

National report for Norway

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1 The Internet

1.1 Children's Internet access

The Internet is widely available in private homes, public libraries and schools, and in a few Internet cafes, which are decreasing in number. Speed is generally good; broadband is widely distributed. National access to broadband is considered a government priority.

ISPs usually offer Internet safety tools, like filters. However, these filters are normally aimed at overall spam and virus control. The Norwegian government's official policy recommends developing literacy rather than content filtering as a strategy for keeping children safe online.

1.2 Findings on children's access to the Internet and online technologies

89% of children have Internet access at home (SSB 2007A). There is Internet access in almost all schools in Norway. The extent to which children can use the Internet varies; older children normally get to use the Internet more, both for project related and other purposes. All public libraries have Internet access open to the public. There are few Internet cafes left as Internet access has become more common at home.

61% of low income families have Internet access at home. 68% of lower medium income households have Internet access at home. 82% of medium income households have Internet access at home. 95% of high income households have Internet access at home (SSB 2007A).

Relating access to the educational level of the parents: Of those who went to Secondary School, 22% do not have access to the Internet at home; High School, 16 % do not have access to the Internet at home; and, College/University, 8 % do not have access to the Internet at home (SSB 2007B).

1.3 Findings on children's use of the Internet and online technologies

97% of children use the computer for homework, games, Internet, e-mail, chat. 45% use the Internet daily (145). The average time spent on the Internet daily by age is 24 minutes for 9 to 12 year olds, 72 minutes for 13 to 15 year olds, and 101 minutes for 16 to 19 year olds (Medienorge 2006). The younger children claim to use the Internet 30 minutes per day. The older children claim to use the Internet 2-3 hours every day (Eurobarometer 2007 Norway).

There are rather small gender differences in Internet access, although far more boys have TV, TV-games, computer and Internet access in their bedroom. In general, boys spend more time on media technologies than do girls. Gender differences increase with age. This is because boys' use remains constant, while girls' use decreases (A Digital Childhood, 2003). Evidence suggests that boys start using the Internet earlier than girls, but the difference evens out at 8/9 years (SAFT 2006). Girls are more likely to use "someone else's computer to go online," while boys are more likely to have their own. However, this is also true for "middle class children" and those who come home to an empty house after school. There are more boys with a technological focus and more boys are heavy users of ICT. There are more girls who are disinterested in using computers and the Internet at lower age (7 to 12) (A Digital Childhood, 2003).

1.4 Internet and Media Content for Children

NRK (the public broadcaster) provides online content for children, but private media companies are also content providers. Advertising aimed at children is prohibited in national based broadcast channels, but is still available via the Internet and satellite channels.

1.5 Opportunities experienced by children online

Opportunities as perceived by parents or other adults:

- Access to global information
- Educational resources
- Entertainment
- Shared experiences with distant others (Action Programme 2001)

Opportunities as perceived by children themselves:

- Educational resource.
- Social Networking.

Entertainment, games and fun (SAFT parent survey 2006)

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Younger children use less of everything. Very few 7 year olds use email or chat. The older they get, the wider their range of uses and the more time they spend online (A Digital Childhood, 2003).

The following activities occur are far amongst boys than girls:

- Computer games
- Downloading music
- Drawing or working with pictures
- Programming
- Watching pornography
- Surfing for fun

Girls are more likely than boys to:

- Do homework online

Gender differences are small when it comes to:

- E-mail.
- Chat
- Looking for information on the Internet.
- Blog or make personal websites
- Using instant messaging (A Digital Childhood, 2003; SAFT parent survey 2006)

Children in families where parents have a higher education use the computer more than others. The difference is largest concerning homework, email and gathering information, but is also significant when it comes to image processing and music. The difference is small or insignificant concerning chat, programming and computer games. Children with parents who have a lower educational level use TV-console games more than do others. There is a positive correlation between how much time the children spend on the computer, how good their grades are, and their parents' educational level (A Digital Childhood, 2003).

There is a tendency whereby children who do well in school use the computer for general activities more than others, but we do not have sufficient data to suggest a causal relationship between the two variables (A Digital Childhood, 2003).

1.6 Risks experienced by children online

Risks as perceived by parents or other adults:

- Illegal content
- Paedophiles
- Extreme or sexual violence

- Harmful or offensive content
- Racist/hate material
- Commercial persuasion
- Biased or faulty information
- Exploitation of personal information
- Cyber-bullying, harassment
- Self-harm
- Invasions of privacy (Governmental action programme, 2001).

Risks as perceived by children:

The EB 2007 focus groups of children aged 9 to 14 years have shown that:

- The problem children mentioned first, regardless of age and gender, is the risk of coming across websites you do not wish to be on.
- The older children commented on the risk of getting viruses. This particularly applies to downloading files, videos, or games.
- The most serious threats for girls are connected with using the Internet for participation in open chats, entering websites (blogs) of friends, and creating and downloading files.
- The boys, and especially the older boys, feel more concerned with the question of virus risks connected with receiving emails and downloading multimedia files, both to a computer and a mobile phone.

