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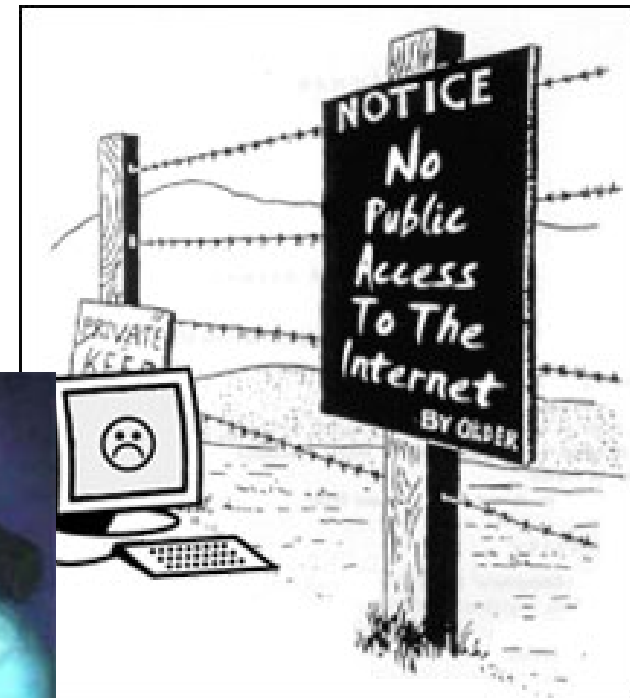
THE LONDON SCHOOL  
OF ECONOMICS AND  
POLITICAL SCIENCE



# Understanding the relation between risk and harm: Theory, evidence and policy regarding children's internet use

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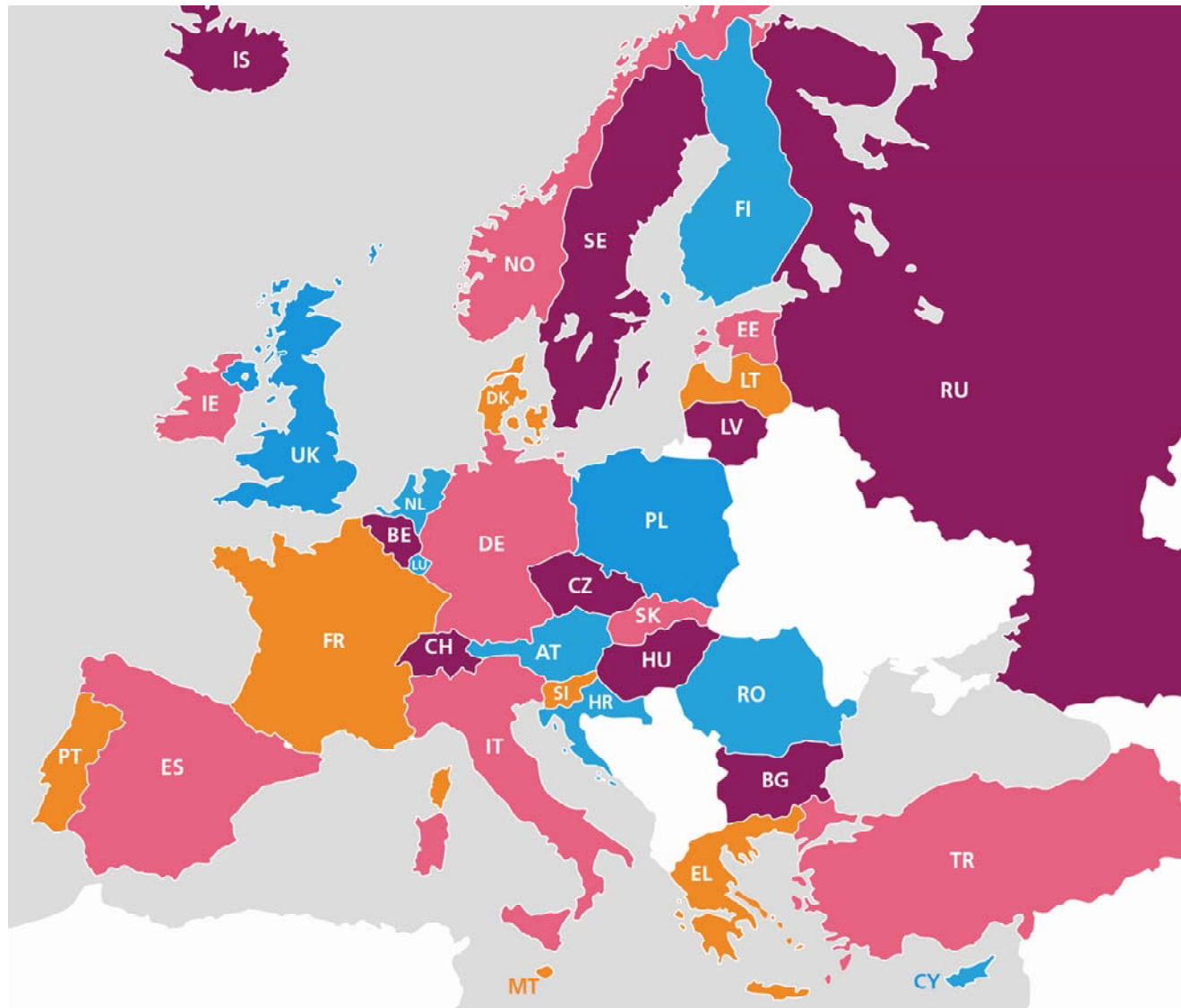
# A context of public anxieties



