

A photograph of a woman with reddish-brown hair sitting on a brown sofa. She is holding a baby in her left arm and a young child is sitting next to her, holding a tablet. The scene is dimly lit, suggesting an evening or indoor lighting.

Parenting & Tech Report

The prevalence of tech in our homes is at an all time high. According to the Childwise Monitor Report for 2018, the percentage of children aged 11+ who own mobile phones has reached 91%, while according to the BBC, half of children aged 11 and 12 have social media profiles - in spite of the 13 year age minimum across most.

Of course, having access to technology is not necessarily a good or a bad thing and, in many ways, depend on how it's used.

In a survey of 805 UK based parents, we explored a range of topics relating to parenting and technology, including:

- How much time children spend with screens on an average weekday
- Frequency of arguments relating to media usage between parents and children
- Use of technology as a shared activity
- Most popular social media channels amongst parents

- Opinions on use of photography on social media
- Worries parents have about social media use

This report documents the questions asked of our respondents, and their answers. It also provides expert commentary to give context to responses, making their insights valuable to real life application.

Furthermore, it highlights just how much opinions vary when it comes to parenting. For anyone out there with a child or children, we're sure you'll agree... there's no right or wrong, and we're all just doing our best.

SECTION 1

Screen time

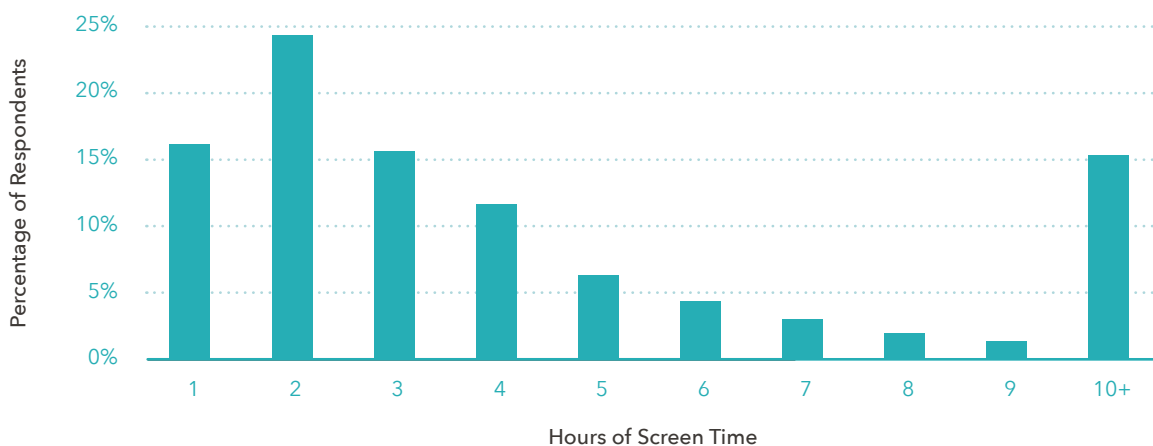
How much time does your child spend with screens on an average weekday?

It's certainly not uncommon for children to spend time watching TV, playing video games or interacting with a smartphone in their evenings. But exactly how much of their average weekday evenings are our children spending with screens? We asked our survey respondents just that. Here's what they told us:

"Children very much need social interaction in order to learn and grow and it could be that their development is being hindered with such prolonged use of screens."

— Alexandra Kremer, Birth and Parenting Coach

How much time does your child spend with screens on an average weekday?



2

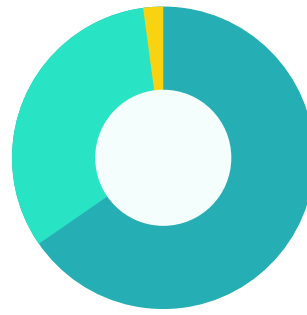
The majority of children were spending two hours of their weekday evenings with a screen.

10

In 15% of cases, children were spending 10 or more hours with screens on an average weekday.

How comfortable are you with the amount of time your child/ren spend using these devices on weekdays?

When asked how comfortable they were with their children's screen usage, the majority of parents told us they were fine with the time spent.



- I am fine with the amount of time he/she spends on screens on average.
- He/she should spend less time with them
- He/she should spend more time with them

"With technology being a major part of modern life many parents worry about this. But it is about moderation."

