



Preliminary findings of the EU Kids Online 2018 Estonian survey: Summary

Original report in Estonian: Sukk, M., Soo, K. (2018). EU Kids Online'i Eesti 2018. aasta uuringu esialgsed tulemused. Kalmus, V., Kurvits, R., Siibak, A. (Eds). Tartu: University of Tartu, Institute of Social Studies. DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.32549.55526

Available at https://sisu.ut.ee/sites/default/files/euko/files/eu_kids_online_eesti_2018_raport.pdf

The survey at a glance

In Estonia, the first wave of the EU Kids Online Survey took place in 2010 and the second (current) wave in 2018. The planning of the research and fieldwork for the second wave started in November 2017. This included the selection of optional modules and questions, adaptation, translation and testing of the questionnaire. In parallel, the research team applied for funding for the survey and for hiring a company (a public contractor) to conduct the fieldwork. The survey was funded by five different institutions: the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Education and Research (from the European Social Fund), the Ministry of Justice, the Estonian Internet Foundation, and the Institute of Social Studies, University of Tartu (the research projects PUT 44, financed by the Estonian Research Council, and IUT 20-38, financed by the Ministry of Education and Research).

The survey questionnaires were adapted and translated following the instructions and suggestions of the EU Kids Online international research team. The questionnaires were translated into Estonian by researchers of the University of Tartu (Kairi Talves and Kadri Soo acted as translators, Andra Siibak and Maria Murumaa-Mengel as reviewers, and Veronika Kalmus as adjudicator) and into Russian by Valeria Jakobson (Veronika Kalmus acted as reviewer and adjudicator). Translations were also checked by Turu-uuringute AS, a market research company that

also conducted the fieldwork in Estonia in 2010 (three people were involved, acting as additional reviewers).

The translations of the questions taken from the 2010 survey were not changed to ensure that the results of the two survey waves would be comparable. The same question wording was used for all age groups.

Cognitive testing was conducted by researchers of the University of Tartu. The questionnaires were tested on a small convenience sample of children covering all age groups (n=4). Special attention was paid to testing the length of the questionnaire, the understanding of the questions and the wording of the questionnaire (ensuring that the wording matched the vocabulary that children themselves use when speaking about technologies, the internet and online activities). Based on the results of the cognitive testing, several adaptations (especially to the length of the questionnaire) were made.

The fieldwork of the current survey wave was conducted from 31 May to 9 July 2018 by Turu-uuringute AS. Data gathering was coordinated by the research team of the University of Tartu.

The target groups of this survey were 9-17-year-old children who used the internet and their parents. The planned sample size was 1,000 respondents in each group and the actual sample size was 1,020 respondents in each group.

In Estonia the fieldwork was conducted at respondents' homes, using individual sample which was ordered from the Population Register. The sample of 5,000 individuals was drawn from the population of parents with children aged 9-17. The random probability method was used for sampling.

During the fieldwork, soft quotas were set for:

1. Location: county, settlement type (urban/rural) and city district (in Tallinn);
2. Children's age group: approximately 50% of respondents had to be less than 13 years old.

The sample of 5,000 individuals was divided into two parts: the main sample (2,773 individuals) and the reserve sample (2,227 individuals). In total 3,120 individuals were contacted during the fieldwork.

Before the start of the fieldwork, information letters were sent to the main sample members. The letters included overviews of the survey, sampling, fieldwork dates, incentives and contacts of the research company.

Data was collected via CASI (computer-assisted self-interviewing) and CAPI (computer-assisted personal interviewing) in respondents' homes. Due to the length of the questionnaire and some sensitive topics, CASI was the preferred method. CAPI was used only if a respondent rejected the CASI method.

In each household, two people were interviewed: one child aged 9-17 (whose year of birth was marked in the sample file) and their parent (or other caretaker).

Collected data were weighted by Turu-uuringute AS. The weighting model was set up based on the population statistic database of the Estonian Statistical Office as of 1 January 2017 (9-17-year-olds).

Data weighting had little impact on the sample distribution by gender, age, region or city district, but had some impact on distribution by ethnicity (Estonian ethnicity was over-represented and other ethnicities under-represented in the unweighted data file) and settlement type (urban areas were over-represented and rural areas under-represented in the unweighted data file).