The SAFT 2006 reports:

- 53% of children aged 13 to 16 and 28% of children aged 9 to 12 have met someone new on the Internet who asked for information like their photo, phone number, street address, or the school they attend.
- 24% of children who use the Internet have received unwanted sexual comments on the Internet at least once. This is no significant change from 2003 (26%). 15% of children aged 13 to 16 and 4% of children aged 9 to 12 have received unwanted sexual comments on the Internet more than 5 times.
- The number of children that have received nude pictures from someone they have only met on the Internet, has increased from 9% in 2003 to 16% in 2006.
- 34% of those who chat have been asked to meet persons they only know through the Internet, while 22% stated that they have actually done so.
- Almost half (47%) of the children who use the Internet have accidentally ended up in a website with naked people (porn site) and 1 in 4 children (24%) have visited a website with naked people on purpose.
- 29% have accidentally ended up on a website with violent or gruesome pictures, while 16% have visited such a site on purpose.
- 21% have accidentally visited a website with hateful content, while 11% have visited such a site on purpose.

Older boys are more often exposed to harmful or offensive content. It is mostly boys who receive unwanted sexual comments. Boys are more likely to have face-to-face meetings with people they have met on the Net. Boys are more likely than girls to go alone to the first meeting. Mainly boys visit pages with offensive content (SAFT parent survey 2006).

Risk: Meeting someone online who ask for personal information

Children are more exposed to risk if parents do not live together or the child comes home from school to a empty house. They are significantly less exposed to risk if there is someone at home when they return from school, their parents were born outside Norway or their parents live together. There is a slight difference suggesting that you are more at risk if you have both older and younger siblings, and less at risk if you have either younger or older siblings.

Risk: Received unwanted sexual comments on the Internet (more than 5 times)

Influences making children more exposed to this risk: child has no siblings; parents do not live together; parents are born abroad.

Risk: Have been sent pictures of naked people (pornography) on the Internet from someone that they have met ONLY on the Internet (a lot and only a few times combined)

Influences making children more exposed to this risk: parents do not live together; have both older and younger siblings.

Influences making children less exposed to this risk: parents live together; parents born abroad; child has older siblings.

Risk: Put any comments on the Internet that were hateful towards a person or group of people

Influences making children more exposed to this risk/ conduct: parents born in Norway; parents have a university degree; children comes home to an empty house (SAFT parent survey 2006).

1.7 Internet regulation and promotion

Standard Norwegian law applies for the Internet as well. In the Penal Code there are laws against harassment and racism. Laws concerning the protection of personal privacy, data protection and copyright laws are also relevant when it comes to publishing photos, information about others, etc. The Norwegian Constitution was recently changed, allowing pornographic imagery among consenting adults. A special paragraph prohibits any images or illustration involving the sexual exploitation of children. A grooming law was implemented in April 2007. No one has been convicted by this law (November 2007) but police authorities report that the grooming law has been a helpful investigation tool. The law allows them to investigate persons and search their computers and homes at an earlier stage than was possible before the law was implemented, and in this process they have revealed a good deal of other illegal material, especially sexual exploitative images of children. The legislation is based on the UK grooming law.

The SAFT project (2002-2006), initiated and coordinated by the Norwegian Board of Film Classification (now the Media authority), is an awareness project aimed at children, parents, educators, industry and other stakeholders. It is the national coordinator of a wide range of stakeholders from Government, industry, educators and NGO's. Its various outputs including the SAFT 2003 and 2006 surveys, as well as educational tools, media campaigns and online resources. Its work continued from 2007 in a newly established "user safety" department at the Media Authority. The Data protection office has, together with SAFT, and the national learning centre provided several resources and awareness projects regarding online privacy issues as well as teacher education and various campaigns to decrease digital divides between girls and boys, and those related to senior citizens.

The Government has financed research and evaluation related to ICTs and School.

Several NGOs, both religious and others, have been eager lobbyists and public debaters, promoting parental awareness and legislation (for instance grooming laws). They have their own web pages and newsletters. Redd Barna (Save The Children) has also produced its own research reports.

1.8 Parental mediation

In general, parents lack knowledge about their children's online activities. 85% of children with Internet access at home have one or more rules concerning their use. Rules concerning not meeting or talking to strangers, and not to use foul language or behave badly are the most common. However, there is a significant difference between children and parents claims about parental mediation. Children claim to experience far more rules than parents claim to have set for them. The only rule parents over-report compared to children is the rule regarding how much time children are allowed to spend online. We lack data on how many families have installed filtering software on their computers, however content filtering is not viewed as desirable and the Norwegian government recommends against its use. Parents desire more information on the safer use of electronic media (SAFT parent survey 2006;

SAFT Children Survey 2006). For younger children, it is more common that parents decide when and for how long their children can play computer/video games, and that they check the games for violent content. There is a clear tendency whereby when children grow older, they get more freedom to use the Internet on their own, and a growing number of children also have Internet access in their bedrooms (A Digital Childhood, 2003; and Hagen 2007). On average, girls claim to have more rules than boys (SAFT parent survey 2006).

