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Teens Pull Back From Popular Social Communities

Fears and Parental Restrictions Result in U.S. High School Students Limiting Online Interactions

Kansas City, MO – Though nearly 2/3 of U.S. high school students have a profile on MySpace, teens have changed the way they interact on the site and express concerns about personal safety and privacy while socializing online.

Most who choose to join communities such as MySpace take precautions to protect themselves and their privacy by not revealing personal information such as their name, location, school, and age. In general, teens are careful not to talk to strangers, accept friend requests only from people they know personally, and keep their profile private.

Still, 25% of teens surveyed do not have an account on an online social network. Fear for personal safety and privacy concerns are frequently cited as reasons for not joining; lack of time and parental restrictions are also major barriers. One teen quote summarizes: “[I do not have a profile because of] bad people and there are too many psychos on it and my parents will not let me and I don’t want to be part of one of those websites.” Some simply prefer not to socialize online: “I’d rather be an individual, plus ... I have friends I can talk to outside of the internet.”

This attitude toward social networks represents a turnaround from a 2005 TeenInsight study conducted where “meeting new people” and “making new friends” were the main reasons they visited MySpace. Since then, reports connecting MySpace with cases of online predators, adults posing as teenagers, and even murder received widespread publicity. Teens became more cautious and their parents started restricting access.

Sconex’s popularity is rising – this site is specifically for high school students. To register, a student must pass a round of security questions about their school such as their principal’s name, school newspaper name, and general class schedule. The exclusivity of the site adds a sense of security public networks are lacking.

TeenInsight is the teen research division of Decision Insight, a full service market research firm. Recognizing the need to target the hard-to-reach Teen segment, we obtained exclusive access to the largest online panel of U.S. teenagers available, with 2.5+ million high school students. TeenInsight respondents are recruited directly via email, ensuring it is ***their opinions***, not their parents – resulting in high-quality, reliable data.

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