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Net Children Go Mobile

The UK report.

A comparative report with findings
from the UK 2010 survey by EU Kids Online

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The UK report

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Net Children Go Mobile

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This report presents new UK-specific findings from Net Children Go Mobile regarding children's online access, opportunities, risks and parental mediation. It compares these with the seven country European 2013 survey by **Net Children Go Mobile** (www.netchildrengomobile.eu/reports/) and with findings from the UK 2010 survey by **EU Kids Online** (<http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/33730/>).

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Executive summary

This report presents new UK findings regarding children's online access, opportunities, risks and parental mediation. The primary focus is on risk and safety considerations. The new UK findings are compared in this report with:

- Findings from the seven-country European 2013-14 survey by Net Children Go Mobile.
- UK findings from the 25-country European 2010 survey by EU Kids Online.
- Illustrative quotations from children are drawn from qualitative interviews conducted by Net Children Go Mobile (which will report later in 2014).

Access and use

Mobile and personalised media are expanding the spatial and temporal locations of internet use among children by providing 'anywhere, anytime' accessibility:

- Home is still the main location of internet use by far, despite it now being available in many locations out and about. Forty per cent of children use the internet at home several times per day, most of them in their bedroom. Over half also go online in other places, and half use it when out and about.
- Compared with 2010, half as many now use a desktop PC, so that access is more often on a personalised device (smartphone, laptop, games console, tablet as well as desktop).
- In the UK, smartphones are already more popular than laptops (used daily by 56% and 47% of 9- to 16-year-olds daily). In Portugal and Italy, laptops are used more often than

smartphones, while in Denmark both are used daily by nearly three in four children.

- The age of first use overall – at around eight years old – is little changed since 2010, although by 2013, children, especially 9- to 10-year-olds, have access to much more complex smartphone convergent technologies than their 2010 predecessors.

Online activities

Research has shown that children's online activities vary by age – with children progressing up 'the ladder of opportunities' over time, from basic uses to creative and participatory uses of the internet:

- The most popular online activities are watching video clips, social networking and listening to music. Some of the activities that policy makers and parents worry about are, in fact, rather rare – purchasing apps, spending time in a virtual world, registering one's geographic location, visiting chatrooms.
- More children do more of most online activities now compared with a few years ago. Moreover, smartphone users make considerably more use of the internet in almost every way. However, many informational, civic and creative uses are regularly undertaken only by a minority of children.
- By comparison with other European countries, UK children are the most satisfied with the online offer. But 9- to 10-year-olds have become less satisfied over time with the content available to them.

Smartphones expand the range of mobile communicative practices and audiences children are now able to engage with. Which children, then, use social networking and media-sharing platforms, and how do they use them?

- Facebook is the main platform used by the youngest age band, with 18% of 9- to 10-year-

olds and 25% of 11- to 12-year-olds having a profile. Children continue to adopt some of the latest social networking sites (SNSs), and the UK is distinctive in the popularity of Twitter – 14% of all 9- to 16-year-olds use it.

- However, since 2010, SNS use has dropped for girls (from 65% to 50%) but hardly for boys. It has also dropped substantially for younger children: safety campaigns have possibly had some effect.
- Substantial numbers of children have relatively few online contacts, and the number of online contacts has dropped a little since 2010, when 16% reported more than 300 contacts (compared with 10% in 2013).
- However, the UK's 14% who accept all 'friend' requests exceeds the European average of 9%, and is lower only than that of Romanian children (18%).
- Half of SNS users keep their profiles private. Boys, teens, and children from low socio-economic status (SES) homes are more likely to have public profiles.
- One-quarter have provided a false age on their profile – more often younger children than teens.

Skills

Contrary to the myth of the digital native, children and young people do not naturally or automatically acquire digital literacy. The research examined children's self-reported competence (or self-confidence), along with self-reported ability with a specific list of skills, including those needed for mobile/online devices:

- Two in three children say they know more than their parents about the internet, and 86% claim to know more than their parents about smartphones. However, 9- to 10-year-olds generally think their parents know more about

using the internet than they do.

- Children's digital literacy and safety skills have not changed much since 2010, although children are now less able to block junk/spam and more able to manage their privacy settings and delete their history.
- In Denmark the average number of skills related to the internet is higher than the UK, possibly because UK parents practise more restrictive mediation, limiting children's chance to explore and learn online.
- Smartphone users are generally skilled in the use of their personal devices, but around one-third cannot block pay-for pop-ups or compare and choose the best or most reliable app or deactivate the function showing their geographical position. Younger girls seem particularly to lack the skill to use their personal devices effectively.

Risks

As children's lives – and the internet – continue to change, it is important to track the changing incidence of risk and harm so as to identify changing patterns, practices and problems:

- Overall, 15% of UK 9- to 16-year-olds have been bothered, uncomfortable or upset by something online in the past year. Such experiences are reported much more by girls, older teens and those from high SES homes. In 2010, the figure was a little lower, at 13%.
- Online upsetting experiences are much higher among smartphone and tablet users than non-users, reflecting the fact that these children do more online generally, and possibly more privately from their parents.
- Taking online and offline bullying together, 21% of children aged 9-16 said this had happened to them, and 18% overall were upset by what happened. The incidence of bullying is

higher among girls, and this marks a substantial rise since 2010.

- In 2010, 16% of children reported being bullied face to face, 8% on the internet and 5% via mobile phone. By 2013, this ratio had reversed, making cyberbullying (12%) more common than face-to-face bullying (9%) – most cyberbullying occurs on SNSs.
- UK children aged 11-16 report receiving fewer sexual messages (4%) than the European average (11%). This represents a notable decrease since 2010 (when the figure was 12%).
- As with cyberbullying, receiving sexual messages is reported more often by smartphone and tablet users, especially via SNSs.
- Seventeen per cent of children aged 9-16 said that have been in contact online with someone they hadn't previously met offline, but just 3% of children said they had been to meet such a person face to face.
- The UK figures are notably lower than across Europe (26% and 12% respectively). They are also a reduction from 2010, when 27% were in contact with people online that they hadn't met face to face, and 5% had met such a person offline.
- Seventeen per cent of children aged 9-16 reported seeing sexual images in the past year, online or offline – this is less than across Europe (28%) and less than in 2010 in the UK (24%). This is more common among teenagers, and girls, who are also more likely to report being upset, or even very upset by this.
- In 2010, mass media (television, film, video/DVD) were a more common source of exposure to sexual images than the internet. In 2013, the internet has become just as common a source, though mass media still matter in this regard.
- Twenty-nine per cent of 11- to 16-year-olds had

seen one or more of the potentially negative forms of user-generated content (UGC) asked about, with hate messages (23%) being the most common, followed by self-harm sites (17%). Such exposure represented a sharp increase on 2010, and was more common among teens, especially 15- to 16-year-olds.

- In 2010 19% of children reported seeing negative UGC only, 13% reported exposure to hate messages, 8% to pro-anorexia content and 6% to self-harm sites.
- Eleven per cent of 9- to 16-year-olds also reported their computer getting a virus, and 9% reported that somebody had used their password/used their phone, accessed their phone to access information or had pretended to be them.
- When they encounter an upsetting problem on the internet, UK children are much more likely than the European average to talk to others (to mothers 48%, friends 26%, and teachers, near the bottom, at 7%). Twelve per cent said that they did not tell anyone when something bothered them online.

(Over)dependence

The notion of 'internet addiction' has been widely debated, although the lack of sound evidence leads most researchers to talk instead of 'excessive' internet or smartphone use, something which may or may not be problematic for the user.

- By far the main benefit of their smartphone perceived by UK children is feeling more connected to friends. However, this has a coercive dimension, as one in three children feel they must be always available for contact.
- One-quarter of children say they miss eating or sleeping because of their use of the internet, and nearly two-thirds say that the internet gets in the way of time they should spend with family, friends or schoolwork – a higher figure

than for others in Europe.

- Regarding smartphone use, children are much more likely to say they have difficulties limiting their use; UK children are also more likely to say this than in other European countries.

