

Young people struggle to maintain their privacy online

57% of young people make their online social network profiles public and disclose a great deal of personal information, according to a recent survey of 21,872 people across Europe organised by European Schoolnet, coordinator of European Insafe network. Almost a third of youngsters responding indicated that they didn't know what to do about making information public or private. However, in other areas, awareness of safe behaviour is increasing.

Social networks such as MySpace and Bebo are some of most popular websites among young people. The Insafe survey suggests that more needs to be done to raise awareness of privacy issues. At the same time, providers of social platforms need to do more to enable young people to make parts of or whole profiles private.

However, in some contexts, many young people are aware of what to do: for instance, when using MSN, 58% of young people surveyed reported that they would not accept a request for contact from a person they didn't know.

Despite this, the under 10 age group seems to have relatively little awareness of the dangers of going to meet someone they have been chatting with online. More than a third indicated hypothetically they would go to meet online contacts without telling parents.

However, awareness increases greatly for 10 to 13 year olds, and then steadily declines; 22% of 17 year olds would forget to tell their parents about such a meeting and 24% of 18 year olds would go alone.

A similar pattern of increased risk-taking from age 14 to 17 can be repeatedly seen in a detailed analysis of the survey results, underlining the need to tailor awareness-raising campaigns to target these age groups.

The Insafe survey was sponsored by UPC, with support from the European Commission. Further survey results will be available on the Insafe website in the coming weeks.

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About Insafe

The Insafe network (<http://www.saferinternet.org>) coordinates internet safety awareness actions in Europe, with the support of the European Commission and in partnership with national Safer Internet awareness nodes. Insafe aims to support and promote the work not only of national nodes, but also that of all individuals, organisations and agencies active in the field in Europe and beyond. The goal is to contribute to awareness-raising and empower citizens to effectively and ethically use and benefit from new information and communication technology, while highlighting associated dangers and safeguarding rights to privacy and security. The network is co-funded by the European Commission's Safer Internet Plus Programme (http://www.europa.eu.int/information_society/activities/sip/index_en.htm)

About UPC

UPC Broadband (<http://www.UPC.nl>) is a pan-European provider of television, broadband Internet, and telephone services. These services are provided in 11 European countries to approximately 10 million customers. UPC is the European cable division of Liberty Global, Inc., the leading international cable operator offering services to connect its customers to the world of entertainment, communications and information. As a supplier of Internet services, the company is conscious of its responsibility with regard to safe and responsible use of the Internet and is therefore involved in various initiatives for raising awareness, primarily among teenagers and young children

About European Schoolnet

European Schoolnet (<http://www.europeanschoolnet.org>) is a unique not-for-profit consortium of 28 ministries of education in Europe created in 1997. EUN provides major European education portals for teaching, learning and collaboration and leads the way in bringing about change in schooling through the use of new technology.