



*You can share absolutely none of your details on the internet whatsoever, but that will probably detract from your enjoyment of the internet and you won't be able to use it to its full potential. Or, you could share all your details, which is highly risky, but will probably be more useful to you, and your friends. I try to find a balance between these extremes.<sup>1</sup>*

## The decision to post

### **Information sharing, assessment of risk and the privacy of young people**

- 7.1 This chapter presents the Committee's consultations with young people on privacy, risk and the information they share online. As the introductory quote indicates, young people engage in a balancing act: sharing information to form greater social networks while also attempting to maintain their personal security. Through its analysis, it seeks to shed light on how young people decide what information to share and when they feel comfortable doing so. It will also discuss appreciation and mitigation of risks online and the extent to which young Australians are already equipped to respond to dangers online. By gaining and insight into the decision-making processes of young Australians, education programs and awareness campaigns can be appropriately targeted and adapted.
- 7.2 Before discussing the decision-processes of young people, it is important to place their online activities in a broader social-development context. Fundamentally, young people 'post' their information, opinions and

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1 Survey respondent, Female aged 17.

activities in order to construct the identity they wish to present to others. Therefore, the links between identity formation and online activities offers important background when gauging young people's appreciation of risks online and their reasons for sharing information.

## The Internet and identity

- 7.3 According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, young Australians are among the highly connected groups in the country.<sup>2</sup> This age group is also at a critical stage in their personal development, exploring and presenting their public and private identities. The advent of new technologies has presented young people with additional platforms to express themselves and experiment with different aspects of their identity. Further, young people often feel buoyed by the perceived distance and anonymity provided by the Internet.
- 7.4 Throughout the formative teenage-years, there are the contradictory desires to create an authentic identity, and the need for a sense of security –self-protection driven by a desire for acceptance by their peers. This tension is particularly evident in the online environment where the disclosure of personal information (the building blocks of an individual's identity) can be accessed and manipulated by third parties, potentially compromising personal safety and privacy.
- 7.5 A recent ethnographic study of members of Generations X and Y conducted by Dr Hilary Yerbury from the University of Technology, Sydney, commented that young people:
- are willing to display their thoughts, behaviours and actions to bolster their sense of self, and to leave traces of themselves in times and spaces where their embodied selves do not exist. In their discussions of trust and authenticity, they acknowledge that they interpret the characteristics of the other person in order to grant trust or recognise authenticity. By the same token, they are aware that others will interpret their actions and expressions to create another's view of their identity. Thus, sometimes they seek to safeguard their future by being careful about the traces they leave online and to maintain the safety of their offline selves by not

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2 Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006-07: *Household Use of Information Technology Survey*.

divulging the kind of information that would make them vulnerable to unwanted attention from strangers.<sup>3</sup>

## Creating authentic identities online and offline

7.6 Creating one's identity has been described as a process of self-actualisation that includes the moral requirement of being able to act in a way that is 'true to oneself'.<sup>4</sup> Yet social relations – the reaction of others – are also important. The construction of identity is a complex process:

It is future oriented, involving both psychological and social processes. The psychological processes of transformation interact with the social processes in ever-changing ways. The interactions are further complicated by the influences of particular aspects of life in the twenty-first century that impinge on the development of the sense of self... notably information and communication technologies.<sup>5</sup>

7.7 Young people have a strong sense of self and value authenticity; they expect to find authenticity in others whether online or offline.<sup>6</sup> Though young people can be tolerant of ambiguity in the identity of others, there is an overarching expectation of sincerity; they believe that it is important to be able to trust in the authenticity of others.<sup>7</sup> Importantly, these expectations of sincerity and anticipations of authenticity can expose young people to great risks online, particularly predatory conduct.

7.8 However, the *Are you safe?* survey received comments indicating that young people may be willing to compromise their individual authenticity to ensure safety and security online:

ever since i had access to the internet, parents and schools have taught me to never tell the truth on the net for fear of all the dangers (Female aged 17).

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3 Yerbury, H. 2010, 'Who to be? Generations X and Y in civil society online', *Youth Studies Australia*, vol. 29, no. 2, p. 31.

4 A Giddens, 1991, *Modernity and self-identity: Self and society in the late modern age*, Stanford University Press, California, pp. 77-79.

5 Yerbury, H. 2010, 'Who to be? Generations X and Y in civil society online', *Youth Studies Australia*, vol. 29, no. 2, p. 31.

6 Yerbury, H. 2010, 'Who to be? Generations X and Y in civil society online', *Youth Studies Australia*, vol. 29, no. 2, p. 28.

7 Yerbury, H. 2010, 'Who to be? Generations X and Y in civil society online', *Youth Studies Australia*, vol. 29, no. 2, p. 28.

Only through your own doing can you reveal yourself online, and if you are really concerned about certain sites then you should create another email address or give false information which won't lead to your identity being revealed (Male aged 17).

On the internet you can basically just use a pseudonym or nickname that has little or no link to yourself to avoid these types of situations and then abandon it if things get too scary (Female aged 17).

- 7.9 In many situations, young people use this 're-set' strategy to protect themselves online. Although this may guard them from certain dangers online, 'abandonment' may not be sufficient to protect their privacy or personal information in all circumstances. These risks are discussed below and in Chapter 5 of this Report.
- 7.10 Many participants in the *Are you safe?* survey commented that they continually assess the authenticity of communications and content they view online. This indicates the positive impact of existing education and awareness programs. The strategies employed by young people to determine the level of risk and authenticity of content and communications is explored further below.

## Exploring identity

- 7.11 In the course of its Inquiry, the Committee received a substantial body of evidence detailing how the Internet's perceived anonymity emboldens its users. Jedidiah, a Year 9 student, commented

A lot of people have a sudden change of personality when online – they may create fake accounts, imitate people or be very dissimilar to what they are in real life... Going online gives opportunities for many to experiment and compete for attention.<sup>8</sup>

- 7.12 This point is also discussed by social researchers:

Free from adult regulation, young people's articulation and expression of various parts of their identity to their friends and others supports critical peer-based sociality. Such processes of socialisation are essential for psychosocial development at a time when many young people are consolidating their identities,

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8 Jedidiah, *Submission 133*, p. 1.

pulling up roots from their family, striving for independence and developing new types of relationships.<sup>9</sup>

- 7.13 A recent paper by the Cooperative Research Centre for Young People, Technology and Wellbeing commented that the flexibility of social networking and its capacity for individual customisation, allows young people use these services to 'experiment and find legitimacy for their political, ethnic, cultural or sexual identity'.<sup>10</sup>
- 7.14 In other studies, young people have also referenced a greater degree of acceptance due to the anonymity provided by new technologies, with one participant noting that he was active in the online environment because he did not feel limited by the reactions of others to ethnicity. The same participant felt that he could meet and engage with people with similar interests and viewpoints in a way that is denied to his embodied self.<sup>11</sup>
- 7.15 The Committee's High School Forum also facilitated a discussion on the effect of perceived anonymity and distance provided by the online environment. When asked 'How many of you believe that you change your personality? ... When your friends go online do you believe they change their personality?', the majority of the Forum's participants indicated by a show of hands that they felt emboldened by online communications or had noticed a change in the personality of others. The question prompted discussion, with the following comments made by participants:

I think some people, in real life, act differently on Facebook maybe because of their insecurities. I find some people will talk to me on Facebook but will not talk to me in real life. I do not know why that is but maybe it is their insecurities or they feel reluctant to come up to me. They feel more secure on Facebook because it is not a face-to-face situation.<sup>12</sup>

I think that everybody does get a little bit braver on Facebook or when texting because you do not have to physically interact with the person you are communicating with. It does not necessarily

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9 Collin, P. *et al*, 2011 *The Benefits of Social Networking Services*, Cooperative Research Centre for Young People, Technology and Wellbeing, p. 16.

10 Collin, P. *et al*, 2011 *The Benefits of Social Networking Services*, Cooperative Research Centre for Young People, Technology and Wellbeing, p. 16.

11 Yerbury, H. 2010, 'Who to be? Generations X and Y in civil society online', *Youth Studies Australia*, vol. 29, no. 2, p. 28.

12 Hayden, High School Forum Participant, *Transcript of Evidence*, 20 April 2011, p. CS22.

change your personality but it does give you more confidence to behave in a way that you probably would not when face-to-face.<sup>13</sup>

7.16 However, this freedom to experiment with an 'emboldened' identity does cause some concern among young people. Other studies have argued that as young people grow towards maturity, they do 'not want to be held to the actions and beliefs recorded online whilst they are creating their self-identity'.<sup>14</sup> Concerns about 'digital-footprints' are discussed below.

## What information do young people share?

### Types of information shared

7.17 The previously mentioned, *Click and Connect: Young Australians' Use of Online Social Media* report by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) revealed willingness to make personal information public differs greatly. An objective of the *Are you safe?* survey was to further explore this issue and better understand the types of information young people share online. The survey asked participants about their willingness to divulge their:

- name;
- age or birthday;
- address;
- telephone number;
- school attended;
- bank account details;
- holiday plans;
- passwords or email addresses; and
- photos of others.

7.18 Each of these is addressed below.

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13 Amanda, High School Forum Participant, *Transcript of Evidence*, 20 April 2011, p. CS22.

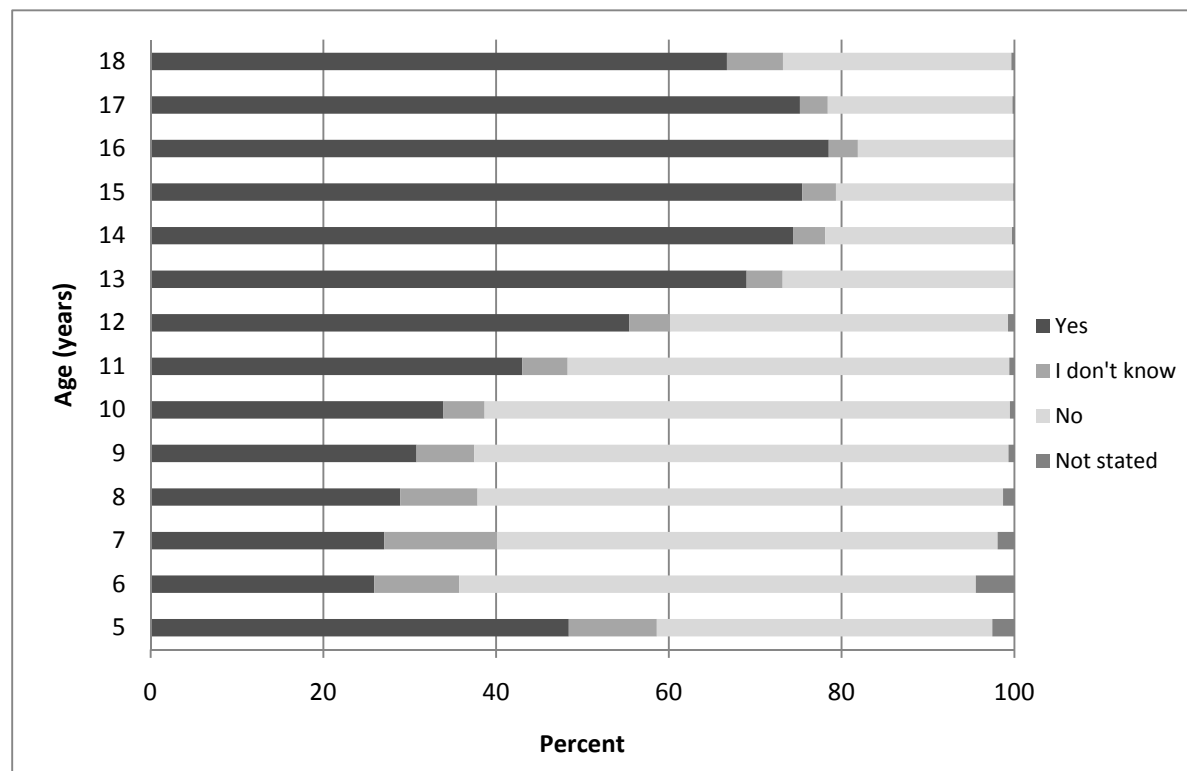
14 Yerbury, H. 2010, 'Who to be? Generations X and Y in civil society online', *Youth Studies Australia*, vol. 29, no. 2.

Name

7.19 The overall majority of participants in the *Are you safe?* survey stated that they share their name online. However, the older the survey’s participants were, the more comfortable they felt to disclose their name online. Research by the Cooperative Research Centre for Young People, Technology and Wellbeing attributed these trends to young people’s desire to both strengthen offline relationships through online communications as well as seek out new online networks.<sup>15</sup>

7.20 There was no significant difference between the genders on this question.

Figure 7.1 Do you share your name online? (Age)



15 Collin P, et al, 2011, *The Benefits of Social Networking Services*, Cooperative Research Centre for Young People, Technology and Wellbeing, p. 17.

Table 7.1 Do you share your name online?

		Yes		No		I don't know		Not stated		Total
Sex		%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	#
5 Years	M	46.7	35	42.7	32	10.7	8	0	0	75
	F	50	41	35.4	29	9.8	8	4.9	4	82
6 Years	M	31.3	15	50	24	12.5	6	6.3	3	48
	F	21.9	14	67.2	43	7.8	5	3.1	2	64
7 Years	M	29.1	32	57.3	63	10.9	12	2.7	3	110
	F	24.7	24	58.8	57	15.5	15	1	1	97
8 Years	M	31.4	133	57.3	243	9.4	40	1.9	8	424
	F	26.8	132	63.9	315	8.5	42	0.8	4	493
9 Years	M	33.0	331	59.5	597	7.0	10	0.6	6	1004
	F	28.8	310	64.1	691	6.4	69	0.7	8	1078
10 Years	M	35.0	596	59.8	1017	4.6	79	0.5	9	1701
	F	32.8	590	61.8	1111	4.9	88	0.5	9	1798
11 Years	M	42.0	968	52.5	1211	4.8	110	0.7	16	2305
	F	44.0	1101	49.8	1247	5.7	142	0.5	12	2502
12 Years	M	54.2	1213	41.0	918	4.1	92	0.7	16	2239
	F	56.6	1281	37.2	842	5.4	123	0.8	17	2263
13 Years	M	66.0	1247	31.0	586	3.0	56	0.1	1	1890
	F	71.3	1752	23.5	576	5.1	125	0.1	3	2456
14 Years	M	71.3	1149	25.9	418	2.4	39	0.4	6	1612
	F	76.9	1524	18.1	359	4.8	95	0.2	4	1982
15 Years	M	74.0	881	22.5	268	3.4	41	0.1	1	1191
	F	76.7	1054	19.8	259	4.3	59	0.1	2	1374
16 Years	M	75.8	612	21.3	172	2.7	22	0.1	1	807
	F	80.7	805	15.3	153	3.9	39	0.1	1	998
17 Years	M	75.4	298	22.0	87	2.3	9	0.3	1	395
	F	75.0	426	21.0	119	3.9	22	0.2	1	568
18 Years	M	67.9	212	25.6	80	6.1	19	0.3	1	312
	F	65.3	169	27.4	71	6.9	18	0.4	1	259



- 7.21 Through free text spaces, a substantial number of participants aged 12 years or younger commented they would use their first name, but would be more hesitant in divulging their surname. For example, comments such as those included below were common in participants aged 12 years or younger:

I always confront my parents before joining to a site or giving any info. about myself. They are like pretty protective so I usually make up a birth date if it is compulsory. Never will I tell any real details of myself that could put me in a dangerous position. With my name, first is alright yet second (last name) is strict no no (Female aged 12).

