

# Online Habits and Safety Concerns Across Three Generations

Cox Mobile surveyed a sample of U.S. teens, seniors, and members of the sandwich generation to learn more about their online habits and safety concerns.

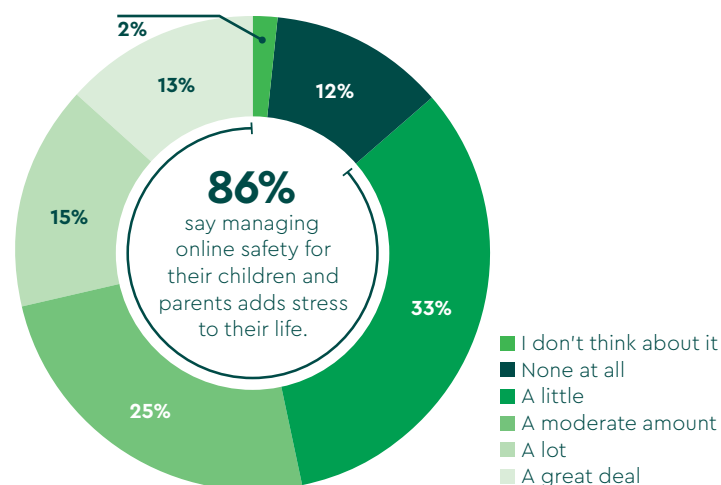
Key findings show that while all generations face digital threats, the sandwich generation bears the greatest burden, with **86%** saying managing online safety for their children and parents adds stress to their life.



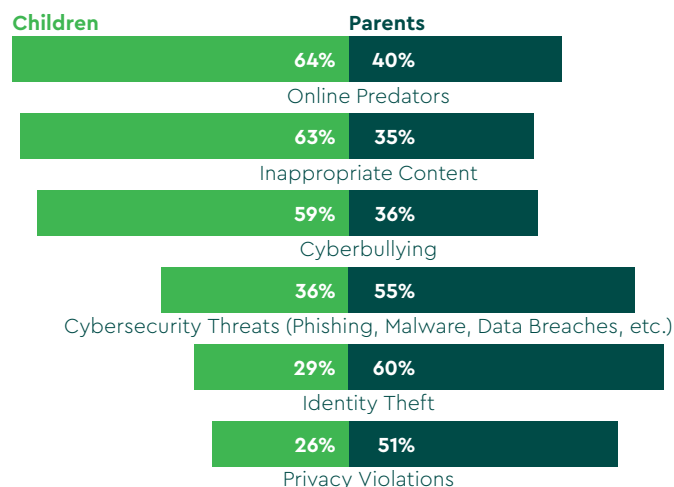
## Digital safety weighs heavily on the sandwich generation

The sandwich generation represents those between the ages of 39 and 59 who care for their children and aging parents.

How much stress, if any, does managing online safety for both the sandwich generation's children and aging parents add to their life?



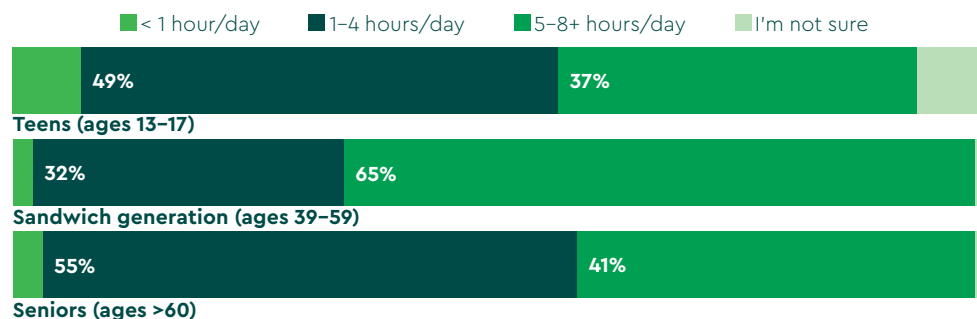
Of the following, which are the sandwich generation's biggest online safety concerns for their children or parents?



## Parents outscroll teens

Nearly **100%** of sandwich generation respondents expressed some level of dependency on connected devices, outranking teens and seniors. They're more active on their devices, too.

On average, how much time does each generation spend on connected devices?



While they may be less tied to tech, seniors know what they're doing digitally. **96%** consider themselves somewhat to extremely digitally literate, while **83%** of teens say the same about their digital literacy.

## Habit and hazard

From teens to seniors and those in-between, social media is frequently identified as a top activity.

However, all surveyed generations agree that social media poses the greatest risk to online safety, with online shopping and managing money also ranking in the top three.

**Which digital activities do you believe pose the greatest risks to your online safety?**



Social media



Online shopping

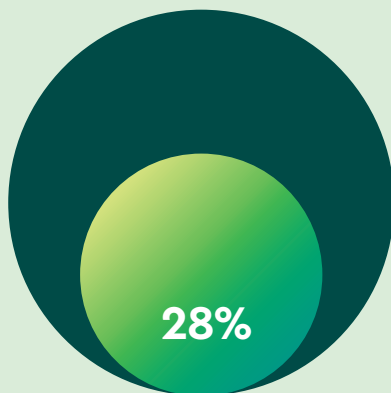


Managing money

## Facing the scroll toll

Over a quarter of teens (28%) reported that being connected to the internet and using digital devices has negative impacts, causing feelings of stress and anxiety.

**How does being connected to the internet and using digital devices affect teens mental health?**



Negatively: It makes teens feel stressed, anxious, or isolated.

