

# *Is There a Relationship Between Online Safety Concerns and Broadband Uptake?*

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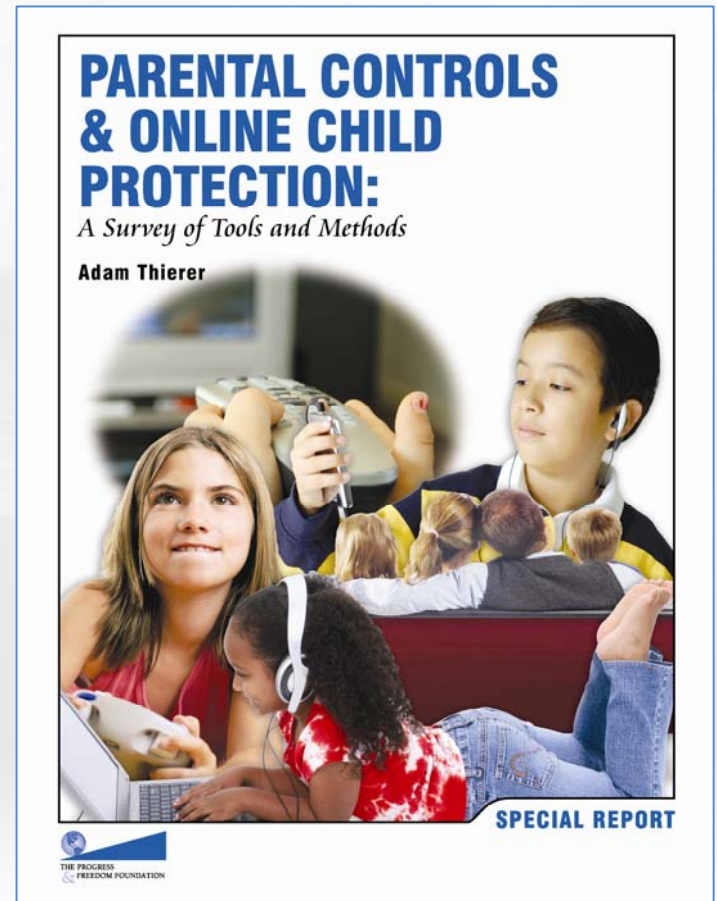
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# Testimony Based on Findings Contained in PFF's *Parental Controls & Online Child Protection: A Survey of Tools & Methods*

[www.PFF.org/parentalcontrol](http://www.PFF.org/parentalcontrol)

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# Summary of Remarks

***No substantive empirical evidence exists suggesting a correlation between parental concerns about online activity and overall household broadband uptake***

**Explanations why parental concerns about online safety haven't "moved the broadband needle" much:**

- 1. Not every home has children present**
- 2. Parents use a variety of household media rules to control media & Internet usage**
- 3. A vibrant marketplace of parental control technologies exists**
- 4. Likely that most parents believe that the benefits of broadband outweigh the potential downsides**



# Breakdown of U.S. Households With and Without Children (1960-2007)

	1960	1970	1980	1990	1995	2000	2005	2007
Total Households (in thousands)	52,799	63,401	80,776	93,347	98,990	104,705	113,146	116,011
Nonfamily Households	7,895	11,945	21,226	27,257	29,686	32,680	36,136	37,587
Family Households With Own Children	25,690	28,812	31,022	32,289	34,296	34,605	36,520	36,757
Family Households Without Own Children	19,215	22,774	28,528	33,801	35,009	37,420	40,491	41,668
Total Households Without Children	27,110	34,719	49,754	61,058	64,695	70,100	76,627	79,255
<b>% of Households Without Children</b>	<b>51.3%</b>	<b>54.8%</b>	<b>61.6%</b>	<b>65.4%</b>	<b>65.4%</b>	<b>67.0%</b>	<b>67.7%</b>	<b>68.3%</b>
% of Households With Children	48.7%	45.4%	38.4%	34.6%	34.6%	33.0%	32.3%	31.7%