1.9 Media literacy

Young people have good skills and knowledge about the Internet and chat, and what precautions they need to take when chatting. Still, some adolescents “forget” to take the necessary precautions and have unpleasant experiences on the Net and when meeting new “friends” face-to-face. There is evidence that shows that as children grow older they are substantially more inclined to publish personal information about themselves online, which is considered a potential risk.. There is also evidence that shows that the general level of knowledge of Internet safety strategies is consistent and does not increase in the children’s population (SAFT 2003 vs. 2006; SAFT Children's Study, 2003)

Statistics from the SAFT 2006 survey (note: 96% claim to use the Internet):

- 14% (67 000) of the Internet users aged 9 to 16 have sent hateful comments or remarks on the Internet.
- 75 000 children aged 9 to 16 have been frightened or hassled by content they have received on email. 19% told an adult about it. 10% contacted the police. 56% deleted the message immediately. 5% forwarded the message to a friend. 24 % of the Internet users aged 9 to 16 have experienced unwanted sexual attention. The majority are boys.
- 85% of those who have Internet at home have one or more rules regarding Internet use. There has been an increase in rules prohibiting talking to/meeting strangers, and not behaving badly towards others or using foul language. On average, girls have more rules than boys.
- Of the 46% of children that have seen pornography online, most report neutral or positive experiences; 33% say they did not think much about it; 20% thought it was funny; 15% thought it was “cool”; 5% did not know. 17% wished they never had seen it, and 5% were upset. Younger children and girls report more negative experiences. 14% report to have had “other feelings”. 63% reported that they ignored the pornography or never went back to it, 8% bookmarked the site, and 8% forwarded the URL to friends. Similar results pertain also to seeing violent or gory content online.
- Children are more upset by seeing hate-speech than porno online. Of those who tell someone of their online encounter with pornography, the younger children are overrepresented in those who tell a parent (5% each for telling mother or father), while 34% told a friend. 37% say they can trust all or most of the information they find on the Internet. This is a decrease from 49% in 2003. 38% take action to ensure that the information they find is trustworthy. 2003-numbers were 25%.

There is a general tendency SAFT 2003 & 2006) whereby children have become less willing to publish personal information on the Internet, especially age and date of birth. They state “safety” as being the reason for this. Teenagers are more inclined than younger children to give out personal information. In 2003, 50,000 children reported that they had had face-to-face meetings with people they knew from the Internet. 1000 of these experienced verbal or physical abuse. In 2006, 34% of those who chat had been invited to face-to-face meetings with people they knew from the Internet. 22% say they have actually had such a meeting. Most of the meetings were with people of the same age and happen without any problems. Parental knowledge about these meetings has increased. Still, 85% of those who have had personal meetings say they would not tell their parents if anything unpleasant would happen to them. Compared with 2003, there is a slight increase in personal meetings being unpleasant either in terms of verbal abuse or physical violence. The majority of children experiencing an unpleasant personal meeting state that they are displeased with friends,

school and/or the family. Also, a majority have parents born in a different European country than Norway (SAFT parent survey 2006: SAFT Children Survey 2006).

Those with a technological focus and who were high end users (mainly boys) were also very skilled computer and Internet users (A Digital Childhood, 2003). In addition, evidence suggests that teens with more Internet skills are more likely to publish personal information. Evidence suggests that children who have had a late introduction to the Internet are overrepresented in being subjected to potential physical abuse as a result of face-to-face meetings following online encounters (SAFT parent survey 2006).

1.10 Factors shaping public discourses about the Internet

Redd Barna (Save The Children) and Barnevakten (The Baby Sitter) are two particular active NGOs. Redd Barna (Save The Children) focuses on the sexual abuse of children. It cooperates with the police and the public Media Council. It was an active advocate of the grooming law, both as lobbyist and in the public debate, and it is regularly cited in the media. Barnevakten (The Baby Sitter) is a volunteer organisation financed by the "familie og medier" (family and media) organization, a Christian foundation aimed at putting the biblical word on the media's agenda. Its focus is to help parents to protect their children, for instance against harmful or offensive media content, and offer advice. It is often cited in the media. It put an emphasis on content regulation, especially violent or offensive content.

