



## **Research Topline**

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## **Tech Abuse in Teen Relationships Study**

*Prepared for:*

# **Liz Claiborne Inc.**

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- > **Background & Objectives**
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  - > Seriousness of tech abuse in dating relationships
  - > Incidence various tech behaviors in dating relationships
  - > How much teens tell parents about tech behavior in dating relationships
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## **Identify and quantify teen dating behaviors that involve the use of technology**

- > In April 2005 and March 2006, Liz Claiborne, Inc., commissioned TRU to field quantitative research that determined the levels of sexual, physical, and verbal abuse among American teenagers.
- > In December 2006, Liz Claiborne, Inc., commissioned TRU to field additional research that would quantify teen dating behaviors that involve the use of technology (cellphones and computers).
  - > Teens 13 to 18—and parents with teens in that age range (independently sampled groups)—were surveyed.
- > Specific research objectives were to:
  - > Understand youth perceptions of the seriousness of various behaviors that involve technology in dating relationships.
  - > Learn the rate at which teens use cellphones (voice calls and texting) and computers (email, IMing, networking sites, blogs, etc.) in dating relationships.
  - > Determine whether this technology is being used by teens to abuse and/or control partners in dating relationships.
  - > Measure parent awareness of teen dating behaviors (and potential abuse) involving technology.

## Sample, field period

- > TRU conducted a national 15-minute online survey among 1,029 respondents:
  - > 615 among 13- to 18-year-olds and
  - > 414 among parents with teens in that age range.
    - The margin of error (at the 95% confidence level) is  $\pm$  four percentage points for teens in total (n=615) and  $\pm$  five percentage points for parents (n=414).
- > For questions answered by teens who have been in a relationship (n=382), the margin of error is  $\pm$  five percentage points – for parents of teens who have been in a relationship (n=213), it is  $\pm$  seven points.
- > Interviews were conducted from December 15-22, 2006.
- > Detail about respondents' demographic make-up is available in Appendix starting on page 17.

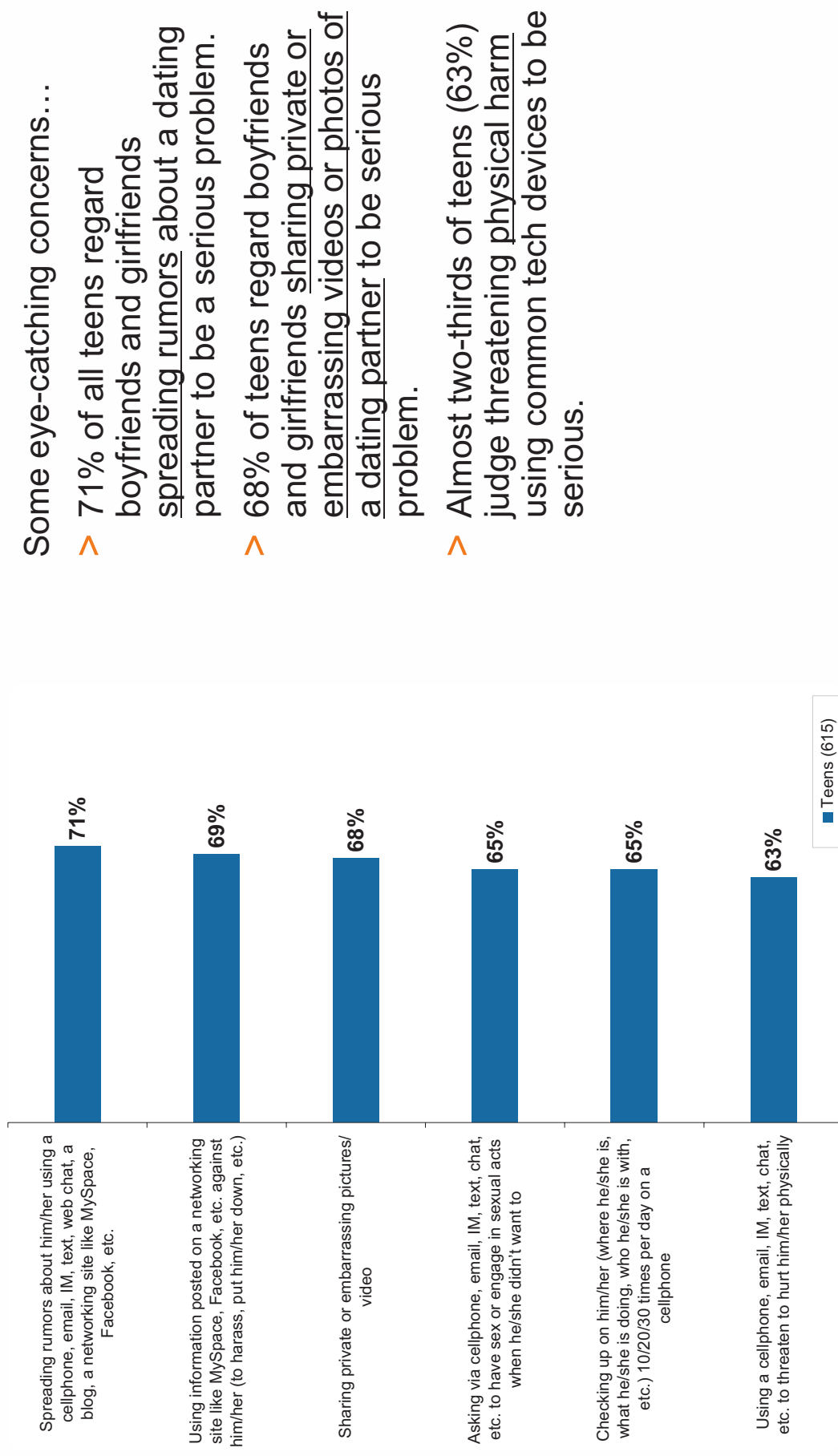
## Summary in brief

- This research provides the first clear evidence that technology has made teen dating abuse more pervasive and hidden.
- > Teens believe that dating abuse via technology is a serious problem across a broad array of everyday tech activities - emailing, texting, IMing, phoning, and community networking.
  - > Alarming numbers of teens in dating relationships are being controlled, abused and threatened using simple tech devices:
    - > Teens claim that this is happening to them
    - > And they confess that they are doing it to others
  - > Notably, teens are typically not telling their parents about this tech abuse in their dating relationships.
  - > The result is that a disturbing **knowledge gap** has opened between the frequency of abusive tech behavior parents are aware of and what is really going on in teens' lives.
  - > Given this gap, it is perhaps not surprising that parents are not doing very much to intercede in their teens' lives with regard to tech use and abuse in dating relationships.
  - > This leaves many teens in a highly vulnerable position, without a primary source of personal support and guidance.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

# Teens report emphatically that dating abuse using technology is a serious problem

### SERIOUS PROBLEM IN TEEN



Some eye-catching concerns...