— Laura Jones MPharmS, Clinical Lead, Assured Pharmacy

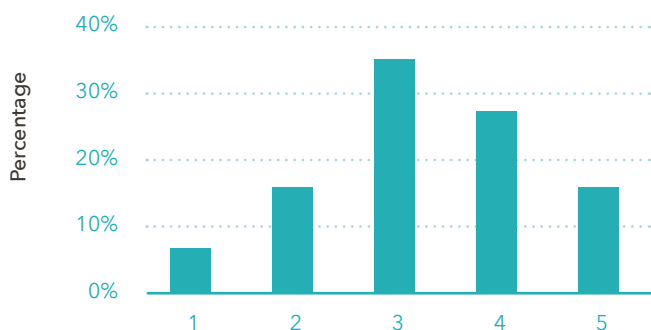
33%

of parents felt their children should spend less time with their screens.

2%

felt their children should have more screen time.

Having access to media (videos, games, social media) via portable devices impact on our quality family time (1 - totally disagree, 5 - totally agree)



When asked whether they felt access to media impacted on their quality family time:

43%

agreed that it had an impact

22%

felt it had little to no impact.

"Technology is a powerful tool and by the time our children grow up, robotics and artificial intelligence will play an active part in many aspects of life. It is important that we teach our children now how to make decisions about when to use technology, not just to binge."

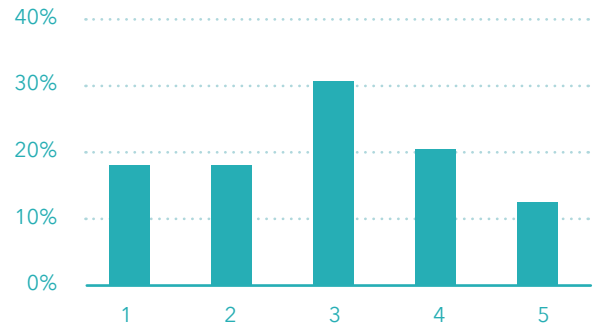
— Richard Curtis, Author of A Parent's Guide to The Modern World

The frequency of media usage is something we argue about a lot (1 - totally disagree, 5 - totally agree)

We asked our respondents how much they argue about the use of media with their children:

"This can be a problem especially with older children who want to keep up with peers. Clear guidelines should be set and time limits. This allows compromise rather than complete bans."

— Laura Jones MPharmS, Clinical Lead, Assured Pharmacy



32%

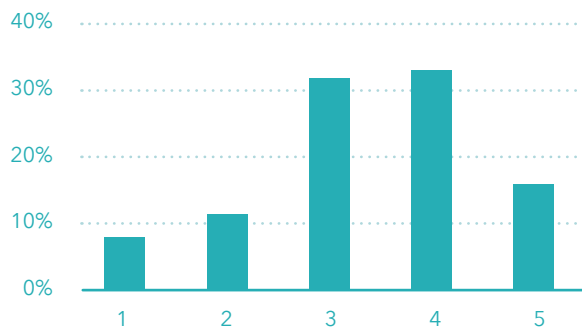
said it was something they argued about a lot.

37%

said they did not argue a lot about it.

Watching videos and playing online or video games are activities we enjoy together

We asked our respondents whether screen time played a part in the activities they enjoyed together as a family.



47%

said they enjoy these activities as a family.

19%

said they didn't enjoy these activities as a family.

TV, tablets or smartphones are good ways to keep the children entertained when I cannot focus on them (1 - totally disagree, 5 - totally agree)

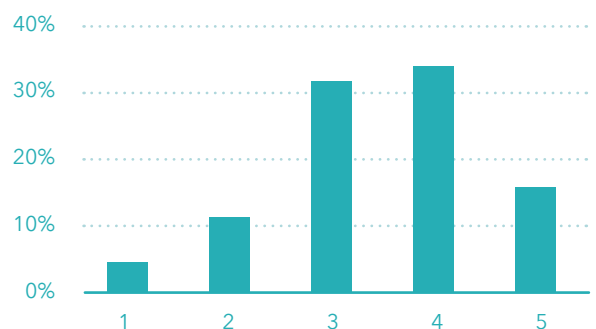
We asked respondents whether screens provided a good way to entertain their children when they could not.