I think it is okay to put your first name because you are not the only person in the world with that name and it would be impossible to find anymore details if they just knew your first name, but never put your last name because it makes it easier for people to track you down (Female aged 12).

- 7.22 Notably, this strategy was not referenced by participants over the age of 13.
- 7.23 The use of nick-names was a common alternative expressed by participants of all ages through the optional free-text spaces. One survey respondent commented:

I think it's OK to put your nick-name up on the web but you shouldn't put your full name ... because they could use that to send you things you don't want [or] hack your private things (Male aged 10).

- 7.24 Research by Australian Communications and Media Authority found that despite privacy concerns, many children and young people in its study claimed they might give their real name if the majority of their peers also used their full name.<sup>16</sup> A comment cited by ACMA illustrates this point:

I have my full name on Facebook. I didn't want to do it but I realised that everyone else and all my friends had.<sup>17</sup>

16 Australian Communications and Media Authority, *Click & Connect: Young Australians' Use of Online Social Media - Part 1*, 2009, p. 49.

17 Australian Communications and Media Authority, *Click & Connect: Young Australians' Use of Online Social Media - Part 1*, 2009, p. 49.

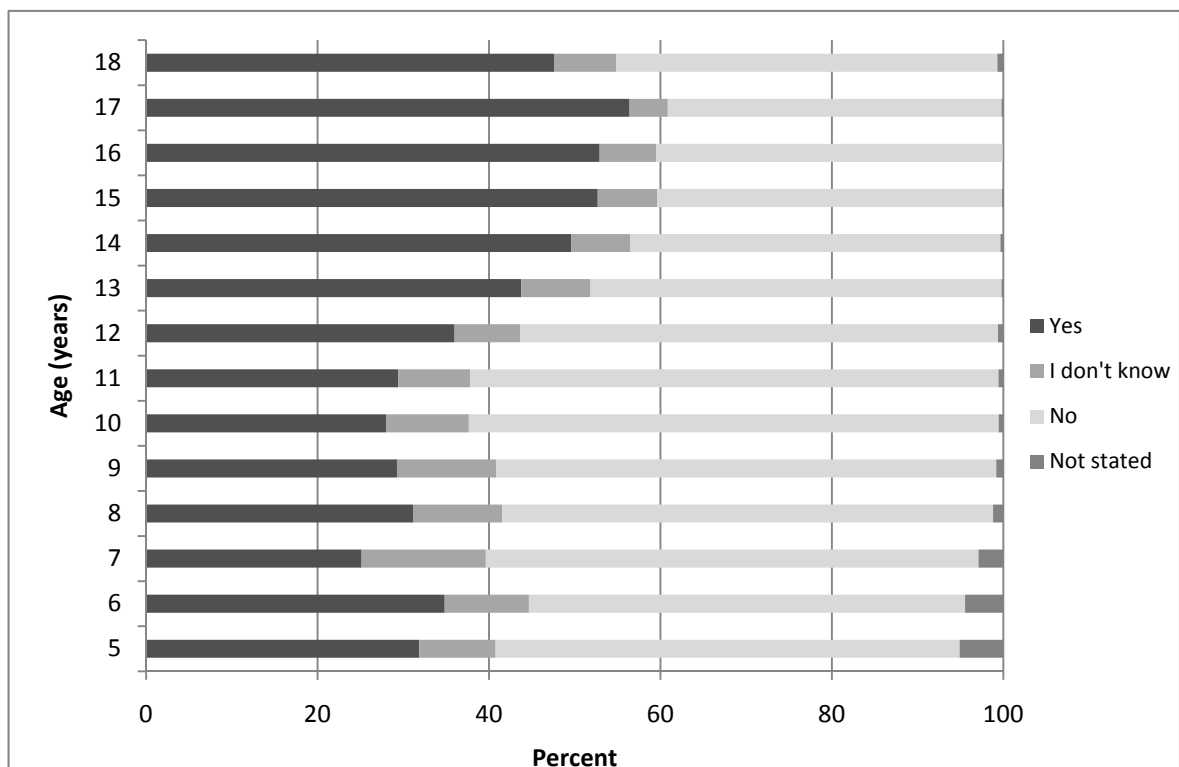
- 7.25 The Committee's consultations revealed some hesitation by some survey respondents, such as:

There are a surprising amount of people on facebook who have posted their mobile, school and networks on their profile-I haven't even put my last name on facebook because I know that people I know will know who I am without my last name-if they don't, then I probably won't add [them] (Female aged 14).

### Age or birthday

- 7.26 When asked if they would disclose their age or birthday, results showed that young people are generally hesitant: 51.9 percent of respondents answered that they would not share their age or birthday online.
- 7.27 There were no significant differences between the sexes, but there was an increase in the number of respondents aged 13 years or older that share their age or birthday online (31.0 percent of respondents 12 years or young share their age online, compared to 49.1 percent of respondents aged 13 years or older).

Figure 7.2 Do you share your age or birthday online? (Age)



- 7.28 The survey asked respondents to qualify their answer through free text space at the end of the question. A recurring theme in the comments was that age or birth dates are not perceived to be unique or identifying features. For example, one survey respondent commented:

I strongly believe that it is okay to put your name and age on the internet , because there is other people that have the same name as you and others that have the same age (Female aged 10)

- 7.29 Similarly, some comments by participants indicate a general ambivalence and awareness of the value of this type of information to third parties. For example:

I don't think it matters whether or not I put my age or birthday on it because I no one can trace you through your name or birthday (Male aged 12).

Table 7.2 Do you share your age or birthday online?

	Sex	Yes		No		I don't know		Not stated		Total
		%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	#
5 Years	M	33.3	25	58.7	44	5.3	4	2.7	2	75
	F	30.5	25	50.0	41	12.2	10	7.3	6	82
6 Years	M	33.3	16	45.8	22	14.6	7	6.3	3	48
	F	35.9	23	54.7	35	6.3	4	3.1	2	64
7 Years	M	24.5	27	54.5	60	16.4	18	4.5	5	110
	F	25.8	25	60.8	59	12.4	12	1.0	1	97
8 Years	M	33.5	142	54.2	230	10.6	45	1.7	7	424
	F	29.2	144	59.8	295	10.1	50	0.8	4	493
9 Years	M	32.9	330	56.8	570	9.6	96	0.8	8	1004
	F	25.9	279	59.8	645	13.5	145	0.8	9	1078
10 Years	M	30.0	511	61.3	1043	8.1	137	0.6	10	1701
	F	26.0	468	62.3	1120	11.2	201	0.5	9	1798
11 Years	M	30.7	707	61.3	1412	7.3	169	0.7	17	2305
	F	28.3	707	62.0	1552	9.3	233	0.4	10	2502
12 Years	M	35.8	801	57.0	1277	6.6	147	0.6	14	2239
	F	36.2	819	54.5	1233	8.7	197	0.6	14	2263
13 Years	M	44.6	842	49.7	940	5.5	104	0.2	4	1890
	F	43.1	1059	46.6	1144	10.1	248	0.2	5	2456
14 Years	M	49.3	794	45.9	740	4.3	69	0.6	9	1612
	F	49.8	988	41.0	812	9.0	179	0.2	3	1982
15 Years	M	53.1	632	42.2	529	4.6	55	0.1	1	1191
	F	52.3	719	38.5	503	9.0	123	0.2	3	1374
16 Years	M	55.8	450	39.2	316	5.1	41	0.0	0	807
	F	50.6	505	41.5	414	7.8	78	0.1	1	998
17 Years	M	58.0	229	38.0	150	3.5	14	0.5	2	395
	F	55.3	314	39.6	225	5.1	29	0.0	0	568
18 Years	M	48.1	150	44.2	138	6.7	21	1.0	3	312
	F	47.1	122	44.8	116	7.7	20	0.4	1	259

## Address

7.30 Overall, 93.2 percent of participants answered that they would not divulge their address online. However, there was a peak at both ends of the age sample with increases in those who answered they have disclosed their address online and those who were unsure.

Figure 7.3 Do you share your address online? (Age)

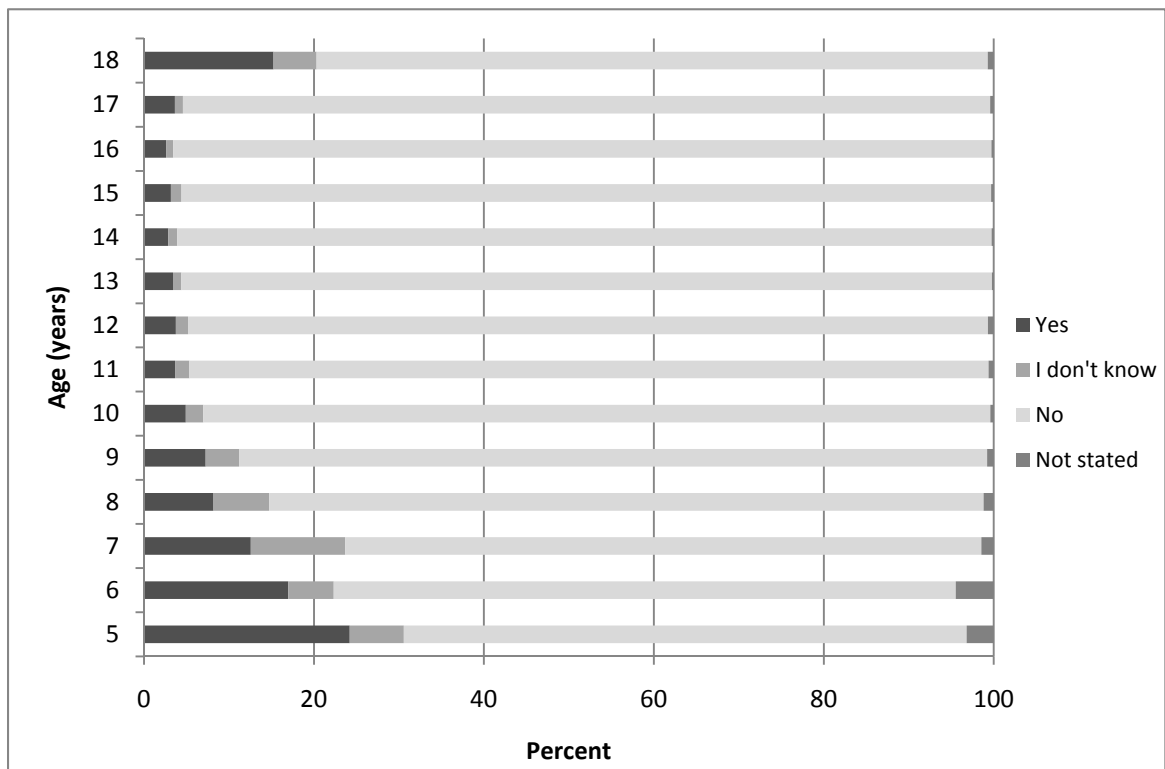


Table 7.3 Do you share your address online?

	Sex	Yes		No		I don't know		Not stated		Total
		%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	#
5 Years	M	22.7	17	72.0	54	4.0	3	1.3	1	75
	F	25.6	21	61.0	50	8.5	7	4.9	4	82
6 Years	M	16.7	8	70.8	34	6.3	3	6.3	3	48
	F	17.2	11	75.0	48	4.7	3	3.1	2	64
7 Years	M	12.7	14	72.7	80	12.7	14	1.8	2	110
	F	12.4	12	77.3	75	9.3	9	1.0	1	97
8 Years	M	9.4	40	80.7	342	8.3	35	1.7	7	424
	F	7.1	35	87.0	429	5.1	25	0.8	4	493
9 Years	M	9.5	95	84.9	852	4.9	49	0.8	8	1004
	F	5.2	56	91.0	981	3.1	33	0.7	8	1078
10 Years	M	6.3	108	90.6	1541	2.6	45	0.4	7	1701
	F	3.6	64	94.5	1700	1.5	27	0.4	7	1798
11 Years	M	4.2	97	93.2	2148	1.8	42	0.8	18	2305
	F	3.2	79	94.9	2374	1.5	38	0.4	11	2502
12 Years	M	5.3	119	92.2	2065	1.8	40	0.7	15	2239
	F	2.2	50	96.0	2173	1.1	24	0.7	16	2263
13 Years	M	4.8	90	93.6	1769	1.4	27	0.2	4	1890
	F	2.4	58	96.8	2377	0.7	16	0.2	5	2456
14 Years	M	4.3	70	94.1	1517	1.2	19	0.4	6	1612
	F	1.7	33	97.2	1927	1.0	19	0.2	3	1982
15 Years	M	5.1	61	93.0	1108	1.7	20	0.2	2	1191
	F	1.5	20	97.2	1336	0.9	12	0.4	6	1374
16 Years	M	4.5	36	94.2	760	1.2	10	0.1	1	807
	F	1.1	11	98.0	978	0.5	5	0.4	4	998
17 Years	M	7.8	31	89.6	354	1.8	7	0.8	3	395
	F	0.7	4	98.8	561	0.4	2	0.2	1	568
18 Years	M	13.8	43	80.8	252	4.8	15	0.6	2	312
	F	17.0	44	76.8	199	5.4	14	0.8	2	259

### Telephone number

7.31 Similar results were found in participants disclosing their telephone numbers online. Overall 90.4 percent of respondents do not disclose their telephone number online, however there was an increase at both ends of the age spectrum.

7.32 Notably, 11.8 percent of participants aged 18 disclose their telephone number online, compared with 5.5 percent of those aged 13 to 17 years.

Figure 7.4 Do you share your telephone number online? (Age)

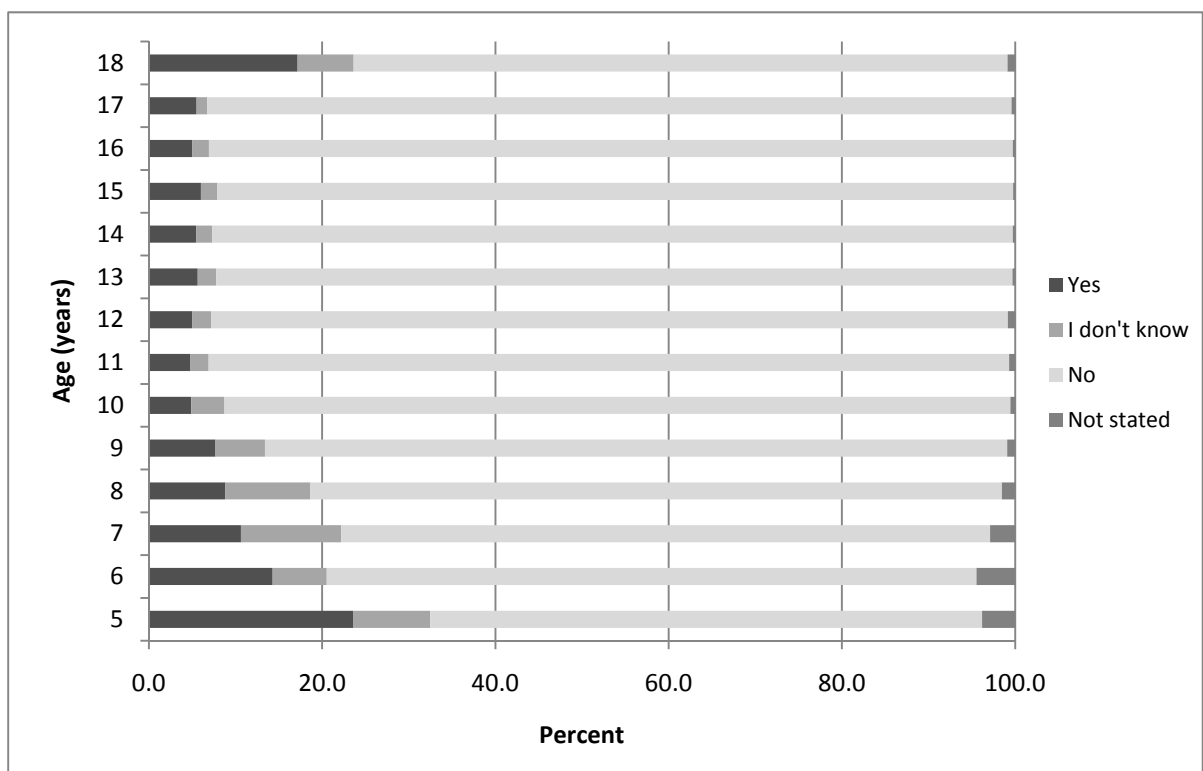


Table 7.4 Do you share your telephone number online?

