



The Security Division of EMC

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## Generation Y Online Security Survey

Conducted by TRU Research; sponsored by RSA, The Security Division of EMC

*Despite being aware of security threats, the risky online behavior of young adults can negatively affect their future career prospects and financial standings, while leaving them vulnerable to identity theft and fraud.*

TRU\* polled more than 1,000 young U.S. adults between the ages of 18-24 regarding their online behavior and security precautions, and found that more than seven out of ten admit that they are not always as careful as they should be when posting and accessing information online.

The research also reveals that young adults regularly make risky choices when engaging in activities such as file sharing and social networking that can lead to long-lasting negative consequences and result in damage to an individual's reputation both online and off.

To help individuals of all ages stay safe online and protect themselves against identity theft and the repercussions of risky online behavior, please visit [www.maintainmyprivacy.com](http://www.maintainmyprivacy.com) for online security and social networking tips to help avoid mistakes that can have a negative lifetime impact on career prospects and financial futures.

*\*TRU is the world leader in Tweens, Teens, and Twenty-Somethings Research + Insights*

## **1. Young adults conduct multiple online activities, many of which expose them to potential online fraud.**

- > **95%** of 18- to 24-year-olds claim to spend at least one hour a day on personal online activities.
  - » **60%** spend at least **three** hours a day on personal online activities.
  - » **22%** spend at least **five** hours a day on personal online activities.
- > Though many online activities are perfectly harmless on the surface, certain online activities (as highlighted below) could pose major threats to the user’s online safety.

\*Percentages noted in **blue** indicate significant differences with a **male-skew**. Percentages noted in **pink** indicated significant differences with a **female-skew**.

	<i>Ever do</i>	<i>Do frequently</i>
Email	<b>98%</b>	<b>81%</b>
Visit social network sites	<b>95%</b>	<b>75%</b>
Visit news sites	<b>93%</b>	<b>44%</b>
Make purchases on amazon.com or other brand/product sites	<b>91%</b>	<b>26%</b>
Play online games	<b>86%</b>	<b>25%</b>
Search for jobs online	<b>83%</b>	<b>27%</b>
Conduct bank transactions online	<b>82%</b>	<b>41%</b>
Enter contests or promotions	<b>80%</b>	<b>13%</b>
Listen to music on sites like Pandora.com, etc.	<b>78%</b>	<b>27%</b>
Upload photos to photo-sharing or social network sites	<b>78%</b>	<b>21%</b>
Buy or sell items at online auction sites like ebay.com	<b>77%</b>	<b>14%</b>
Upload videos online (Youtube, social network sites, etc.)	<b>63%</b>	<b>14%</b>
Visit entertainment sites for celebrity news/gossip	<b>60%</b>	<b>11%</b>
Download/use file-sharing app allowing others access to their computer/files	<b>46%</b>	<b>10%</b>
Download/upload music/media to/from an “illegal” source/site	<b>43%</b>	<b>10%</b>
Post blogs or video blogs online	<b>42%</b>	<b>7%</b>
Use a micro-blogging site like Twitter	<b>42%</b>	<b>13%</b>
Click on/respond to pop-up ads	<b>29%</b>	<b>2%</b>
Visit private bulletin boards where illegal or unauthorized files are shared	<b>25%</b>	<b>4%</b>
Download apps for “illegal” and/or “warez” sites	<b>22%</b>	<b>3%</b>
Use a geo-location program like GoWalla or FourSquare	<b>16%</b>	<b>2%</b>

## I. Most young adults recognize that identity theft is on the rise.

- > **89%** say identity theft is a growing problem in our society.
- > **73%** are concerned about being a victim of online fraud or ID theft. (*77% females vs. 70% males*)
  - » **Less than half** say they feel very safe sharing personal info (**45%**) or financial info (**44%**) online. (*Personal info = 54% males vs. 36% females*) (*Financial info = 50% males vs. 38% females*)

## II. However, they think others their age don't take this seriously.

- > **96%** of young adults believe that *most people their age* are not as careful online as they should be, if at all.
  - » **A large majority** say *most people their age* feel very safe sharing personal info (**80%**) or financial info (**66%**) online.
  - » **More than three out of four (76%)** say *most people their age* refuse to pay for services that are supposed to protect them from online fraud.
  - » **Just as many (76%)** say *most people their age* are willing to take chances with security in return for lower prices on things they want or need.
  - » **One in three (33%)** say that *most people their age* don't even recognize that identity theft is a growing problem in today's society.

## III. Further, more than seven out of ten (71%) admit that, despite good intentions, they personally are not always as careful as they should be... and their behavior shows it! (*75% females vs. 66% males*)

### File sharing:

- > **64%** are concerned about enabling hackers to access their hard drive or files. (*68% females vs. 60% males*)
  - » Yet, **46%** admit to using a file-sharing app that allows others to access their computer/files. (*54% males vs. 38% females*)
  - » Further, **42%** say they access private documents or files on public computers.