47%

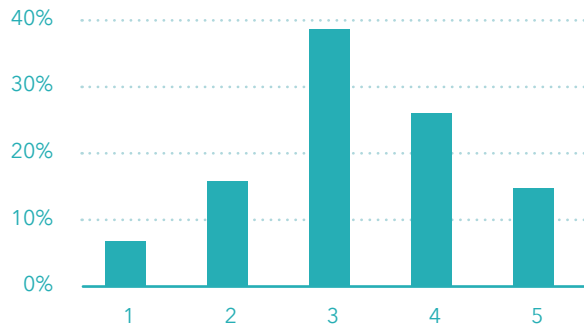
of parents agreed

16%

of parents disagreed



Portable computers and devices are mainly educational tools for us (1 - totally disagree, 5 - totally agree)



40%

In our survey, 40% of parents claimed they used portable computers and devices as educational tools.

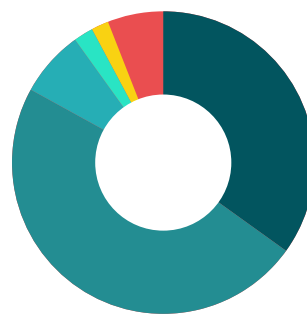
"In the current climate, it is important for children to know how to use technology; but it is also important to show children from an early age, how to put down their devices and seek alternative stimulation."

— Dr Tamara Begumbe, paediatrician



On average, how often do you argue with your children about screen time / media time?

We asked our respondents how often they argue with their children about use of screens or media.



- At least once per day
- At least once per week
- At least once per month
- At least once per quarter
- At least once per year
- Never

48%

said they argued at least once per week

35%

arguing with their children daily.

6%

had never argued with their children.

SECTION 2

Mobile phones

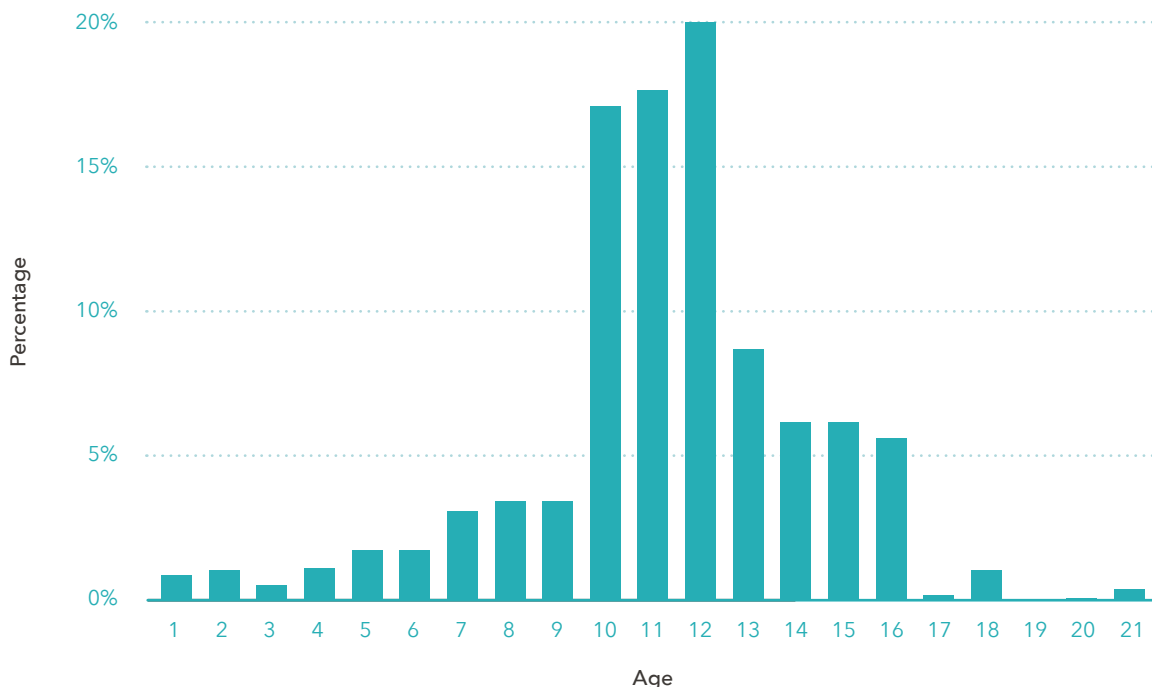
According to Statista, 95% of the UK population now owns a mobile phone. Here, we explored mobile phone use amongst children with our surveyed parents to get an understanding of how they perceive and manage the rising popularity of this technology.

What is the appropriate age for your children to get smartphones?

In spite of mobiles being a relatively recent invention, you'd be forgiven for struggling to remember a time when they didn't exist! We asked our respondents how old they thought was an appropriate age for children to get their first smartphone.