	Sex	Yes		No		I don't know		Not stated		Total
		%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	#
5 Years	M	20.0	15	72.0	54	6.7	5	1.3	1	75
	F	26.8	22	56.1	46	11.0	9	6.1	5	82
6 Years	M	8.3	4	79.2	38	6.3	3	6.3	3	48
	F	18.8	12	71.9	46	6.3	4	3.1	2	64
7 Years	M	12.7	14	72.7	80	10.9	12	3.6	4	110
	F	8.2	8	77.3	75	12.4	12	2.1	2	97

8 Years	M	11.3	48	74.1	314	12.3	52	2.4	10	424
	F	6.7	33	84.8	418	7.7	38	0.8	4	493
9 Years	M	9.3	93	82.3	826	7.5	75	1.0	10	1004
	F	6.2	67	88.9	958	4.1	44	0.8	9	1078
10 Years	M	6.1	104	89.2	1518	4.1	70	0.5	9	1701
	F	3.7	67	92.2	1657	3.6	64	0.6	10	1798
11 Years	M	5.8	133	90.4	2084	2.9	67	0.9	21	2305
	F	3.8	95	94.3	2359	1.4	36	0.5	12	2502
12 Years	M	6.9	155	89.5	2005	2.6	59	0.9	20	2239
	F	3.1	71	91.1	2136	1.7	38	0.8	18	2263
13 Years	M	7.5	141	89.5	1692	2.8	52	0.3	5	1890
	F	4.2	104	93.8	2304	1.6	40	0.3	8	2456
14 Years	M	7.8	126	89.4	1441	2.4	38	0.4	7	1612
	F	3.5	70	94.9	1880	1.5	29	0.2	3	1982
15 Years	M	8.6	103	88.8	1058	2.4	29	0.1	1	1191
	F	3.7	51	94.5	1298	1.5	20	0.4	5	1374
16 Years	M	7.9	64	89.7	724	2.2	18	0.1	1	807
	F	2.6	26	95.3	951	1.7	17	0.4	4	998
17 Years	M	9.6	38	87.3	345	2.3	9	0.8	3	393
	F	2.6	15	96.7	549	0.5	3	0.2	1	568
18 Years	M	19.3	48	71.8	186	8.1	21	0.8	2	259
	F	17.2	50	75.5	431	6.5	37	0.9	5	571

## School attended

- 7.33 The majority of participants answered that they would not disclose the name of their school online (68.9 percent). There was no significant difference between male and female respondents, though older participants indicated they are more willing to share information about the school they attend online: 16.2 percent of respondents aged 12 years or younger share this information, compared with 32.0 percent of respondents aged 13 years or older.
- 7.34 Of those that do share the name of their school online, many appear to do so to link up with others that attend their school. For example, the following comments were common from those that disclose their school:



sometimes putting information like the school you attend could be dangerous, but its something a lot of people do so that they can identify their peers on facebook (Female aged 14).

Because I am in Year 11, putting this information (Name and School) is quite essential for me to contact past friends and future business opportunities (Male aged 17).

7.35 However, one participant noted a belief that the size of the school would mitigate any risk posed by sharing this information:

I don't think it matters whether or not I put my school ... because even though people can track my school, my school has over 500 people so I don't think I'd have to worry about that (Male aged 12).

Figure 7.5 Do you post the name of your school online? (Age)

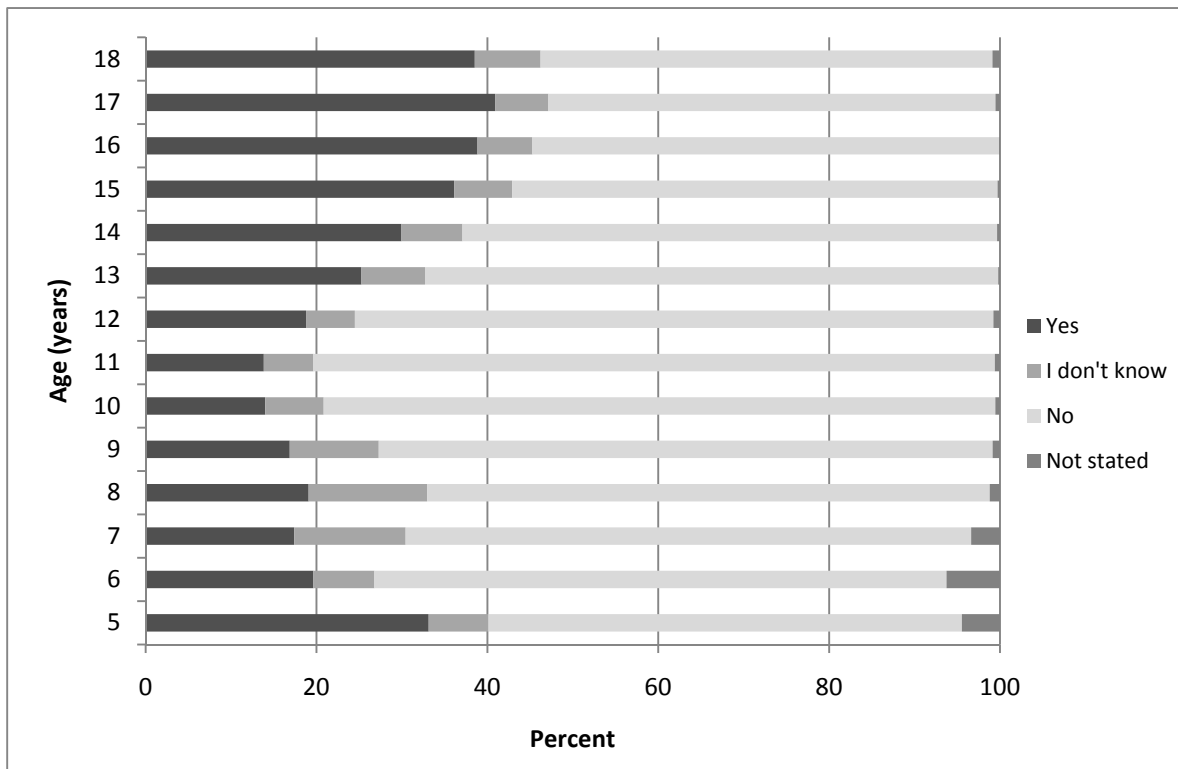


Table 7.5 Do you post the name of your school online?

		Yes		No		I don't know		Not stated		Total
Sex		%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	#
5 Years	M	36.0	27	57.3	43	4.0	3	2.7	2	75
	F	30.5	25	53.7	44	9.8	8	6.1	5	82
6 Years	M	14.6	7	62.5	30	14.6	7	8.3	4	48
	F	23.4	15	70.3	45	1.6	1	4.7	3	64
7 Years	M	20.0	22	65.5	72	10.9	12	3.6	4	110
	F	14.4	14	67.0	65	15.5	15	3.1	3	97
8 Years	M	22.2	94	61.6	261	14.6	62	1.7	7	424
	F	16.4	81	69.6	343	13.2	65	0.8	4	493
9 Years	M	20.9	210	67.9	682	10.3	103	0.9	9	1004
	F	13.1	141	75.5	814	10.6	114	0.8	9	1078
10 Years	M	16.1	274	76.3	1298	7.0	119	0.6	10	1701
	F	12.0	216	80.8	1453	6.7	120	0.5	9	1798
11 Years	M	17.0	391	76.8	1770	5.5	127	0.7	17	2305
	F	11.0	274	82.5	2064	6.1	152	0.5	12	2502
12 Years	M	21.3	477	72.6	1625	5.4	120	0.8	17	2239
	F	16.3	368	76.8	1739	6.1	138	0.8	18	2263
13 Years	M	27.8	526	65.7	1241	6.3	119	0.2	4	1890
	F	23.3	572	68.2	1675	8.3	204	0.2	5	2456
14 Years	M	33.9	547	60.2	971	5.3	85	0.6	9	1612
	F	26.7	529	64.5	1278	8.7	172	0.2	3	1982
15 Years	M	42.1	501	52.7	628	5.0	60	0.2	2	1191
	F	30.9	425	60.1	830	8.3	114	0.4	5	1374
16 Years	M	45.6	368	49.1	396	5.3	43	0.0	0	807
	F	33.4	333	59.1	590	7.3	73	0.2	2	998
17 Years	M	48.1	190	45.6	180	5.3	21	1.0	4	395
	F	35.9	204	57.0	342	6.9	39	0.2	1	568
18 Years	M	39.7	124	52.2	163	7.1	22	1.0	3	312
	F	37.1	96	53.7	139	8.5	22	0.8	2	259

### Bank account details

- 7.36 An large majority of participants stated they would not share their bank account details online (94.0 percent).
- 7.37 The increase at the age of 18 years might be explained by an increase in those engaging in the digital economy and making purchases online.

Figure 7.6 Do you share your or your family's bank details online? (Age)

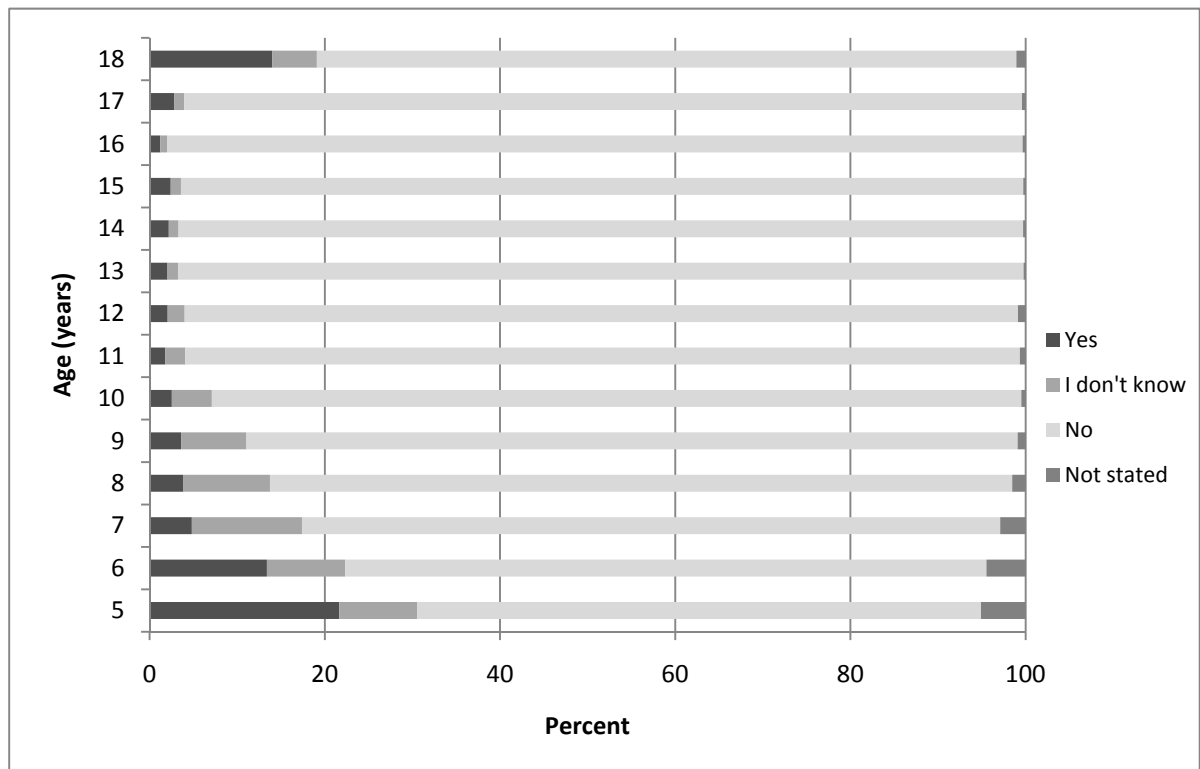


Table 7.6 Do you share your or your family's bank account details online?

