POLLING MEMO: PARENTS' VIEWS ON CHILDREN'S DIGITAL PRIVACY AND SAFETY

IN A NEW SURVEY, PARENTS ARE VERY CONCERNED ABOUT THEIR ABILITY TO PROTECT THEIR FAMILY'S DIGITAL SAFETY AND PRIVACY. AS THEIR TOP PRIORITY, THEY WANT CONGRESS TO ADOPT ADDITIONAL PRIVACY PROTECTIONS OVER ANY OTHER LEGISLATIVE EFFORTS.

By the age of 11, more than half of U.S. children have their own smartphone, but how are they being protected? Given the pervasive role technology sometimes plays in our children's lives, Trusted Future launched a comprehensive new national survey of parents of school aged children (992 respondents with at least one child living in their home age 17 and under) to better understand the views of parents on the challenges and opportunities they face, specifically as it relates to children's privacy and safety online. In addition, the survey was designed to learn from parents about what key steps they believe would help foster greater trust in the technologies they use every day, and expand opportunities for their children tomorrow.

Parents[1] see both opportunities and challenges in the technologies their children use. On the one hand, they understand how technology can expand learning opportunities today, and technology skills can ultimately increase access to good paying jobs for their children. But they also recognize the risks associated with being online and they are looking for more support from all quarters. These issues are increasingly relevant as borne out by data from other surveys showing that 94% of children ages eight to 18 have a smartphone at home, up to 75% of young kids between age three and five have access to a tablet, and many infants start handling mobile devices during the first year of life. The privacy protections these devices have now and will have in the future are critical to our kids.

While parents are taking steps to protect their children, they don't feel they can do it all on their own and have clear ideas for what they want from their existing technologies, from innovators, and from policymakers. For example, their top priority in Congress is privacy: 63% want Congress to adopt additional privacy protections whether for children specifically or the country as a whole, as compared to, for example, only 3% whose top priority is antitrust legislation.[2]

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[1] "Parents" in this memo means "parents of school age children," children who are age 17 and under.
[2] The survey data can be found here: https://trustedfuture.org/survey-data-childrens-digital-privacy-and-safety.

PARENTS VIEW CONNECTED TECHNOLOGIES AS VITAL TO EVERYDAY LIFE

Parents view technology as central to their daily activities and important to improve their family's quality of life.

- Parents depend on technology everyday: 92% of parents use connected technologies every day, 91% say their children are using connected technologies.

- 92% of parents believe being connected to the internet is important for their family – specifically, stay in touch with loved ones (88%), to improve learning outcomes (84%), and for remote work that can improve work life balance (72%).

PARENTS ALSO BELIEVE ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY IS IMPORTANT FOR THEIR CHILDREN'S FUTURE

Parents view technology as a force for progress and believe technological innovation will transform and improve the way their children live, work, learn, and connect with each other – to help them live easier and more prosperous lives.

- 87% of parents believe technology will help their children keep learning throughout their lives.

- 85% of parents think it will help their children access the good paying jobs of the future.

- Nearly three-quarters think that technology will make the lives of future generations easier than the lives of their parents.

BUT PARENTS ALSO SEE BIG CHALLENGES – ESPECIALLY ON PRIVACY AND SAFETY

Parents are on the front lines of raising and protecting the next generation - the most connected generation in history, but also some of the most vulnerable users of new technologies.

- More than three-quarters (77%) of parents are concerned about protecting their family's digital privacy.

- 73% of parents are concerned about personal data being collected by third parties, without their consent.

- And parents also recognize the importance of protecting their children's identity (90%), location (88%), health data (87%), age (85%), school records (85%), and browsing history (84%).

PARENTS ARE ALREADY TAKING STEPS TO ENGAGE AND PROTECT THEIR CHILDREN: THE ROLE OF PARENTS

Parents are adapting to this new environment and recognize the need to proactively engage their children on the practical steps necessary to take to stay safe online. Large majorities now view the need to talk to their kids about online safety as consistent with their responsibility to teach their children about physical safety and to have that "sex talk."

- 86% of parents think that it is important to discuss online privacy, safety, and security with kids.
  - And parents are having that talk with their kids, with 79% of parents of teenagers telling us they have had it and 69% of parents whose kids are 11 and under.
- 84% of parents believe that it is important to tell young kids to think twice before they click on a link, just like they tell their kids to look twice before crossing the street.
- 75% of parents believe the "'tech talk" is as important for teens as the "sex talk", rising to 79% of parents of teenagers.

EVERYONE HAS A ROLE TO PLAY

Parents recognize that they have the ultimate responsibility to take actions that protect the privacy and safety of their family. But in reality, they are busy, often overwhelmed, can't monitor their kids' technology use 24-7, and want and need support from the devices they use, technology innovators, and Congress.

