

The Year in Online Safety



2012



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The Year in Online Safety:

Trends in 2012

The use of Internet-enabled devices accelerated in 2012, creating unprecedented opportunities for young people and teens, while complicating daily routines for families working to more safely manage their digital lifestyles. As technology companies rushed to meet the demand for new services and devices, they, too, struggled with how to help manage the online safety needs of families, and how to respond to renewed concerns from regulators. Governments around the world explored ways to increase online safety and privacy for consumers. In 2013, the digital world will continue to present both opportunities, and challenges in the area of online safety for everyone.

“Bring your own device”: home edition

Bring your own device refers to the proliferation of personal Internet-enabled mobile devices in the workplace, and has brought with it security concerns from IT professionals. 2012 saw the same phenomenon in homes, as **19 percent of U.S. households now have at least one tablet**, and **66 percent of young Americans now own smartphones**. All of these devices have created new digital lifestyles, leaving families hungry for strategies to help manage safety and privacy settings in homes chockfull of PCs, tablets, e-readers, smartphones, laptops, and online gaming consoles. Compounding the problem is the fact that most devices have incompatible privacy and safety settings. The future may offer some relief with more comprehensive home network management tools.

Taking a stand against online meanness: Are we reaching a cultural tipping point?

Schools, parents—and increasingly, youth themselves—are looking for ways to address the problem of online bullying. A **Microsoft survey** found that 54 percent of children age 8 to 17 in 25 countries are concerned that they will be bullied online. In 2012, young people took **action** by starting a number of youth-led anti-bullying movements, such as “**Nice It Forward**,” and participating in initiatives with heavy youth involvement, such as the **Born This Way Foundation**. The year offered some hopeful signs that more than a decade of efforts against online bullying may be pushing several societies toward a “cultural tipping point” on bullying in the near term.

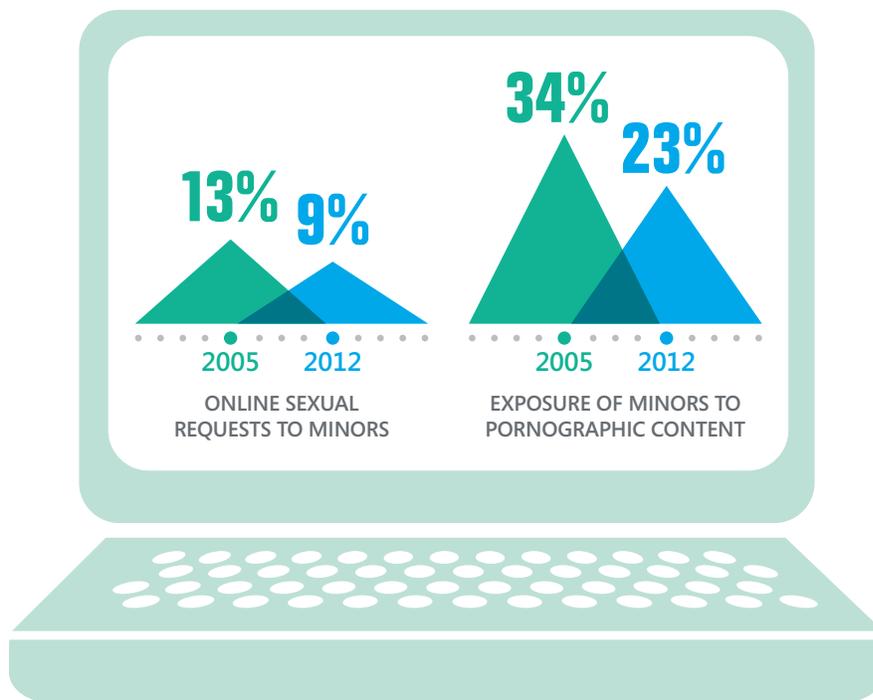


OF YOUNG AMERICANS
NOW OWN SMARTPHONES

Maybe the Internet isn't really so bad for kids

New research and initiatives, such as [A Platform for Good](#), increased recognition of the positive side of the Internet for youth, even as concerns about addiction to the Internet rise. The trend toward this acceptance is being fueled by a wave of new research indicating that the number of incidents of sexting and sexual contact as the result of online encounters among juveniles is both smaller than thought and actually declining.

A [study](#) published by the Crimes Against Children Research Center found that since 2005, "online sexual requests made to minors have declined from 13 percent to 9 percent," and that "exposure to pornographic content has dropped from 34 percent to 23 percent." In addition, new [research](#) about video games suggests they may actually be beneficial to kids' cognitive and social development.