Mediation

Family, peer cultures and the school context are all influential sources of direct mediation of children's internet use, and their relevance has been widely recognised within policy debates:

- According to their children, UK parents' main form of active mediation of internet use is to talk to their child (68%), though 56% also encourage their child to explore and learn online.
- By comparison with 2010, UK parents are doing less general active mediation of their child's internet use, but more active mediation of their child's internet safety in particular. They also mediate their child's internet safety more than parents in other European countries.
- However, UK parents are also more restrictive than in other European countries. Parents apply restrictions across a wide range of activities, especially giving out personal information and revealing their geographic location, according to their children. However, compared with 2010, parents are less restrictive about uploading and downloading, but just as restrictive as before when it comes to rules about social media use.
- Forty-eight per cent of children say their parents use parental filtering software, compared with only 26% across Europe. This is, however, little changed since 2010, when 46% said their parents had filters installed – and 54% of parents said the same.
- Parental controls are less often used on smartphones than on domestic computers,

according to children. Nonetheless, the percentages for UK parents who use filtering software are almost twice that of the European average.

- Nearly half of UK children think their parents know a lot about what they do online – especially among the younger children. However, when it comes to their phone, children are a bit less confident that their parents know how they use it.
- In 2010, 32% of children said their friends had suggested ways to behave to others online, and this has now dropped to 24%. A further 33% in 2010 (vs. 24% in 2013) had suggested ways to use the internet safely. One might infer that, as parents step up their actions, friends are less needed to play this role.

Schools

Within policy discourses, education is attributed a strategic role in providing internet safety. Schools are best positioned to reach all children, and they can introduce internet safety in a pedagogic context that allows for solid learning over time:

- Two-thirds of children, especially in secondary schools, say there is Wi-Fi at school. Only one-third of those in primary school (aged 9-10) say this, and only half of those from low SES homes say this. Countries with Wi-Fi more available at school include Denmark (85%), Ireland (76%) and Portugal (73%).
- For the two-thirds of children who do have Wi-Fi at school, one-third are not allowed to use it, but most can, with some restrictions.
- Two-thirds of children are not allowed to use a smartphone in school. More restrictions apply to children from lower SES homes. Strikingly, 70% of Danish children may use their smartphone at school without restrictions.
- Three-quarters of children say they are

encouraged to use the internet for schoolwork, and around half use the internet weekly to collaborate with other students. Far fewer use their smartphones for assignments in class.

- Three-quarters of children say their teachers have talked to them about what to do on the internet, and similar numbers have made rules about use, helped the child to manage something difficult, explained the value of websites or discussed internet safety and how to behave to others. Over half have talked about what to do if something bothered them online. All of these figures are considerably higher than the European average. But there is no evidence that UK teachers are mediating students' internet safety more now than in 2010.

Conclusions

The report concludes with a discussion of the key points, and some brief recommendations for policy makers:

- In just a few years, UK children have shifted from accessing the internet via a desktop computer to accessing it primarily via a smartphone or laptop. This demands an equally profound shift in how their internet safety is to be managed. Parental or teacher supervision is becoming ever harder. On the one hand, improvement in the range of technical strategies is required – ranging from provision of user-friendly filtering solutions across platforms and services to 'safety by design' (a matter of defaults and features that recognise users may be children).
- Equally, or even more important, children must be educated to become competent and resilient digital citizens. This has just become a matter of educational policy even in primary schools but is yet to be implemented or evaluated. Such education should link technical competence in managing online interfaces with personal, social and sexual education so that children are empowered to respond constructively – with critical literacy and moral responsibility – to the online risk of harm.
- Given that children are also using the internet at ever younger ages, often before they have sufficient skills to prevent or cope with what they may encounter online, we urge that both approaches are pursued.
- In many ways, the UK is leading in children's internet safety, adopting both social and technical forms of mediation with vigour. As a result, our findings show that the last few years have seen greater improvements in children's safety online than is the case in other European countries.
- Given the considerable multi-stakeholder effort devoted to this task, the present findings suggest these are proving successful. Yet particular groups still need attention – a new gender gap in risk seems to be opening up, with girls more likely to report being bothered or upset by online encounters, necessitating a gender-sensitive approach to safety provision. Inequalities in SES are also apparent, and these are greater in the UK than in other European countries.
- However, complacency would be ill-advised, for the present findings also show that children's exposure to online risk of harm is increasing, albeit not hugely. Such increases are particularly marked in relation to peer-to-peer interactions and UGC online rather than engagement with mass-produced content. Specifically, we have documented notable increases in children's exposure to cyberbullying, race hate, pro-anorexia content and self-harm websites.
- At the same time, children's self-reported levels of harm have only increased very slightly, suggesting that children are also better prepared for what they find – risk, after all, does not inevitably make for harm, and some degree of risk is even necessary if children are to

become resilient.

- By comparison with some other European countries, the UK appears to prioritise minimising risk over maximising the opportunities of the internet. This report documents this in several ways – UK children not gaining some of the online opportunities in creative or civic spheres; younger children struggling to find sufficient age-appropriate and stimulating content; and restrictions on internet or mobile use in school by comparison with some other countries.
- Henceforth we suggest that managing risk should continue to be important, but that greater effort should now be devoted to optimising the benefits of the internet for ever more children.

1 Introduction

1.1 Context

Both childhood and the media environment are changing, with children growing up in a **convergent media ecology** (Livingstone, 2009; Ito *et al.*, 2010). The children studied in this present research (Mascheroni & Ólafsson, 2014), who are aged 9-16, are growing up in a world where the distinction between fixed and mobile online use is increasingly blurred by ubiquitous Wi-Fi and 3G/4G coverage, as well as by the availability of convergent devices such as smartphones, tablets, laptops and games consoles.

These technologies represent a **moving target**, and the social practices of use are therefore also subject to continual change. Significant opportunities for sociability, self-expression, learning, creativity and participation are provided by various online media accessed via fixed and mobile devices (Goggin & Hjorth, 2014).

Since 2006, the EU Kids Online network has investigated online opportunities and risks for children, showing their interdependence: the more children use the internet, the wider range of opportunities they take up and also the more they are exposed to risks online (Livingstone, Haddon & Görzig, 2012).

In response, **multiple stakeholders** – from governments and industry through child welfare organisations and education to parents and children themselves – are all seeking ways to regulate, redesign, teach or learn to manage the evolving digital environment, in order to maximise opportunities and minimise risk of harm. To inform such a process, **timely evidence** is vital.

This report presents **new UK findings** regarding children's online access, opportunities, risks and parental mediation. The primary focus is on risk and safety considerations. The new UK findings are compared in this report with:

- The seven country European 2013-14 survey by **Net Children Go Mobile** (see www.netchildrengomobile.eu/reports/).
- The UK 2010 survey by **EU Kids Online** (see <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/33730/>; see also www.eukidsonline.net).


UK policy relating to mobile and internet use is being developed by multiple stakeholders, including educators, regulators, industry self-regulation, and the work of a range of child welfare and parenting bodies. It is coordinated by the UK Council for Child Internet Safety.

At the level of the European Union (EU), such policy is coordinated by the Better Internet for Kids programme, as part of DG Connect.¹

1.2 Data and methods

The quantitative data used in this report comes from the UK country study of the Net Children Go Mobile study conducted in seven European countries from May to November 2013 (UK, Denmark, Italy, Romania, Ireland) and February to March 2014 (Portugal and Belgium) (Mascheroni & Ólafsson, 2014).

Many of the questions asked in this survey precisely replicate those asked in the EU Kids Online survey conducted in 25 European countries in 2010 (Livingstone *et al.*, 2011).

 When direct comparisons are made to the earlier EU Kids Online survey, they are prefixed with the EU Kids Online logo, as here.

Illustrative quotations from children are drawn from the qualitative interviews conducted by Net Children Go Mobile (report in preparation).

In this present report, **children** refers to 9- to 16-

¹ For evidence-based policy recommendations pertinent to this agenda, see Barbovschi *et al.*, 2104).

year-olds in the UK who use the internet. It is estimated that this includes nearly all children in this age group in the UK. For full methodological details, refer to the above-cited reports for each project.