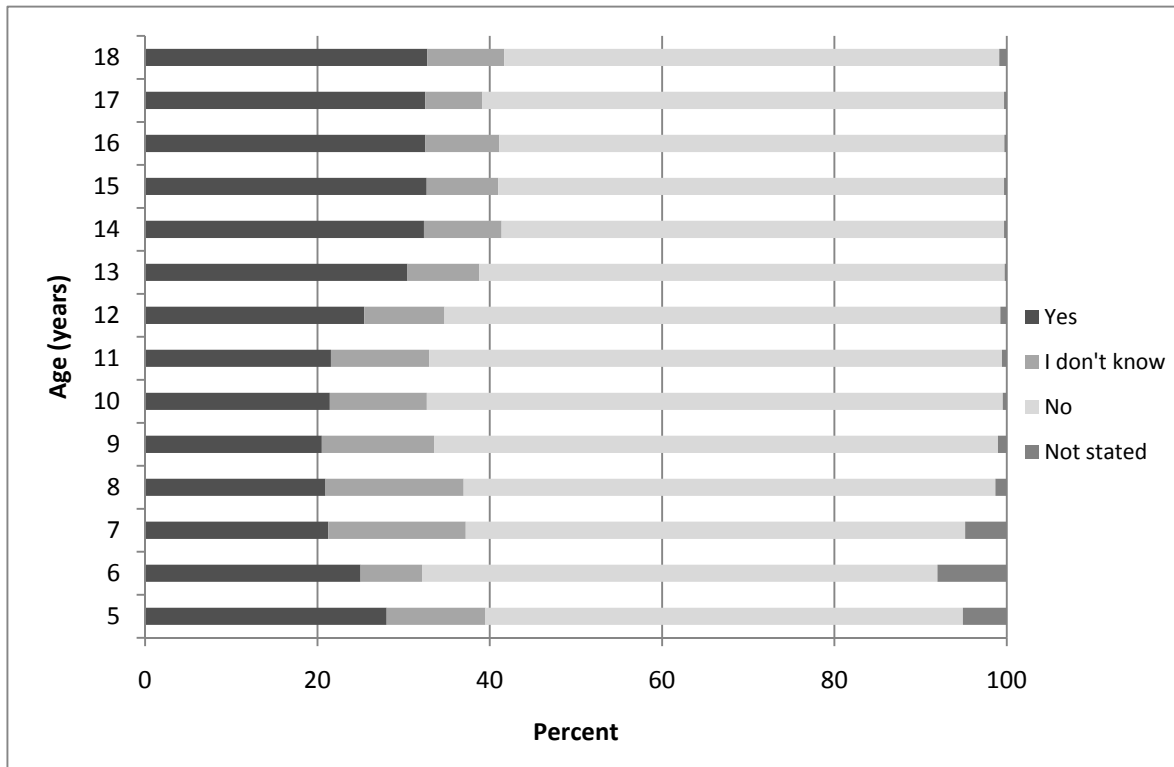
	Sex	Yes		No		I don't know		Not stated		Total #
		%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	
5 Years	M	18.7	14	70.7	53	6.7	5	4.0	3	75
	F	24.4	20	58.5	48	11.0	9	6.1	5	82
6 Years	M	10.4	5	70.8	34	12.5	6	6.3	3	48
	F	15.6	10	75.0	48	6.3	4	3.1	2	64

7 Years	M	7.3	8	79.1	87	10.0	11	3.6	4	110
	F	2.1	2	80.4	78	15.5	15	2.1	2	97
8 Years	M	5.2	22	80.9	343	11.8	50	2.1	9	424
	F	2.6	13	88.0	434	8.3	41	1.0	5	493
9 Years	M	4.8	48	86.6	869	7.8	78	0.9	9	1004
	F	2.5	27	89.4	964	7.1	77	0.9	10	1078
10 Years	M	2.9	49	91.5	1557	5.1	87	0.5	8	1701
	F	2.2	40	93.2	1676	4.1	73	0.5	9	1798
11 Years	M	2.1	49	94.3	2174	2.6	61	0.9	21	2305
	F	1.4	36	96.2	2406	2.0	50	0.4	10	2502
12 Years	M	2.8	63	93.9	2103	2.4	54	0.8	19	2239
	F	1.3	30	96.3	2180	1.5	33	0.9	20	2263
13 Years	M	2.5	47	95.8	1811	1.5	28	0.2	4	1890
	F	1.7	42	97.1	2384	1.0	24	0.2	6	2456
14 Years	M	3.3	54	94.9	1529	1.4	22	0.4	7	1612
	F	1.3	25	97.7	1936	0.9	18	0.2	3	1982
15 Years	M	3.5	42	94.7	1128	1.6	19	0.2	2	1191
	F	1.5	20	97.4	1338	0.8	11	0.4	5	1374
16 Years	M	1.6	13	97.1	784	1.0	8	0.2	2	807
	F	0.9	9	98.1	979	0.6	6	0.4	4	998
17 Years	M	4.8	19	92.7	366	1.8	7	0.8	3	395
	F	1.4	8	97.7	555	0.7	4	0.2	1	568
18 Years	M	12.2	38	82.4	257	4.5	14	1.0	3	312
	F	16.2	42	76.8	199	5.8	15	1.2	3	259

## Holiday plans

7.38 Participants in the survey were divided over disclosing holiday plans. 62.6 percent answered that they would not share holiday plans; 26.8 percent answered they would share holiday plans and 10.0 percent reported they were unsure.

Figure 7.7 Do you share your holiday plans online? (Age)



7.39 Of those that would not disclose their plans, the risk that this would pose was appreciated:

Because youif you tell them you are going on a hoilday and where you live, then when you are away they could go and rob your house (Female aged 11).

7.40 However, other comments received through the free text spaces indicated that young people felt this was 'exciting news' that they want to share with their friends:

often we put up things [like] "OMG guys, we're totally going to Bali for the first week of the holidays!! SO excited!" (Female aged 17).

7.41 Other comments reveal that some young people believe that a risk online may be mitigated by factors in the physical world:

Even if I'm going on a holiday and post it, My house has pretty top notch security so I don't think I'd have to worry (Male aged 12).

7.42 Further, it is possible that the rate of divulging holiday plans is greater than these results indicate. It is possible that young people may unintentionally reveal their holiday plans by posting photos on social networking pages or other online networks which could indicate current or future travel plans, thereby exposing themselves to risks back at home.

Table 7.7 Do you share your holiday plans online?

		Yes		No		I don't know		Not stated		Total
Sex		%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	#
5 Years	M	28.0	21	58.7	44	9.3	7	4.0	3	75
	F	28.0	23	52.4	43	13.4	11	6.1	5	82
6 Years	M	27.1	13	60.4	29	2.1	1	10.4	5	48
	F	23.4	15	59.4	38	10.9	7	6.3	4	64
7 Years	M	20.9	23	59.1	65	13.6	15	6.4	7	110
	F	21.6	21	56.7	55	18.6	18	3.1	3	97
8 Years	M	22.4	95	59.4	252	16.3	69	1.9	8	424
	F	19.7	97	63.7	314	15.8	78	0.8	4	493
9 Years	M	22.5	226	64.4	647	12.1	121	1.0	10	1004
	F	18.6	201	66.4	716	13.9	150	1.0	11	1078
10 Years	M	21.0	358	67.8	1154	10.6	181	0.5	8	1701
	F	21.8	392	65.9	1185	11.8	213	0.4	8	1798
11 Years	M	21.5	496	68.1	1569	9.7	223	0.7	17	2305
	F	21.6	541	65.0	1627	12.9	324	0.4	10	2502
12 Years	M	23.5	526	67.6	1513	8.1	182	0.8	18	2239
	F	27.4	619	61.5	1392	10.5	237	0.7	15	2263
13 Years	M	29.6	559	63.9	1207	6.3	120	0.2	6	1890
	F	31.1	764	58.8	1443	9.9	243	0.2	4	2456

14 Years	M	31.3	504	61.5	992	6.8	109	0.4	7	1612
	F	33.2	659	55.7	1104	10.8	215	0.2	4	1982
15 Years	M	32.9	392	60.5	720	6.5	78	0.1	1	1191
	F	32.5	446	57.2	786	9.8	135	0.5	7	1374
16 Years	M	34.6	279	59.1	477	6.2	50	0.1	1	807
	F	30.9	308	58.2	581	10.5	105	0.4	4	998
17 Years	M	33.4	132	59.2	234	6.8	27	0.5	2	395
	F	31.9	181	61.4	349	6.5	37	0.2	1	568
18 Years	M	34.0	106	55.8	174	9.6	30	0.6	2	312
	F	31.3	81	59.5	154	8.1	21	1.2	3	259

## Passwords

- 7.43 The majority of participants would not disclose their passwords online. However, 5.7 percent stated they would disclose their passwords online, and a further 3.0 percent were unsure.
- 7.44 Possible reasons for divulging this information was provided by ACMA's *Click and Connect* report:

Young people and children claimed they would give someone (usually their best friend) their password in certain circumstances. This may be, for example, if they struggled to remember it, they were not allowed online and they wanted their friend to upload photos from the weekend, or they were no longer using their account and thought someone else might as well make use of it.<sup>18</sup>

18 Australian Communications and Media Authority, *Click & Connect: Young Australians' Use of Online Social Media - Part 1*, 2009, p. 49.

Figure 7.8 Do you share your email or passwords online? (Age)

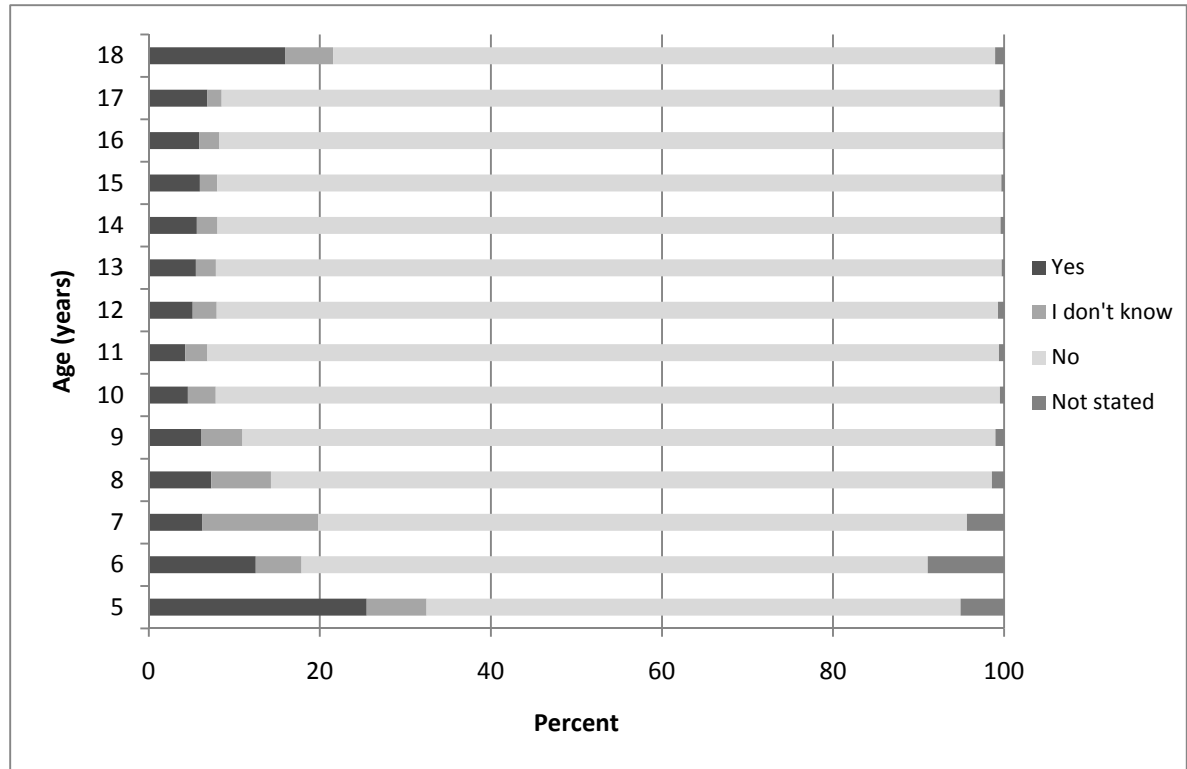


Table 7.8 Do you share your email and passwords online?

	Sex	Yes		No		I don't know		Not stated		Total
		%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	#
5 Years	M	22.7	17	68.0	51	5.3	4	4.0	3	75
	F	28.0	23	57.3	47	8.5	7	6.1	5	82
6 Years	M	8.3	4	77.1	37	2.1	1	12.5	6	48
	F	15.6	10	70.3	45	7.8	5	6.3	4	64
7 Years	M	8.2	9	74.5	82	11.8	16	5.5	6	110
	F	4.1	4	77.3	75	15.5	15	3.1	3	97
8 Years	M	9.2	39	80.9	343	8.0	34	1.9	8	424
	F	5.7	28	87.2	430	6.1	30	1.0	5	493
9 Years	M	8.2	82	85.0	853	6.0	60	0.9	9	1004
	F	4.2	45	90.9	980	3.8	41	1.1	12	1078



10 Years	M	6.0	102	89.9	1530	3.6	62	0.4	7	1701
	F	3.2	58	93.3	1678	2.9	52	0.6	10	1798
11 Years	M	5.2	119	91.0	2098	3.1	71	0.7	17	2305
	F	3.4	86	94.0	2351	2.1	53	0.5	12	2502
12 Years	M	6.6	147	89.5	2005	3.2	71	0.7	16	2239
	F	3.7	84	93.2	2108	2.4	55	0.7	16	2263
13 Years	M	6.3	119	91.0	1719	2.4	46	0.3	6	1890
	F	4.9	120	92.6	2274	2.3	56	0.2	6	2456
14 Years	M	7.4	119	89.5	1443	2.4	38	0.7	12	1612
	F	4.2	83	93.2	1847	2.5	49	0.2	3	1982
15 Years	M	7.6	90	90.0	1072	2.2	26	0.3	3	1191
	F	4.6	63	93.2	1280	1.9	26	0.4	5	1374
16 Years	M	6.6	53	91.1	735	2.2	18	0.1	1	807
	F	5.3	53	92.0	918	2.5	25	0.2	2	998
17 Years	M	9.6	38	87.1	344	2.5	10	0.8	3	395
	F	4.9	28	93.7	532	1.1	6	0.4	2	568
18 Years	M	15.7	49	78.2	244	5.1	16	1.0	3	312
	F	16.2	42	76.4	198	6.2	16	1.2	3	259

## Photos of others

- 7.45 Overall, the majority of participants thought the posting of photos without their permission was not appropriate. The data reflects earlier trends: there are peaks at both ends of the age spectrum, although there was no significant difference between male and female respondents.
- 7.46 The complexities of photo sharing and the types of considerations given by young people when deciding to post a photo is discussed below.

Figure 7.9 Do you post photos of others online? (Age)

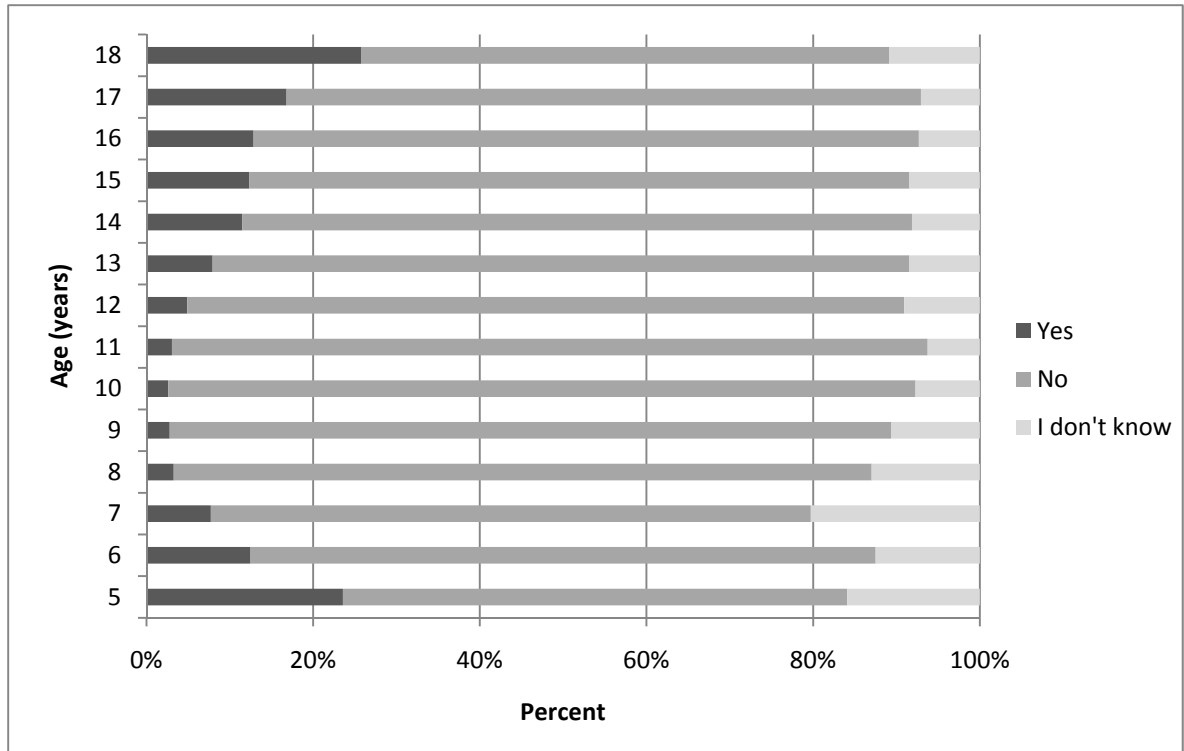


Table 7.9 Do you post photos of others online?