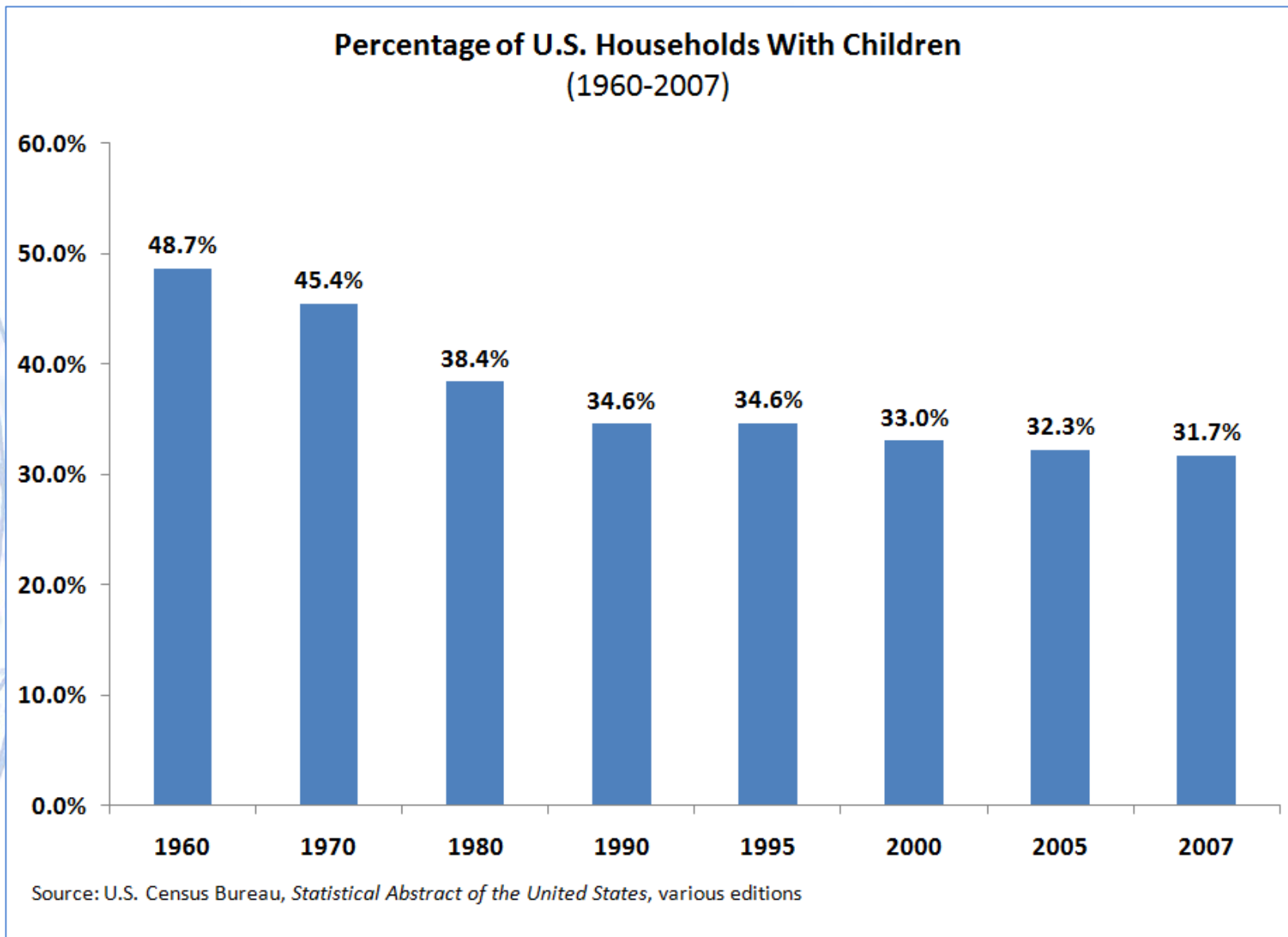
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, various years

**Only 32 % of homes have children present**

See: Adam Thierer, *Who Needs Parental Controls? Assessing the Relevant Market for Parental Control Technologies*, PFF Progress on Point 16.5, Feb. 27, 2009, [www.pff.org/issues-pubs/pops/2009/pop16.5parentalcontrolsmarket.pdf](http://www.pff.org/issues-pubs/pops/2009/pop16.5parentalcontrolsmarket.pdf)