COPPA creates challenges and uncertainty for online companies

The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act of 1998 ([COPPA](#)) is a U.S. law that requires website operators to obtain verifiable consent from a parent or guardian before knowingly collecting information from a person under 13 years of age. While some in the online safety community praise COPPA, others say it has the effect of excluding those under 13 from online content, and [research](#) has shown that it leads millions to lie about their age.

In 2012, the Federal Trade Commission ([FTC](#)), which is charged with enforcing COPPA, published a set of [proposed rule changes](#) that would extend COPPA to include geo-location information as well as web-tracking cookies. In the European Union, countries also looked at ways to regulate children's online privacy.

The challenges surrounding the implementation of COPPA left companies that want to provide content to customers under 13 uncertain about how to do so in 2013 and beyond, and may lead to fewer online services developed for younger visitors.

App stores are helping families make safety choices

As mobile app platform developers look for ways to provide a more consistent and reliable experience for customers, they have turned to managing the content available in their app stores—a significant change from the way content on traditional operating systems has been managed. Mobile app platform providers have taken a more active role in recent years in policing applications for security and safety. Mobile app stores, including those of Microsoft and Apple, now place restrictions on content, and often provide age-related content ratings.

At the end of 2011, CTIA-The Wireless Association [announced the release](#) of a mobile-application rating system in conjunction with the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB). In 2012, Microsoft [announced](#) that the Windows Phone Store would begin applying ESRB ratings to its offerings. In 2013, families may look to app stores for content screening and content ratings to help them manage mobile use.

Is “Internet addiction” real? Some countries are sure of it.

2012 saw an increase in developed countries acknowledging the problem of Internet addiction. In the U.S., the American Psychiatric Association (APA) does not consider Internet addiction a disorder. However, in 2012, the APA [added](#) “Internet Use Disorder” to the appendix of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Health Disorders (DSM-V), deeming it a condition “recommended for further study.”

In the highly wired nation of South Korea, the government [provides counseling](#) for those suffering from Internet addiction, which health professionals there estimate to be more than two million people. But the nation that has gone the furthest is China, which [recognized](#) Internet addiction in 2008, and has more than 1,500 licensed Internet addiction treatment specialists. As our global society leads more of its life online, expect concerns about Internet overuse to rise.



Governments worldwide increasingly block adult content for youth as well as adults

Since the beginning of the World Wide Web in the early 1990s, countries have grappled with how to protect youth from inappropriate content, especially pornography. Western governments have largely left matters to parents, but as countries in Asia and Africa increase their online participation, blocking of sexual content in these regions [has become more widespread](#).

In 2012, even Western democracies were considering using blocking technologies to shield children from such content. For instance, the UK government [studied](#) a proposal to enable filtering on all Internet Service Provider (ISP) connections and computers to be used by children, and Australia considered but finally [abandoned a plan](#) to require ISPs to filter pornography.





The Year in Online Safety: Microsoft in 2012

Throughout 2012, Microsoft was at the forefront of efforts to help families manage their digital lifestyle, continuing its long-standing commitment to online safety since the advent of its first online services in the early 1990s.

Microsoft's approach to improving online safety includes technological tools, education and guidance, and relationships with government, industry, law enforcement, and other organizations to help create safer, more trusted computing experiences for everyone.

Since 1997, Microsoft has provided robust online safety guidance and resources and led global awareness campaigns, including work for nearly a decade with non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Technology Tools

Technology tools play an important role in online safety for many families. While not a substitute for parental involvement, monitoring, filtering and other parental control technologies can help reduce the risk of exposure to inappropriate material. For years, Microsoft has worked to help meet these needs by providing online safety and privacy features in a number of its products, including Windows Vista, Windows 7, Xbox, Xbox 360, and Windows Live. Two major products released in 2012, Windows 8 and Windows Phone 8, contained significant new safety enhancements.

Microsoft Family Safety

In 2012, Microsoft released Windows 8, which includes [Family Safety software](#), with new safety features that allow parents and caregivers to create activity reports so they can easily review children's online activities or block inappropriate content. Family Safety enhances the standard Parental Controls in Windows, adding remote management that allows parents and caregivers to change a child's permissions online, and get session and website visit reports right from the Family Safety website. When installed on multiple computers and other devices in the household, Family Safety enforces the same settings and combines information from all devices into a single report.