### Email and social networking:

- > **56%** are concerned about someone hacking into their email or social network account. (*62% females vs. 51% males*)
  - » Yet, **28% never** log out of their email, and **25% never** log out of their social network account.
    - Another **29%** (email) and **33%** (social network) say they log out **only sometimes**.
  - » Further, **56%** email or visit social network sites on a public computer. (*59% males vs. 52% females*)

- » *Three out of ten (30%) even admit to trying to guess a friend, family member's, or co-worker's password to try to log into their email or social networking account.*

> **Convenience trumps safety!**

- » **56%** say they usually remain logged in to their personal sites to avoid the time and hassle of entering their user name and password every time they visit the site.
- » **46%** say it's not necessary to log out of your personal accounts when you're using your own personal computer.

**Online personal contact information:**

- > **56%** are concerned that their personal info, like phone, email, or home address will end up online without their knowledge. (*63% females vs. 49% males*)
  - » Yet, **18%** of social networkers admit that their contact info (phone, address, email) on their social network profile is viewable by *people outside their "friends" list*: (*26% males vs. 9% females*)
  - » **65%** of social networkers say their contact info is viewable by *friends only*. (*71% females vs. 58% males*)
    - However, **91%** of social networkers say they are social network friends with someone they don't know well, *if at all*: (*93% females vs. 89% males*)
      - **88%** are "friends" with an acquaintance. (*91% females vs. 85% males*)
      - **44%** are "friends" with someone they've met online but not in person.
      - **33%** are "friends" with someone they've **never met** online or in person. (*37% males vs. 29% females*)

**Passwords and PINs:**

- > **76%** agree it's very important to change your online passwords/PIN numbers regularly.
- > **55%** are concerned that someone will figure out their passwords on password-protected sites.
  - » Yet, **32% never** change their passwords on email, social network sites, or banking sites. (*Banking sites = 36% females vs. 27% males*)
- > **Again, convenience trumps safety!**
- > **87%** say it's very important to use different or complex passwords for online accounts.
  - » Yet, **52%** usually use the same password for all accounts, and **44%** usually use the same PIN for all accounts.
  - » **76%** say they usually select PIN that will be easy to remember. (*79% females vs. 73% males*)
- > Though, **75%** say most of their passwords are a complex combination of letters, numbers, or symbols...(*79% males vs. 73% females*)
  - » **33%** frequently forget the passwords to their password-protected accounts.
  - » **26%** store their passwords on their computer/PDA so they won't forget them.

### Physical safety:

- > **37%** are concerned that someone will cause them physical harm, follow them, or break-in to their home as a result of posting their physical location online. (*43% females vs. 30% males*)
  - » Yet, **26%** admit they frequently or occasionally post their physical location online. (*30% males vs. 22% females*)
  - » **Only 22%** have an alarm system in their house.

### Online photos and content:

- > **44%** are concerned that photos of themselves may end up online without their knowledge (*49% females vs. 39% males*), and **33%** are concerned about being turned down or losing a job because of suggestive photos or content posted online.
  - » However, **67%** admit to having posted risky content, photos, and/or videos online.
    - **57%** have used curse words.
    - **37%** have made posts including cigarettes, alcohol, or drugs.
    - **26%** have posted online comments that are sexual in nature. (*29% males vs. 23% females*)
    - **25%** have made compromising or suggestive posts that they would not want viewed by a parent or employer.
    - **4%** have posted naked or sexual photos or videos of themselves online.
  - » **37%** of social networkers admit that their **profile info** (comments, posts, status updates, etc.) on their social network profile is viewable by *people outside their friends' list*. (*50% males vs. 26% females*)
  - » **34%** of social networkers admit that their **photos, videos, and blogs** on their social network profile are viewable by *people outside their friends' list*. (*41% males vs. 26% females*)
  - » **61%** of social networkers say their **profile info** is viewable by *friends only* (*73% females vs. 48% males*), and **63%** say their **photos, videos, and blogs** are viewable by *friends only*. (*72% females vs. 53% males*)
    - However, **66%** of social network users are social network friends with a *co-worker*.
    - **27%** are “friends” with a *boss*.

## **IV. Personal online activity at work poses a different kind of threat – to one’s job security! This behavior is prevalent among young employees... yet, few are concerned about it.**

- > **79%** of those employed *full-time* say they conduct personal online activities while at work.
  - » **18%** of those employed *full time* are spending an hour a day or more on personal online activities *at work*.
  - » **29%** of those employed *full-time* who search for jobs online say they do so on a work computer.

	<b>Ever do on a work computer</b>
<i>(Employed full-time and ever do the following online activities...)</i>	
<b>Communicate via email, social network, Twitter, or geo-location program</b>	<b>61%</b>
<b>Visit news/entertainment sites</b>	<b>58%</b>
<b>Make purchases or conduct financial transactions</b>	<b>48%</b>
Listen to music on sites like Pandora.com, etc.	<b>37%</b>
<b>Search for jobs online</b>	<b>29%</b>
Play online games	<b>26%</b>
<b>Sharing photos, videos, blogs</b>	<b>26%</b>
<b>Enter contests or click on offers/promotions</b>	<b>21%</b>
<b>Illegal activities (illegal downloads, apps, files, etc.)</b>	<b>13%</b>
Download/use file-sharing app allowing others access to their computer/files	<b>11%</b>

- > **Only 31%** of those employed *full-time* are concerned about getting caught conducting personal online activities at work.