In both surveys, questions first underwent careful cognitive testing to ensure children understood what was being asked. Both were administered face to face to random stratified samples of 9- to 16-year-olds. The interview included a private (paper-based) self-completion section for sensitive questions about risk, harm and parental mediation.

- The sample size for Net Children Go Mobile (2013-14) was about 3,500 in seven countries (**Belgium, Denmark, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Romania, UK**), with 516 children interviewed in the UK.
- Note that the notion of a European average, against which the 2013 UK findings are compared, refers to the average across these seven countries.
-  The sample size for EU Kids Online (2010) was 25,142 for 25 countries across Europe, with 1,032 children interviewed in the UK.
- Respondents were also categorised according to socio-economic status (SES), which is measured here as a combination of household income and the education of the main income earner.

Table 1 shows the number of respondents (not weighted, by sub-groups) on which the findings in this report are based. Note that random error increases as the sample sizes decrease.

Table 1: Number of respondents by sub-group

	N
Boys	267
Girls	249
9-10	125
11-12	131
13-14	114
15-16	146
Low SES	215
Medium SES	148
High SES	153
Daily smartphone users	267
Daily tablet users	150
Use neither a smartphone nor tablet on a daily basis	189
Has a profile on SNS	319
Has a profile on a media sharing platform	162
All	516

Base: All children who use the internet. UK survey for Net Children Go Mobile.

Table 2 shows that daily smartphone users – a group that we focus on in detail in this report, are on average older than the overall sample, and from wealthier homes.

Table 2: Characteristics of daily smartphone users

	use Smart- phones daily
Boys	56
Girls	55
9-10	9
11-12	49
13-14	68
15-16	81
Low SES	35
Medium SES	63
High SES	63
Daily tablet users	81
Not daily tablet users	43
Have a profile on SNS	81
Do not have a profile on SNS	21
Have a profile on a media sharing platform	89
Do not have a profile on a media sharing platform	37
All	56

Base: All children who use the internet.

2 Access and use

Research has shown that the **social context of internet access** shapes children's online experiences and, more specifically, the conditions under which children take advantage of online opportunities or are exposed to online risks (Livingstone, Haddon & Görzig, 2012).

Mobile media are likely to expand the spatial and temporal locations of internet use among children by providing **'anywhere, anytime'** accessibility, although economic or technological constraints may limit the use of mobile devices when children are on the move. This may have implications for social norms of freedom, privacy and surveillance.

2.1 Where children use the internet

Table 3: How often children use the internet in different places

%	Several times each day	Daily or almost daily	At least every week	Never or almost never
Own bedroom	36	28	6	30
At home but not in own room	25	38	28	9
Use at home (bedroom or elsewhere)	40	39	19	2
At school	10	19	58	13
Other places (home of friends/ relatives, libraries, cafés)	8	14	35	43
When out and about, on the way to school or other places	11	22	14	53

NCGM: Q1 a-e: Looking at this card, please tell me how often you go online or use the internet (from a computer, a mobile phone, a smartphone, or any other device you may use to go online) at the following locations...

Base: All children who use the internet. UK survey for Net Children Go Mobile.

- **Home is the main location of internet use by far.** Forty per cent of children use the internet at home several times a day, most of them in their bedroom. Over half also go online in other places, and half use it when out and about.
- Compared with the European average, **UK children go online more often in all locations.** Nonetheless, they are 'behind' Denmark in daily access at home and, most markedly, at school (29% UK vs. 61% Denmark).


 Compared with the UK situation in 2010, **children go online more often in all locations except at school**, where there is little change.

Table 4: Daily internet use in different places, by gender, age and SES

	% own bedroom	% at home but not own room	Use at home (bedroom or elsewhere)	% at school	% other places	% when out and about
Boys	63	66	81	25	18	33
Girls	65	60	76	34	27	32
9-10	20	33	37	18	3	3
11-12	47	73	78	40	16	8
13-14	76	60	90	20	24	34
15-16	96	80	97	38	38	71
Low SES	47	53	65	16	7	17
Medium SES	76	59	82	30	28	43
High SES	66	73	85	37	27	35
All	64	63	79	29	22	32

NCGM: Q1 a-e: Looking at this card, please tell me how often you go online or use the internet (from a computer, a mobile phone, a smartphone, or any other device you may use to go online) at the following locations...

Base: All children who use the internet. UK survey for Net Children Go Mobile.

- Age differences are striking. Few young children

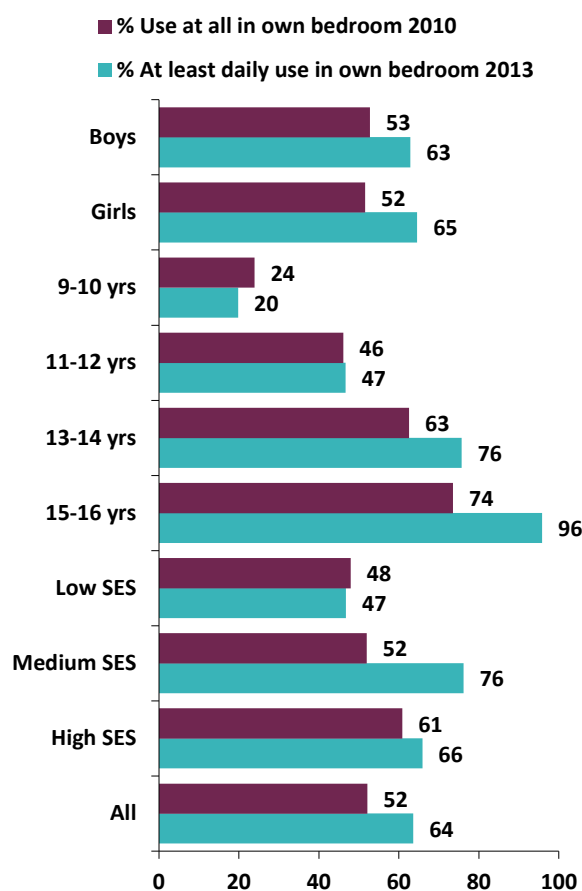
but **most older teens go online in their own bedroom and when out and about**. Gender differences in the location of internet use are small. Children from low SES homes mainly access the internet at home in a shared space, and overall have less access in any location, including at school.

“They didn’t have phones until they went to secondary school, but then it becomes ... very difficult to monitor because if you’ve got Wi-Fi, if you’ve got a Smartphone and you’ve got Wi-Fi, you can do anything.” (Rula, parent of three boys aged 14-18)

- Across Europe, there are also few gender differences, but similar differences by age and SES to those in the UK.
- The comparison between 2010 and 2013 is not exact, as the questions asked were slightly different. However, if we focus on use in the bedroom, where 52% had access (at all) in 2010, by 2013 fully 91% accessed the internet weekly or more. Thus we compare use at all (2010) with use daily (2013) in order to show that, **while use in the bedroom has evidently become more widespread, the demographic differences are not so changed**.
- Girls and boys still have equivalent access, and older children (especially teenagers) have much better access than young children, just as was the case in 2010. In terms of SES, however, it seems that those in the middle of the range have seen the most improvement in terms of quality of access.

“They’ve got the iPad that they share among themselves, although we take it out and we have it in our room at night time, so that they can’t have it.[...] Tommy takes it to bed, and he’s got a computer in his room as well, but he doesn’t, he’ll be on his bed, and be on the iPad. Doing Minecraft now, most of the time, but we take it off them at nine o’clock, that’s it, the three of them.” (Helen, parent of three boys aged 11-14)

Figure 1: Children who access the internet in their own bedroom, comparing 2010 and 2013



NCGM: Q1a: How often you go online or use the internet (from a computer, a mobile phone, a smartphone, or any other device you may use to go online) [from your bedroom]?
 EU Kids Online: QC301a: Looking at this card, please tell me where you use the internet these days.
 Base: All children who use the internet. UK surveys for EU Kids Online (2010) and Net Children Go Mobile (2013).