Windows Phone Kid's Corner

With the release in 2012 of Windows Phone 8, Microsoft includes a new feature called [Kid's Corner](#). Kid's Corner allows parents and caregivers to set limits on access to apps, games, videos, and music. Children can then open Kid's Corner on their own and enjoy videos or games. However, they will be restricted from functions that might not be age-appropriate, such as web browsing or text messaging, or from accessing their parent's critical apps or files.



Making PhotoDNA available to law enforcement

In 2009, Microsoft, working with Dartmouth College, developed PhotoDNA, a technology that aids in finding and removing from the Internet some of the worst images of the sexual exploitation of children. Microsoft then donated the PhotoDNA technology to the U.S. National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC), which established a PhotoDNA-based program for online service providers to help disrupt the spread of child pornography online. In 2012, Microsoft worked with NetClean to make PhotoDNA image-matching technology [available to law enforcement](#) at no cost. This will help enhance their investigations of the sexual abuse of children, empowering them to more efficiently identify and rescue victims and bring abusers to justice.

Collaboration with Government, Industry, Law Enforcement, and NGOs

Creating a safer online environment requires a holistic approach in which consumers, government leaders, technology providers, and NGOs all play a vital role, and engaging with them is central to Microsoft's focus.

Relationships with NGOs and industry

Microsoft participated in many initiatives with NGOs and industry groups in 2012:

- Sponsored [A Platform for Good](#), a project of the [Family Online Safety Institute](#) designed to help parents, teachers, and teens connect, share, and do good online.
- Continued our sponsorship with the National Cyber Security Alliance (NCSA) through [StaySafeOnline.org](#), on the [STOP.THINK.CONNECT.](#) campaign, and on [National Cyber Security Awareness Month](#).
- Worked [with AARP](#) in a series of online safety summits aimed at reaching the older online population, as well as launching [Connecting Generations](#), a research report on how computers, mobile devices, and the Internet are changing the way we communicate.
- Sponsored [Generation Safe](#) from [iKeepSafe](#), which provides resources for educators and students to more safely manage and navigate the digital environment at school.
- Worked with the [Ben Cohen Stand Up Foundation](#), an organization dedicated to raising awareness of the long-term damaging effects of bullying, and to raising funds to support those working to stop it.
- Sponsored the inaugural Youth Advisory Board Summit of the [Born This Way Foundation](#), which aims to foster a more accepting society where differences are embraced and individuality is celebrated.

Relationships with government and law enforcement

Microsoft worked with governments and law enforcement agencies on a number of online safety initiatives in 2012:

- Participation as a [founding member](#) of the European Union's [CEO Coalition to make the Internet a better place for kids](#), a collective effort of government and industry to discuss best practices that improve life online for children.
- The Microsoft Digital Crimes Unit and Microsoft Research, which [provided grants](#) to six research teams to advance a deeper understanding of the advertising and selling of children and the use of technology in the child sex trade.
- Hosted the third annual [Capitol Hill Game Night](#) in Washington, D.C., attended by more than 500 members of Congress, their staff, and family members, as well as young leaders from the Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Washington, [Fuel Up to Play 60](#), and a winner from the [National STEM Video Game Challenge](#).

Education and Outreach

In 2012, Microsoft continued to invest in online safety education and outreach by creating materials on how consumers can help secure their computers, protect their online reputations, avoid online scams, secure mobile devices, and avoid, block, and report inappropriate behavior. Microsoft also provides practical guidance for families on how to more safely enjoy video games and other media at the [Get Game Smart](#) and [Xbox](#) websites.

Online media

In 2012, the redesigned [Microsoft Safety & Security Center](#) continued to serve as a central location for Internet safety-related guidance and resources. The site routinely receives more than five million unique visitors per month. Microsoft's [Safer Online Facebook](#) page, which offers the latest online safety tips and resources, reached the significant milestone of 500,000 "likes," and Microsoft's [Safer Online Twitter](#) channel grew to more than 50,000 followers. Microsoft launched its [Safer Online Teen Challenge](#), a contest where teens can submit creative works that champion being smarter and more secure on the Internet. The contest closes in April 2013, and winners will be announced thereafter.