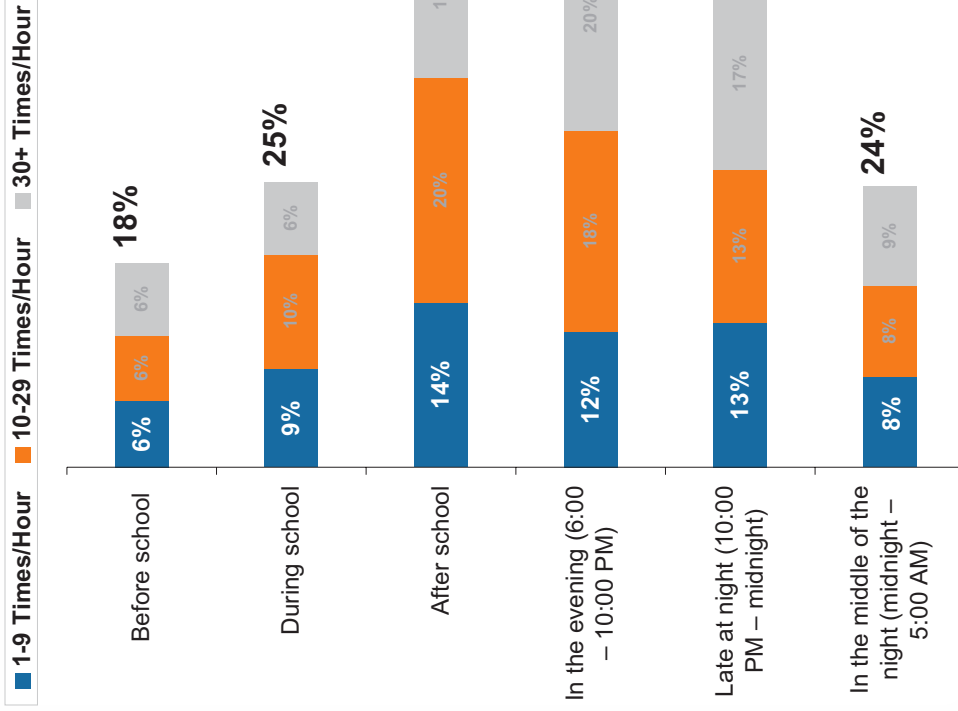
- > 71% of all teens regard boyfriends and girlfriends spreading rumors about a dating partner to be a serious problem.
- > 68% of teens regard boyfriends and girlfriends sharing private or embarrassing videos or photos of a dating partner to be serious problem.
- > Almost two-thirds of teens (63%) judge threatening physical harm using common tech devices to be serious.

**Q.16:** Thinking about **people your age who are in a relationship**, how serious of a problem would you say each of the following issues is? [Top 2 Box Reported: "Extremely" or "Very Serious"]

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

# Dating teens are calling and texting each other at all times of the day and night with unimaginable frequency

### WHEN CONTACTED IN RELATIONSHIP



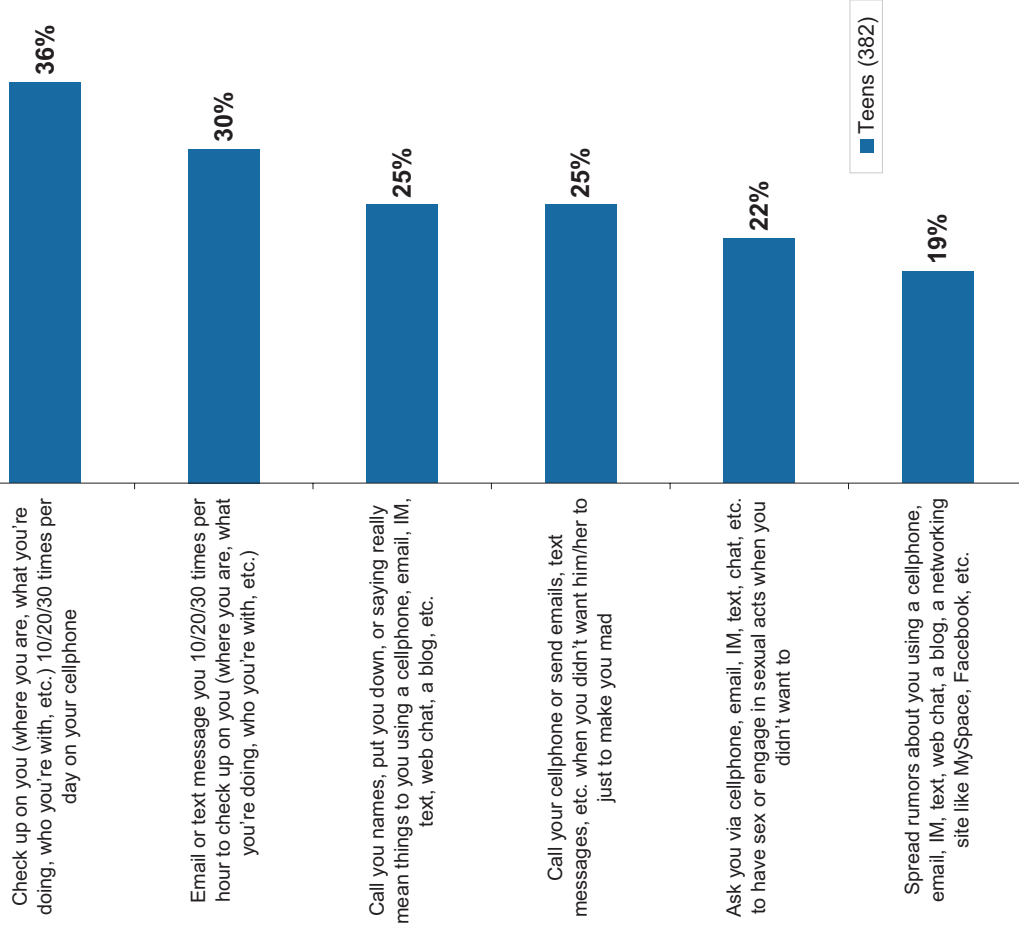
- > From midnight to 5:00 AM: Nearly one in four teens in a relationship (24%) communicated with their partner via cellphone or texting hourly between midnight and 5:00 AM.
  - > One in six (17%) admit to having communicated with their partner via cellphone or texting 10 or more times per hour between midnight and 5:00 AM.
- > From 10 pm to midnight: Nearly one in three teens in a relationship (30%) say they've communicated with their partner via cellphone or texting 10 to 30 times or more hourly.