2.2 How children access the internet

- Going online in the child’s bedroom is mainly achieved via a smartphone or laptop, followed by games consoles and tablets. Overall, **the smartphone is the main device used to go online, whatever the location**.

- Compared with the European average, **UK children are more likely to go online using diverse devices** (especially smartphones, tablets, games consoles).

Table 5: Devices used to go online daily in different places

%	Own bedroom	At home but not own room	At home (bedroom or elsewhere)	At school	Other places	When out and about
Desktop computer (PC)	10	17	24	19	2	0
Laptop computer	30	29	43	9	6	0
Mobile phone	14	10	18	4	3	4
Smartphone	45	40	51	25	26	37
Tablet	26	21	31	6	13	1
E-book reader	3	4	4	0	1	1
Other handheld devices	16	14	20	5	10	3
Home games consoles	26	24	34	1	11	1
Access at least once a day	64	63	79	29	22	32

NCGM: Q2 a-h: When you use the internet these days at ... how often do you use the following devices to go online?
Base: All children who use the internet.

Ernie, from a 9- to 10-year-old boys' focus group, says: *"I have a Blackberry, I have an iPad Air and I have a Macbook, the new one."*

A group of mothers of children aged between 9 and 16 list the devices their children use to go online at home:

"There's iPads, iPods, iPhones. There's computers, laptops, there's Xbox, PlayStation, Wii." (Sally)

"I don't have the PlayStation, but we have an Xbox, and that can be online playing as well as not. It usually is online, with a Wii and smartphones, laptops, and tablet. We've bought one iPad, but that's my husband's iPad, but the boys use it." (Rula)

"Same, PlayStation, Xbox, tablet, iPad, iPod, smartphones, internet, the laptop computer, and...." (Suki)

"Itouches?" (Janie)

"iPod Touches, I forgot that." (Sally)

- Compared with 2010, half as many now use a desktop PC, so that **access is more often on a personalised device** (smartphone, laptop, games console, tablet, as well as desktop).

Table 6: Daily use of devices, by age and gender

%	9-12 years		13-16 years		
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	All
Desktop computer (PC)	31	36	44	35	37
Laptop computer	39	25	42	80	47
Mobile phone that is not a smartphone	6	18	21	30	19
Smartphone	29	33	74	76	56
Tablet	32	17	34	45	32
E-book reader	2	0	7	5	4
Other handheld devices	7	8	29	42	23
Home games consoles	47	16	43	24	33

NCGM: Q2 a-h: When you use the internet these days at ... how often do you use the following devices to go online?
Base: All children who use the internet.

- Among younger children, boys have more access via games consoles and tablets. But among teens, this is reversed – girls go online more using laptops, tablets and other handheld devices, though boys still favour game consoles.
- In the UK, smartphones are more popular than laptops, but in Portugal and Italy, laptops are more often used. In Denmark, both are used daily by nearly three in four children.

Table 7: Ways of connecting to the internet from mobile/smartphone, by gender, age and SES

	% mobile internet plan and free Wi-Fi	% mobile-internet plan only	% free Wi-Fi only	% phone does not connect to the internet
Boys	44	21	16	19
Girls	37	14	19	30
9-10	13	11	9	67
11-12	35	25	25	15
13-14	48	13	16	23
15-16	46	20	19	15
Low SES	50	24	7	19
Medium SES	34	8	29	29
High SES	31	19	23	27
All	41	17	18	24

NCGM: Q8 a-c: Are you able to connect to the internet from your smartphone/mobile phone, and if so, how do you connect?
Base: All children who own or have for private use a mobile phone or a smartphone.

- **In terms of connectivity, boys have the advantage over girls**, as do older teens compared with younger children. The findings for SES are counterintuitive – with better access among low SES households.
- This suggests poorer UK parents are making particular efforts to give their children quality internet access. Overall, **UK children are more likely to have a mobile internet plan and free Wi-Fi** than all other countries except Denmark.

2.4 Age of first use


- In terms of age of first use, younger children have the advantage, having gained mobile, smartphone and internet access earlier than their older peers. There are no notable differences by gender or SES.

Table 8: Age of first internet use, first mobile and first smartphone, by gender, age and SES

	How old were you when you first...		
	Used the internet	Got a mobile phone	Got a smartphone
Boys	7.8	9.9	12.3
Girls	8.1	9.9	12.2
9-10	6.1	8.2	8.9
11-12	7.8	9.7	10.7
13-14	8.3	9.7	11.8
15-16	9.2	10.9	13.8
Low SES	7.8	10.2	13.0
Medium SES	8.6	10.1	12.3
High SES	7.5	9.6	12.0
All	7.9	9.9	12.3

NCGM: Q5: How old were you when you first used the internet?
Q6: How old were you when you got your first mobile phone (a phone which is not a smartphone)?
Q7: How old were you when you got your first smartphone?
Base: All children who use the internet.

- British 9- to 10-year-olds go online around one year younger (six years old) than the European average. Overall, they go online half a year earlier than the European average for internet access but not mobile or smartphone use. **First internet use in the UK is earlier than in all other countries except for Denmark.**

 **The age of first use overall – at around eight years old – is little changed since 2010**, although by 2013, children, especially 9- to 10-year-olds, have access to much more complex smartphone convergent technologies than their 2010 predecessors. Although they can potentially use them to do much more, the qualitative research shows that the range of what younger children do in practice is limited and more constrained by their parents than is the case for older children.

3 Online activities

Research has shown that children's online activities vary by age – with children progressing up **'the ladder of opportunities'** over time, from basic uses such as gaming and school-related searches, to creative and participatory uses of the internet such as maintaining a blog, creating and sharing content (Livingstone & Helsper, 2007; Livingstone *et al.*, 2011).

EU Kids Online showed that **online activities are difficult to categorise as simply beneficial or harmful**, precisely because much depends on both the child and the context. Generally – as confirmed by the Net Children Go Mobile data – children who take up a wider range of online activities are likely to encounter more risks, but they may also be better equipped to cope with those risks, becoming resilient to harm (Livingstone, Haddon & Görzig, 2012).

3.1 Types of online activities

Table 9: Daily online activities, by age and gender

% who have daily...	9-12 years		13-16 years		All
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
Watched video clips	21	31	52	84	49
Visited a social networking profile	11	15	72	78	48
Listened to music	24	19	59	73	46
Used instant messaging	10	24	50	68	41
Used the internet for school work	25	17	32	66	36
Checked information to satisfy a curiosity	21	14	38	57	34
Watched broadcast television/movie online	12	17	37	59	33
Played games on own or against the computer	39	20	47	20	33
Played games with other people on the internet	22	21	50	9	27
Downloaded free Apps	13	3	38	47	27
Downloaded music or films	1	3	23	56	22
Published photos, videos or music to share with others	3	17	25	39	22
Read/watched the news on the internet	12	1	17	45	19
Used file sharing sites	2	6	14	40	16
Published a message on a website or a blog	3	4	20	30	15
Visited a chatroom	4	0	13	18	10
Read an e-book	11	1	3	22	9
Registered my geographical location	3	3	12	13	8
Used a webcam	2	4	4	22	8
Purchased apps	1	0	8	13	6
Bought things online	1	4	10	6	6
Looked up maps/timetables	1	16	4	1	5
Spent time in a virtual world	3	6	4	5	4
Created a character, pet or avatar	1	2	4	2	2
Read QR codes/scan barcodes	0	0	0	2	0

NCGM: Q9a-d, 10a-e, 11a-e, 12a-k: For each of the things I read out, please tell me how often you have done it in the past month.

Base: All children who use the internet.