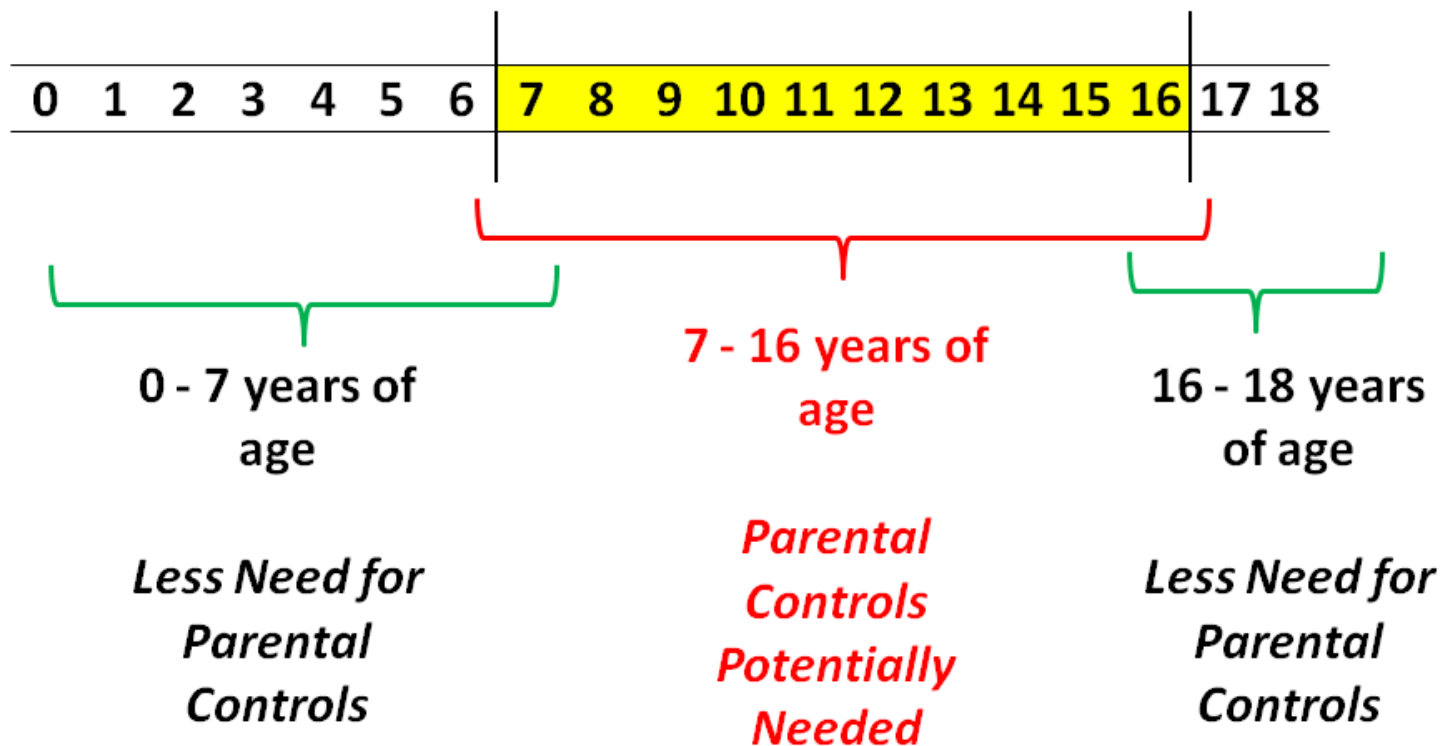
# Steady Decline of Homes With Children Present



# Only Certain Ages Need Parental Controls

## When are Parental Controls Needed?

Ages 7 to 16 are Likely Years When  
Parental Controls are Employed in Most Homes