ROLE OF EXISTING TECHNOLOGY: KEY APP STORE BASED PARENTAL CONTROLS PARENTS RELY UPON

Parents also want to be empowered to play an active role in protecting their children's privacy when using internet connected devices. Many device manufacturers have responded by providing tools that parents rely on to help keep their kids safe.

- 89% of parents agree that parents should be empowered with technological tools that allow them to play an active role in protecting their children's privacy
- They strongly support the parental safety and privacy tools that companies have built into their mobile device app stores, including:
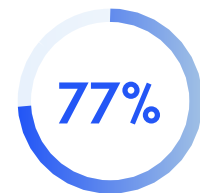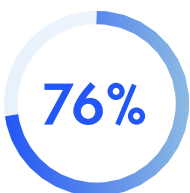
88% The ability to restrict children's in-app purchases

80% The ability to block mature content
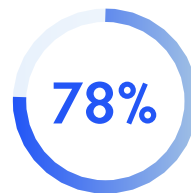
78% The ability to limit targeting and tracking of kids
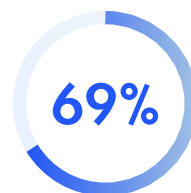
77% To see what data may be collected about their children
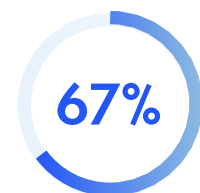
76% The ability to restrict children's app downloads

70% A carefully curated kids app store that is age appropriate

69% The ability to set a specific time, like bedtime, when apps and notifications are blocked

67% The ability to keep track of how much time their kids spend using different apps

ROLE OF INNOVATORS, DEVELOPERS AND PRODUCERS: WHAT PARENTS WANT

A parent playing an active role should not mean they need to be their own Chief Information Security Officer. Parents simply cannot be the only line of defense. An overwhelming majority of parents want the apps they download onto their devices to be reviewed by experts for privacy and safety before they are made available to the public. And they would be very concerned if device manufacturers were required to make available apps that had not had such a review.

- 91% of parents want apps reviewed by experts for privacy and security before being made available for download.

- 74% of parents want mobile device makers to build in security to help thwart mobile malware from getting installed on devices to help them to protect their and their family's data security.

- 75% of parents would be concerned if device makers were required to allow apps that had not been reviewed by experts to be available for download.

❙ ROLE OF POLICYMAKERS: THE SIX KEY THINGS PARENTS WANT

Parents expect policymakers at the federal and state level to help build a future that enables our children to benefit from technological progress by protecting them from inherent privacy and security risks while also giving them the tools they will need to succeed. According to our survey, parents identified six keys for advancing a more trusted future:

01 **BETTER PRIVACY PROTECTIONS.** Parents were asked for their top Congressional priority among four options of technology policy proposals currently being considered. 63% of parents want additional privacy protections (37% that want children's privacy and 26% that want a national privacy framework), while 24% want new investments in technology innovation, and just 3% want Congress to focus on antitrust legislation. Simply put, parents want progress on privacy.

02 **A TRUST SCREEN: THOROUGH SECURITY/PRIVACY/SAFETY REVIEW OF TECHNOLOGY RELATED LEGISLATION.** 67% of parents would have more trust in technology legislation that has undergone a comprehensive review of the security implications, including that which could impact children's privacy, safety and security. To the extent legislation deals specifically with the smart devices families use everyday, a thorough technical review of the impacts to parental controls and the privacy protections built into app stores on our most vulnerable technology users only seems prudent.

03 **CONTINUOUS SECURITY PROTECTIONS.** Consistent with many other findings in this survey about the desire of parents for action to increase security standards, 83% of parents support congressional attempts to limit cyber threats like malware and ransomware.

04 **CODING SKILLS FOR KIDS.** Looking at both the federal and state level, 76% also want every school to offer classes on coding so every child, regardless of income or geography will be able to take advantage of good paying technology jobs in their communities.

05 **ACCESS TO CONNECTED LEARNING TOOLS.** Similarly, 83% want federal and state policymakers to ensure that every student has high speed broadband and a learning device, so they can have equal access to the online universe of knowledge, and are able to obtain the education they need to get ahead in life.

06 **GREATER INVESTMENTS IN OUR CHILDREN'S TECHNOLOGICAL FUTURE.** At a time when Congress is considering the Bipartisan Innovation Act (also referred to as USICA or the Competes Act), 78% want America to invest more to advance emerging technologies and America's innovative capacity so that today's children will be able to benefit from good-paying jobs in high-tech industries of the future. And as noted above, 24% of parents selected this as their top priority for Congress related to technology policy.

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