILLING TO DO SO.

88% of respondents who are not currently taking preventative measures to protect their children's information and identities admit to be willing to do so.

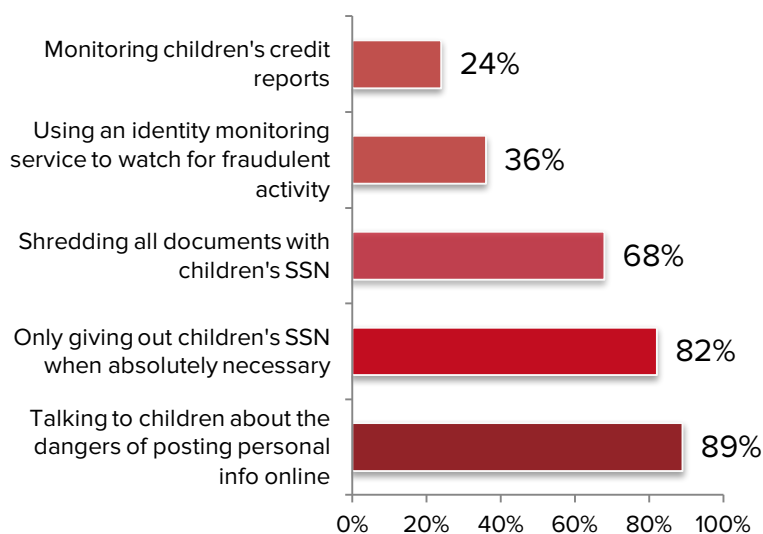
PERCENT OF PARENTS WHO ARE NOT CURRENTLY TAKING PREVENTATIVE MEASURES VS. WILLINGNESS TO DO SO



PARENTS WHO ARE WILLING TO TAKE ACTION ARE MOST LIKELY TO START AROUND THE DINNER TABLE.

89% of the respondents mentioned above—those who are not currently taking preventative measures but would be willing to do so—say that they would be most likely to talk to children about risks and dangers of posting information online, followed by more restrictive distribution of the child's Social Security number (SSN) (82%).

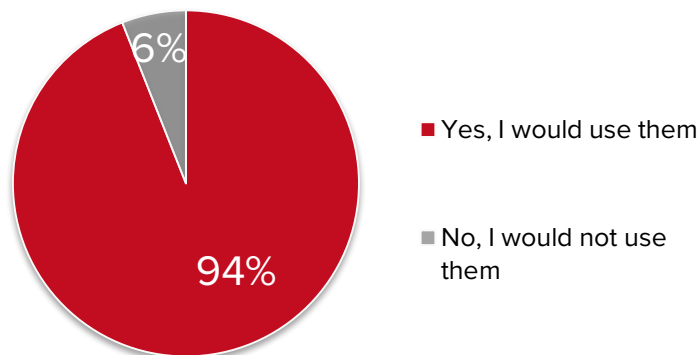
TYPES OF PREVENTATIVE MEASURES VS. PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS WHO WOULD BE WILLING TO ADOPT THE MEASURE



NEARLY ALL PARENTS WOULD SUPPORT GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS TO PROTECT CHILDREN'S IDENTITIES.

94% of respondents say they would use local and state government programs to protection children's online activity and identity information.

PARENTS WHO WOULD USE LOCAL/STATE GOVERNMENT ID PROTECTION PROGRAMS VS. PARENTS WHO WOULD NOT



TAKEAWAYS

This survey reveals that although parents are aware that child identity theft is a growing issue and are willing to take action against it, over half are not currently doing so, creating an opportunity for further education for parents. Additionally, of the parents who are currently taking preventative measures, only 14 percent are using a monitoring service, potentially leaving their children's accounts unchecked until adulthood when they need to use them.

Also, parents are most concerned about Facebook being a high-risk source for identity theft, but reports are surfacing that children ages 13 to 18 use Tumblr more than Facebook, and nearly twice as many teens use Instagram than adults. Only 19 percent of parents are concerned about the safety of Instagram, and 9 percent are concerned about Tumblr.

Finally, the actions that parents are taking and would be willing to take as preventative measures could leave holes. Most are either currently talking or would be willing to talk to their children about the dangers of posting personal information online (88 percent), but fewer are relying on monitoring services (36 percent) to watch for potentially dangerous activity.

But the issue of child identity theft doesn't end in the home. Businesses should take note of this alarming trend and can be a part of the solution by offering monitoring and protection tools to consumers. The willingness of parents to take action, demonstrated in CSID's survey results, provides an opportunity for businesses to help them take the first steps in protecting their family.

To provide solutions and resources to parents and businesses, CSID presented a webinar titled "Child Identity Theft: A Parenting Blind Spot." To view a recording of the webinar, visit www.csid.com/securechildid.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

FOR PARENTS

- **DO** talk to your children about the dangers that lurk online, and what could happen if their personal information is compromised.
- **DO** ask questions every time someone requests your child's personal information. Ask what it will be used for, why it is needed and how it will be guarded.
- **DO** use monitoring and identity protection services to keep an extra eye on your kids' online activity.
- **DO** continue talking to your children about what they are doing online as technologies and popular platforms shift. A hot new app may be revealing more of your child's personal information than you'd like.
- **DO** help your children to create complex passwords consisting of a mix of letters, numbers and symbols.

HOW BUSINESSES CAN HELP

- **DO** offer monitoring services that give parents the ability to monitor credit information, Social Security numbers and social activity for their children.
- **DO** extend social monitoring services to parents as what parents post online can put their children at risk.
- **DO** offer a free child check for parents to drive awareness and interest in ongoing monitoring.
- **DO** include mobile devices in your monitoring services. Phones, gaming devices and apps—children use these to share information and communicate.

METHODOLOGY

CSID and digital data collection firm Research Now teamed up to survey a demographically representative sample of 1,048 U.S. adults (age 18 and above) from the Research Now Consumer Panel. The sample framework is balanced based on U.S. Census data for age, ethnicity, gender, region and income. The survey also collected demographic data for education level.

ABOUT CSID

CSID, a part of Experian, is a leading provider of global identity protection and fraud detection technologies for businesses, their employees, and consumers. With CSID's enterprise-level solutions, businesses can take a proactive approach to protecting the identities of their consumers all around the world. CSID's comprehensive identity protection services extend beyond credit monitoring to include a full suite of identity monitoring and fraud detection services; identity theft insurance provided under policies issued to CSID; full-service restoration services; and proactive data breach services.

www.csid.com

ABOUT RESEARCH NOW

Research Now, the leading digital data collection provider, powers market research insights. They enable companies to listen to and interact with the world's consumers and business professionals through online panels, as well as mobile, digital and social media technologies. Their team operates in 24 offices globally and is recognized as the market research industry's leader in client satisfaction. They foster a socially responsible culture by empowering our employees to give back.

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