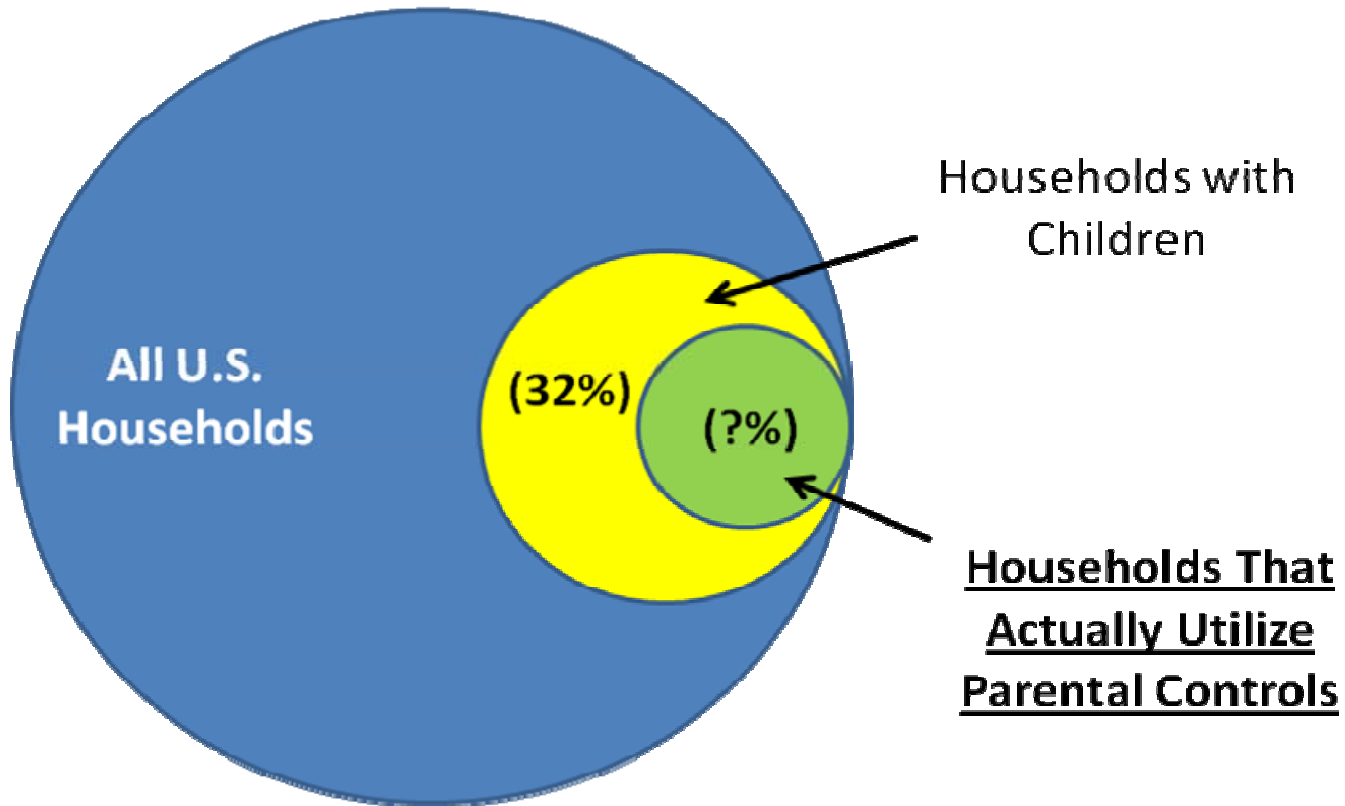


**Source:** Adam Thierer, Progress & Freedom Foundation

# Fewer Homes Need Parental Controls Than Most Think

## Who Needs Parental Controls?

Far Less than 32% of U.S. Households Likely Need Parental Controls



**Source:** Adam Thierer, Progress & Freedom Foundation

# Parents Use a Variety of Household Media Rules to Control Media & Internet Usage

## 2007 Kaiser Family Foundation poll

- 65% of parents closely monitor their children's media use;
- 73% of parents say they know a lot about what their kids are doing online;
- 87% of parents check their kid's instant messaging "buddy lists;"
- 82% of parents review their children's social networking sites; and,
- 76% of parents look check websites their children have visited.

## 2007 Common Sense Media & Cable in the Classroom poll

- 85% of parents and legal guardians of children ages 6 to 18 who go online say they have talked to their child in the past year about how to be safe and smart online.





# Grouping Household Media Rules

1. **“WHERE” rules** (assigning a place for content consumption);
2. **“WHEN and HOW MUCH” rules** (creating a media allowance);
3. **“UNDER WHAT CONDITIONS” rules** (carrot-and-stick incentives); and,
4. **“WHAT” rules** (specifying what exactly kids can and cannot view or listen to).

***>>The widespread use of such household media rules by parents suggests that most parents realize they have ways of dealing with media consumption by their children if they choose to subscribe to broadband access services.***



# Diverse Array of Parental Control Tools

- Filters
  - network-based or ISP-provided
  - stand-alone or PC-based software
- Monitoring tools
- Operating system-level controls
- Browser tools
- Safe search controls
- Walled gardens and kid-friendly portals
- Social networking safety settings



## ... and the Even Better News Is...

- Technological **innovation in this area continues** at an impressive pace
- Parental control technologies growing both **increasingly sophisticated & user-friendly**
- The cost of these tools continues to plummet. In fact, **most of these tools are free to consumers** or available for a very small fee



