

EU Kids Online II – UK Findings

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, in order to inform the promotion of a safer online environment for children.

Key Findings

Patterns of Use

- Half (52%) of UK children aged 9-16 who use the internet go online in their bedroom or other private room (including 24% of 9-10 year olds) and over half (57%) at a friend's house.
- Half of UK children go online via a mobile device (54%) and 26% report handheld access to the internet (e.g. iPod Touch or iPhone or Blackberry).

Social networking

- 67% of children who use the internet in the UK have their own social networking site profile, a little more than the European average of 59%.
- 28% of 9-10 year olds and 59% of 11-12 year olds have a profile, suggesting that it is the start of secondary school, rather than the minimum age set by providers, that triggers social networking.
- 19% of 11-16 year olds (more boys than girls, more teens than young children) say they communicate online with people who they met online who have no connection with them offline.
- One reason for such apparently risky communications may lie in the finding that 55% of 11-16 year old internet users say they find it easier to be themselves online, 49% talk about different things online than offline, and 29% talk about more private things online than with people face to face.
- 4% of UK children have gone to an offline meeting with someone first met online.

Sexual images

- 11% of UK children have encountered sexual images online. 8% of UK 11-16 year olds say they have seen online sexual images including nudity, 6% (more teenagers than young children) have seen images of someone having sex, 6% have seen someone's genitals online and 2% say they have seen violent sexual images.
- Among children who have seen online sexual images, 41% of parents say their child has not seen this, while 30% recognise that they have and 29% say they don't know.
- As in other countries, 9-10 year olds are less likely to see sexual images online but more likely to be bothered or upset by the experience if they do see them.

Bullying

- In relation to online bullying, 21% of UK children say they have been bullied, but just 8% say this occurred on the internet.

Other online risks

- 19% of UK 11-16 year olds have seen one or more type of potentially harmful user-generated content, rising to 32% of 14-16 year old girls. Most common are hate messages (13%), followed by

anorexia/bulimia sites and sites talking about drug experiences (both 8%). Few (2%) have visited a suicide site.

- The main misuse of personal data experienced by UK children is when someone has used their password or pretended to be them (10%).

Mediation

- Parents do considerably more active mediation of younger children's use of the internet – including talking to them, staying nearby, encouraging them or sharing internet use. However, one in nine parents (11%) never do any of these things.
- 87% of UK children say that they are either not allowed to do some of a list of online activities (disclose personal information, upload, download, etc) or that restrictions apply, and younger children face more restrictions.
- 54% of parents block or filter websites and track the websites visited by the children, (46% according to their children) - these figures are far higher than in Europe generally.
- However, 56% of children think that parental mediation limits what they do online, 13% saying it limits their activities a lot.

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

The large scale, quantitative survey was administered face-to-face at home to a random stratified sample of 1032 UK 9-16 year olds and one of their parents/carers during May/June 2010.

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: Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A., and Ólafsson, K. (2011). Risks and safety on the internet: the UK report. LSE, London: EU Kids Online. Available at www.eukidsonline.net

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