# Research and policy agendas



# Three phases of work





A quarter of children overall reach this last, most advanced and creative step. It includes visiting chatrooms, file-sharing, blogging and spending time in a virtual world. Less than one fifth of 9-12 year olds and only a third of even 15-16 year olds do several of these activities. Across all ages, around a third of children reach this step in Sweden, Cyprus, Hungary and Slovenia.

**23% OF CHILDREN**

Step 4 includes playing with others online, downloading films and music and sharing content peer-to-peer (eg, via webcam or message boards). Across Europe, over half of 9-16 year old internet users reach this point, although only one third of 9-10 year olds and less than half of 11-12 year olds do so. Children in Sweden, Lithuania, Cyprus, Belgium and Norway are most likely to reach this step.

**56% OF CHILDREN**

**75% OF CHILDREN**

Most children use the internet interactively for communication (social networking, instant messaging, email) and reading/watching the news. This captures the activities of two thirds of 9-10 year olds but just a quarter of 15-16 year olds. Only half of children in Austria, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Poland and Turkey reach this step.

**86% OF CHILDREN**

In addition to schoolwork and games, this step adds watching video clips online (eg, YouTube). These are all ways of using the internet as a mass medium – for information and entertainment. Half of 9-10 year olds only get this far, along with a third of 11-12 year olds.

When children begin to use the internet, the first things they do are schoolwork and playing games alone or against the computer. Fourteen per cent don't get further than this, including nearly a third of 9-10 year olds and a sixth of 11-12 year olds. Also in Turkey, these popular internet uses capture the activities of a quarter of children.

**100% OF CHILDREN**



# A ladder of opportunities

# Classifying risks (exemplars)



	<b>Content</b> Child as receiver (of mass productions)	<b>Contact</b> Child as participant (adult-initiated activity)	<b>Conduct</b> Child as actor (perpetrator / victim)
<b>Aggressive</b>	Violent / gory content	Harassment, stalking	Bullying, hostile peer activity
<b>Sexual</b>	Pornographic content	‘Grooming’, sexual abuse on meeting strangers	Sexual harassment, ‘sexting’
<b>Values</b>	Racist / hateful content	Ideological persuasion	Potentially harmful user-generated content
<b>Commercial</b>	Embedded marketing	Personal data misuse	Gambling, copyright infringement

# EU Kids Online findings



	<b>Content</b> Child as receiver (of mass productions)	<b>Contact</b> Child as participant (adult-initiated activity)	<b>Conduct</b> Child as actor (victim / perpetrator)
<b>Aggressive</b>	Violent / gory content	Harassment, stalking	Bullying 6%
<b>Sexual</b>	Pornographic content 14%	Meeting 'strangers' 9%	'Sexting' 15%
<b>Values</b>	Racist / hateful content 12%	Ideological persuasion	Potentially harmful user-generated content 21%
<b>Commercial</b>	Embedded marketing	Personal data misuse 9%	Gambling, copyright infringement

# Did this bother or upset you?



	<b>Content</b> Child as receiver (of mass productions)	<b>Contact</b> Child as participant (adult-initiated activity)	<b>Conduct</b> Child as actor (victim / perpetrator)
<b>Aggressive</b>	Violent / gory content	Harassment, stalking	Bullying  4 in 5
<b>Sexual</b>	Pornographic content 1 in 3	Meeting a 'stranger' 1 in 9	'Sexting' 1 in 4
<b>Values</b>	Racist / hateful content	Ideological persuasion	Potentially harmful user-generated content
<b>Commercial</b>	Embedded marketing	Personal data misuse	Gambling, copyright infringement



# Comparing risks



	Sexual images	Bullying	Sexual messages*	Meeting new people
<b>Experienced the risk at all</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>---</b>	<b>---</b>
<b>Experienced the risk online</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Online perpetrators</b>	<b>---</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>---</b>
<b>Felt bothered</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>---</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Felt bothered</b> (% of those who experienced the risk)	<b>32</b>	<b>---</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>(Fairly) upset</b> (% of those who felt bothered)	<b>44</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>50</b>