	Sex	Yes		No		I don't know		Not stated		Total #
		%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	
5 Years	M	25.3	19	61.3	46	9.3	7	4.0	3	75
	F	22.0	18	59.8	49	12.2	10	6.1	5	82
6 Years	M	12.5	6	72.9	35	2.1	1	12.5	6	48
	F	12.5	8	76.6	49	4.7	3	6.3	4	64
7 Years	M	8.2	9	70.9	78	14.5	16	6.4	7	110
	F	7.2	7	73.2	71	15.5	15	4.1	4	97
8 Years	M	3.1	13	84.0	356	9.9	42	3.1	13	424
	F	3.4	17	83.6	412	10.5	52	2.4	12	493
9 Years	M	3.3	33	85.5	858	10.0	100	1.3	13	1004
	F	2.3	25	87.6	944	8.6	93	1.5	16	1078
10 Years	M	3.2	54	88.1	1498	7.1	121	1.6	28	1701
	F	2.1	38	91.2	1639	5.5	99	1.2	22	1798

11 Years	M	3.9	90	90.2	2078	4.6	107	1.3	30	2305
	F	2.3	57	91.2	2281	5.4	135	1.2	29	2502
12 Years	M	5.3	119	85.3	1910	7.7	173	1.7	37	2239
	F	4.5	102	86.7	1962	7.6	173	1.1	26	2263
13 Years	M	7.9	150	85.0	1606	6.3	120	0.7	14	1890
	F	7.9	195	82.6	2028	9.0	220	0.5	13	2456
14 Years	M	12.5	202	81.1	1307	5.6	91	0.7	12	1612
	F	10.7	212	79.7	1580	8.8	175	0.8	15	1982
15 Years	M	14.3	170	77.8	927	7.2	86	0.7	8	1191
	F	10.6	146	80.4	1105	8.2	112	0.8	11	1374
16 Years	M	15.0	121	78.6	634	6.1	49	0.4	3	807
	F	11.1	111	80.9	807	7.2	72	0.8	8	998
17 Years	M	19.7	78	72.2	285	6.8	27	1.3	5	395
	F	14.8	84	78.9	448	5.5	31	0.9	5	568
18 Years	M	25.6	80	64.7	202	8.3	26	1.3	4	312
	F	25.9	67	61.8	160	11.2	29	1.2	3	259

## Conclusion

7.47 Divulging personal information forms part of an ‘identity-mosaic’ that young people wish to present to the public. *Click and Connect* found that

Purposeful divulgence of personal details [was] commonplace. Sometimes personal information was divulged without an understanding of the potential consequences of disclosure.<sup>19</sup>

7.48 Although young people share their information intentionally, it appears they are not sufficiently aware of the cumulative consequences. Although young people may assign a low level of risk to disclosing a single item of personal information, it appears that they do not evaluate the cumulative

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<sup>19</sup> Australian Communications and Media Authority, *Click & Connect: Young Australians’ Use of Online Social Media – Part 1*, 2009, p. 8.

## Are young people aware of online risks?

7.49 The extent to which young Australians are aware of online risks is not settled with many studies revealing a disconnect between the awareness of a risk existing, and identifying that their actions online may be exposing themselves to that very risk. Indeed, as Mr John Dalgleish commented:

Kids are going to engage in risk behaviours because of their developmental needs to, regardless of what intellectually they know.<sup>20</sup>

7.50 ACMA's submission argued that young people have a high awareness of cybersafety risks, and identify activities such as 'posting personal information' as high risk behaviour.<sup>21</sup> Yet, ACMA's research found that of those aged 16 to 17 years,

- 61 percent accept 'friend requests' from people they do not know offline; and
- 78 percent claim to have personal information such as a photograph of themselves on their social networking profile pages, compared to 48 percent of eight to nine year olds.<sup>22</sup>

7.51 More broadly across the age spectrum, ACMA found that 17 percent of 12-17 year olds claim that one of their top three reasons for using social networking services is to 'make new friends'.<sup>23</sup>

7.52 *Click and Connect* commented that children and young people tend not to identify their behaviour 'in terms of risk, or ascribe a degree to it'.<sup>24</sup> However, the *Are you safe?* survey received comments that indicate young people do appreciate risk and actively seek to mitigate those risks based on known options. For example, when asked about the content they share online, the following comments were submitted:

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20 Mr John Dalgleish, Manager, Strategy and Research, BoysTown, *Transcript of Evidence*, 17 March 2011, p. CS15.

21 Australian Communications and Media Authority, *Submission 80*, p. 4.

22 Australian Communications and Media Authority, *Submission 80*, p. 4.

23 Australian Communications and Media Authority, *Submission 80*, p. 4.

24 Australian Communications and Media Authority, *Click & Connect: Young Australians' Use of Online Social Media - Part 1*, 2009, p. 8.

When I realised that literally almost everyone could see what I post on the internet. I then went through all my friends on facebook and realised that there were people I didn't even know, and that really freaked me out, knowing that they could see everything I posted up, as they were on my friends list (Female aged 15).

Many people feel that they are safe when on these [social networking sites] because they only communicate with their friends, however that does not always stop other people from viewing their account (Female aged 15).

I believe that the maximum security features are utilised on social networking, it is okay to use that social media (Male aged 16).

i think that you shouldn't express to much information especially if it is personal or the least bit personal because it is giving away your privacy to others that you don't know. this could be very dangerous (Female aged 11).

- 7.53 Young people who engage in high risk behaviour primarily do so because others do, and therefore their behaviour generally reflects those around them.<sup>25</sup> However, other motivations for high risk behaviour have been found to include fun, excitement, curiosity and boredom.<sup>26</sup>
- 7.54 Yet comments were also made in the *Are you safe?* survey that indicate a possible connection between perceived anonymity and a lack of awareness of risk. One participant commented that 'no one can see me online - i am safe'.<sup>27</sup> Anonymity as a perceived safe-guard against risk, though relatively uncommon, is concerning and exposes these young people to extreme risks when online.
- 7.55 Equally dangerous, are the risks that arise when third parties are 'anonymous' or use identities that cannot be verified by others online. For example, when asked what content they share online, a female survey respondent commented:

I like to talk to other young people on the internet. I often use webcams, but unfortunately the other guy's webcam doesn't work. But I know I'm

25 Australian Communications and Media Authority, *Click & Connect: Young Australians' Use of Online Social Media - Part 1*, 2009, p. 49.

26 Australian Communications and Media Authority, *Click & Connect: Young Australians' Use of Online Social Media - Part 1*, 2009, p. 49.

27 Survey respondent, Male aged 14.

safe, because I have talked to these people on the internet before (Female aged 13).

7.56 This respondent exposes herself to predatory dangers discussed in Chapter 4.

7.57 Comments were also made that indicate young people are aware that a general risk exists, but are unaware of the specific dangers the unmitigated risk might bring. When asked about what content they post online, a female survey respondent commented:

can people get on here and look at at this privite stuff.because sometimes i get worried when i'm when i'm on the internet? (Female aged 8).

### Risk and anonymity

7.58 Quantitative analysis of the results from the *Are you safe?* survey reveals trends of young people's perceptions of anonymity when online. Almost 29.2 percent of participants aged between five and ten years believe they are anonymous when online. This compares with 21.6 percent of participants aged 11 to 18 years. Perceptions of anonymity overall declined with the age of participants. Significantly, more females aged ten years or younger had greater perceptions of anonymity than their male counterparts, whilst this difference was reversed in the older age group (11 years and older).

Figure 7.10 Do you think you are anonymous on line? (*Age and gender*)

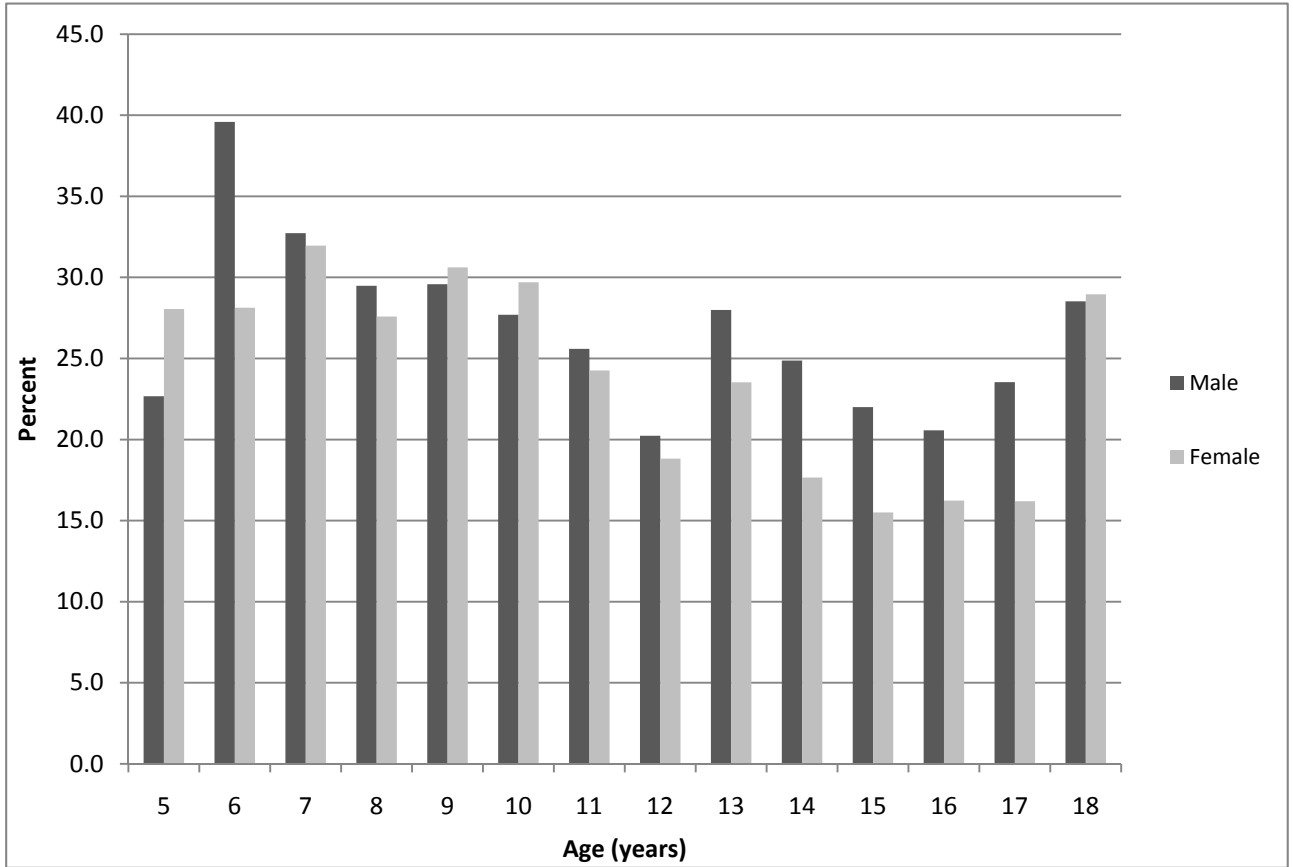


Table 7.10 Do you think you are anonymous on line?

		Yes	No	Not stated
<i>Sex</i>		%	%	%
5 Years	M	22.7	52.0	25.3
	F	28.0	37.8	34.1
6 Years	M	39.6	39.6	20.8
	F	28.1	54.7	17.2
7 Years	M	32.7	58.2	9.1
	F	32.0	56.7	11.3
8 Years	M	29.5	51.2	19.3
	F	27.6	55.2	17.2
9 Years	M	29.6	48.3	22.1
	F	30.6	51.3	18.1
10 Years	M	27.7	50.0	22.3
	F	29.7	51.9	18.4
11 Years	M	25.6	51.5	22.9
	F	24.3	56.2	19.5
12 Years	M	20.2	55.8	23.9
	F	18.8	63.4	17.8
13 Years	M	28.0	72.0	0.0
	F	23.5	76.5	0.0
14 Years	M	24.9	75.1	0.0
	F	17.7	82.3	0.0
15 Years	M	22.0	78.0	0.0
	F	15.5	84.5	0.0
16 Years	M	20.6	79.4	0.0
	F	16.2	83.8	0.0
17 Years	M	23.5	76.5	0.0
	F	16.2	83.8	0.0
18 Years	M	28.5	71.5	0.0
	F	29.0	71.0	0.0



7.59 Although it cannot be presumed that those believing they are anonymous also believe ‘anonymity’ provides them sufficient protection from online dangers, it is concerning that this percentage of young people still believe they cannot be identified or physically located. This is despite extensive developments in education curricula and safety campaigns by police around the country.

7.60 Of concern are the rates of those that believe they are anonymous online and are not concerned about their safety. Figures 7.11a and 7.11b detail the Committee’s findings from its survey on this question.

Figure 7.11a Of those who believe they are anonymous online, do they feel safe? (Female)