"Parental controls can be applied to make sure they cannot access inappropriate material and also that they can not access data during school hours for example."

— Laura Jones MPharmS, Clinical Lead, Assured Pharmacy



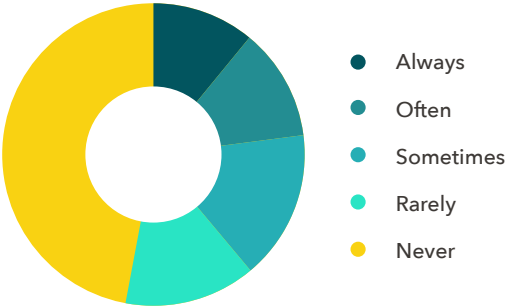
10-12

According to our survey, the ages of 10-12 were the most popular ages to get a smartphone, coinciding with the start of high school and perhaps reflecting a desire to provide more independence while still being able to keep in touch.



Are your children allowed to use their phones, video games or tablets at family meals?

We all know how important family meal times can be in developing relationships. We asked our respondents how often their children used screens at the dinner table:



“If we are distracted and watching screens while eating, we miss signals from our gut that we are full and continue to eat past the point of satisfaction. Using screen times during meals can create a habit of overeating and eventually obesity.”

– Dr Tamara Begumbe, paediatrician

47%

said they would never allow screens at a family meal.

23%

said they always or often allow them.



SECTION 3

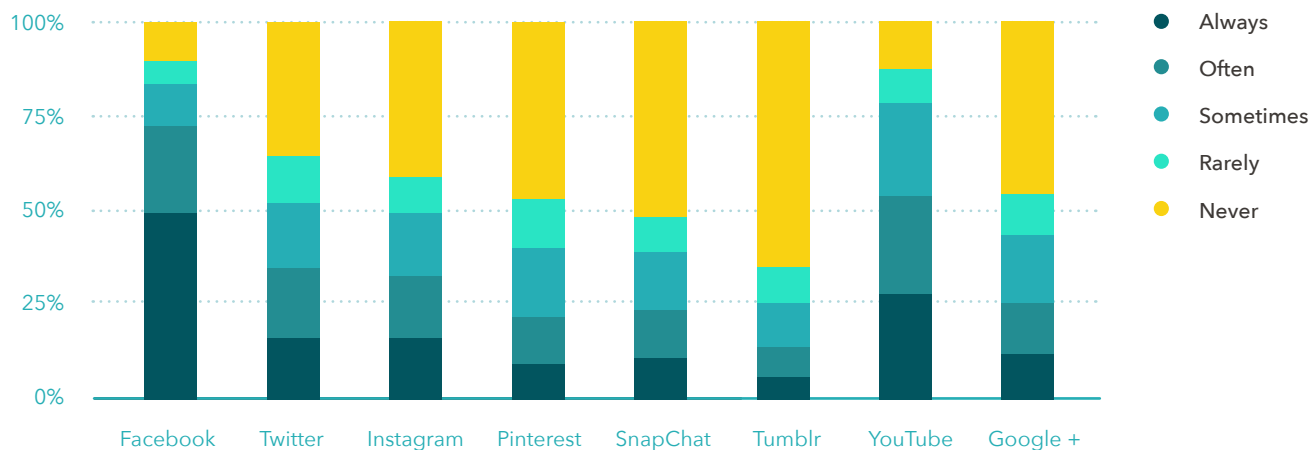
Social media

Whatever your thoughts on social media, there's no denying that its existence has become a part of our daily lives, to the extent that we use it in our personal and our working lives as a means of building networks and developing relationships.

Which social media channels do you use?

The changing demographics of different social media channels are something regularly discussed by parents and children alike - with the latter often on the hunt to ensure their social platform of choice hasn't become 'cool with the grown ups'!

We asked our respondents which social media channels they use:



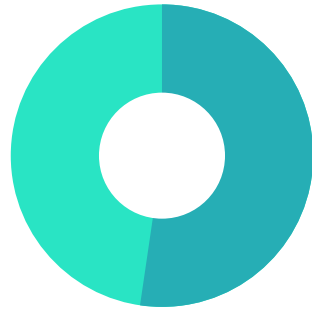
According to our survey, Facebook is the social media network of choice for parents, with nearly three quarters (72%) claiming to use it often or always and only 11% claiming never to use it. YouTube is the second most popular network with parents, with more than half (54%) using it always or often.