Key findings

Children's internet use and online activities

- The use of the internet is thoroughly embedded in Estonian children's daily lives: 97% of children aged 9–17 accessed the internet every day, using at least one device. In 2010, 82% of Estonian children used the internet daily or almost daily, so there was a notable increase in the frequency of children's internet use in the past eight years.
- The children went online mostly via mobile phones or smartphones. In 2010, only 31% of Estonian children accessed the internet via phones. This number increased significantly, to 86%. Teenagers (13–17-year-olds) used their mobile phones or smartphones to access the internet more than younger kids (9–12-year-olds). Girls went online via mobile phones or smartphones more than boys, who, on the other hand, used PCs or laptops to access the internet more than girls.
- Many children who participated in the survey (41%) spent about two to three hours online every day. Boys spent more time on the internet than girls (on both school days and days off). Teenagers (13–17-year-olds) spent more time online on school days than younger kids (9–12-

year-olds). Russian-speaking children used the internet on regular school days a little bit longer than Estonian-speaking children.

- The most popular online activities amongst children were related to entertainment: watching videos (80%), listening to music (69%) and playing online games (41%). Social networking was also important for the kids.
- The internet has become an important part of the learning process: children used the internet at school and at home for repeating, practising and writing tasks, as well as for socialising with friends from school and searching for information (e.g. from the school website).

Digital literacy

- The children believed their digital literacy skills were good in general. Most of the 11–17-year-olds could remove people from their contact lists (93%), save pictures (91%) and install apps (90%). The children also knew how to take care of their online safety (they knew which information should be shared online, they could change their privacy settings etc.).
- The children also thought that their mobile device using skills were good.
- The children felt confident online, saying that that they rarely needed guidance when using the internet.
- Digital literacy skills were improved in schools and via training sessions: more than half of the teenagers who took part in the survey had at least sometimes received information about cyber safety, helping others, sharing private information online or talking to strangers.

Risks and harm

- The children thought that, in general, the internet was a safe place: more than three quarters of those who participated in the survey said that they always or often felt safe online. At the same time, most children were careful when it came to online communication, e.g. 66% of the children would not tell anyone online anything about themselves that they wouldn't tell people in offline communications.
- Parents were not always aware of whether their children had encountered disturbing online content. The older the child, the less the parent knew about what he or she had experienced

online, e.g. 30% of 15–17-year-olds had seen something disturbing online in the past 12 months, but only 13% of the parents knew about this.

- The children turned to their friends (41%) or parents (40%) to talk about their concerns regarding the internet. At the same time, as many as 27% of the children who had seen something disturbing online kept it to themselves.
- The children encountered many risks online. Most frequently problems were caused by viruses (15%), misuse of passwords or personal data (5%) and spending money in online games and apps (5%). Parents often knew nothing about these situations.
- A quarter of the children had encountered sexual content in the past 12 months, boys slightly more than girls (26% and 22%, respectively). Seeing sexual images increased as children got older: while only 9% of 9–10-year-olds had seen such images, amongst 15–17-year-olds the share was 44%. More than half of the children who had seen pornographic images encountered them on corresponding websites.
- Sexting was not very popular amongst children. Only 11% of 11–17-year-olds had received sexual messages in the past 12 months. Of the 763 children aged 11–17 who participated in the survey, only 23 had sent sexual messages.
- The exposure of children to harmful websites did not happen very often. In the past year the children had mostly encountered websites with aggressive content (35% had seen such websites at least sometimes) and websites that provided information about self-harm (28%). The older the child, the more he or she had seen these websites. The parents' knowledge of their children's experiences with harmful websites differed considerably from the children's experiences. More than a quarter of the parents thought that their children had not seen anything harmful online.
- The children's online communication can be characterised as searching for new friends and contacts. Older children took more risks online than younger ones. For instance, 36% of teenagers aged 13–17 had looked for new friends and contacts online at least once a month, whereas only 14% of 9–12-year-olds had done so.
- Almost half (46%) of the children who participated in the survey had had online contact with someone whom they had never met face to face. Boys were more prone to this type of behaviour. Teenagers (13–17-year-olds) socialised with strangers more than younger kids.