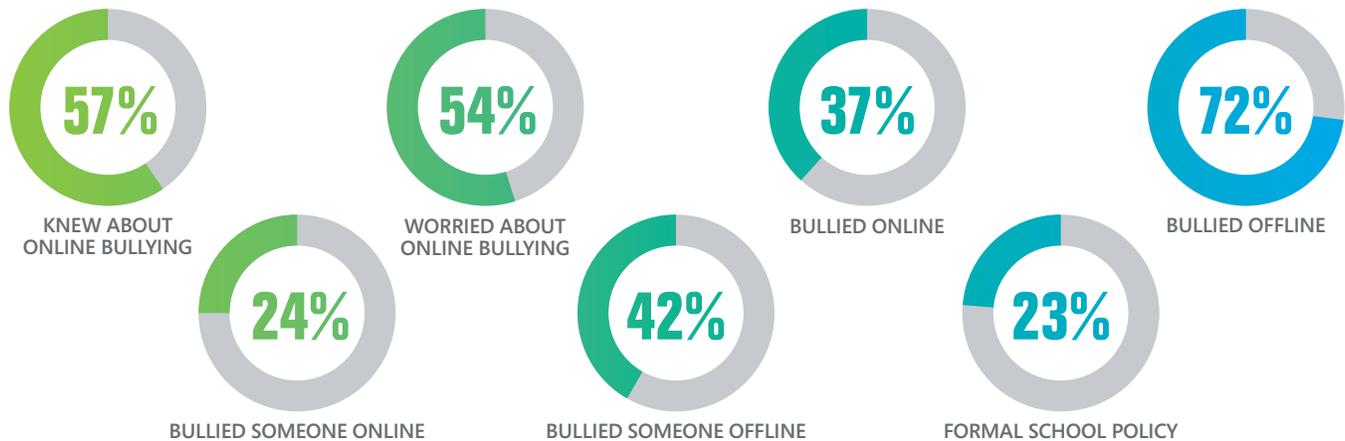
Publications

Microsoft regularly publishes materials related to online safety, including whitepapers, brochures, reports, and other informational resources. In 2012, Microsoft issued a number of significant new works related to online safety, including:

- [Internet Security at Work Toolkit](#), a set of resources to help employees work more securely on the Internet and better defend company information.
- [Online Fraud: Your Guide to Prevention, Detection, and Recovery](#), which contains practical anti-fraud safety tips and advice for consumers.
- *Preventing Online Bullying: What Companies and Others Can Do*, a paper set to be published by the European Commission (EC). It will appear in a special issue of [Ethics and Information Technology](#) entitled, "Ethics of Social Networks for Special Needs Users." The paper caps Microsoft's participation in a two-day workshop sponsored by the EC on social networking and online bullying among teens.
- [Online safety presentation series](#), which offers practical guidance for teaching others to protect individuals, families, and employees online. Each presentation page includes a PowerPoint deck with detailed preparation and presentation instructions, online safety materials, a promotional poster, and thorough speaker notes to help guide the presenter.

Online bullying metrics: worldwide averages

Microsoft Youth Online Behavior Study



Research

Microsoft regularly produces [original research](#) related to online safety. New studies in 2012 included:

- The [Microsoft Computing Safety Index \(MCSI\)](#), originally released as a five-country survey in October 2011, was extended to a total of 28 countries in 2012. Its goal was to gauge the best and most-used methods for effectively managing and overcoming threats to security and safety online.
- [Online Scam Survey](#) released in conjunction with National Cyber Security Awareness Month in the United States, revealing the top five most commonly encountered online scams.
- [Youth Online Behavior Study](#), which examined online behaviors among youth ages 8 to 17 in 25 countries, ranging from meanness (least severe) through online bullying and cruelty (most severe).
- [Connecting Generations](#) research, which examined how people of all ages are using online communication and social networking to enhance their family relationships.

Events

Microsoft regularly sponsors and presents at online safety events, including these highlights in 2012:

- [Safer Internet Day](#), which included a live social media event on [Facebook](#), where we shared the results of the Connecting Generations research with nearly 5,000 registered attendees.
- [National Cyber Security Awareness Month](#), which Microsoft helped to sponsor, including participation in the U.S. kickoff event in Omaha, Nebraska.
- [Internet Governance Forum](#), where Microsoft representatives presented and participated.
- [Family Online Safety Institute Conferences](#) in Europe, the Middle East, and the United States, where Microsoft representatives spoke on panels.
- [Washington State Cyberbullying Summit](#), which Microsoft hosted on our main campus in Redmond, Washington, participating in panel discussions and leading breakout discussion groups.
- [Digital Family Summit](#), a two-day event sponsored by Microsoft in Philadelphia, where youth and parents came together to learn and grow as families, sharing concerns about digital safety, kids' privacy, and online bullying.
- [Get Connected](#), a series of events with the AARP that provided instruction on safer Internet use to more than 1,000 attendees.