Meanwhile, Tumblr is the least popular, with 65% claiming never to have used it. Pinterest and Snapchat - often considered amongst the 'newer' social channels - have never been used by 47% and 52% of parents respectively, though 9% and 11% claimed to always use them.

Does your child(ren) use social media?

We asked our respondents if their children used social media. Again, opinions were fairly split, with the slight majority saying 'yes' and a slight minority saying 'no'.

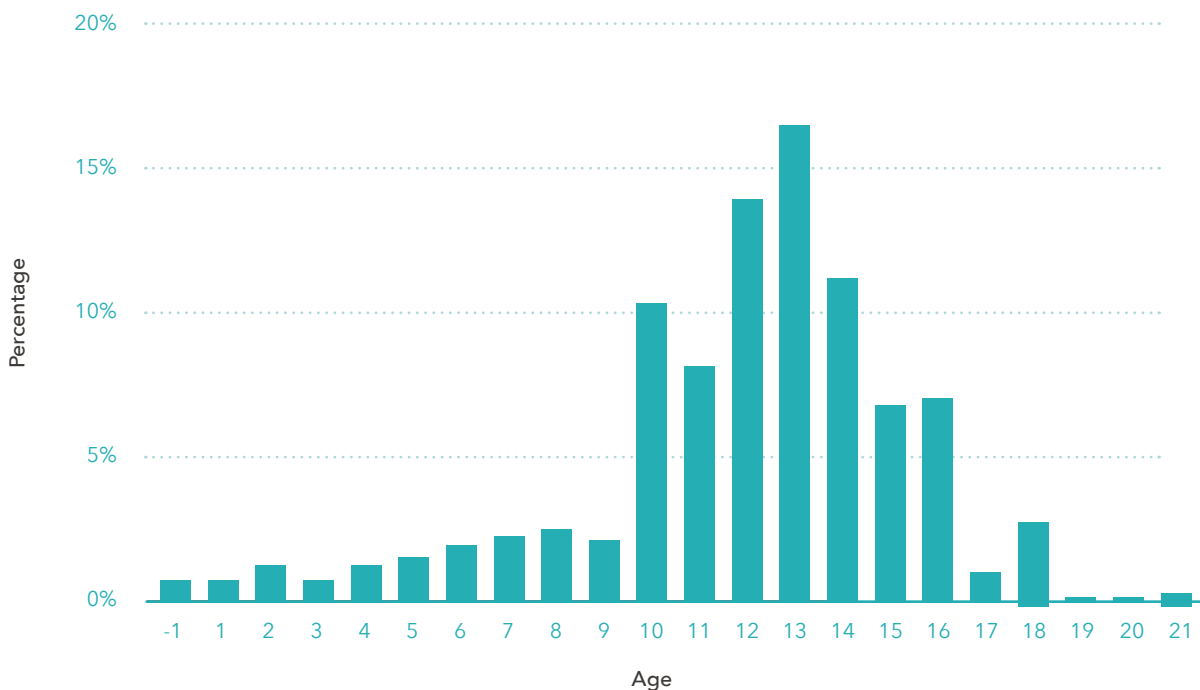
47.6%
said no



52.4%
said yes

At what age did/would you allow your child(ren) to use social media?

The age at which children can use social media is often set by the social networks themselves. But in spite of this, many children of any age are using social platforms. We asked our respondents what age they allowed their children to get started.



27%

said they would allow social media use before the high school starting age of 11 years.

72%

said they would wait until after their child reached high school age.

13yrs

The most popular answer

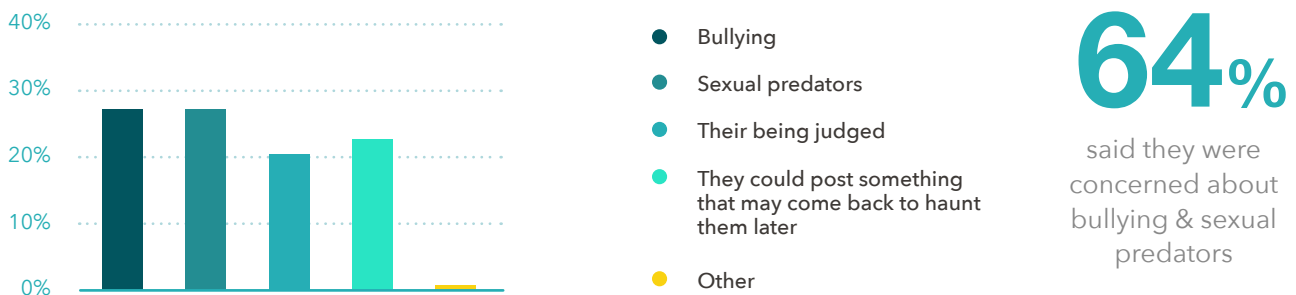
Are you worried about your child(ren) being on social media?

