

EU Kids Online II – European findings on risks and safety for children on the internet

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. The findings reported below relate to 25 countries in Europe, including the UK.

Key Findings

Patterns of Use

- Children are going online at ever younger ages - the average age of first internet use is seven in Denmark and Sweden and eight in several Northern European countries. Across all countries, one third of 9-10 year olds who use the internet go online daily, this rising to 80% of 15-16 year olds.
- The most common location of internet use is at home (87%), followed by school (63%). But internet access is diversifying – 49% use it in their bedroom and 33% via a mobile phone or handheld device.

Social networking

- 59% of 9-16 year olds have a social networking profile – including 26% aged 9-10, 49% aged 11-12, 73% aged 13-14 and 82% aged 15-16.
- Among social network users, 43% keep their profile private so that only their friends can see it. A further 28% report that their profile is partially private so that friends of friends and networks can see it. Notably, 26% report that their profile is public so that anyone can see it.
- Only 1 in 12 children have met an online contact offline, and also this risk rarely has a harmful consequence, according to children.

Sexual images

- 14% of 9-16 year olds have in the past 12 months seen images online that are *“obviously sexual – for example, showing people naked or people having sex.”*
- 53% of those who had been bothered by seeing sexual images online told someone about this the last time it happened – 33% told a friend, 25% told a parent. However, 25% simply stopped using the internet for a while and few changed their filter or contact settings.

Bullying

- In relation to online bullying, 6% of 9-16 year olds have been sent nasty or hurtful messages online, and 3% have sent such messages to others. Two thirds of those who received bullying messages were fairly or very upset.
- Since 19% have been bullied either online or offline (compared with 6% online), and 12% have bullied someone else either online or offline (compared with 3% online), it seems more bullying occurs offline than online.

Other online risks

- 15% of 11-16 year olds have received peer to peer “sexual messages or images ...[meaning] talk about having sex or images of people naked or having sex,” and 3% say they have sent or posted such messages.
- Of those who have received such messages, nearly one quarter were bothered by this. Further, of those who have been bothered, nearly half were fairly or very upset.
- 21% of 11-16 year olds have been exposed to one or more types of potentially harmful user-generated content: hate (12%), pro-anorexia (10%), self-harm (7%), drug-taking (7%) or suicide (5%).

Mediation

- Most parents talk to their children aged 9-16 about what they do on the internet (70%) and stay nearby when the child is online (58%). But one in eight parents (13%) do not practise any of the forms of mediation asked about, according to their children.
- The use of technical safety tools is relatively low: just over a quarter of parents blocks or filters websites (28%) and/or tracks the websites visited by their child (24%).
- Two thirds of children (68%) think their parents know a lot or quite a bit about their children's internet use. However, 29% say they ignore their parents a little and 8% of children say they ignore their parents 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 Europe. 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

This large scale, quantitative 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

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

Contact information S.Livingstone@lse.ac.uk

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