**V. Perhaps not surprisingly, many young adults claim they or someone they know has actually been a victim of or has been made vulnerable to online fraud or identity theft.**

- > More than seven out of ten (**71%**) know someone and two out of three (**66%**) say they personally have experienced some form of attempted online fraud, such as:
  - » Receiving an email claiming they had a large sum of money awaiting them, but they were first responsible for lawyer fees.
  - » Clicking on a link or attachment containing a virus, Trojan, etc.
  - » Receiving an email seemingly from a reputable bank, asking them to provide a PIN, password, or mother's maiden name, etc.
  - » Applying for a job online that turned out to be a scam.
  - » Getting a message from a Facebook or MySpace friend (whose account had been hacked) saying he/she was stranded overseas and needed money, asking for a credit card number.
  - » Signing up online for a "free sample" and agreeing to pay for shipping, only to have their credit card charged for more than that.
- > **64%** claim that they've either been a victim of identity theft or have been made vulnerable via:
  - » Lost or stolen cell phone, credit card, data storage device, mail, or laptop.
  - » Photos or personal info ended up online without their knowledge.
  - » Someone hacked into their email, social networking account, PayPal or other financial account, or their hard drives/files without permission.

**VI. Despite the high incidence and risk of online threats, young adults are doing very little to protect themselves.**

- > **73%** say they are concerned about being a victim of online fraud or ID theft. (*77% females vs. 70% males*)
  - » Yet, more than half (**57%**) refuse to pay for services that are supposed to protect them from online fraud. (*61% males vs. 53% females*)
    - **Only 14%** of respondents use a fraud detection service (**11%**) or have identity theft insurance (**8%**).
  - » A full **41%** admit that they're willing to take some chances with security in return for lower prices on things they want or need. (*46% males vs. 35% females*)
- > Many admit they don't take the necessary steps to prevent their information from being compromised.
  - » **55%** admit they never check their credit report. (*59% females vs. 51% males*)
  - » **45%** never shred documents with personal or financial info on them.
  - » **32%** never change their passwords on banking sites. (*36% females vs. 27% males*)
  - » **26%** never back-up the files on their laptop/computer. (*29% females vs. 23% males*)
- > Even more open themselves up to security threats via online purchases and transactions.
  - » **63%** say they don't always review the return policy before making online purchases.
  - » **44%** don't always check out merchant reviews and recommendations before purchasing from a website. (*48% females vs. 41% males*)
  - » **39%** don't always keep records of their online transactions.
  - » **36%** say they don't usually have time to verify a website's security.
  - » **35%** say they don't always check their bank records to ensure it matches up with their online purchase.
  - » **31%** admit that they don't always take steps to verify that a website is legit before submitting their credit card info.
- > Further, their attitudes expose a lack of understanding about potential online threats.
  - » Two out of three (**67%**) say it's ok to click on links or attachments in emails as long as you know the sender.
  - » **19%** say it's ok to click on pop-up ads as long as they appear on trusted websites. (*22% males vs. 16% females*)
  - » More than half say people who refuse to shop online (**58%**) or bank online (**57%**) for security reasons are old-fashioned. (*Shop online = 64% males vs. 53% females*) (*Bank online = 62% males vs. 51% females*)

## VII. Demographics

### > Gender

Male	50%
Female	50%

### > Age

18	14%
19	15%
20	13%
21	13%
22	13%
23	16%
24	17%

### > Background

Alaskan Native or American Islander	0%	Hispanic / Latino	11%
Asian or Pacific Islander	5%	White or Caucasian	76%
Black / African-American	12%	Other	1%

### > Region

East	21%
South	33%
West	28%
Midwest	18%

### > Residential setting

Urban, city environment	35%
Suburban or town/village environment near a city	46%
Rural or small town environment	19%

### > Annual Household Income before income taxes

Less than \$15,000	17%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	10%
\$25,000 to \$49,999	23%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	14%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	8%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	6%
\$150,000 or more	3%
Don't know	8%
Decline to answer	11%

## Survey Methodology

This survey was conducted by [TRU\\*](#), a division of [TNS Custom Research, Inc](#) and sponsored by [RSA](#), the Security Division of EMC. Between February 26 and March 8, 2010, 1,002 online interviews were conducted among males and females ages 18-24. Interviews were distributed evenly by age and gender. African-Americans and Hispanics comprised 13% and 11% of the sample respectively. Survey invitations were nationally-dispersed consistent with the US census figures in order to ensure a representative geographic mix. Each interview was approximately 10-12 minutes in length. The total sample yields a margin of error of +/-3.1 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

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## About RSA

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