

## EU Kids Online – cross national comparisons

### Aims

The EU Kids Online Project aims to enhance knowledge of European children's and parents' experiences and practices regarding use of the internet and new online technologies, informing the promotion of a safer online environment for children.

### Key Findings

#### Children's use of the internet

- In countries where children have more mobile and/or private access to the internet, average time spent online is generally higher. As children gain access to the internet at younger and younger ages, the time they spend online is rising.

#### Skills and activities

- Children report the highest levels of digital literacy and safety skills in Finland, Slovenia and the Netherlands. Their digital skills are reportedly the lowest in Romania, Italy and, especially, Turkey.
- If children are classified according to the types of activities they do, the percentage of users in each country that can be classified as 'advanced/creative users' ranges from 14% in Romania to 50% in Sweden.
- Self-reported digital literacy and safety skills are generally related to diversity of online activities. In general, countries where children report a higher level of digital skills also display a wider repertoire of online activities, and vice versa.

#### Excessive use

- 'Excessive use' describes problematic behaviour associated with use of the internet or related digital technologies. Across Europe, 15% of children aged 9-16 agree that 'I have caught myself surfing when I am not really interested'.
- In most countries, more time spent online (in minutes) is straightforwardly associated with higher proportions of children who report excessive use.

#### Risk and harm

- In general, countries with high levels of internet use also have the highest percentage of children who have encountered risks on the internet. The highest percentage of risks experienced by children is found in North East Europe (Estonia and Lithuania), closely followed by Sweden and Norway. Countries with the lowest risk encountered online are West and South European countries, the lowest percentage being in Turkey, Portugal, Greece and Italy.
- Talking to someone about a harmful online experience is more common among children from France, the Netherlands, Italy, the UK and Portugal.

### Seeing sexual images

- Across Europe, 14% of 9- to 16-year-olds have in the past 12 months seen images online that are 'obviously sexual – for example, showing people naked or people having sex'.
- In general, the higher the percentage of children in a country who have seen sexual images on websites, the lower the percentage who have been bothered by seeing such images. This suggests that exposure results in a degree of resilience.

### Bullying

- In relation to online bullying, 6% of 9- to 16-year-olds have been sent nasty or hurtful messages online, and 3% have sent such messages to others. Over half of those who received bullying messages were 'fairly' or 'very upset'.
- In most countries, between 70 and 90 percent of children who have encountered bullying on the internet say that they have been a bit, fairly or very upset by this experience.

### Meeting online contacts offline

- Thirty per cent of European children aged 9-16 who use the internet have communicated in the past with someone they have not met face-to-face before, but only 9% of children have met an online contact offline in the past year. One per cent of all children (or one in nine of those who went to a meeting) were bothered or upset by such a meeting.

## Policy Context

Policies for the promotion of a safer internet are based on an understanding of risks and risk-taking behaviour. The EU Kids Online Project provides a vast array of quantitative data relating to the online behaviour of children and young people in the UK. An understanding of broad trends in patterns of risky use of the internet and new online technologies is essential for the development of evidence-based policies for the promotion of safer internet use.

## Methodology

In this large-scale quantitative study, a survey was administered face-to-face at home to a random stratified sample of 25,142 children aged 9-16 who use the internet, plus one of their parents, during Spring/Summer 2010 in 25 European countries.

## Background

The UK survey was conducted as part of a larger 25 country survey conducted by the *EU Kids Online* network and funded by the EC's Safer Internet Programme.

Source: [www.eukidsonline.net](http://www.eukidsonline.net)

Research Team Sonia Livingstone, Leslie Haddon, Anke Görzig and Kjartan Ólafsson

Contact information [S.Livingstone@lse.ac.uk](mailto:S.Livingstone@lse.ac.uk)