**Question 11:** In that relationship, how often would you say your boyfriend/girlfriend contacted you by cellphone, email, texting, etc. (measured as each message sent or received)? [N=382 teens and 213 parents]

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

# Cellphones and internet heighten the extent and insidiousness of teen dating abuse

### EVER HAD A BOYFRIEND/GIRLFRIEND...



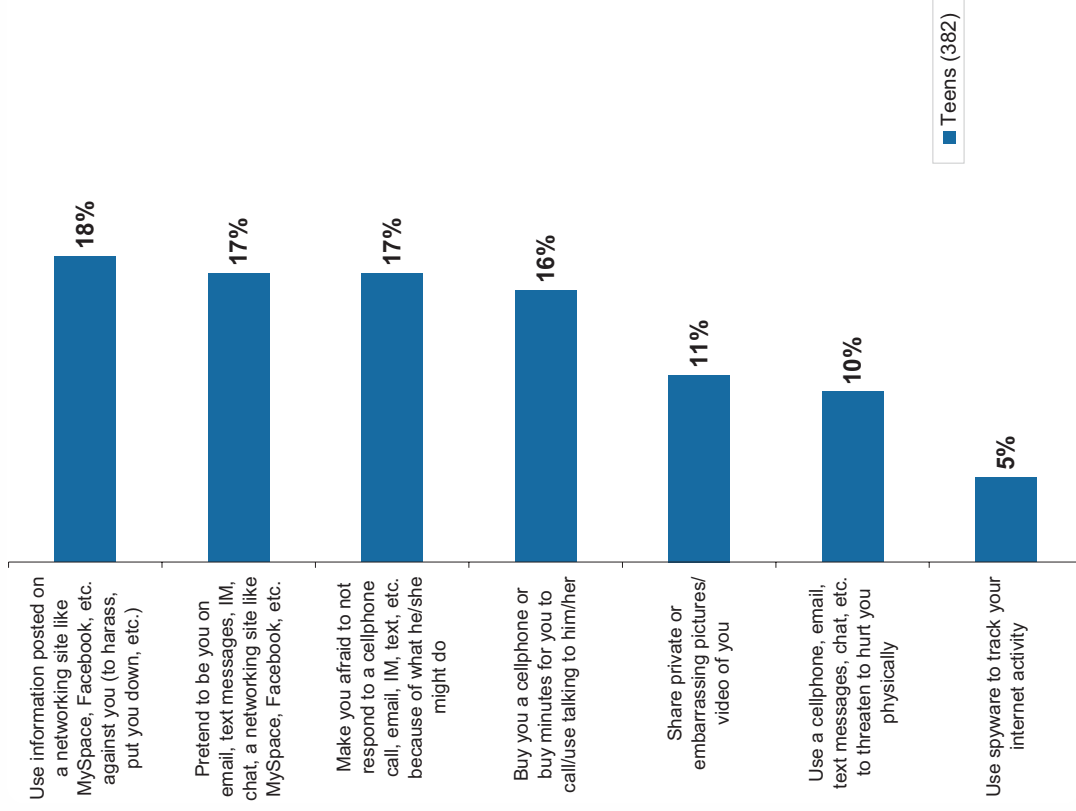
- > One in three teens who have been in a relationship (30%) say they've been text messaged 10, 20, or 30 times an hour by a partner finding out where they are, what they're doing, or who they're with.
- > One in four teens in a relationship (25%) say they have been called names, harassed, or put down by their partner through cellphones & texting.
- > One in five teens in a relationship (22%) have been asked by cellphone or the internet to engage in sexual activity when they did not want to.
- > Nearly one in five teens in a relationship (19%) say that their partner has used a cellphone or the internet to spread rumors about them.

