Parents can play an important role in helping children understand the media environment and rules around media use. The Common Sense Census explored how parents and their children communicate about media, including what discussions they have and how aware parents are of children’s media use.

Talking with children about media

- The vast majority of youth report that their parents have talked with them about their media use.
- Young people are far more likely to have heard from their parents about online safety and responsibility than about how much time they spend using media.

What parents know about the media their children use

- The majority of tweens say their parents know “a lot” about the various media they use, ranging from 54 percent who say their parents know “a lot” about what they do on social media (among those who use it) to 78 percent who say their parents know “a lot” about the TV shows they watch.
- Most teens say their parents don’t know “a lot” about the media they use, with the exception of the TV shows they watch (58 percent of teens who watch TV shows say their parents know “a lot” about them). Indeed, only about a third of teens say their parents know “a lot” about what they do online (32 percent), the apps they use (29 percent), or what they do on social media (32 percent).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARENTAL AWARENESS ABOUT THE MEDIA TWEENS AND TEENS USE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Among those who “often”/“sometimes” do each activity, percent whose parents:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The TV shows they watch</td>
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<tr>
<td>The video/computer games they play</td>
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<tr>
<td>The songs they listen to</td>
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<tr>
<td>What they do/see online</td>
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<tr>
<td>The apps they use</td>
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<td>The social media they use</td>
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Note: Superscripts are used to denote whether differences between groups are statistically significant (p<.05). Items with different superscripts differ significantly. Items that do not have a superscript, or that share a common superscript, do not differ significantly.
Demographic differences in parental talk about and awareness of children’s media

- The biggest differences in parent communication and awareness about media are by age, with tweens reporting that their parents know and talk more about media than the parents of teens do.
- In both age groups, Hispanic youth are the most likely to report that their parents talk about when they can use media (83 percent for tweens and 64 percent for teens) and how much time they can spend using media (81 percent for tweens and 59 percent for teens).
- Black and Hispanic tweens are more likely to report that their parents talk about being responsible and respectful online (92 percent) than their white peers (83 percent).
- When it comes to parental awareness, young people who have more highly educated and higher-income parents are consistently less likely than other youth to report that their parents know “a lot” about the media they use.

Parents and social media

The vast majority of young people say their parents have spoken with them about staying safe online (87 percent of tweens and 86 percent of teens) and about being “responsible, respectful, and kind” online (86 percent of tweens and 85 percent of teens). However, not all parents know what happens on their children’s social media platforms.

Among those who “often”/“sometimes” use social media, percent who say their parents know … about what they do on social media

Tweens

AMONG TEENS WHO DO EACH ACTIVITY, PERCENT WHOSE PARENTS KNOW “A LOT” ABOUT …

**By Family Income**

- **What they do/see online**
  - Lower income: 32%
  - Middle income: 43%
  - Higher income: 26%
  - **Not significant**

- **Video/computer games they play**
  - Lower income: 45%
  - Middle income: 44%
  - Higher income: 39%
  - **Not significant**

- **TV shows they watch**
  - Lower income: 60%
  - Middle income: 57%
  - Higher income: 60%
  - **Not significant**

- **Songs they listen to**
  - Lower income: 41%
  - Middle income: 33%
  - Higher income: 48%
  - **Significant**

- **Social media they use**
  - Lower income: 31%
  - Middle income: 38%
  - Higher income: 28%
  - **Not significant**

- **Apps they use**
  - Lower income: 27%
  - Middle income: 35%
  - Higher income: 27%
  - **Not significant**

Note: “Lower income” is defined as <$35,000; “middle” is $35,000-99,999; and “higher” is $100,000 or more. Superscripts are used to denote whether differences between groups are statistically significant (p<.05). Items with different superscripts differ significantly. Items that do not have a superscript, or that share a common superscript, do not differ significantly.