



WiredSafety's Statement Regarding the Internet Safety Technical Task Force's Final Report to the Attorneys General December 17, 2008

Due to space limitations, [www.wiredsafety.org/taskforce](http://www.wiredsafety.org/taskforce) contains supplemental information to this comment incorporated by reference herein, updated as needed. Our appreciation, especially to the Attorneys General, is set forth therein.

WiredSafety is a grass-roots all-volunteer charity that helps empower Internet users of all ages and addresses risks encountered online and on mobile, cell and gaming devices. It first began operations in 1995 and is run by Parry Aftab, an Internet privacy and security lawyer (also an unpaid volunteer), WiredSafety is best known for its unique insight into how young people use technologies, identifying the risks they face and framing solutions to those risks.

It does this by engaging teens and preteens in the process. Teenangels, and its younger counterpart, Tweenangels, are WiredSafety's youth cybersafety leadership and research programs. They don't just learn about cybersafety, they teach others, research the issues and create solutions and awareness programs of their own. The Teenangels advise industry, appear on TV, testify before Congress, conduct presentations, publish research and host summits.

While we agree with the ISTTF Report as a whole, we have some concerns over the shortage of current and relevant research which can lead to out-of-date and, in some cases, misleading conclusions. The Teenangels research is designed to elicit relevant information about what teens and preteens do online and how this information can be used to forge awareness, education, technology and policy solutions. And because teens are more frank with their peers than adults whom they fear may tell their parents, these findings are compelling, insightful and meaningful.

In a survey of 512 7<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade girls, 44% said they were cyberbullied, most from their best friend (19%), boyfriend or girlfriend (9%) or an acquaintance (57%). More than 60% shared their passwords with others. (There is a direct connection between misuse of passwords and cyberbullying.) Younger teen girls take more risks than older ones (19% of one poll admitted to a real life meeting with someone that they had only known online. Most of these were freshmen girls.) In the same survey, 10% of the students had between 10 and 50 strangers on their social networking "friends" list. 75% had 100 or more friends on their "friends list (50% had 200 or more). Teen girls believe that they are safe online, but their friends are not. (89% felt they were safe online, but thought 28% of their friends were unsafe online.) 96% of the teen girls polled had a social networking profile. Given the kinds of things they chose as passwords, 91% of their passwords can be easily guessed by others in their class. Password abuse is the root of much evil.

How do girls and boys compare? In a separate study of 547 boys and girls, boys were almost twice as likely to share their cell numbers on their profiles. A review of these findings disclosed that boys tend to feel safer and therefore share more contact information online than girls.

While not classified as "peer-reviewed," teen peer-conducted surveys provide fresh, relevant and much needed information about young people online. As we search for answers, young people must be part of the process, the research and in framing solutions and meaningful approaches. (For more research results, our full comments and our appreciation to all involved for their extraordinary effort and the honor of being a part of the ISTTF, visit [wiredsafety.org/taskforce](http://wiredsafety.org/taskforce).)