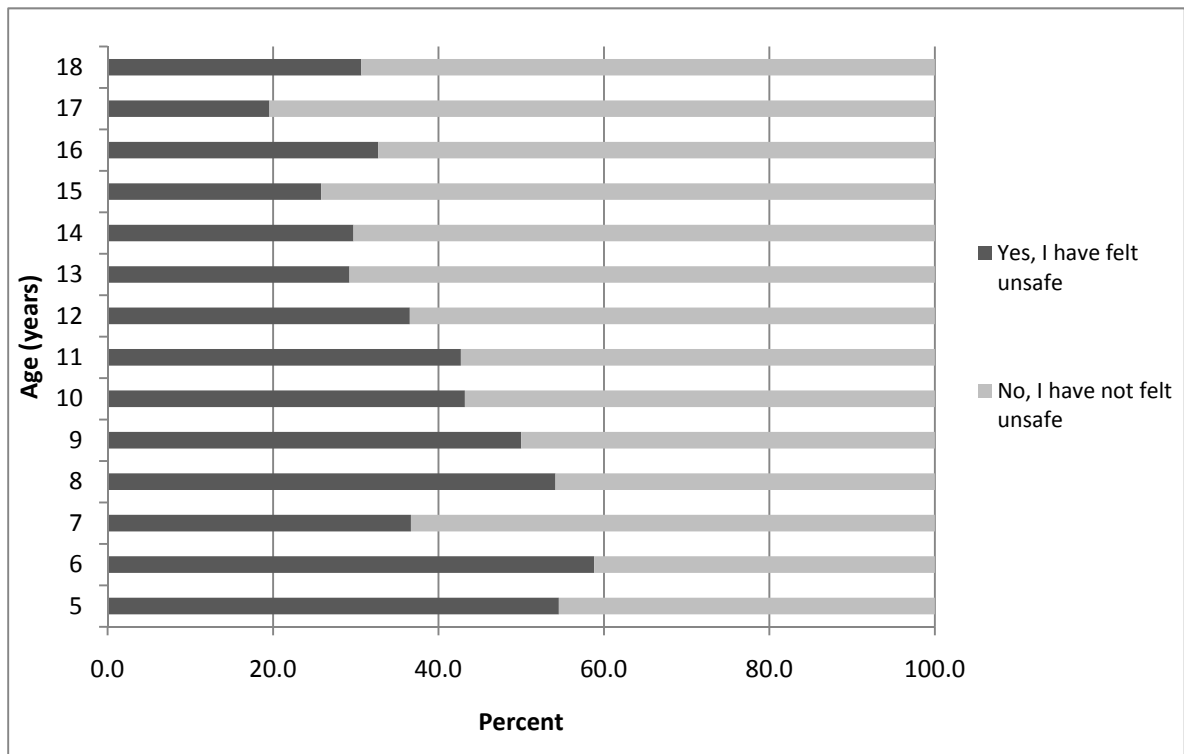
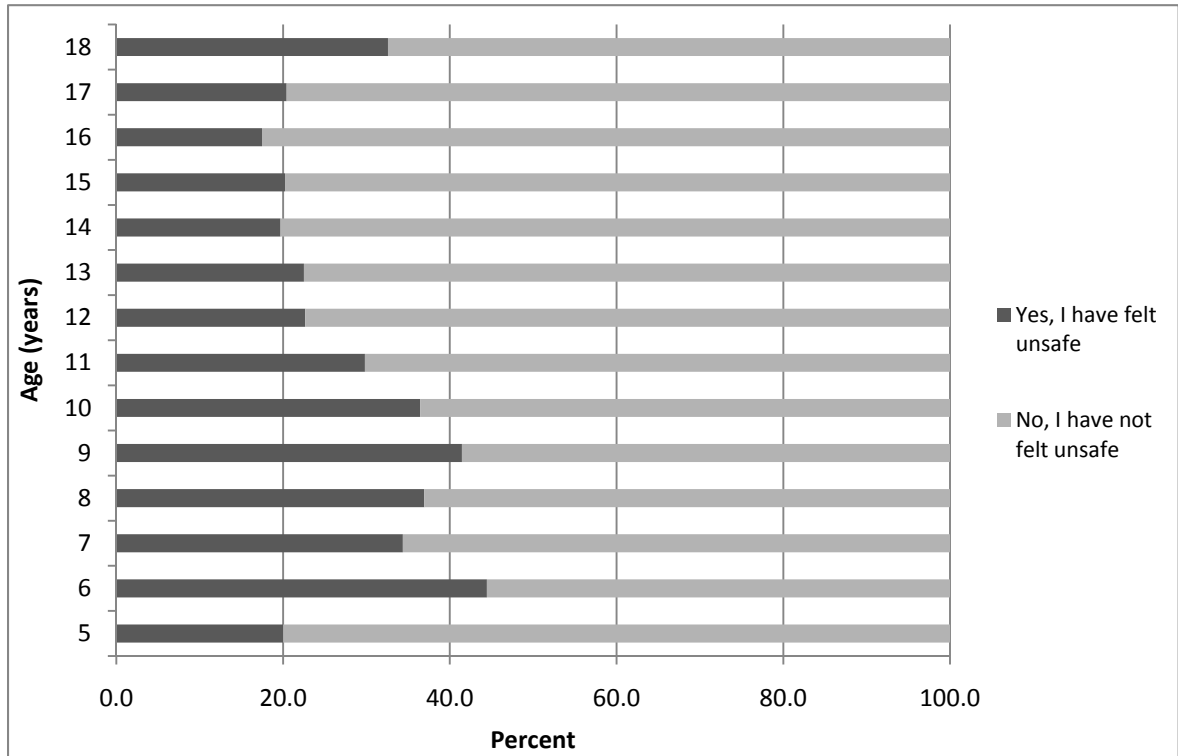


Figure 7.11b Of those who believe they are anonymous online, do they feel safe? (Male)



7.61 The graph below shows the general trend of those that believe they are anonymous when online and tracks their state of worry.

Figure 7.12a Of those who believe they are anonymous, what is their level of concern about online risks? (Aged 12 years and younger)

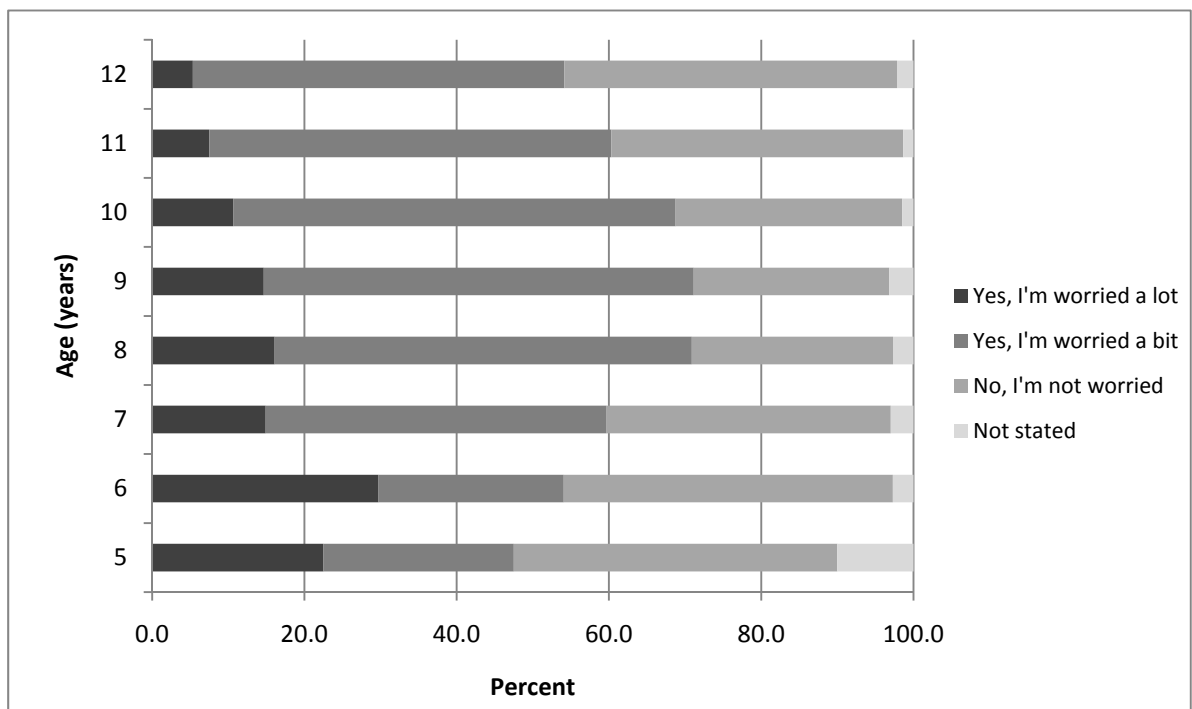
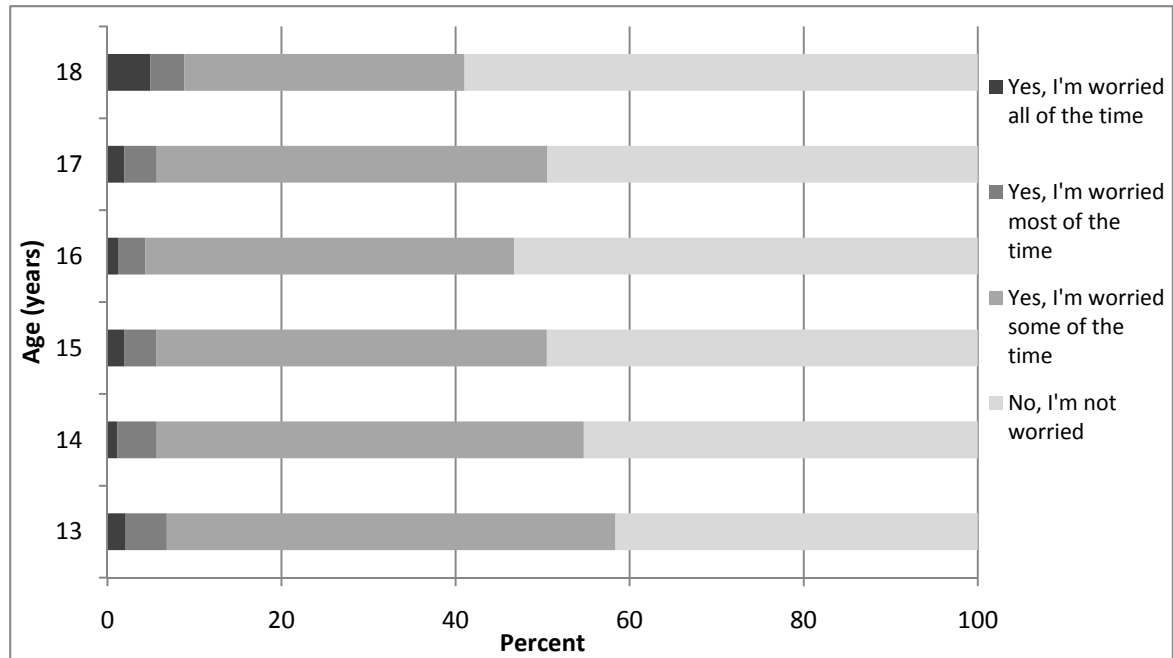


Figure 7.12b Of those who believe they are anonymous, what is their level of concern about online risks? (Aged 13 years and older)



- 7.62 Children aged between eight and 11 years of age show greater level of concern than those aged five to seven years of age. As might be expected, there is greater concern about safety among females aged 12 years and younger.
- 7.63 As children aged 12 years and older possibly become more aware of the opportunities for connecting online, they appear to become less concerned with their safety. This is similar to findings by ACMA reported above.
- 7.64 Although the rate of perceived anonymity appears to decline with age, their level of concern also decreases. If this group believe perceived anonymity is a sufficient mitigation of risk, these young people might be exposing themselves to high levels of risk. Further, these results might indicate that cyber-safety education is not having the desired impact and not reaching its main target audience sufficiently.

### Ambivalence

- 7.65 Though the survey did not ask respondents specifically about their awareness of risk, comments were submitted through free text spaces that indicate a general awareness of a risk, but an ambivalence of the danger it poses. For example when asked about content posted online, the following comments were made:

Often we put up things that we know we shouldn't such as holiday date etc, but we do anyway (Female aged 17).

I know there's all this cyber awareness stuff going on, but its just that its never happened to me or anyone around me. I just don't see it as relevant. I mean, i know the basics, like not posting addresses etc, and i'm not an idiot, so i'm not that worried (Female aged 17).

I accept the fact that the internet can be dangerous, but I'm really complacent about safety issues. I don't really have anything to hide, which is why I'm not worried (Female aged 17).

i think I am pretty careful with what i tell people and put up on the internet. I don't think there's anything that people could use against me. some things may be awkward, but not unsafe (Female aged 14).

- 7.66 The diverse range of awareness and appreciation of risk is not surprising as varying results are also reflected in similar studies. A longitudinal survey of young Australians surveying their awareness and appreciation of risks online would be valuable when seeking to evaluate education programs. Further, examining the rates of perceived anonymity and the strategies that this group employ to safeguard their privacy would reveal the extent to which young people mitigate risks in ways that neither the Committee's survey nor other Australian studies have included.

## How and why do young people decide what content to share online?

- 7.67 As in other areas of their lives, young people appear to want to take responsibility for their safety online and have a meaningful and valued input to creating a safer online environment. For example, through free text spaces, participants submitted the following comments in response to a question about information shared online:

Everyone has their own responsibility of what they post on the web, and at our age we should be wise enough to know our limits on what we can post and can't post (Female aged 14).

I believe that if you treat the internet with caution and with the awareness of the dangers of cyber activity, then it is possible to feel quite safe on the internet. I have certainly managed this, simply because I am

well aware of the risks and dangers associated with the internet and familiar in how best to avoid or deal with these in an appropriate manner (Female aged 17).

I know what i should and shouldn't be posting up on the internet. (i.e facebook and msn). I have been warned about the issues that could result, if any of my information were to fall in the wrong hands (Female aged 14).

- 7.68 As presented in the Introduction to this Report, the Committee believes that young people hold the key to their safety online. The remainder of this chapter examines how young people decide what information to share, and the resources they employ to achieve their understanding of safe online practices.
- 7.69 Before examining the tools used by young people, it is again important to note that young people are not a homogenous group. Differences in personality have an important effect on online activities, appreciation of risk and the strategies used to maintain a level of safety and security they each deem appropriate.

## Personality, identity and appreciation of risk

- 7.70 It has been commented that young people choose to be open and expressive when online.<sup>28</sup> The option of protecting their privacy online can fall by the wayside in favour of wanting to stand out to others online.<sup>29</sup> This is most often sought through expressive profile pages, welcoming attention from the opposite sex, and making or accepting friend requests from those with similar interests.<sup>30</sup>
- 7.71 *Click and Connect* categorised its teenage-participants into five distinct groups based on the level of risk which they expose themselves: active risk-takers; responsible risk-takers; the vulnerably influenced; specialist seekers; and claimed conformists. Although no direct comparisons can be drawn between the *Are you safe?* survey and ACMA's report, this model of segmenting is particularly helpful when seeking to ascertain how young

28 Australian Communications and Media Authority, 2009, *Click & Connect: Young Australians' Use of Online Social Media – Part 1*, p. 5.

29 Australian Communications and Media Authority, 2009, *Click & Connect: Young Australians' Use of Online Social Media – Part 1*, p. 5.

30 Australian Communications and Media Authority, 2009, *Click & Connect: Young Australians' Use of Online Social Media – Part 1*, p. 5.

people decide what content to post online, and how they mitigate known risks.

- 7.72 All types of risk takers identified by ACMA's *Click and Connect* report employ a variety of risk management strategies:
- abiding by the rules or advice given to them;
  - using common sense;
  - learning from experience; and
  - resilience.<sup>31</sup>
- 7.73 The Committee's consultations with young people revealed similar strategies, and its findings particularly point to
- critical thinking and rational deduction;
  - informal learning through experience, by examples or through peer-based exchanges; and
  - formal learning through schools, parents and official programs.
- 7.74 Young people also seek to limit certain online networks so that they can communicate and divulge information to those they trust online, but maintain their privacy from the general online public.
- 7.75 Lastly, young people are also concerned by 'digital footprints' and these concerns can inform their decisions to post information and content online. These factors are discussed below.

## Critical thinking and rational deduction

- 7.76 Young people can engage a process of critical thinking and rational deduction when assessing online risks, authenticity of content and its sources. One participant noted that real-life networks inform their decisions when asked about the information they share online:

I probably won't add people as a friend unless we have lots of mutual friends (Female aged 14).

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31 Australian Communications and Media Authority, *Click & Connect: Young Australians' Use of Online Social Media - Part 1*, 2009, p. 9.

- 7.77 Additionally, as the following dialogue demonstrates, young people assess the authenticity of their communications with their peers when online:

CHAIR- ...How do you determine whether or not you should be clicking on a link [that appears to be sent to you by 'friends']? [Georgia] said it did not sound like [her] friends, so was that a gut instinct?

Georgia-Yes. It was the way it used all the abbreviations-like the way they spelled 'like' was 'lyk' - and those sorts of things. My friends and I only use full words [when communicating online].

CHAIR-So you can look at the language that it has used. Okay. Would anyone else like to comment on that?

...

Jacqui-You have 'friends' on Facebook, but you do not communicate with them over Facebook. You get the people that you do not actually talk to but you know. Those types of people sending [links to virus' or spam messages] to you. It is like, 'You never talk to me; why are you sending me this?' Or it will be [sent by] more than one person. That is another way you can figure out not to click on it.<sup>32</sup>

- 7.78 Submitted in the final free-text space, the following comment demonstrates the use of critical thinking by young people:

If I am asked a question in an online forum, I always think "who is going to read this information - who has access to it". Online safety is all about assessing what you are about to do critically - but that's the important point: it must be before you post or else that information is most likely going to exist forever (Male aged 18).