We asked our respondents whether they were worried about their children being on social media. Just under two-thirds (63%) said 'yes':



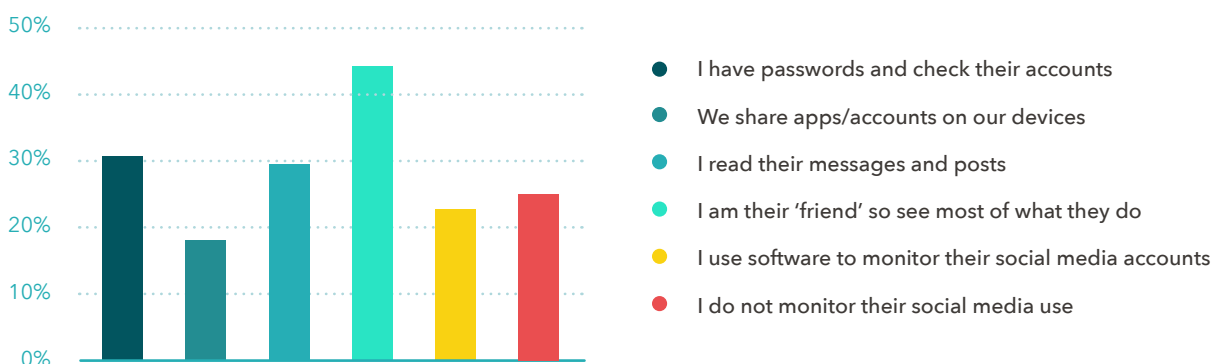
What are you most concerned about?

Of those who said they were worried about their children being on social media, nearly two thirds (64% each) were concerned about bullying and sexual predators, while over half (53%) worried their children could post something which may come back to haunt them later.



How do you monitor your child(ren)'s use of social media?

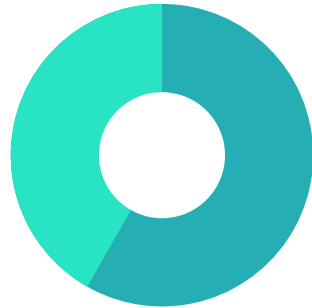
The majority (45%) were monitoring social media by 'befriending' their children on their social channels, meaning they would see the majority of their activity through their feeds. Just under a quarter (23%) were using software to monitor their children's social media activity. Almost a third (30%) had passwords to login to their children's accounts. Just 25% said they did not monitor their social media activity at all.



Do you post photos on social media?

When asked if they posted photos of their children on social media, responses were mixed amongst our parents, with 58% saying 'yes' and 42% saying 'no'.

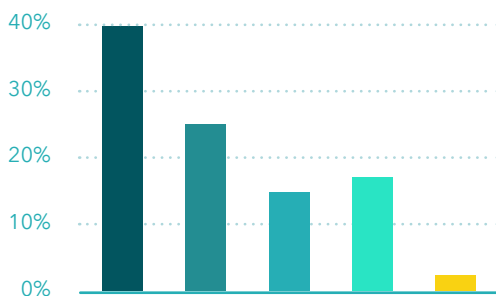
41.7%
said no



58.3%
said yes

Why don't you post pictures of your children on social media?

Of those who responded 'no' to the question of whether they share photos of their children on social media, the majority gave the reason of 'protecting their children's privacy'. Nearly a quarter (24.4%) were afraid of sharing too much information with strangers. Only 3% blamed not knowing how to use security settings, which is interesting given the focus of networks like Facebook in educating people on security this year.



- To protect my children's privacy
- I'm afraid of sharing too much information with strangers
- I only use these platforms as an observer
- I don't have the interest or the time
- I don't know how to use the security settings in order to present them only to a pre-selected audience (e.g. family, friends)

Are you OK with your child(ren)'s caregiver sharing pictures of them on social media?

When asked how they felt about their caregiver sharing photos of their children on social media, opinions were split fairly evenly between 'yes', 'yes, but only if they ask beforehand and I approve the content' and 'no'.



- Yes, that's fine
- Yes, but only if they ask beforehand
- No

31.9%
said yes, that's fine

33.1%
said yes, but only if they
ask beforehand.

35%
said no