**Question 17:** While in a relationship, have you ever had a boyfriend/girlfriend...?

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

# Many have feared not staying connected; others have been threatened physically

### EVER HAD A BOYFRIEND/GIRLFRIEND...

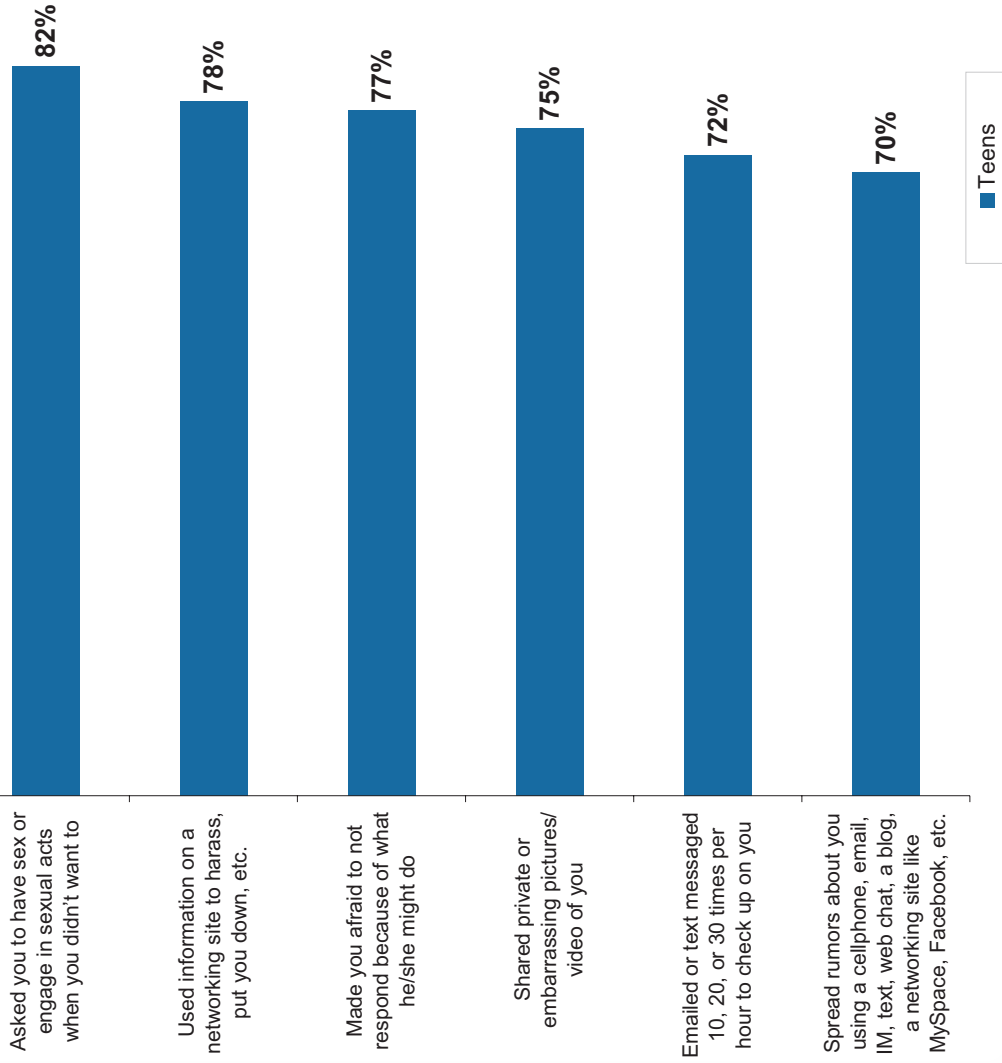


- > Nearly one in five (18%) say their partner used a networking site to harass or put them down.
- > More than one in ten (11%) report that a partner has shared private or embarrassing pictures/videos of them.
- > 17% say their partner has made them afraid not to respond to a cellphone call, email, IM or text message because of what he/she might do.
- > An alarming one in ten (10%) claim they have been threatened physically via email, IM, text, chat, etc.
- > Importantly, 16% claim their partner has actually bought a cellphone or minutes for them.

**Question 17:** While in a relationship, have you ever had a boyfriend/girlfriend...?

# Teens not telling parents about this behavior

## DID NOT TELL PARENTS THAT A BOYFRIEND OR GIRLFRIEND...



- > More than eight in ten (82%) did not tell their parents they'd been asked to engage in sexual activity.
- > 78% of teens harassed and embarrassed by their partners on networking sites didn't tell.
- > 72% of teens who reported they've been checked on 10 times per hour by email or text messaging report that they didn't tell their parents.

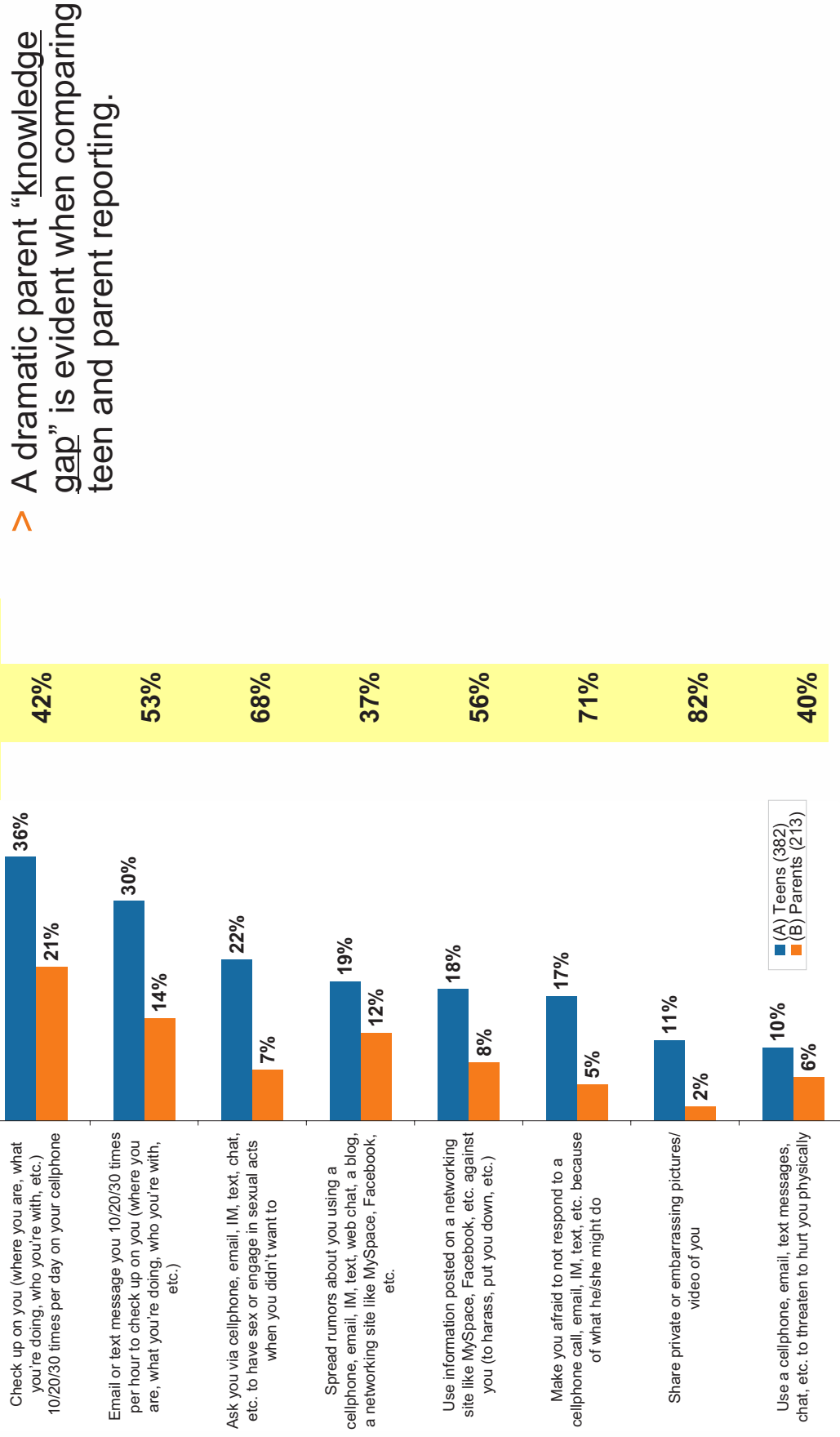
**10** Question 18: Do your parents know that your boyfriend/girlfriend... ["No" and "Yes - found out" (without having told) Reported]