Base: All children, n=25,142

\* only 11-16 years

# What's on the internet that bothers people your age?



*"All kinds of bullies, who can hurt person with words"*  
(girl, 14, Estonia)

*"When human beings are killed; when human beings are hurt while other people are watching"*  
(girl, 10, Germany)

*"If people put your secrets on the Internet. If people take pictures or videos of you and put them on the Internet when you don't want them to"* (girl, 9, Ireland)

*"Obscene scenes with naked people, men with men or men with women, saying rude words, hitting, whipping"*  
(boy, 12, France)

*"When I am playing games with my older sister on the internet, naked people pop up and it is very bad"*  
(girl, 15, Turkey)

*"Kids bullying each other and being cruel and nasty. Sending nasty rumours about them to other people"* (girl, 16, UK)

# Risks and opportunities





## Children are not all the same

### Low risk novices

This group includes many younger children, and averages 11.1 years old. They use the internet rather little, focusing mainly on schoolwork, watching video clips and reading/watching the news. Few have an SNS profile and they do few risky online activities. Although they encounter few online risks, when they do, they tend to be upset.

### Risky explorers

Averaging 13.5 years old, these children spend almost two hours a day online and do the widest range of activities, including some more advanced and creative activities on the ladder of opportunities. They also do more risky online activities. Although not the oldest group, they encounter the most risk online but are the least likely to be upset.

### Intensive gamers

These children are on average 13.6 years and more often boys than girls. They are online for the longest of all (around 3 hours per day) and have a fairly wide range of activities. They like playing games against the computer and watching video clips, and they do relatively little schoolwork, news or creative activities. Their exposure to risk is quite high but lower than that of the 'risky explorers'; some use the internet excessively.

### Young networkers

These children are about one and a half years older than the first group (average 12.7 years) and more often girls than boys. They are less likely to use the internet for schoolwork or news and more likely to use SNSs. They also encounter online risks though they tend not to find these upsetting.

### Moderate users

Being of similar age as the second group (13.1 years on average), these children spend about the same time online, but have a much wider range of activities. They are less likely to encounter online risks linked to online communication, although their level of risk is similar to that of the 'young networkers'.