General public discourse has been influenced by the SAFT project (measured by quarterly public opinion trackers). An especially significant event was the shift in official governmental policy from content filtering strategy to media literacy at a SAFT press conference in 2003, by the Minister of Family and Children Services and the Minister of Culture and Church Affairs. Different public documents related to ICTs have influenced the academic discourse, but not so much the general public discourse. The media discourse is dominated by ongoing reports of single cases on violent offenders, paedophiles and distribution of private pictures. There have also been some reports on cyber bullying, which has received quite a bit of attention.

2 The Educational system

2.1 General education

The general literacy of the population is high.

In Norway, there is mainly a public school system. In 1997, the minimum age was changed from 9 to 10 years. At the same time, a political reform was implemented to strongly encourage everyone to take an additional three years. 25% of the population aged 50 to 66 has been educated to a college/university level. Among people aged 20 to 49, 24% have 9/10 years of schooling. 45% have 12 to 13 years of schooling. 3 % have college/university education. Higher Education has often been considered elitist, but since late 90s there has been a development towards higher education having more mass access.

Primary and lower secondary education covers education for children aged 6 to 15. This includes pupils in 1st to 10th grade, together with pupils in minority language groups and special groups. In addition, there are special schools for children with special educational needs. Day care facilities for school children are available for pupils from 1st grade to 4th grade.

Upper secondary education provides three years of general education or vocational training after the 10th year of lower secondary education. The norm for apprenticeship training is two years of vocational training in upper secondary education followed by one or two years of practical training in the industry.

Tertiary education: As part of the implementation of the Bologna Process, the degree system was entirely restructured in 2002-2003. As a result, the main structure follows the 3 + 2 + 3 model, viz. three-year Bachelor's degrees, two-year Master's degrees, and three-year PhD degrees.

Children start at school at six years of age, which is one year earlier than before. Children today will be in school from 6 to 19. Their parents will normally have been in school from 7 to at least 16, and in the past it was easier to get a job at that age. Today, that is almost impossible.

2.2 Education and the Internet

Almost all schools have computers with Internet access, though the number of computers and speed of the Internet connection varies between schools. It is quite usual that children have access to more advanced computers and a better Internet connection at home. It is increasingly common to have a few computers available in the classrooms, but the pupils usually do not have free access to these.

IT is not a subject in elementary and secondary school, but is incorporated into other subjects, such as social science and geography. In secondary school and high school it is often available as an optional subject.

Knowledge Promotion is the latest reform in the 10-year compulsory school and in upper secondary education and training. It introduces certain changes in substance, structure and organisation from the first grade in the 10-year compulsory school to the last grade in upper secondary education and training. In this reform, schools are to prioritise the cultivation of basic skills in all subjects. This is an important foundation for all other learning. These basic skills are as follows:

- the ability to express oneself orally
- the ability to read
- the ability to do arithmetic
- the ability to express oneself in writing
- the ability to make use of information and communication technology

These basic skills have been incorporated into the subject syllabuses for all subjects. All teachers are therefore responsible for enabling pupils and apprentices/trainee teachers to develop basic skills through their work in various subjects. An emphasis on reading and writing from the first grade in the 10-year compulsory school is an integral part of the Knowledge Promotion.

3 Wider society

3.1 Social change

Broadband access, wireless networks and computers are owned by many, especially families with school children. Internet access has been given high priority by the Government, but the public take these changes for granted. Norway is portrayed as one of the ICT-pioneers; still there is fear about lagging behind.

The elderly use computers and the Internet less than others, and are not as digitally competent.

There is still a rural population, but Internet access is available in most rural areas in Norway.

More and more of the population works in knowledge organisations and in the service sector, while many traditional manual jobs are computerised or dependent on technology.

Norway has traditionally been a very homogenous society, with one ethnic minority. The minorities have mainly been the same population and small groups of "travellers" (Romani and Gypsies). Since the 1970s there has been an increasing immigrant population, especially in the cities. There have also been an increasing number of refugees during the last 30 years.

3.2 Role of the state

The state has traditionally played an active role in media regulation for radio/TV (The NRK monopoly existed until 1981). There is still a tendency to ask for state regulation, even though parents have been given much responsibility in recent times

There is a high level of free speech in Norway, but there is some regulation of commercial content directed towards children. There are also laws against blasphemous and racist expressions. There has been much recent debate about these topics, and also some court trials, but no convictions.

4. Other factors affecting children's online experiences

Mastery of English is common in Norway, except among the elderly. Children listen to music, watch TV and films in English. English is introduced from day 1 in school nowadays. There are a number of Norwegian websites available for children and young people. Most Norwegians can read Swedish and Danish if they need to.

There is a growing tendency for children to have more and more media equipped bedrooms. Teenagers, especially boys, often have media rich bedrooms with TV, TV-games, the Internet, music devices (CD-player, Midi, Mp3, etc.). Thus, bedroom culture is increasing. Climate is also a factor contributing to more indoor media activities.

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