- The most popular online activities² are watching video clips, social networking and listening to music. **Some of the activities that policy makers and parents worry about are, in fact, rather rare** – purchasing apps, spending time in a virtual world, registering one’s geographic location, visiting chatrooms.
- The ‘all’ figures mask some substantial differences in both gender and age. **Nearly all activities become more common with age.** Younger children particularly favour activities that engage with online content (watching video clips, listening to music or watching TV).
- Teenagers are more likely to do a range of activities, though **levels of some informational, civic and creative uses of the internet are still not very high.**
- Teenage girls are much more likely than boys to listen to music, watch video clips, use instant messaging, download free apps and upload content – and they are twice as likely as boys to use the internet for schoolwork or to watch films, television or news online. Teenage boys are much more likely to play online games.
- By comparison with the European average, **UK children’s online activities are fairly typical.** They are less likely to visit chatrooms than in some countries, although teenage girls are twice as likely to use a webcam – one in five children altogether.

In the 2010 survey respondents aged 11-16 were asked also about how often they did certain activities. Looking at this age group for both surveys allows for a comparison of those who do these activities on a daily basis.

² We focus on daily use since many activities are integrated in children’s lives, but, of course, some activities are done less often.

Table 10: Daily online activities, comparing 2010 and 2013 (11+)

% who have at least daily...	2010	2013
Visited a social networking profile	44	59
Used instant messaging	40	47
Watched video clips (e.g. on YouTube)	32	53
Used the internet for schoolwork	18	40
Played games with other people on the internet	17	28
Downloaded music or films	10	27
Put (or posted) a message on a website	9	19
Visited a chatroom	9	11
Read/watched the news on the internet	7	24
Used a webcam	6	10
Put (or posted) photos, videos or music to share with others	6	24
Spent time in a virtual world	5	4
Used file sharing sites	4	20
Created a character, pet or avatar	2	3

Q9a-d, 10a-e, 11a-e, 12a-k: For each of the things I read out, please tell me how often you have done it in the past month.
EU Kids Online QC102: How often have you played internet games in the past 12 months? QC306a-d, QC308a-f and QC311a-f: Which of the following things have you done in the past month on the internet? (Multiple responses allowed.)
Base: All children aged 11-16 who use the internet.


 Not only has access changed considerably in the three years between the two surveys, but also the range of activities children undertake has increased. Possibly because the capabilities of the devices they use enhance online opportunities, the comparison of **children’s daily online activities shows that more children do more of most online activities now, compared with a few years ago.**


Table 11: Daily online activities, by age comparing 2010 and 2013 (11+)

% who have daily...	11-13 years		14-16 years	
	2010	2013	2010	2013
Visited a social networking profile	41	37	71	77
Used instant messaging	27	35	48	57
Watched video clips (e.g. on YouTube)	19	30	34	71
Used the internet for schoolwork	24	23	38	53
Played games with other people on the internet	15	31	15	25
Downloaded music or films	4	9	14	43
Put (or posted) a message on a website	8	11	21	26
Visited a chatroom	8	10	16	12
Read/watched the news on the internet	2	11	10	34
Used a webcam	5	4	7	14
Put (or posted) photos, videos or music to share with others	2	20	10	27
Spent time in a virtual world	3	2	3	4
Used file sharing sites	1	10	5	28
Created a character, pet or avatar	1	3	2	2

NCGM: Q9a-d, 10a-e, 11a-e, 12a-k: For each of the things I read out, please tell me how often you have done it in the past month.

EU Kids Online: QC102: How often have you played internet games in the past 12 months? QC306a-d, QC308a-f and QC311a-f: Which of the following things have you done in the past month on the internet? (Multiple responses allowed.)

Base: All children aged 11-16 who use the internet.

 **While the overall trend is towards a greater range and uptake of activities online, this has occurred differently for younger and older children.** Most of the activities have increased for both age groups over time. However, there is no increase in use of internet for schoolwork among 11- to 13-year-olds – still only a quarter of children do this. Downloading has mainly increased among older teens. Further, for SNS use, there is no real increase – even a slight decrease among the younger group.

3.2 Smartphone users

In order to grasp the consequences of mobile internet devices on the mix of daily online activities, the next table (and others in this report) **compares smartphone and non-smartphone users**, divided into two age groups.

Table 12: Daily online activities, by age and by whether child uses a smartphone or not

% who have daily...	9-12 years		13-16 years		All
	Non-user	Smartphone user	Non-user	Smartphone user	
Watched video clips	23	34	43	73	49
Visited a social networking profile	4	34	32	88	48
Listened to music	14	38	26	79	46
Used instant messaging	10	33	4	77	41
Used the internet for schoolwork	14	34	37	50	36
Checked information to satisfy a curiosity	12	29	41	47	34
Watched broadcast television/movie online	13	18	30	52	33
Played games on own or against the computer	15	60	15	43	33
Played games with other people on the internet	15	36	7	41	27
Downloaded free apps	1	22	3	55	27
Downloaded music or films	1	5	1	49	22
Published photos, videos or music to share with others	9	13	8	40	22
Read/watched the news on the internet	1	16	0	38	19
Used file sharing sites	1	12	8	31	16
Published a message on a website or a blog	0	10	11	29	15
Visited a chatroom	0	6	1	18	10
Read an e-book	1	24	0	13	9
Registered geographical location	0	8	1	17	8
Used a webcam	1	8	0	16	8
Purchased apps	1	2	0	14	6
Bought things online	0	8	0	11	6
Looked up maps/timetables	10	7	3	3	5
Spent time in a virtual world	4	5	1	4	4
Created a character, pet or avatar	1	4	0	4	2
Read QR codes/scan barcodes	0	0	0	1	0

NCGM: Q9a-d, 10a-e, 11a-e, 12a-k: For each of the things I read out, please tell me how often you have done it in the past month.

Base: All children who use the internet.

- Smartphone users make considerably more use of the internet in almost every way, even comparing within the two age groups. Indeed, some activities (e.g. engaging with news online, visiting a chatroom) are only taken up by smartphone users.
- By comparison with other European countries, the differences between smartphone users and non-users in the UK are often much starker.** This suggests a more marked difference between the online opportunities enjoyed by smartphone users and non-smartphone users in the UK.

"I use it [smartphone] for contacting my friends but mainly it is to be used for contacting my parents in an emergency or having to search things up when we're in the car and my parents can't do anything, or if I'm just wondering about something, then I use it to search things up on search engines such as Google and things like that." (Erica, 12)

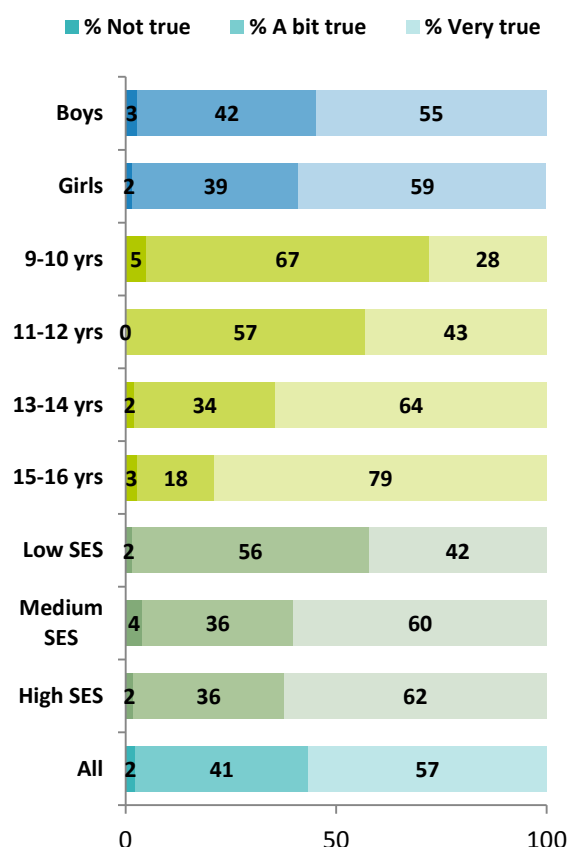
- However, as noted at the outset, smartphone users are generally from higher SES households than non-users, so this may explain the differences in their take-up of opportunities. Note that we cannot assume that smartphone users use their smartphone to do all the activities shown in the table. It does seem, however, that smartphone users have truly embraced the value of **'anywhere, anytime' connectivity**.

