

Welcome to the online world

Quarter of children have online births before their real ones

Uploading ante-natal scans, giving children an online album from birth, and in some cases even creating email addresses for babies - today's parents are increasingly building a digital footprint for their children from the moment they are born.

This is according to research released by Internet security company AVG conducted among mothers with children aged under two in North America (USA and Canada), the EU5 (UK, France, Germany, Italy, Spain), Australia/New Zealand and Japan.

AVG's research shows that:

81% of children under two currently have some kind of digital dossier or footprint, with images of them posted online. In the US that rises to 92% while for the EU5 the figure is 73%.

Though the average digital birth of children happens at around six months, a third (33%) of children have information and photos online within weeks of being born. In the UK, 37% of newborns have an online life from birth, whereas in Australia and New Zealand the figure is 41%.

A quarter (23%) of children have had their pre-birth scans uploaded to the Internet. This figure is higher in the US, where 34% have had *antenatal* scans posted online, while in Canada the figure is even higher at 37%. Fewer parents share scans of their children in France (13%), Italy (14%) and Germany (15%). Likewise only 14% of parents share baby scans online in Japan.

Seven percent of babies and toddlers have an email address created for them by their parents and five percent have a social network profile.

When asked what motivates them to post images of their babies on the Internet, more than 70% of all mothers surveyed said it was to share with friends and family.

However, more than a fifth (22%) of mothers in the US said they wanted to add more content to their social network profiles, while 18% of US mothers said they were simply following their peers.

Lastly, AVG asked mothers how concerned they are (on a scale of one to five with five being very concerned) about the amount of online information available for their children in future years.

Mothers were moderately concerned (average 3.5), with Spanish mothers being the most (3.9) and Canadian mothers the least (3.1) worried.

According to AVG CEO JR Smith, “It’s a sobering thought that while a 30-year-old has an online footprint stretching back at most 10-15 years, the vast majority of children today have online presence by the time they are two-years-old - a presence that will be built on throughout their whole lives.

“Our research shows that the trend is increasingly for a child’s digital birth to coincide and in many cases pre-date their real ones. A quarter of babies have scans posted online before they have even physically come into the world.

“It’s completely understandable why proud parents would want to upload and share images of very young children with friends and families. At the same time we would urge parents to think about two things.

“First of all, you are creating a digital history for a human being that will follow him or her around for the rest of their life. What kind of footprint do you actually want to start for your child, and what will they think about the information you’ve uploaded in future?

“Secondly, it reinforces the need for parents to be aware of the privacy settings they have set on their social network profiles. Otherwise, you maybe sharing your baby’s picture not only your friends and family but with the whole online world.”

ENDS

The research was conducted by Research Now among 2200 mothers with young (under two) children during the week of 27 September. Mothers in the EU5 (UK, Germany, France, Italy, Spain), Canada, the USA, Australia, New Zealand and Japan were polled.

Key results

1 - Mothers with children aged under two that have uploaded images of their child

Overall - 81%

USA - 92%

Canada - 84%

UK - 81%

France - 74%

Italy - 68%

Germany - 71%

Spain - 71%

(EU5 - 73%)

Australia - 84%

New Zealand - 91%

Japan - 43%

2 - Mothers that uploaded images of their newborn

Overall - 33%

USA - 33%

Canada - 37%

UK - 37%

France - 26%

Italy - 26%

Germany - 30%

Spain - 24%

(EU5 - 28.6%)

Australia - 41%

New Zealand - 41%

Japan - 19%

3 - Mothers that have uploaded antenatal scans online

Overall - 23%

USA - 34%

Canada - 37%

UK - 23%

France - 13%

Italy - 14%

Germany - 15%

Spain - 24%

(EU5 - 20%)

Australia - 26%

New Zealand - 30%

Japan - 14%

4 - Mothers that gave their baby an email address

Overall - 7%

USA - 6%

Canada - 9%

UK - 4%

France - 7%

Italy - 7%

Germany - 7%

Spain - 12%

(EU5 - 7%)

Australia - 7%

New Zealand - 4%

Japan - 7%

5 - Mothers that gave their baby a social network profile

Overall - 5%

USA - 6%

Canada - 8%

UK - 4%

France - 2%

Italy - 5%

Germany - 5%

Spain - 7%

(EU5 - 5%)

Australia - 5%

New Zealand - 6%

Japan - 8%