Parents considered their children's contacts with strangers to be relatively unlikely: 28% of parents knew that their child had spoken to strangers online in the past 12 months.

- 33% of those children who had had contact with strangers on the internet had also met that person face to face. Girls were more likely to do so than boys (39% and 29%, respectively). Teenagers (13–17-year-olds) were also more likely to meet strangers face to face than younger children (9–12-year-olds): 39% and 19%, respectively.
- In the last 12 months, 23% of the children who participated in the survey had experienced bullying. This happened more in face-to-face interactions: 77% of those who had been bullied in the past year said that they had encountered bullying face to face. The children had experienced bullying a little less online or via phone (66% of those who reported being bullied). In the past year, 40% of the children who participated in the survey had witnessed cyberbullying. A notable number of children (36%) who had been cyberbullied never told anyone about it.
- One of the risks associated with the internet is excessive use. 62% of 11–17-year-olds agreed with the statement that they had spent time online in the past year even when they were not really interested in doing so.

Parental practices and social mediation

- Estonian parents are also active internet users: 95% of the parents who participated in the survey used the internet every day or almost every day.
- Estonian parents are confident internet users: 79% of those who participated in the survey said that they knew a lot about using the internet. At the same time, they believed that their children were even more skilled: only half of the parents said that they knew more about the internet than their children did.
- The parents who participated in the survey did not generally share information about their children online. Only 17% reported they did so once a month or more often, 49% said they almost never did so, and 32% claimed they had never done so. One in every five children aged 11–17 had friends who had posted something online without their permission.

- Estonian parents are active mediators of their children's internet use and safety. Most of the parents (92%) said that they talked to their children about what the children did online or gave advice about using the internet safely (59%). Children, however, considered their parents' role in the mediation of their internet use to be much smaller: e.g. only 54% of children said that their parents talked to them at least sometimes about what they were doing online. Hence, parents and children did not agree on the frequency of parental mediation.
- The parents' attitudes towards their children's online activities varied. Parents' attitudes towards their children's social media use and playing games were mostly critical: in many cases, children needed their parents' permission (54% and 50%, respectively).
- The most common practice of restrictive mediation involved limiting the time the children could spend online: 63% of the parents said they did so. Interestingly, only 37% of the children said that their parents did so.
- The role of technical mediation remains small amongst Estonian parents: only 22% of the parents used technology to keep an eye on their child's location and 21% monitored the webpages and apps their children used. Parents actively monitored their children's profiles on social media or in web communities: this type of monitoring was used by more than half of the parents who participated in the survey. But young people were not always aware of parental monitoring: only 22% of 13–17-year-olds said that their parents at least sometimes monitored their user profiles (e.g. on social media).
- Most of the children (68%) thought that their parents knew enough about their online activities; 8% of children wished that their parents would be less interested in their online activities and only 3% wanted their parents to show greater interest in their online activities.
- The children tended to ignore what their parents told them about the use of the internet: 39% of children admitted that they at least sometimes ignored what their parents said. The most obedient were, according to the children themselves, 11–12-year-olds: 56% of them never ignored what their parents told them.
- Most of the parents (85%) received information about safer internet use from their family or friends. This was also the most preferred way of receiving information amongst parents. The media also played an important role: 81% of the parents named television, radio, newspapers and magazines as significant sources for information. Almost two thirds (63%) of the parents received information and advice from their own children, whereas even more parents (79%)

wanted to talk more about these matters with their children. The parents said that they received hardly any help regarding safe internet use from governmental institutions, for instance local governments (16%). At the same time, expectations regarding governmental institutions were high: 41% of the parents wanted to receive information about the internet from them.

- Among the teachers, the most frequent mediation practices were explanatory and advisory activities (according to the children): 64% of the children said that their teachers had at least sometimes given them advice about safe internet use. 54% of the children claimed that their teachers had explained to them how to behave with other people online. The teachers' role in helping children who had encountered disturbing online content was relatively modest (31%).
- The role of friends as mediators of children's internet use was generally small. Two-thirds of the children had never or almost never received any advice from friends (e.g. about good or bad websites, or online behaviour). The role of friends was greater in situations where a child needed to do something more complex than usual online or find something there: 64% of the children who participated in the survey said that their friends had helped them at least sometimes in those situations.