3.4 Online positive content

Much of the content that children engage with online has been designed for the general public, and so is not always age-appropriate or particularly beneficial for children. In small language communities – although not in the UK – there are also limitations on the amount and diversity of

content enjoyed by children. For these reasons, we asked children for their assessment of how much there is that they could enjoy engaging with online.

Figure 2: 'There are lots of things on the internet that are good for children of my age', by gender, age and SES



NCGM: Q25c: How true are these of you?

Base: All children who use the internet.

- The vast majority of children consider it to be a bit true (41%) or very true (47%) that there are lots of good things on the internet for children of their particular age group.** Nonetheless, 9- to 10-year-olds are less likely to answer this question with enthusiasm, the majority saying it is only a bit true that there's lots of good content for them. Children from low SES homes are also more doubtful about the amount of good content available

These boys from the 9- to 10-year-old focus group shared their frustrations about using the internet on their smartphones:

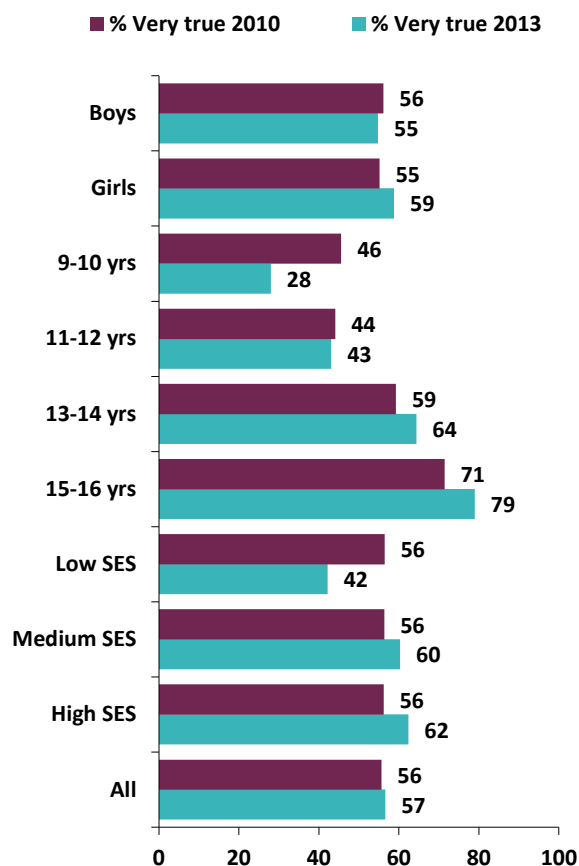
“When you’re downloading a game and it says that, for example, FIFA 14, when it’s three and over, because I’ve got my phone really recently, when I try to buy it, it says not available to download and it really starts to annoy me.” (Laton)

“Yes, there’s Escape Minecraft that a few people have heard about and because it costs money to get the actual thing, it says ... I go to another website, it says free and you can download it for free, and then I download it and I have to go through all of this long process and then after that, it doesn’t even work”. (Taran)

“I also have a problem with Netflix. When it says you can use a free trial and you do it, and then my mom’s doing it, helping me, but then it comes up to this page that says you have to put in your bank details but I don’t get why you have to put in your bank details if you’re having a free trial”. (Ernie)

- By comparison with other European countries, however, **UK children are the most satisfied with the online offer** (and Italian and Belgian children are among the most dissatisfied).


Figure 3: ‘There are lots of things on the internet that are good for children of my age’, comparing 2010 and 2013



NCGM: Q25c: How true are these of you?

EU Kids Online: QC319c: There are lots of things on the internet that are good for children of my age. Response options: very true, a bit true, not true.

Base: All children who use the internet.

 Compared with children’s answers in 2010, there is no difference in the overall results. However, **9- to 10-year-olds have become less satisfied, suggesting that as younger children come to use the internet more over time, the relative lack of provision for their age group is increasingly of concern to them.**

4 Communication practices

Staying in touch with friends is an important part of children's daily activities, online as well as offline. What happens when access to SNS and instant messaging services is provided on mobile phones, and then, always at hand? The potential for **'anywhere, anytime' access to peers and online contacts** has renewed public concerns over SNS, such as popular anxieties regarding the fragile balance between privacy and intimacy, as well as contact with people met online.

Smartphones expand the range of mobile communicative practices and audiences children are now able to engage with (Bertel & Stald, 2013). Are children developing different notions of 'friendship' and different regimes of privacy and disclosure, associated with different platforms or services? Rather than replacing one SNS with another, it seems that children combine and integrate them with other communicative practices, resulting in particular **'communication repertoires'** (Haddon, 2004).

4.1 Social networking and media sharing platforms

We have seen that social networking tops the activities taken up by children on a daily basis, and that children who also use a smartphone and a tablet to go online are more likely to engage in activities on a SNS every day. Which children, we now ask, use social networking and media-sharing platforms?

Given that most SNSs have minimum age restrictions, we present the findings on SNS use in terms of narrow age bands.

Table 13: Children with a profile on social networking and media sharing platforms, by age

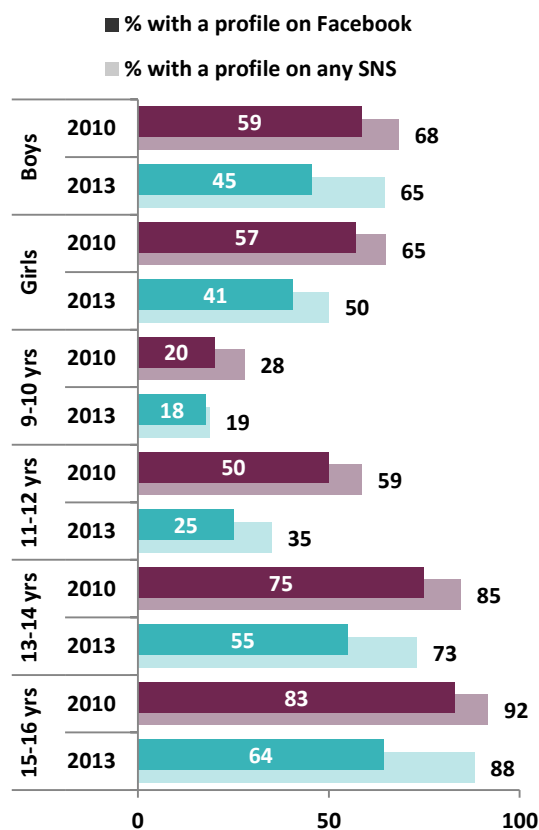
%	9-10 years	11-12 years	13-14 years	15-16 years	All
Facebook	18	25	55	64	43
Twitter	0	10	17	24	14
YouTube	1	5	24	33	18
Instagram	0	23	19	28	19

Q16 a-f: Do you have your own profile on a SNS (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, etc.) that you currently use and if you have a profile/account, do you have just one or more than one?

Base: All children who use the internet.

- **Facebook is the main platform used by the youngest age band, with 18% of 9- to 10-year-olds and 25% of 11- to 12-year-olds having a profile.** Instagram, and to a lesser degree Twitter, are used by those as young as 11-12 years old. Among teenagers, Facebook is still the most popular site, although SNS use is diversifying. Note that we have already seen that most children use YouTube – what this table shows is the percentages who have registered their own profile.
- **Children continue to adopt some of the latest SNSs** which have come to prominence even since the survey. Instagram and WhatsApp are the most talked about as being in daily use in the focus groups and interviews – parents and teachers expressed concern about mis-use of WhatsApp for inappropriate messages and bullying.
- **The UK is distinctive in the popularity of Twitter, as this is little used by children in the other European countries** (14% of 9- to 16-year-olds in the UK, or 24% of all SNS users; the next highest is Ireland, with 7% users overall). Instagram is more popular in the UK (and other northern countries), while Southern European children are more likely to register on YouTube.


Figure 4: 'Children with a profile on SNS, comparing 2010 and 2013



NCGM: Q16 a-f: Do you have your own profile on a SNS (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, etc.) that you currently use and if you have a profile/account, do you have just one or more than one? Q25c: How true are these of you?