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

# The result: parents are in the dark about what really happens to their teens...

### KNOWLEDGE GAP

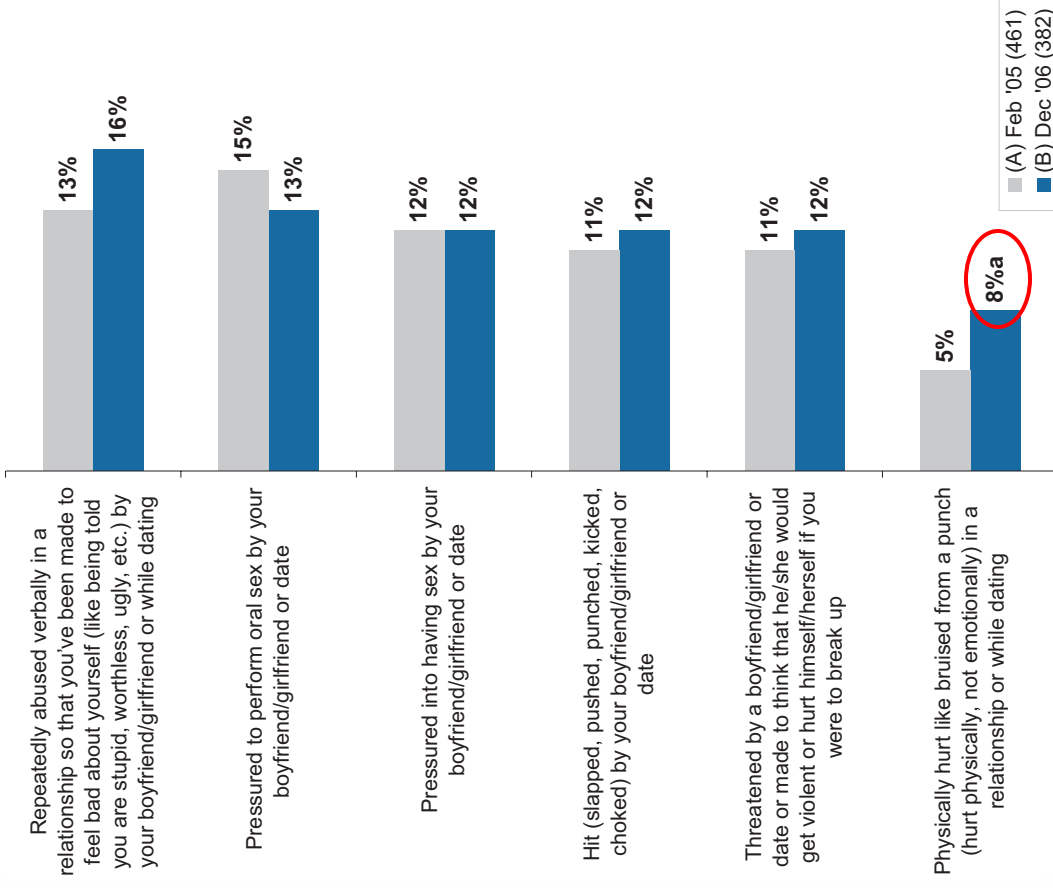
#### HAD A BOYFRIEND/GIRLFRIEND...



**11** Question 17/21: While in a relationship, have you [Has your son/daughter] ever had a boyfriend/girlfriend...?

# Teens also report directionally more physical abuse than they did two years ago

## HAD A BOYFRIEND/GIRLFRIEND...



- > There is evidence that teens in relationships are experiencing more physical abuse than in February, 2005:
  - > Directionally more relationship-teens (8% vs. 5%) said they have personally been hit, punched, slapped, or kicked while in a relationship.
  - > Additionally, more teens say they know a friend who has been hurt physically in a relationship (28% vs. 24%). [not charted]

Question 14: Have you ever been... [identically worded question]

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

# And a parental Knowledge Gap also exists for this kind of physical abuse

### TEEN (CHILD) PERSONALLY BEEN...

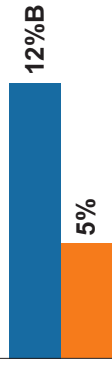
Repeatedly abused verbally in a relationship so that you've been made to feel bad about yourself (like being told you are stupid, worthless, ugly, etc.) by your boyfriend/girlfriend or while dating



Pressured to perform oral sex by your boyfriend/girlfriend or date



Hit (slapped, pushed, punched, kicked, choked) by your boyfriend/girlfriend or date



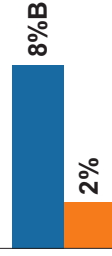
Pressured into having sex by your boyfriend/girlfriend or date



Threatened by a boyfriend/girlfriend or date or made to think that he/she would get violent or hurt himself/herself if you were to break up



Physically hurt like bruised from a punch (hurt physically, not emotionally) in a relationship or while dating



### KNOWLEDGE GAP

> Parents are in the dark about traditional physical abuse happening to their teens just as they are about the abuse happening via technology.

