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Canadian Parents Have Important Role to Play in Educating Teenage Daughters about Internet Safety and Risk of Sex Trafficking, According to new Covenant House / Ipsos Survey

Improved Familiarity with Sex Trafficking and its Risks Can Lead to Safer Behaviour among Teenaged Girls

Teenage Girls More Likely to be Aware of Risky Behaviour and Avoid It When Parents are Aware of Child's Social Media

Toronto, ON, December 6, 2018 — New research conducted by Ipsos for Covenant House has revealed that parents have an important role to play in educating their teenage daughters about internet safety and the risky behaviour that could lead to being unwittingly lured into the sex-trafficking industry. The research included an online survey of girls aged 12-16, and in-person interviews that focused on personal experience with sex trafficking. The survey finds that the early teenage years are a critical age range in which to educate girls before their risk factors increase.

Overall, seven in 10 girls (70%) are familiar (22% very/48% somewhat) with the term “sex trafficking”, but this varies significantly with age, with only 51% of 12-year-olds familiar (9% very/42% somewhat) with the term compared to 85% (31% very/50% somewhat) among 16-year-olds. Girls with greater familiarity with the term sex trafficking were more likely to take steps to ensure their safety and be confident they would know if they were being catfished online. For example, they are more likely to:

- Keep their phone on whenever they leave the house (79%, versus 66% of those who aren't familiar);
- Only go to parties/homes where they know the host or go with someone who does (67%, versus 53% of those who aren't familiar);
- Talk about internet safety with friends (67%, versus 52% of girls who aren't familiar with the term);
- Be confident they would know if they were being catfished online (68%, versus 58% of those not familiar with the term sex trafficking).

The findings from Ipsos's qualitative research with sex trafficking survivors and advocates also demonstrated the importance of education around sex trafficking and open dialogue with parents. Many of these girls lacked a big picture understanding of what was happening to them and the right vocabulary to describe it to others. These factors, combined with not knowing where to turn to for help, were key barriers when survivors were thinking about leaving.

When it comes to their friends, the survey finds that six in 10 (59%) teenage girls agree (18% strongly/41% somewhat) they have a friend who has done things online that weren't safe. Only four in 10 girls (38%) claim their own parents are 'very aware' of their social media activity (50% say their parents are 'somewhat aware', while the rest (13%) are not aware their daughters' social media habits).

Address: 160 Bloor Street East, Suite 300
Toronto, ON, M4W 1B9
Tel: +1 416 324-2900

Contact: **Mitra Thompson**
Senior Account Manager, Ipsos Public Affairs
Email: mitra.thompson@ipsos.com
Tel: +1 514 904-4329



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Girls’ social media use increases with age, and girls who use more social media are less likely to feel they can talk to their parents about anything. Nearly eight in 10 (78%) girls aged 12-14 said they talk to their parents about online safety, while older girls aged 15-16 are significantly less likely (69%) to broach the topic with their parents.

Throughout the research, those teenage girls who report that their parents are aware of their online social media activity or feel that they can talk to their parents about anything expressed greater awareness of the risks of certain behaviours, and greater aversion to engaging in many of those risky behaviours.

Perceptions: Risky (Very/Somewhat)		
	Parents Aware of Social Media Activity	
	Yes	No
Respond to online messages from people I don’t know in person	77%	61%
Post photos of myself online	63%	48%

Conversely, engagement in these behaviours is often more prominent among girls who keep their social media activity a secret from their parents:

Behaviours: Engage in (Regularly/Sometimes)		
	Parents Aware of Social Media Activity	
	Yes	No
Respond to online messages from people I don’t know in person	20%	37%
Accept friend or follow requests from people I’ve never met in person	31%	47%

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About the Study

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos survey conducted between April 1 and 9, 2018, on behalf of Covenant House. For this survey, a random sample of 501 girls aged 12 to 16 was interviewed online via the Ipsos I-Say panel and non-panel sources. Parental consent was obtained. Weighting was then employed to balance demographics to ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the population of girls aged 12 to 16 according to Census data and to provide results intended to approximate the sample universe. The precision of Ipsos online surveys is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the survey is accurate to within ± 5.0 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, had all girls aged 12 to 16 in Canada been polled. The credibility interval will be wider among subsets of the population. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error.

For more information on this news release, please contact:

Mitra Thompson
Senior Account Manager, Ipsos Public Affairs
+1 514 904 4329
Mitra.Thompson@ipsos.com

About Ipsos

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www.ipsos.com

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