EU Kids Online QC313: Do you have your OWN profile on a social networking site that you currently use, or not?

Base: All children who use the internet.

 **SNS use has dropped for girls** (from 65% to 50%) but hardly for boys. **It has also dropped substantially for younger children** (from 28% to 19% for 9- to 10-year-olds and from 59% to 35% for 11- to 12-year-olds). Within this overall picture, **Facebook use has also dropped in recent years** (for older teens in particular, it has dropped more than for SNS use generally – from 83% to 64%), suggesting that children are diversifying their use of SNS sites (Lilley & Ball, 2013) It may also be that safety campaigns have had some effect. In focus groups and interviews girls report using smartphone/tablet messaging, especially group

messaging among friendship and year groups which may have displaced SNS such as Facebook.

"I don't use Facebook that much." (Eliza)

"I only use it occasionally." (Imogen)

"We used to use it a lot but as different things have come about we use it less, but we use Facebook to talk to other people who don't have Twitter or messaging so we talk to them on Facebook instead." (Eliza and Imogen, 16-year-old girls' focus group)

4.2 Nature of SNS contacts

The number of contacts on SNS is often assumed as an indicator of risky behaviour. However, the risk that children are getting in touch with ever-larger social circles is somewhat overstated (Livingstone, Ólafsson, & Staksrud, 2011).

Table 14: Number of contacts on SNS, by profile used the most

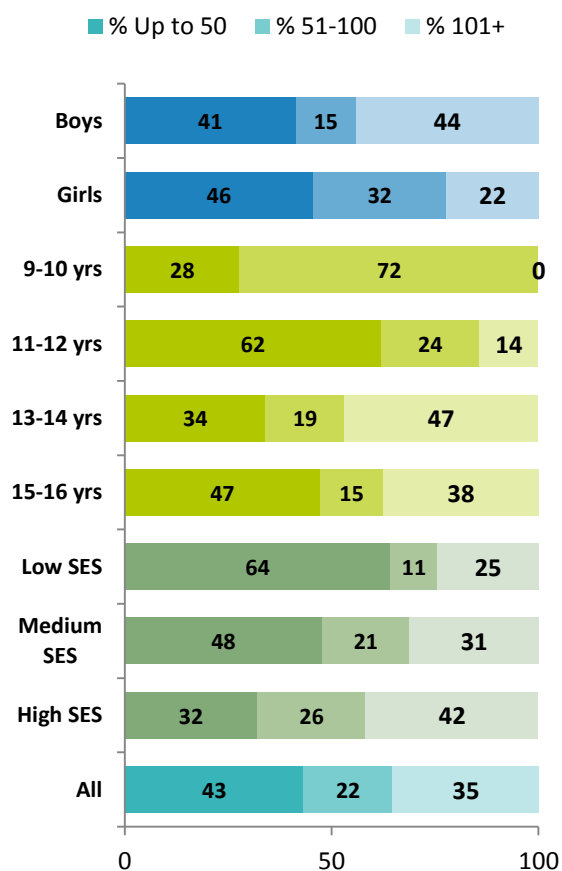
%	Facebook	Twitter	Other	All
Up to 10	12	40	33	19
11-50	20	38	67	25
51-100	23	17	0	21
101-300	32	4	0	25
More than 300	13	1	0	10

NCGM: Q18: Roughly how many people are you in contact with when using [SNS profile that is used the most]?

Base: All children who use SNS.

- **Facebook more than Twitter or other platforms is used to maintain contacts with relatively large circles of 'friends'.**

Figure 5: Number of contacts on SNS, by gender, age and SES

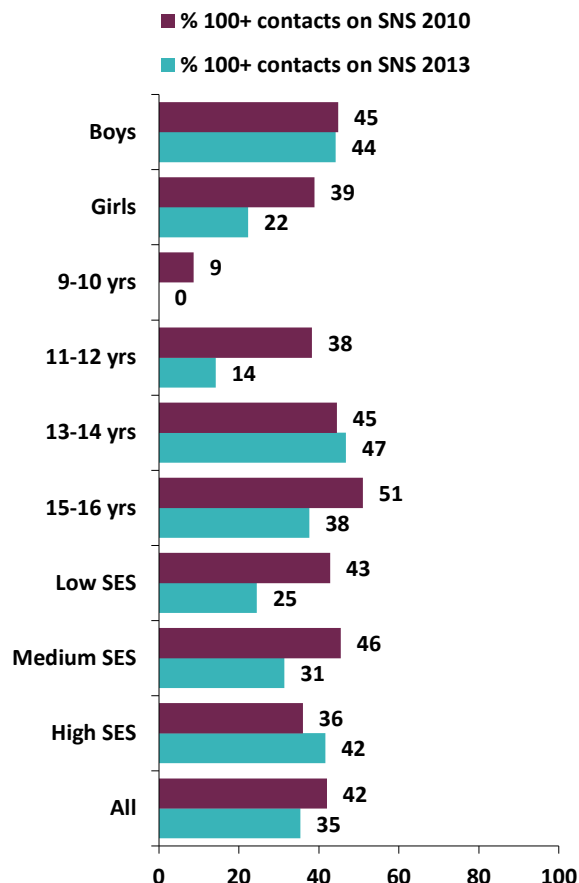


NCGM: Q18: Roughly how many people are you in contact with when using [SNS profile that is used the most]?

Base: All children who use SNS.

- Girls have slightly more online contacts than boys, and children from high SES households have more than those from low SES households. Note that, in practice, the findings in this graph comprise 75% Facebook use, and the rest is almost entirely Twitter. Overall, **substantial numbers of children have relatively few online contacts**. None of the youngest group (9-10 years) reports having more than 100 contacts, though almost half of the 13- to 14-year-olds do.
- European comparisons suggest **that the UK is about average** – Romanian children have many more contacts; Danish and Irish have considerably fewer.

Figure 6: Number of contacts on SNS, comparing 2010 and 2013



NCGM: Q18: Roughly how many people are you in contact with when using [SNS profile that is used the most]?

EU Kids Online QC316: Roughly how many people are you in contact with when using [social networking profile]?

Base: All children who use SNS.


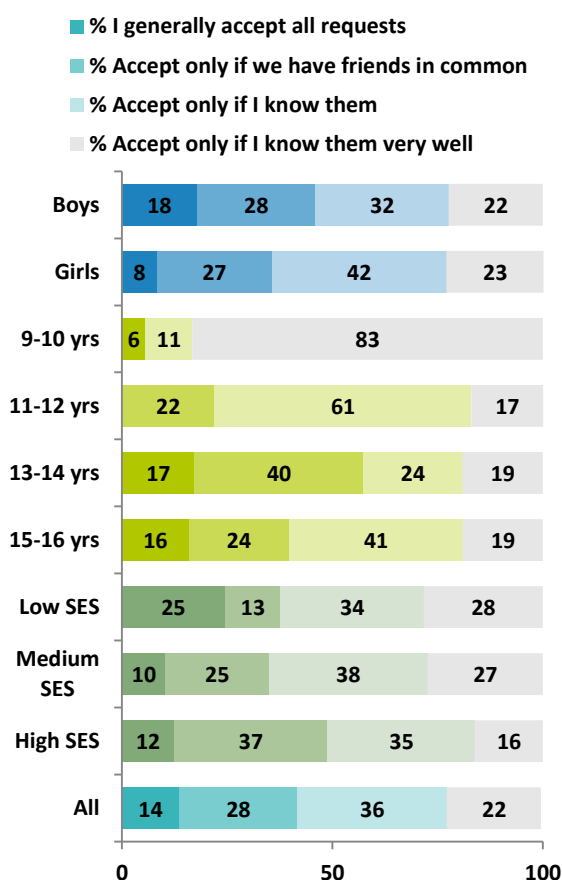
 **The number of online contacts has dropped a little since 2010** when 16% reported more than 300 contacts. In 2013, the equivalent figure was 10%. The reduction in children with more than 100 contacts is most marked among younger ('under-age') users, girls, and those from lower SES homes.