44%

69%

58%

33%

50%

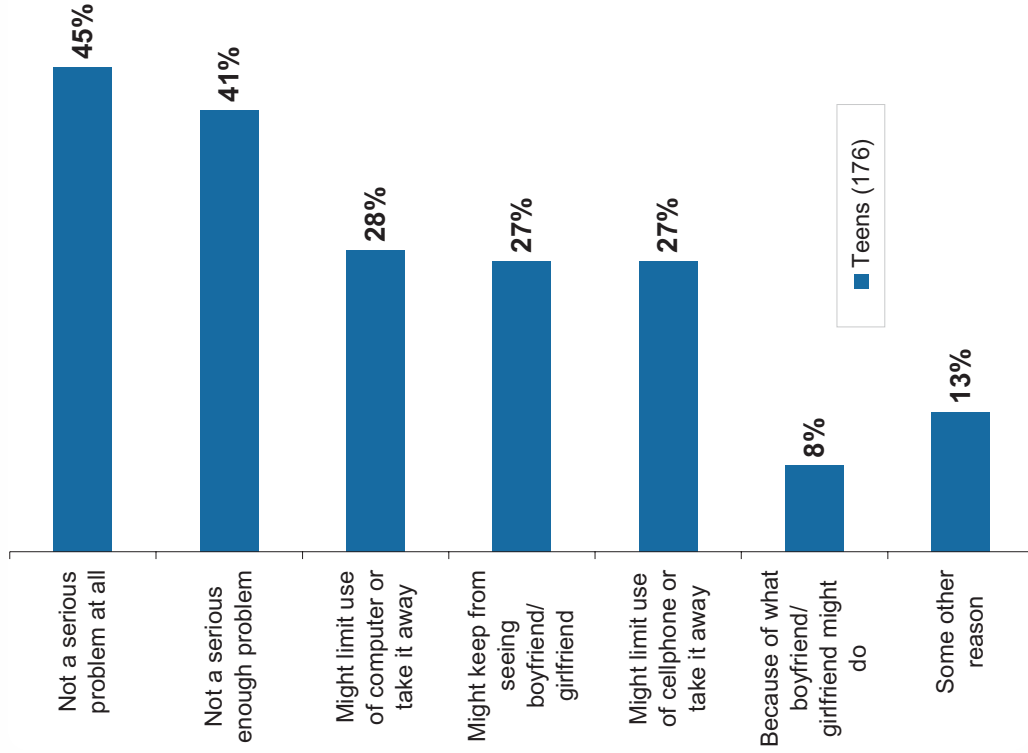
75%

■ (A) Teens (382)  
■ (B) Parents (213)

**13** Question 14/18: Have you (Has your son/daughter) ever been...

# Reasons for not telling parents

## REASONS FOR NOT TELLING PARENTS



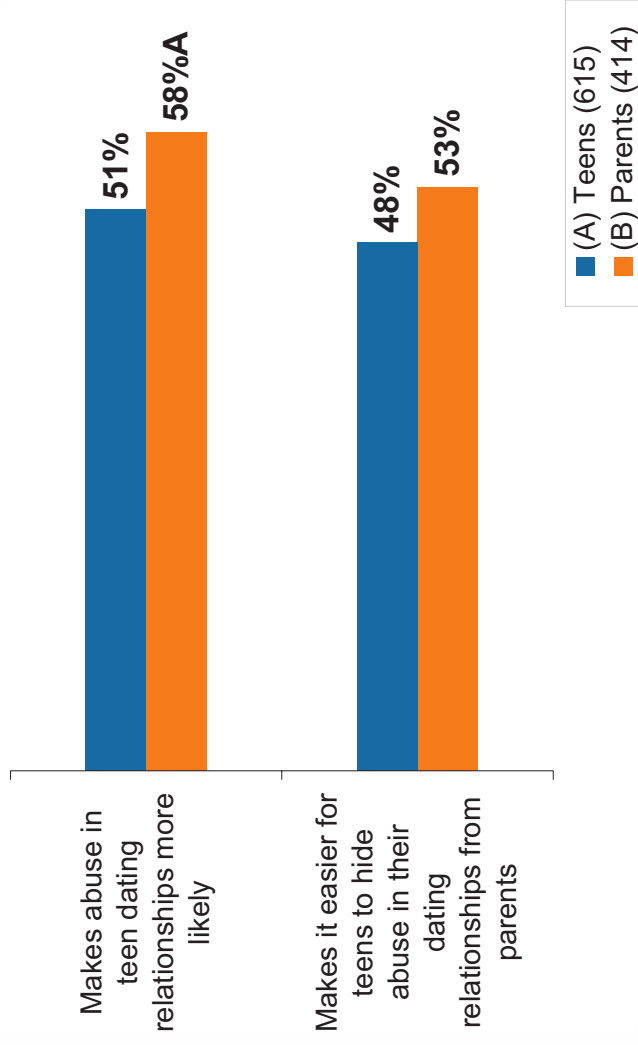
- > When asked why they don't tell parents, teens often minimize the seriousness of various behaviors. This may reflect their fear of parental consequences as well as their own inability to interpret various behaviors as abusive.
- > Reasons for not telling parents:
  - > 68% believe the behaviors were not serious enough to justify telling.
    - 45% deemed the behaviors “not serious at all” and nearly as many (41%) said the actions weren’t “serious enough”
  - > 28% say they fear their parents may limit or take away use of their computer; nearly as many (27%) worry about the loss of cellphone privileges.
  - > 27% say because their parents might prevent them from seeing their partner.

**Question 19:** What are the reasons you did not tell them about those things a boyfriend/girlfriend did?

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

# Parents actually agree with teens that tech makes abuse more prevalent and hidden

### NEW TECHNOLOGY...



> A majority of both teens (51%) and parents (58%) believe computers and cellphones make abuse in teen dating relationships more likely to occur.