## Informal learning

- 7.79 From a young age, children apply common sense and begin to learn from experiences they encounter themselves, through examples by others and as reported in the media. These behaviours or strategies are acquired as children become more resilient and adept at managing their online experiences.<sup>33</sup> These avenues of informal learning are explored below.

32 High School Forum, *Transcript of Evidence*, 20 April 2011, p. CS8.

33 Australian Communications and Media Authority, *Click & Connect: Young Australians' Use of Online Social Media - Part 1*, 2009, p. 9.

## Learning from experience

- 7.80 Often, young people learn to modify behaviour after encountering some unsought experiences online. Moreover, learning from experience and developing resilience is 'usually a phenomenon of increasing age and exposure to being online'.<sup>34</sup> Exposure over time to unsought experiences can result in an individual learning how best to handle such situations.<sup>35</sup>
- 7.81 Indeed, the way children and teens begin to manage risk is often by navigating challenging experiences. In an ACMA study, participants gave examples of making their profile pages private after receiving unwanted comments, not using a webcam with strangers after an incident of indecent exposure, or avoiding downloading suspect files or opening pop-ups after they have had a virus.<sup>36</sup>
- 7.82 When asked where they learnt about cyber-safety, similar examples emerged through the free-text spaces in the *Are you safe?* survey:

on msn, some girl kept on trying to make me her friend on the internet and she tried it for about a month until I found a way to stop it and I tried to block her but somehow she kept on talking to me and I felt very scared that she wasnt who she said she was and she wasnt the age she posted either... I think msn should make it less easy for random people to start talking to you (Female aged 13).

Personal experience and common sense. I grew up surrounded by technology and learnt on my own (Male aged 16).

- 7.83 Experimenting with risk-averse behaviours were found in the ACMA qualitative study to have an effect on the likelihood of repeat activity:

Engaging in high risk behaviour can have varying levels of impact... Some behaviours have consequences which would deter future repetition. In others, the consequences may not be so severe, and therefore these behaviours may be repeated.<sup>37</sup>

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34 Australian Communications and Media Authority, 2009, *Click & Connect: Young Australians' Use of Online Social Media – Part 1*, p. 53.

35 Australian Communications and Media Authority, 2009, *Click & Connect: Young Australians' Use of Online Social Media – Part 1*, p. 9.

36 Australian Communications and Media Authority, 2009, *Click & Connect: Young Australians' Use of Online Social Media – Part 1*, p. 53.

37 Australian Communications and Media Authority, 2009, *Click & Connect: Young Australians' Use of Online Social Media – Part 1*, p. 49.



## Sibling- and peer-based learning

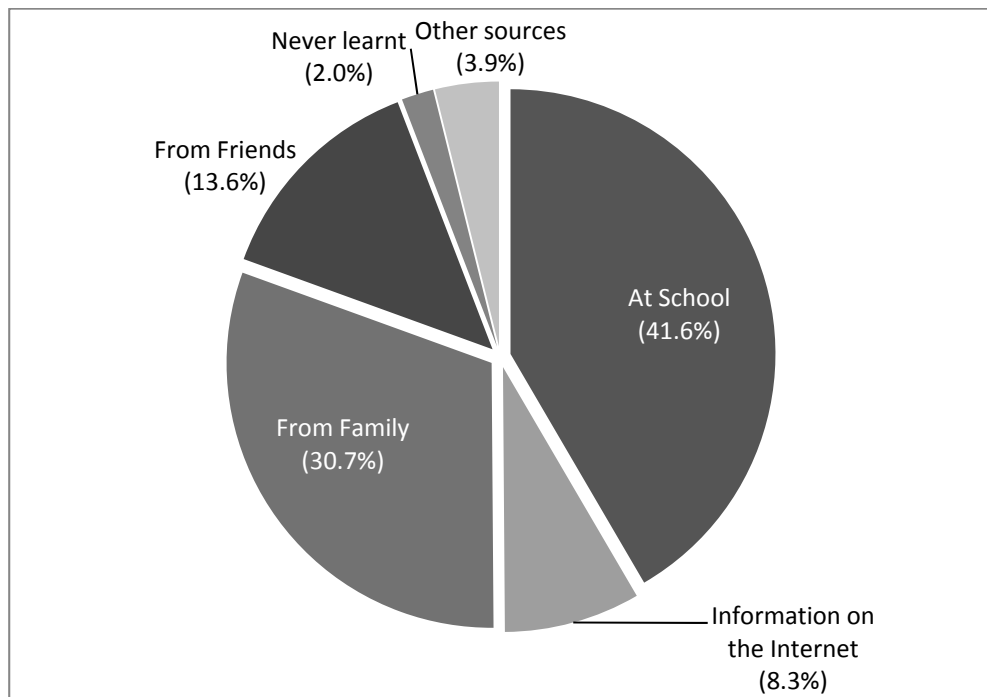
- 7.84 Learning from the experiences of others is an important tool in deciding what content to post online. Most often, young people will learn from each other (their peers) or from their siblings. For example, one respondent explained how they learnt to be safe online:

i sort of learnt by myself, taking examples from others who did the wrong thing, helped me to understand how far i should or should not go (Female aged 15).

just as i grew up, i have older siblings who told me everything about it (Female aged 15).

- 7.85 The role of family and friends in the decision by young people to post information online should not be undervalued. Based on analysis of the results from the Committee's survey, 30.7 percent of young people surveyed identified they primarily learnt about cyber-safety through their family, and an additional 13.6 percent identified that their friends were their primary source of guidance.

Figure 7.13 Where did you learn about cyber-safety?



7.86 This finding highlights the need for these groups to be the carriers of thorough and detailed information, as young people are less likely to reach out to formal portals for assistance.

7.87 ACMA found that older siblings influence risk-taking behaviour by setting the precedent:

[Older siblings] can influence their younger counterparts' behaviour in a number of ways, through allowing them to watch what they do from an early age, and thus advancing their younger sibling's internet capability and social awareness. They often teach them how to use the computer and internet, setting up accounts for younger siblings and setting the level of trust between parent and child. This level of trust often then applies to all younger siblings in the family. For example, if the eldest is seen to demonstrate responsible behaviour online, parents are more likely to be trusting of all their children, however, if they are irresponsible then parents are likely to monitor all of their children more closely.<sup>38</sup>

7.88 Similar to sibling-based learning, peers influence risk-taking behaviour by setting the social standard:

Trends set by peers include determining what profiles should include, seeking out the next best violent game, determining which online website/forum is best for interacting, and finding and forwarding the next most explicit/shocking material possible.<sup>39</sup>

7.89 The role of family is further explored in Chapter 10 of this Report.

### Common sense

7.90 A considerable number of respondents in the *Are you safe?* survey used the free-text spaces throughout the survey to indicate that deciding what content to post or information to search was largely an exercise in 'common sense', 'common knowledge' or 'general knowledge'. Some of these comments are included below:

Internet personal safety is, in a lot of ways, just a logical extension of
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38 Australian Communications and Media Authority, *Click & Connect: Young Australians' Use of Online Social Media - Part 1*, 2009, p. 51.

39 Australian Communications and Media Authority, *Click & Connect: Young Australians' Use of Online Social Media - Part 1*, 2009, p. 51.

personal safety in reality. If you do not want someone to phone you, you do not give them your phone number. If you do not want someone to be able to find you or address you directly, you do not give them your name. My initial sense of personal safety in reality can almost definitely be attributed to my family, but as far as on the internet goes, it's COMMON SENSE (Male aged 17).

My common sense, which forms a part of the majority of teenagers, which is why most of them are so annoyed about all of this 'cyber education.' None of it is new, different, or useful. Horror stories you hear about in regards to cyber accidents are just that....accidents. And I understand you are trying to prevent that... but repeating common knowledge at the cost of thousands of dollars is not going to change that (Female aged 13).

You just have to use your common-sense. You wouldn't tell a stranger your personal information or send them raunchy photos. The internet is full of strangers, so just keep personal info to yourself or you'll end up in trouble (Female aged 16).

- 7.91 The identification by young people that they employ 'common sense' is indicative that they are absorbing a level of cyber-safe practices that they have received from a young age, and therefore do not identify that these skills are anything out of the ordinary.

### Learning by examples reported in media or featured in television shows

- 7.92 Another source that is impacting on the internal decision-making processes of young Australians includes learning through examples reported in the media or cases that might be featured in television shows.
- 7.93 More specifically, comments made by respondents in the *Are you safe?* survey referenced news stories. For example, a female aged 13 commented that in addition to other sources she learnt about cyber-safety through 'the bad publicity on the media about people getting stalked and bullied and harassed on the internet'.<sup>40</sup>
- 7.94 Similarly, young people are becoming more aware of online dangers and learning methods of managing online risks through popular television programs or movies that feature cyber-safety or cyber-bullying in their storylines. Notably, a 17-year old male survey respondent commented that he learnt about cyber-safety through media:

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40 Survey respondent, Female aged 15.

on television programs or movies - i knew how to rotect your facebook page or how stupid it is to put info about yourself up on the interent for strangers to see (Male aged 17).

- 7.95 However, a few respondents were eager to comment that media reporting of cyber-bullying and cyber-safety more generally has led both parents and schools to overstate threats online. In response to the same question, the following comments were made:

Reports on Channel 7 news and A current affair etc has meant taht my parents are super concerned about my safety online. Sometimes they want to sit beside me whilst they actually watch my ever click! Sure bad thigns can happen online, but i believe that we've had so much education at school i can know what to click and when to post (Male aged 16).

I learnt about the actual dangers of what can happen if you disclose too much info online through the news. We learnt about cyber-safety at school, but not so mcuh on [how] little information is needed for a stranger to track you down (Female aged 14).

## Formal learning

- 7.96 The results of the *Are you safe?* survey mirror that of other studies: a higher number of young people learn cyber-safety through formal channels.

- 7.97 Most young people 'claim to follow the 'basic' safety advice there have been given, yet it was also noted that young people find that exceptions to these rules are quite common.<sup>41</sup> *Click and Connect* commented that:

Abiding by the rules and applying commonsense are relatively easy strategies which tend to be used by the eight to 10-year-olds. Methods this age group might use to mitigate risk would be giving only parents their password, scanning downloadable files, and reporting someone who is behaving inappropriately or offensive material they come across online.<sup>42</sup>

- 7.98 Further, young people appear to use the general rules of personal safety to ensure their digital self is also protected. The following comments were

41 Australian Communications and Media Authority, *Click & Connect: Young Australians' Use of Online Social Media - Part 1*, 2009, p. 53.

42 Australian Communications and Media Authority, *Click & Connect: Young Australians' Use of Online Social Media - Part 1*, 2009, p. 9.

submitted through free text spaces in response to two different questions in the survey:

Having a sense of an idea how to play safe helps. If you follow what most parents tell their kids and 'Don't talk to stranger' then you should feel safe most of the time. On the internet you can basically just use a pseudonym or nickname that has little or no link to yourself to avoid these types of situations and then abandon it if things get too scary (Male aged 16).

The internet is a public forum so anything that you wouldn't tell random people on the street shouldn't be put up on it (Female aged 15).

- 7.99 There will be more detailed discussion of the role of formal education and discussions with family in Chapters 8 and 10.

## Limiting online networks

- 7.100 The Committee's consultations also found that although young people frequently post personal information, they limit the network that is able to view this information. The forums and the context in which material appears, features heavily in the decision-making process of whether the information should be disclosed or remain offline.
- 7.101 Young people commonly enable privacy settings so that their social networking pages, and personal information contained therein, are not available for broad public viewing. Young people will disclose more online if they believe they have limited their online network to a group of people with whom they feel comfortable sharing that information.
- 7.102 In its submission, ACMA commented that its research had shown that the use of privacy settings on profile pages appeared to be greater amongst the older age groups.<sup>43</sup> The strategies of limiting online networks as a method of protecting their personal information further expands the analysis in Chapter 5 on privacy and identity theft.
- 7.103 The following comments were made in the *Are you safe?* survey in response to questions about information sharing online:

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43 Australian Communications and Media Authority, *Submission 80*, p 4.

It is important to not display your pages to the public. By doing this you are risking not only your safety but your family and friends. Never take the powers of the internet lightly (Female aged 13).

As long as pictures and emails are only able to be viewed by the people you know, and the people that would most likely already have your email, then it is okay. The same can be said for schools. If the school that I am attending is only able to be seen by the people who attend my school, or otherwise know that I attend it, then there is little or no issue (Female aged 15).

I believe you should only post in places where the audience can be limited to just your friends, e.g. social networking. I also believe that if you are posting in public places, only post information if you would be happy to have the same information in a newspaper, it's a good way of gauging whether to post information or not (Male aged 18).

We go on Facebook but some of us, including me, set out profiles to friends only so that random strangers can't see our profiles! When we post something onto Facebook, it doesn't go out for the whole world to see! Please understand this! (Female aged 13).

Sites that i might have published photos of my friends or my birthday are completely excluded to the general public, you have to be my friend to see those things. I have chosen who can see those things and if there is somebody i don't know i don't make the silly mistake of accepting their request (Female aged 15).

i think if you have a site that you can communicate with your friends your page should be on private, so only your friends can see so no one who u dont know can see information about you or anyone (Female aged 10).

i think if you have good privacy settings and dont talk or add people you dont know then facebook, msn and myspace are fine (Female aged 12).

7.104 *Click and Connect* made some general comments about the use of privacy settings to limit the network of users online who can view and access the personal information of others. It commented that:

Privacy controls are important in providing young people with the choice to protect themselves. While most young people understand that internet safety is primarily their responsibility, many believe web providers have a duty to allow website users to be safe, and give the choice not to disclose personal information. ...

The privacy controls that were valued included the choice of either a public or private webpage, the choice to hide their age, ... and the choice to show either their real name or an alias.<sup>44</sup>

### Disclosing information to expand networks

- 7.105 Despite many young people limiting their social networks online in order to enhance their privacy, some respondents commented that they specifically disclose their information online so that they expand their social networks. For example the following comments were made by respondents to explain their answers regarding information sharing:

sometimes putting information like the school you attend could be dangerous, but its something a lot of people do so that they can identify their peers on facebook (Female aged 14).

Putting information on facebook is quite essential for me to contact past friends and hook up with people who have similar interests (Male aged 17).

- 7.106 Sharing such information appears to increase as young people reach their mid- to late-teen years.

- 7.107 Though sharing information of this kind can expose users to significant risks online, some young people who participated in the survey wanted to demonstrate that they saw this as a risk, but believed in the importance of trusting others online. For example, respondent to questions on what information they share online, one respondent commented:

My parents say that i should put up the name of my school on my social networking pages or bcome friends with people i don't know in real life. But i would be missing out on too many other good things on the net - it places too much emphaisis on the dangers. We need to stike a better balance - know the risks, but if there are opportunites that would outweigh the risk, i will always pursue them (Male aged 16).

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44 Australian Communications and Media Authority, *Click & Connect: Young Australians' Use of Online Social Media - Part 1*, 2009, p. 54.

## Digital footprints

- 7.108 The decision of some young people to post content is also influenced by concerns about their digital footprints. More specifically, young people are aware of the risks brought by the longevity of uploaded content, as well as the transfer of ownership to the site administrators, and the fact that information can never be permanently deleted.