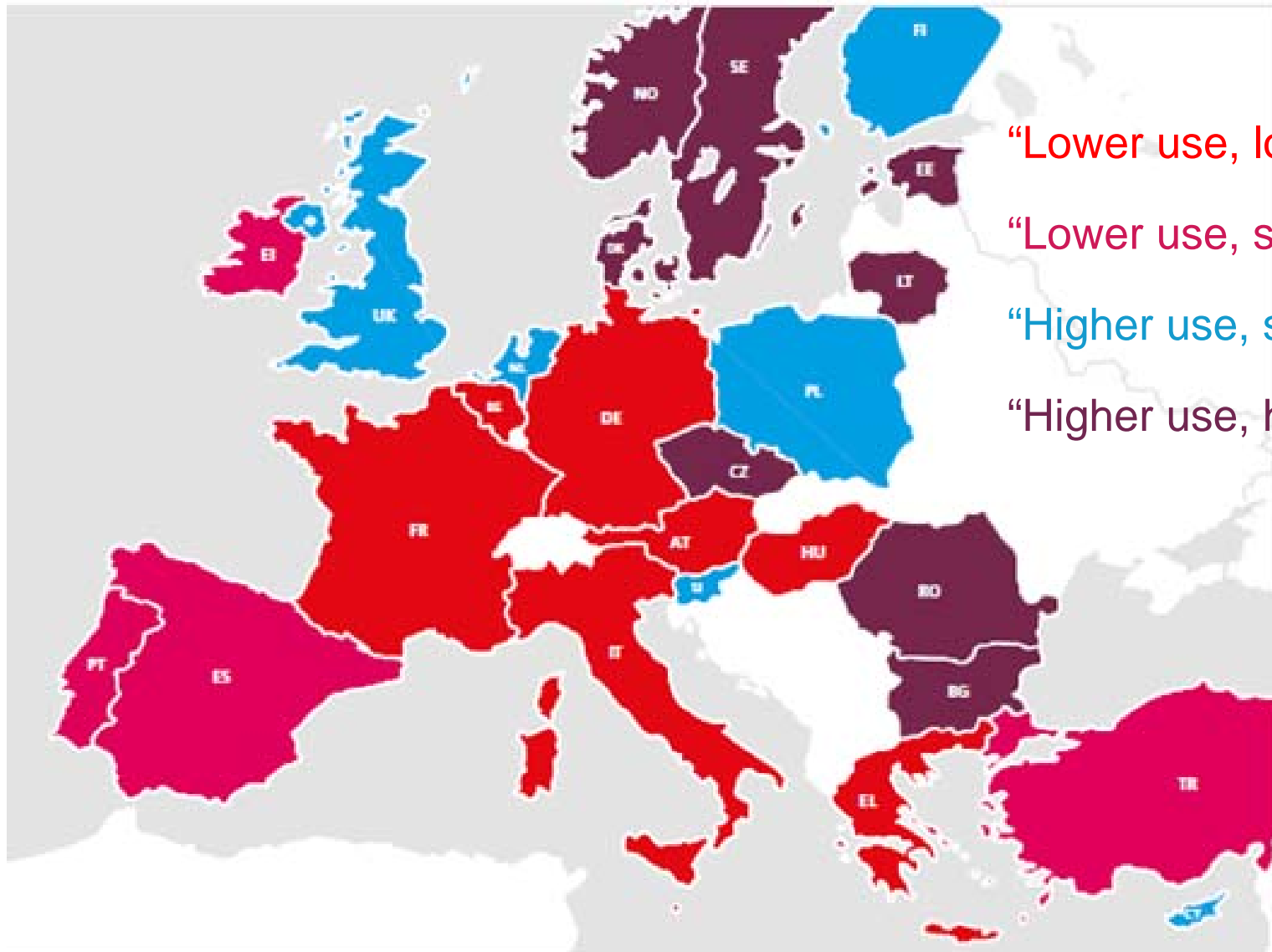
### Experienced networkers

This is the oldest group (average 14.1 years), with more girls than boys. They use the internet for less than two hours but do more activities (especially social networking, though less gaming) than the average. They also read/watch news, use instant messaging, post photos or music and write blogs. They encounter a similar level of risk to the 'intensive gamers' but relatively low harm (though they seem particularly sensitive to bullying).





# Comparing countries



“Lower use, lower risk”

“Lower use, some risk”

“Higher use, some risk”

“Higher use, higher risk”

# Refuting top 10 myths



**1** Digital natives know it all

**2** Everyone is creating their own content now

**3** Under 13s can't use social networking sites so no worries

**4** Everyone is watching porn online

**5** Bullies are baddies

**6** People you meet on the internet are strangers

**7** Offline risks migrate online

**8** Putting the PC in the living room will help

**9** Teaching digital skills will reduce online risk

**10** Children can get around safety software

# Conclusions



- Producing evidence-based policy is impeded by the persistence of the moral panic agenda in public and policy discourses. The EU Kids Online network has worked in dialogue with stakeholders to explain the findings of its 25 country in-home survey of 25142 children aged 9-16.
- We propose a classification of risks that recognises the involvement of the child as receiver, participant or actor in a range of risk situations. Our findings reveal that the incidence of online risks is not as high as feared and the proportion of children who report harm is even lower.
- It is not my purpose to minimise the real risk of harm to children online, and the EU Kids Online network has worked hard to advise policy makers on how to manage or reduce this risk. But it is important to distinguish risk from harm – both because the factors that shape each are different, and because if they are confused, the harm is misleadingly exaggerated.
- We also show that risks and opportunities go hand in hand, and thus efforts to manage risk can have the unintended consequence of reducing opportunities, itself problematic given how few children benefit as yet from a deep or wide engagement with the internet.
- Thus it is important to recognise that in our increasingly risk-averse culture, opportunities are too easily sacrificed to risk management, the grey zone between risks and opportunities ('risky opportunities') is misunderstood, and children cannot gain the experiences that build resilience.

# The EU Kids Online Network



- Our multi-national collaboration has produced two books:



- Reports, methods and data are at: [www.eukidsonline.net](http://www.eukidsonline.net)





# Selected reports



- Dürager, A. & Livingstone, S. (2012) How can parents support children's internet safety? <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/id/eprint/42872>
- Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A., and Ólafsson (2011) EU Kids Online Final Report. <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/39351/>
- O'Neill, B., Livingstone, S. and McLaughlin, S. (2011). Final recommendations for policy, methodology and research. <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/39410/>
- Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A. and Ólafsson, K. (2011) Risks and safety on the internet: The perspective of European children. <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/33731/>
- Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A., & Ólafsson, K. (2011) Disadvantaged children and online risk. <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/39385/>
- Görzig, A. (2011) Who bullies and who is bullied online? A study of 9-16 year old internet users in 25 European countries. <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/39601/>
- Livingstone, S., Ólafsson, K. and Staksrud, E. (2011) Social networking, age and privacy. <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/35849/>
- Sonck, N., Livingstone, S., Kuiper, E. and de Haan, J. (2011) Digital literacy and safety skills. <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/33733/>
- Livingstone, S. and Ólafsson, K. (2011) Risky communication online. <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/33732/>