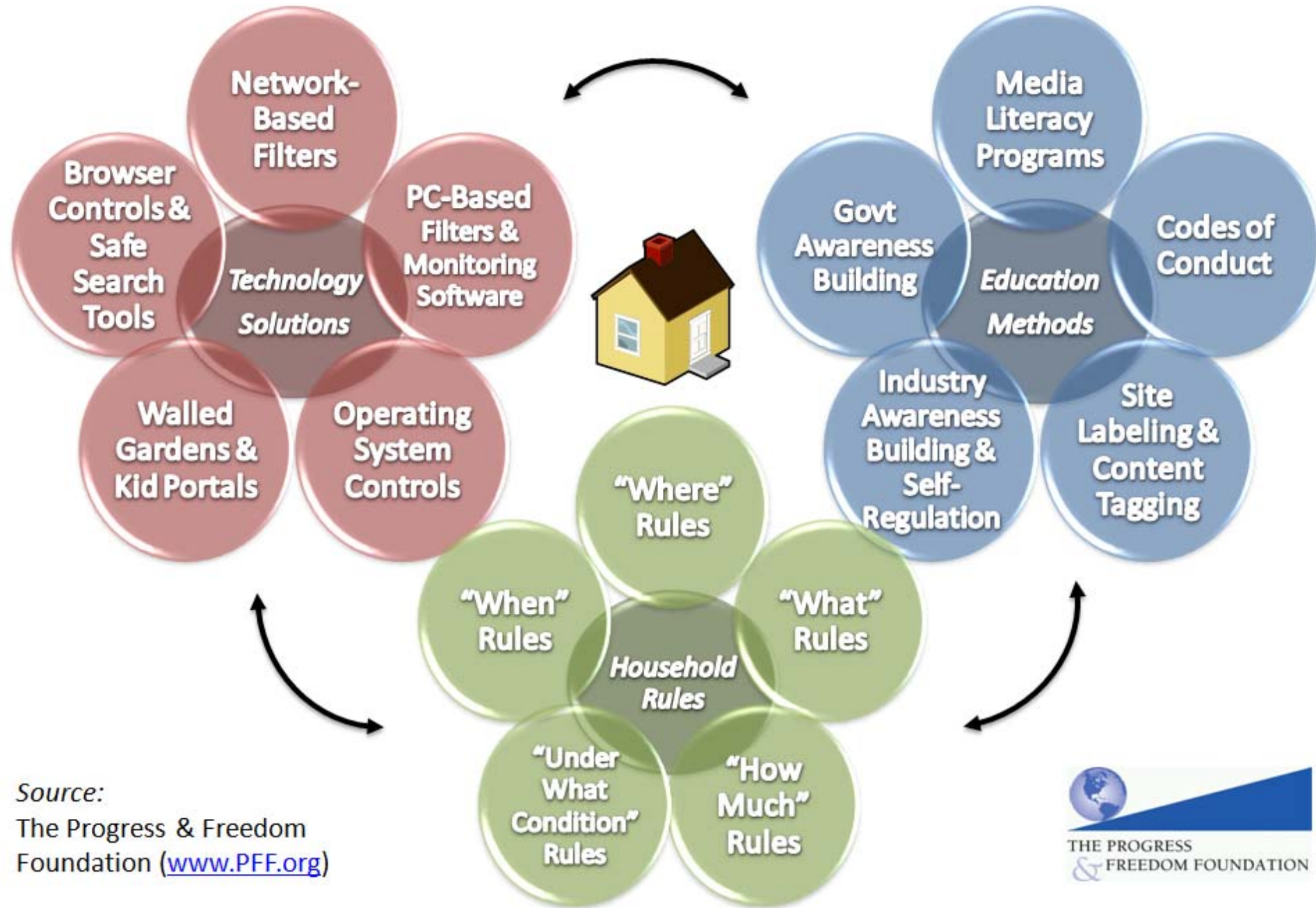
# A Well-Functioning Market

- As the FCC recently reported: **“Studies have found that Internet parental control tools on the market are effective and that those who use these tools are generally pleased with their performance.”**

***>> The increasing ubiquity, and awareness of, the wide variety of sophisticated parental control tools on the market today has assuaged some of the parental concerns about online child safety that existed in prior years.***



# Mosaic of Parental Control Tools & Methods



Source:  
The Progress & Freedom  
Foundation ([www.PFF.org](http://www.PFF.org))

# Concluding Thoughts

- Likely that most **parents believe that the benefits of broadband outweigh the potential downsides**
- Also likely we are seeing this **same pattern unfolding on the privacy front**
  - Not all homes have same privacy sensitivities
  - A vibrant market of privacy-enhancing tools & methods exists
- Best thing the FCC can do is **educate the public** about the empowerment tools and methods at their disposal to the extent concerns persist