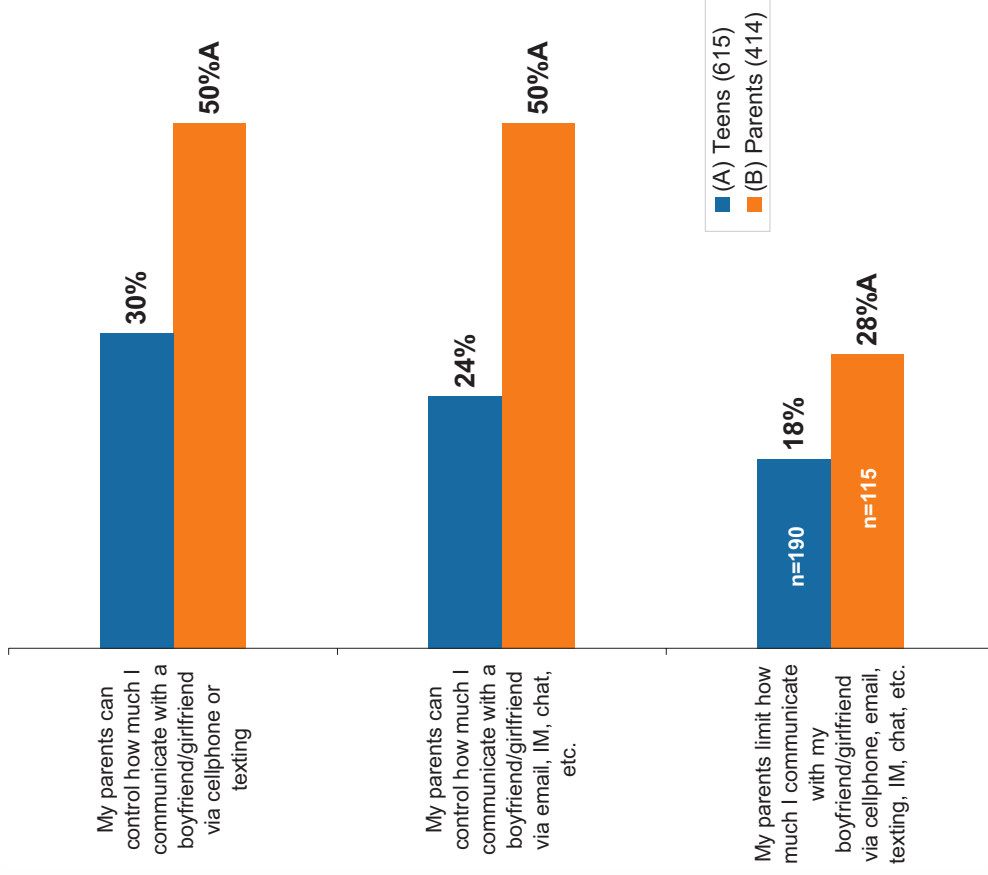
> Both teens and parents also believe that computers and cellphones make abuse easier to conceal from parents (48% and 53%, respectively).

**Question 21/25:** Which of the following, if any, do you think are true of the new technology available using cellphones and computers (emailing, instant messaging (IM), text messaging, and networking sites like MySpace, Facebook, etc.)?

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

# And parents believe they can control teen communications – though most are not

### AGREE WITH STATEMENT



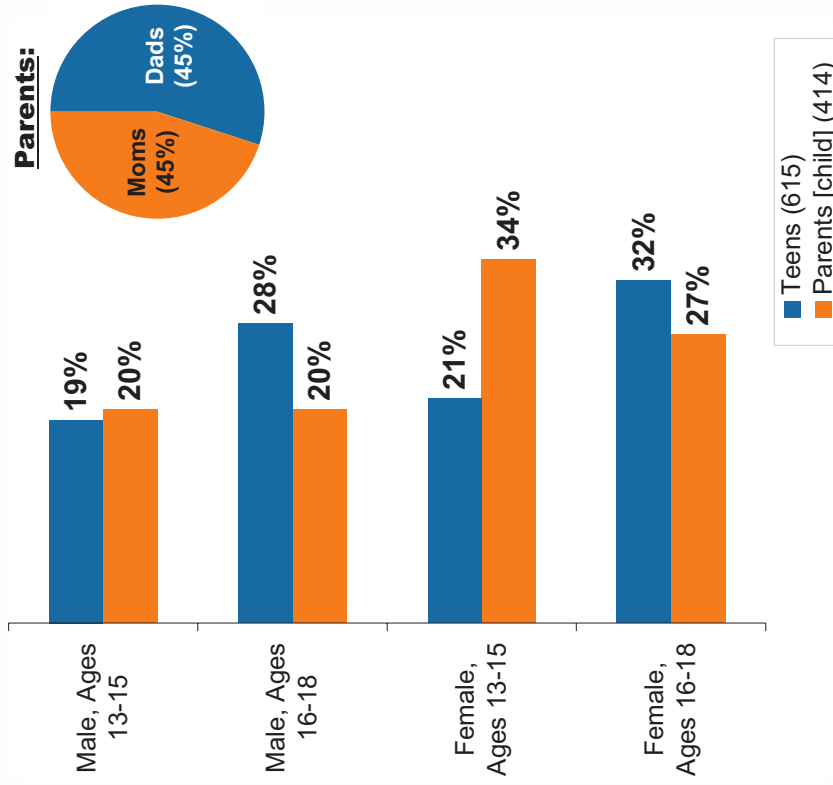
- > Half of parents (50%) said they can control how much their child communicates with a dating partner using technology devices.
- > But many parents are not exercising control and limits: About one in four parents of teens (28%) say they limit their teenager's use of technology for communicating with a dating partner.
  - > Less than one in five teens (18%) say their parents actually limit their use of tech devices for communicating with a partner.