### Longevity of the life of posted content

- 7.109 The Committee's consultations with young people revealed that young people hold concerns about the lasting effect that their online activities might have in the future.
- 7.110 Respondents made the following comments in response to questions about personal content posted online.

... if you were to put a photo up on the internet, you have to consider the fact that people in the workforce will also have access to these photos, so if you want to get your dream job make sure you only put photos you are willing for your future employers to see (Female aged 15).

[Posting] anything online could be dangerous. Putting things online about yourself or others is not safe no matter how safe you think it is and when you delete something it is always going to be online in a way (Female aged 12).

I know that any information that you put up on the web is there, and staying there. What I mean by this is that every time you write something, you are leaving an 'electronic footprint'. This may show users what websites you have been on, etc (Female aged 12).

- 7.111 Similarly, the High School Forum discussed topic of digital footprints with some insights:

CHAIR- Fast forward 20 or maybe 30 years... think of the worst thing you have ever said, put on there or posted--or that someone has posted about you. How are you going to explain it to your 15-year-old?

Georgia-I have had this discussion with my mum. She tells me how she-I do not think she used the word 'cheated' but how she cheated in her-



CHAIR-You do not have to go into too much detail-just how she did something and how she felt about it.

Georgia-It was really nice to see that she kind of had a human side.

CHAIR-Okay; so that would be your human side, to your teenager.

Georgia-Yes. It was just nice to see that I could relate to her in other forms-like, knowing that she had done some wrong things and that she was not perfect.

CHAIR-And whatever the worst thing was that you had ever done, you would not mind your 15-year-old doing that either? Because they will be coming back to you and saying: 'Well, Mum, you did it.'

Georgia-As long as my 15-year-old was not getting their head stomped in or making someone else feel belittled, I would not have a problem with it.

CHAIR---Okay. Someone else? ...

Jacquie--I have a few points on that. The first is: when you get to there, in 20 or 30 years time, like Georgia said, you will be able to relate. I am not saying that your child is going to say, 'Oh, but you did it.' You have learned. But you can relate. So if it happens you can say: 'I understand your position. I know where you have been. This is what I think is best, not from a mother's point of view but from what I learnt at that age.'

Samantha-I think it is a very hard question to answer when you think of how much we have evolved with technology in the last 15 years and how things have changed - like, it is not just bullying anymore, it is cyberbullying. Things have progressed. It is going to be completely different.

CHAIR-That was just thrown in there to get you thinking about what you are actually putting on there. You look down the track and think, 'One day it might be an employer, or a parent or a child.'

Matt-I think that in the next 20 or 30 years the technology is going to change. Like, now we have iPads and stuff like that; in the next 20 years we could be using some different gadget.

CHAIR.-So this would be so outdated you would not even see it?

Matt-Yes. We would not see it.<sup>45</sup>

- 7.112 Other Australian studies also account young people's concerns in this area. The study by the University of Technology Sydney of online and offline identities refers to one participant who commented that:

I know I can do things online, because I'm a number, so I will sign petitions online, forward emails, stuff like that, but as soon as I can be photographed, identified, that's where I draw the line... if [activities where I can be identified] jeopardise my future, I don't know how valuable they are right now.<sup>46</sup>

- 7.113 The same participant acknowledged that in the future, those online reminders of a self existing in another time and space remain positioned as undeniable 'fact', searchable and removed from the context in which they were first expressed. Thoughtfully, the study noted above commented that:

the persistence of these traces of experimentation online creates a dilemma for young people wishing to experiment with ideas and actions, because they last long after the flesh-and-blood person has disowned them.<sup>47</sup>

### Ownership of posted content

- 7.114 Concerns were also expressed about the ownership of posted content. In the Committee's High School Forum, a participant commented:

When you upload photos onto Facebook, Facebook technically owns them. Even if you ask them to remove it, it is permanently on the internet and can be brought back at any time depending on the people who own Facebook. I think there needs to be education or warnings put into place so kids understand what they are doing before they click a button.<sup>48</sup>

- 7.115 Another participant commented that the Internet's informality allows content to be freely adopted or stolen by others:

I take photos as a major hobby, so I am always clicking away. People always say, 'Upload them,' so I do. If they want me to take

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45 High School Forum, *Transcript of Evidence*, 20 April 2011, pp. CS25-26.

46 Yerbury, H. 2010, 'Who to be? Generations X and Y in civil society online', *Youth Studies Australia*, vol. 29, no. 2, p. 28.

47 Yerbury, H. 2010, 'Who to be? Generations X and Y in civil society online', *Youth Studies Australia*, vol. 29, no. 2, p. 29.

48 Amanda, High School Forum participant, *Transcript of Evidence*, 20 April 2011, p. CS18.

them down, even though it is a really good photo because I sift through tons of photos, I take it down but r am reluctant. I have other friends who are majorly into photography but I can steal their images too because I really like an image'.<sup>49</sup>

- 7.116 A respondent in the *Are you safe?* survey also raised concerns about his private information 'owned' by social networking sites who may then sell that information to third parties. The following comment was submitted in response to questions about sharing personal information online:

It is rather confronting to think that companies such as Facebook and Acxiom are selling our private information to marketers (Male aged 16).

### Inability to delete accounts/information posted etc

- 7.117 Adjacent to the concern of ownership is the concern that posted content, including personal information and opinions expressed, cannot be deleted or permanently removed from the online environment.
- 7.118 Two notable comments were expressed in the survey's free-text spaces by respondents wishing to explain the why they have felt unsafe online:

I signed up in random website (such as Facebook) and then I wanted to delete my account because I didn't felt safe with it but than it didn't deleted it but just locking account. (I wanted to delete the account permanently but it won't) Then I felt unsafe about websites (Female aged 15).

It feels like every bit of information you put up on the net, someone else is saving it for their own personally use. And I feel like everything I put up on the internet, even if i delete it, it will never be really deleted (Female aged 14).

### Targeted advertising as a result of interests and past activities

- 7.119 Young Australians also appear to be concerned by perceptions of becoming the targets of advertising campaigns. The following dialogue demonstrates these concerns:

Ebru-Another thing on Facebook is that if you talk about certain things-if you like soccer or fashion-an advertisement will come up for things that you are interested in. You click on it and see what it

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49 Victoria, High School Forum participant, *Transcript of Evidence*, 20 April 2011, p. CS18.

is about. Obviously, Facebook is becoming worldwide with businesses. Businesses are starting to use it-real estate, restaurants and everything-so kids are seeing more advertising for these kinds of things. I remember when Facebook first became popular that if you swore on Facebook you would get banned for a day or a couple of hours. But I think the rules of Facebook have changed since it first started becoming popular.

CHAIR-Do you think it is the rules or do you think it has become so big that it is too difficult to control?

Ebru-Yes, probably the people of Facebook cannot control what every single adolescent says. People put pictures up on Facebook and they just do not care about it anymore because it is so popular.

Senator BARNETT-So you think that Facebook are either selling or transferring your likes and information about you for commercial benefit or for other reasons? That is what you are saying?

Ebru-Yes.<sup>50</sup>

- 7.120 During the Forum, approximately 30 percent of participants indicated they would rather not be targeted by advertisers, and were concerned about such campaigns.<sup>51</sup>

## **When fun isn't fun anymore: examining the complexities of photo sharing**

- 7.121 Photo sharing draws upon many of the issues discussed above and illustrates complexities and nuances of the online environment. This topic is frequently raised in broader public discussion. Media outlets have recently given significant attention to the circulation of photos of women among groups of men online, as well as the role of law enforcement agencies to pursue those that *receive* photos of others.
- 7.122 In the context of young people deciding to post content online, the example of photo sharing demonstrates the risks young people expose themselves to as well as the strategies they employ to reduce risk. It also raises an important discussion of how posting photos of others can create additional concerns of permission, ownership and the ability to control

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50 High School Forum, *Transcript of Evidence*, 20 April 2011, p. CS14.

51 High School Forum, *Transcript of Evidence*, 20 April 2011, p. CS14.

one's personal information. Further, posting photos can increase strain on existing relationships when requests are made to remove photos.

- 7.123 The Committee received many comments from survey participants when asked whether they post photos of others online. Survey respondents commented on these general complexities:

Photos, I believe are a contentious issue because people freely put up photos on social networking sites like Facebook without permission and pretty much assume that if you are in a photo you give permission for a large amount of people to see you (Male aged 16).

I havnt been on Facebook for about 3 months but every time when i logged on their would be someone fighting with someone on someones wall or status- stupid photos put up on purpose. for example if a girl was a party and might of been sitting in a position and a camera just so happened to take an awkward shot of her underwear or something- this event is totally innocent but the person who uploads this photo onto the internet is an idiot- this happens a lot. photos which at the time are accidental or the subject might not even known are being taken are being put up on the internet for everyone to see. And what girl wants photos of their underwear all over the internet. this example happens allllloooooottt! (Female aged 16).

- 7.124 The Committee's High School Forum also discussed this issue, with one participant noting the absence of requiring formal permission before posting photos of others in a public forum:

It is interesting that, when a school takes a photo of you, it has to have permission and it is the same everywhere. But a friend can put it up and you can ask them to take it down, but they do not have to because it is on their profile. So even if you do not like that photo and you want them to take it down, they can say no.<sup>52</sup>

- 7.125 These complexities have led some young people to give specific consideration to the consequences of sharing photos of themselves and others online. Comments made by respondents give examples:

For posting pictures of others without their permission. although it would probably be most appropriate to always get their permission, my rule is usually....if its in some ways inappropriate or might hurt or

52 Samantha, High School Forum participant, *Transcript of Evidence* 20 April 2011, p. CS17.

embarrass this person, i will ask them first, otherwise it shouldnt be an issue and i put it up anyway. i take it down if theyve seen it and then ask me to because they are not comfortable with it (Female aged 15).

I only add photos of others without their permission if they already have lots of photos of themself already, they don't care or if is not an innapropriate picture (Female aged 14).

I think it's ok to put some photos up on the internet if you have the person's permission and also if your willing to have that picture stay on the internet forever (Female aged 14).

In terms of posting photos of others without permission, we often post photos of our friends without their permission as a joke and it is well recieved and comical among our group of friends. However it is never at the expense of another persons feelings, if we feel they will be upset over the photo then we dont post it (Female aged 16).

## Requesting the removal of photos

7.126 Throughout the Committee's consultations, comments were made by young Australian's that indicate the pathways they seek to have photos of themselves removed. Generally, young people appear to discuss the matter first with their friend/s who posted the photo, and then send a formal request to the site administrator if progress is not made at the first stage:

Imogen was saying before that if you do not like a photo, talk to the person and they may remove it. But if the situation is not resolved within a few days then... you can report it.<sup>53</sup>

7.127 Both stages are discussed below.

## Approaching friends

7.128 The Committee's High School Forum discussed the experiences of young people when they requested their friends to remove a photo online:

CHAIR - A photograph has gone up and you do not like it. You have asked your friend to take it down. I want to know what you did. Who can we start with?

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53 Madeline, High School Forum participant, *Transcript of Evidence*, 20 April 2011, p. CS16.

Lauren-There was a picture of me and this person ... from my school. Anyway, I was like to my friend, 'Can you take it down?' and she just did it straightaway, inboxed it. She took it down. ... I explained to her why I wanted it down.

CHAIR--Good. So you gave the information back how it made you feel for whatever reason.

Lauren-Yes.

...

Jacqui-It is more or less: if you want pictures taken down, make sure you do it for other people. Don't be a hypocrite. Don't be expect people to do things for you and not let do it for them... You should take on both people's perspectives. You want it off. They want theirs off even though you like it, so do the same for them.<sup>54</sup>

- 7.129 In response to a question on whether approaching friends was a successful strategy, an extremely low percentage of participants in the High School Forum indicated by a show of hands that the issue was satisfactorily resolved.<sup>55</sup> Amy, a participant, commented that she compromised and sought an informal resolution independently:

They did not take the photo down, and I said, 'No, it's a really bad photo. I don't like it.' If they did not take it down, I just had to remove the tag so the photo would not come up in my other photos. [The photo] is still in their [album], which was okay for me. I just did not want to see it.<sup>56</sup>

- 7.130 A similar comment was made by another Forum participant, Imogen:

If any of my friends tag me in a photo that I would not want to be tagged in, it is up to me to get rid of that tag and ask my friend to delete that photo off Facebook altogether. I can untag it myself, but if you want the photo to go completely you have to ask your friend. ... I have my privacy. I can have everything private or to just my friends. I think it is important because some people can find a way.<sup>57</sup>

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54 High School Forum, *Transcript of Evidence*, 20 April 2011, pp. CS16-18.

55 High School Forum, *Transcript of Evidence*, 20 April 2011, p. CS17.

56 Amy, High School Forum participant, *Transcript of Evidence*, 20 April 2011, p. CS17.

57 Imogen, High School Forum participant, *Transcript of Evidence*, 20 April 2011, p. CS13.

## Submitting requests to site administrators

- 7.131 Participants in the Committee's High School Forum discussed formal methods of removing unwanted photos of themselves. A few had previously submitted requests to site administrators. For example:

Ebru-From my experience, if I really did not like the photo and it was something that was unnecessary, I actually reported the person with the photo because you can do that. That is like sending something to Facebook and saying, 'This person has a photo of me that I don't want on their Facebook.' You have friends but they have more friends that you do not have, and word will get around if it is a really silly photo of you at a party out there in public. You have to care about your reputation at the end of the day.

CHAIR-And the future: when your kids see it.

Ebru-Exactly. If we just pop up in 20 years and think, 'I've graduated and it's still there.'<sup>58</sup>

- 7.132 Another participant was tagged in a sexually explicit photo by an unknown third party:

Peter-I got tagged once by a pornographic picture. I saw it and did not really like it. I reported it [to Facebook].<sup>59</sup>

- 7.133 Forum participants expressed a general frustration with the reporting processes to site administrators:

One of the problems is that when you report something you want to get a personal response such as: 'Your problem has been brought up. We have looked at it and we have found more cases.' But for people who report, either they do not get looked at or they do not get feedback at all. So you do not know what is going and you do not know if it is going to happen again. I think it is best that you should get feedback-no matter what. You should get feedback knowing that it has been brought up, otherwise it might happen again and you would not know. If you report something you want it to be dealt with, otherwise there is no point reporting it. ... you want to know that someone has looked at the problem not only on your behalf but also on behalf of other people.<sup>60</sup>

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58 High School Forum, *Transcript of Evidence*, 20 April 2011, pp. CS16-18.

59 High School Forum. *Transcript of Evidence*, 20 April 2011, p. CS8.

60 Jacqui, High School Forum participant, *Transcript of Evidence*, 20 April 2011, p. CS10.



- 7.134 Young people's ideas on how the online environment can be made safer are explored in more detail in Chapter 18.

## Conclusion

- 7.135 This Chapter has sought to detail the awareness and appreciation of risks of young people and reveal their decision-making processes when posting content online.
- 7.136 The resources and strategies employed by young people when deciding to post online demonstrate that young people truly are 'digital natives', whilst older generations have had to learn a 'new' set of rules and technologies that were previously foreign. This difference gives great weight to the exchange of learning that can occur between the generations: young people have much to learn from adults about the value of personal information and personal safety; whilst adults have much to learn from young people about their experiences and their social online currency that underpins their engagement with new technologies.