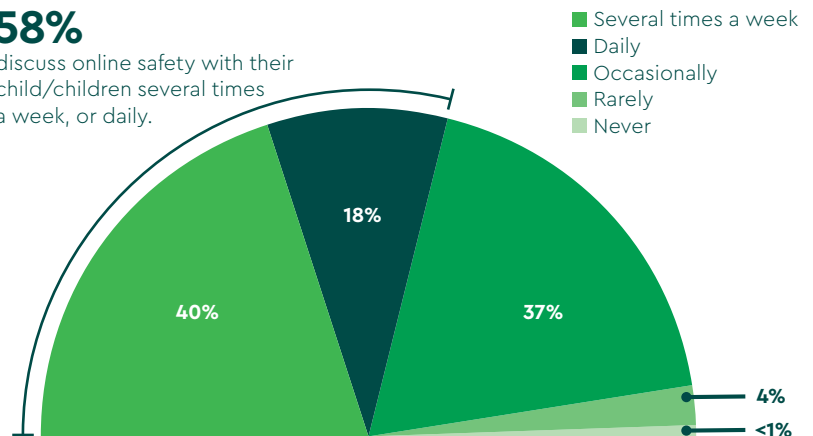
## Talking about online safety

The sandwich generation is being proactive about online safety with their teens, with **71%** currently using tools or settings to monitor or control their children's online activity.

**How often does the sandwich generation discuss online safety with their child/children (ages 13-17)?**

**58%**

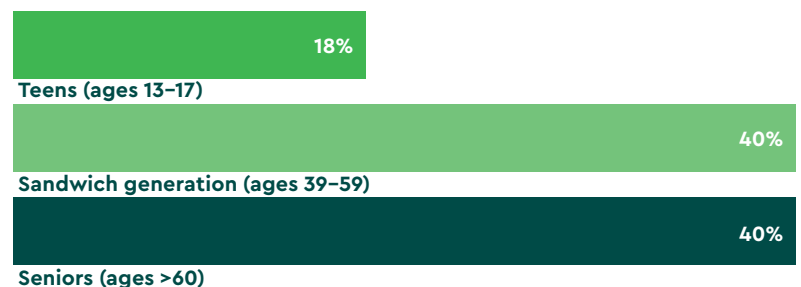
discuss online safety with their child/children several times a week, or daily.



Teens are opening up, too. **Sixty-seven percent** said that when facing an online safety issue, they asked a parent/trusted adult or tech support for help.

## Online security issues increase with age

The sandwich generation and seniors have experienced more online cybersecurity issues than teens over the last 12 months.



The biggest culprits for the sandwich generation and seniors were things like phishing scams, malware, and data breaches.



Phishing scams



Malware



Data breaches

## Mis/disinformation is flying under the radar

Watch out – all generations have experienced some level of mis/disinformation.

Experienced mis/disinformation over the last 12 months:

21%

Teens

32%

Sandwich generation

32%

Seniors



Despite all three groups experiencing mis/disinformation, none of them selected it as one of their top three online safety concerns.

## About Connecting the Digital Dots: Online Habits and Safety Concerns Across Three Generations

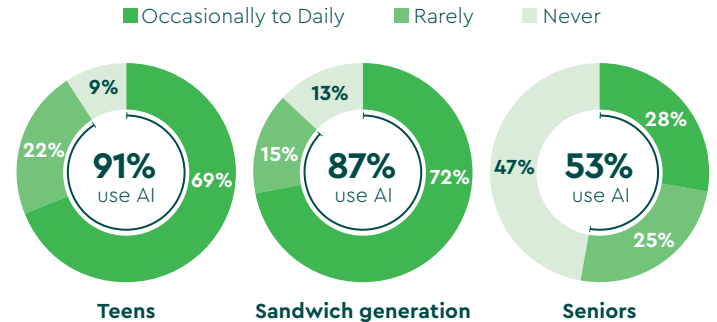
Cox Communications commissioned a blind survey of U.S. teens, seniors, and the sandwich generation in May of 2025 to learn more about their online habits and safety concerns. Respondents to the survey included a total of 500 teens between the ages of 13 and 17, 500 seniors aged 65+, and 600 parents (ages 39 – 59) of teens between the ages of 13 and 17 with aging parents. The margin of error for this survey is +/-4% for each age group.



## AI: Love it or leave it

Teens and parents use generative AI the most and agree on how they use it, while **almost half (47%)** of seniors never use it.

How often do you use generative AI (e.g., ChatGPT, Copilot, Google Gemini) in your personal life?



Teens and the sandwich generation are usually using generative AI for learning purposes, whether that's simply looking something up or seeking help with work or schoolwork.

What are the top ways you use generative AI?

### Teens



Schoolwork  
(30%)



Learning new stuff  
(26%)



Finding ideas for things at home  
(23%)

### Sandwich generation



Look up quick answers  
(58%)



Help write things  
(45%)



Get ideas for meals, shopping lists, and caregiving tips  
(41%)

But not everyone is game when it comes to Gen AI. For those who don't use it, their main reason was "I don't know how to and don't want to learn." This is true for **20%** of teens, **30%** of the sandwich generation, and **49%** of seniors.

## About Cox Communications

Cox Communications is committed to creating meaningful moments of human connection through technology. As the largest private broadband company in America, we own network infrastructure that reaches more than 30 states. Our fiber-powered wireline and wireless connections are available to more than 12 million homes and businesses and support advanced cloud and managed IT services nationwide. We're the largest division of Cox Enterprises, a family-owned business founded in 1898 by Governor James M. Cox that is dedicated to empowering others to build a better future for the next generation.

To learn more about Cox Mobile's survey findings, visit [www.coxmobilesafety.com](http://www.coxmobilesafety.com).

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