**Question 12/15:** How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? [Teen-survey wording shown in graph – parents were asked the same of their teenager; Top 2 Box Reported: “Strongly” or “Somewhat Agree”]

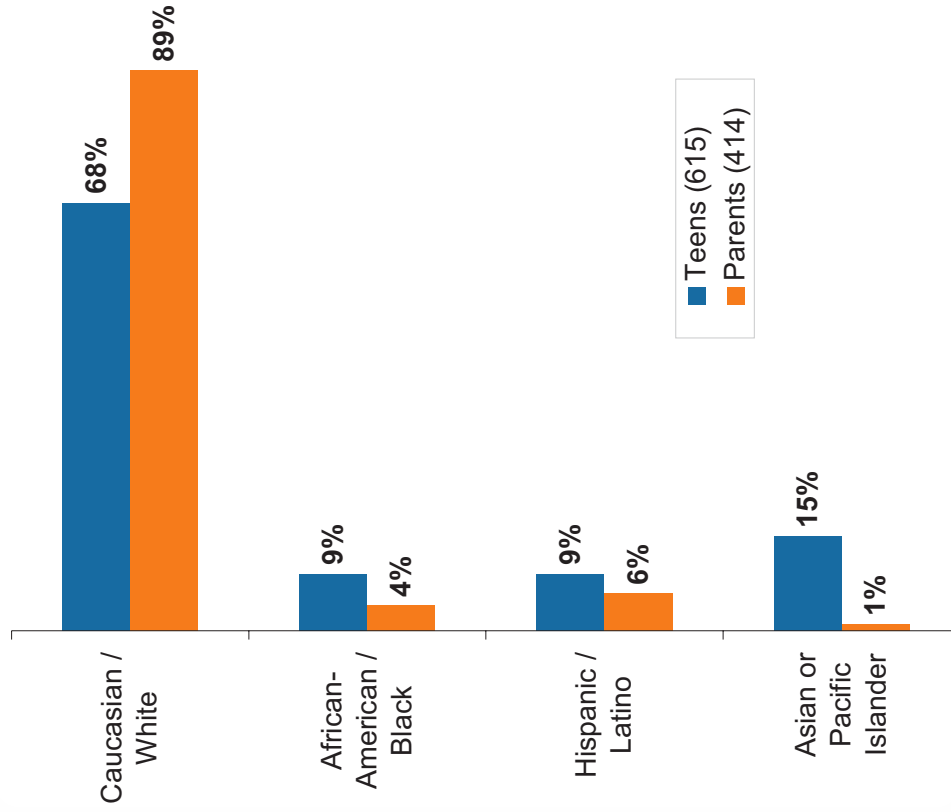
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- > **Appendix: Demographic Sample Profile**

**APPENDIX: DEMOGRAPHIC  
SAMPLE PROFILE**

**AGE/GENDER [Teenager]**



**ETHNICITY**



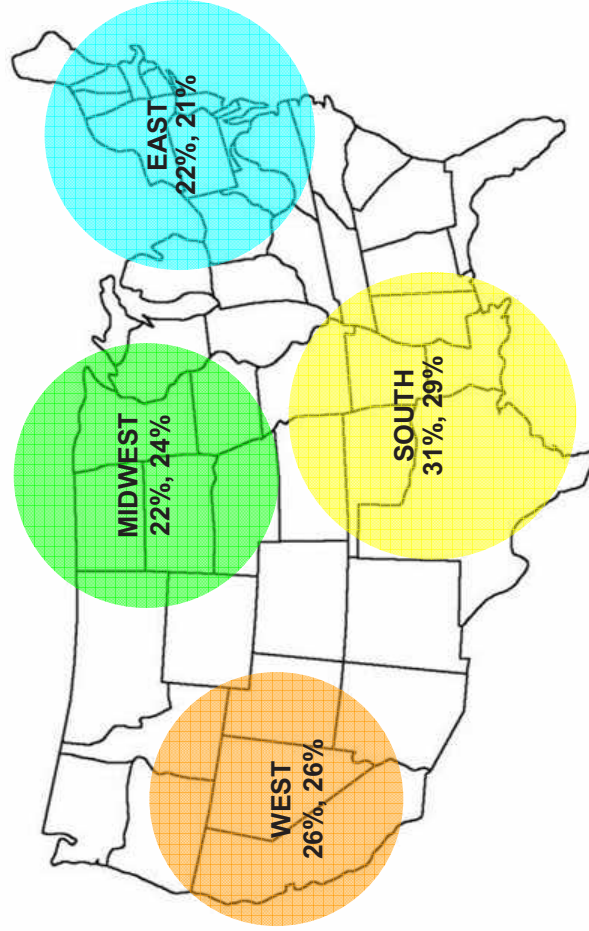
**Q1.:** Are you...? **Q2.:** What is your age?

**18 Q25/29.:** Are you...?

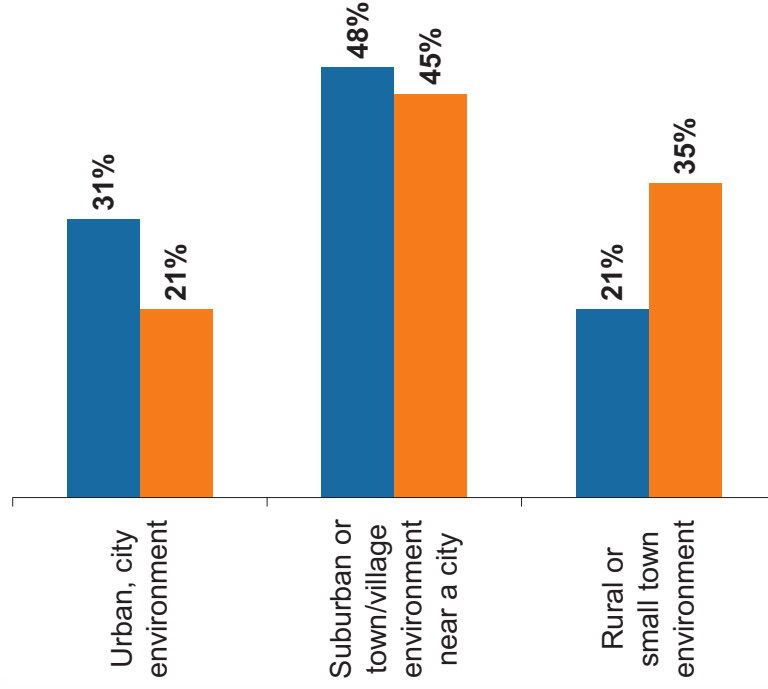
**APPENDIX: DEMOGRAPHIC  
SAMPLE PROFILE**

**GEOGRAPHIC REGION**

(Teen %, Parent %)



**COMMUNITY TYPE**



■ Teens (615)  
■ Parents (414)

**Q22/26.:** What state do you live in?

**Q24/28.:** Which of the following best describes where you live?



## ***Questions, Comments?***

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