Figure 7: Children's responses to friends' requests on SNS, by gender, age and SES



NCGM: Q22: How do you generally respond to requests from people to become your 'friends' on [SNS profile that is used the most]?

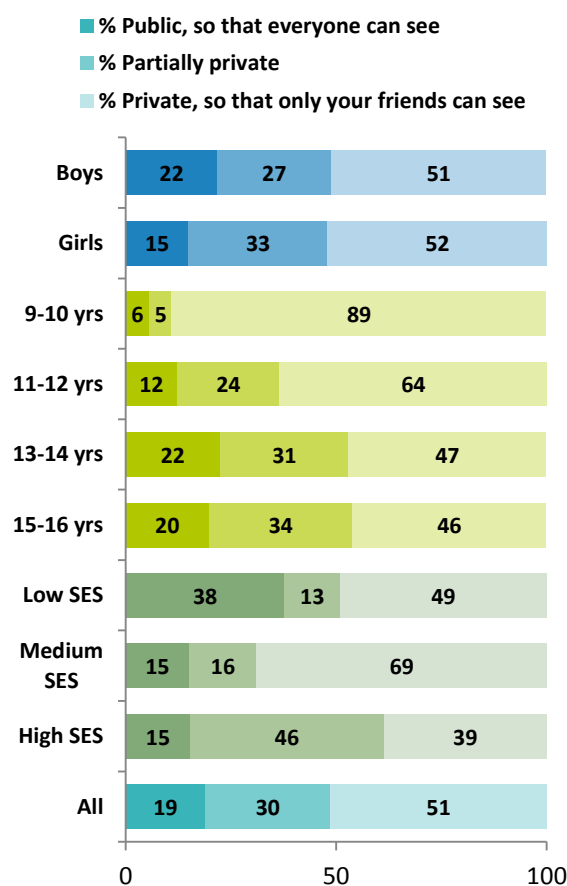
Base: All children who use SNS.

- **Only 14% of SNS users say that they generally accept all 'friend' requests**, with the majority accepting them if they have friends in common or know the person already. The tendency to accept all requests is higher among boys than girls, among children from low SES homes and among 11- to 12-year-olds (the year when UK children move to secondary school). Nine- to ten-year-olds are particularly cautious about accepting such requests (note that the sample sizes here are small, so this finding can only be tentative).
- Nonetheless, **the UK's 14% who accept all 'friend' requests exceeds the European average of 9%**, and is lower only than that of Romanian children (18%).

4.3 SNS privacy settings

- Half of SNS users keep their profiles private. **Boys, teens, and children from low SES homes are more likely to have public profiles.** Note that, as above, in practice 75% of these responses concern Facebook and the rest are mainly Twitter.
- European comparisons show that, apart from Ireland (15%) and Belgium (19%), **UK children are least likely to have public profiles**, especially compared with Romania (57%).

Figure 8: Whether SNS profile is public or private, by gender, age and SES



NCGM: Q20: Is your profile set to...?

Base: All children who use SNS.


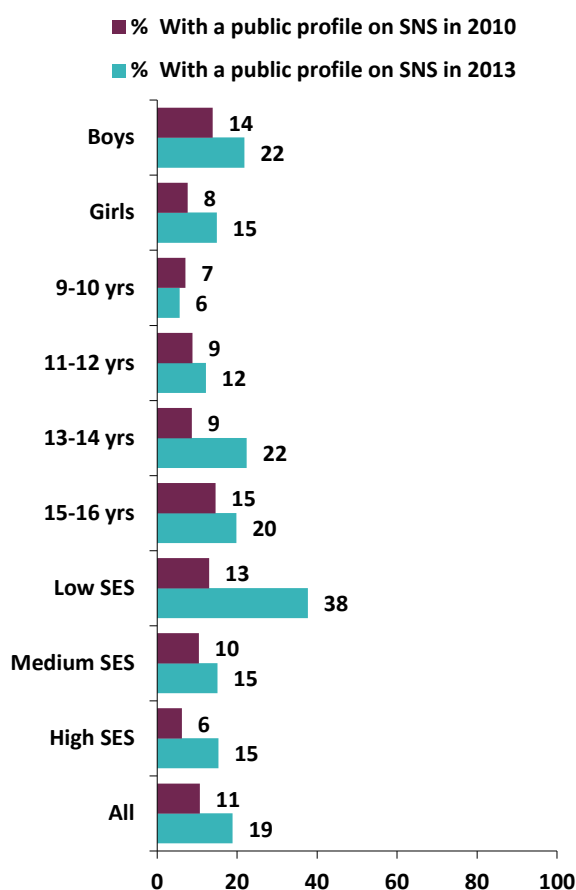
 **Compared with 2010, however, there seems to be a decrease in privacy** (then, only 11% had a public profile and 66% were wholly private compared with 19% and 51% in 2013). This may, however, refer to the rise in Twitter which is, generally, ‘public’.

Figure 9: Whether SNS profile is public or private, by gender, age and SES, comparing 2010 and 2013



NCGM: Q20: Is your profile set to...?
 Base: All children who use SNS.

Table 15: Personal information children show on their SNS profile, by age and gender

% who say that their SNS profile shows...	9-12 years		13-16 years		All
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
A photo that clearly shows their face	86	44	72	92	76
Their last name	93	63	79	93	83
Their home address	0	0	2	6	3
Their phone number	21	3	4	21	11
Their school	33	45	63	60	58
An age that is not their correct age	30	45	26	8	23

Q21: Which of the bits of information on this card does your profile/account include about you?
 Base: All children who use SNS.

- Now that Facebook, the most used SNS, insists on full/real names, it is unsurprising that most children show their last name on their profile. Photos need not show the child's face but most do, they say. School name is then the most identifying information, provided by more than half, though less so by younger children. Few reveal their phone number. One-quarter, however, **have provided a false age on their profile – more often younger children than teens.**
- Some children are made aware of the risks of not taking care with their Facebook accounts at school. Eleanor, Rosemary and Sophie, 12-year-olds, describe what happened when someone came to their school to talk about social networking and found photographs of them they didn't know were accessible.

"We had a talk last year about Facebook and Twitter last year." (Eleanor)

"Oh, yes, we did. And someone had a non-appropriate picture and then they got a picture from my account on Facebook." (Rosemary)

“Yeah, it was ours, well it was both of ours.” (Sophie)

“Yes it was a private one.” (Rosemary)

“There was a picture of a couple of us sitting on the sofa and then we were on our phones, which was taken [unclear], and he came and he said.... And we’re all on private Facebook and I thought that no one could see my photos that I didn’t add. But obviously there’s some secret way that Facebook don’t even know about that you could. And this guy came in and was, like, I’ll look at your photos. And he started looking through photos of us of all our friends. And I was like, how did you get that? A picture of all of us. And we were like, what?” (Sophie)


Table 16: Children with a profile on SNS who show an age that is not their correct age, by age

%	9-10 years	11-12 years	13-14 years	15-16 years	All
Facebook	17	65	34	6	24
All	17	47	37	7	23

Q16 a-f: Do you have your own profile on a SNS (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, etc.) that you currently use and if you have a profile/account, do you have just one or more than one?

Base: All children who use SNS.

- Giving a false age on Facebook is particularly common among 11- to 12-year-olds who use it, unsurprisingly, given that 13 is the minimum age required to register.
- By comparison with other European countries, UK children are a little less likely to give their address or school and also less likely to give a false age (39% for European average vs. 23% in the UK).

 **In 2010, 27% of UK SNS users showed an incorrect age, suggesting that falsifying age when registering a profile has not changed very much in recent years (now, 23%).**

“I started [Facebook] when I was ten – then I used it

for a week a lot.” (Sophie, 12)

“I used it for maybe a month and then I realised nobody had it at that age and it was silly and I was too young anyway to use it. So I just didn’t use it for ages. Then when I was 11 and a half, I started using it again just posting some photos of me and my friends. Then I just don’t use it now at all, really.” (Rosemary, 12)

Table 17: Ways of being in contact with parents

% of children in contact with parents by...	Several times each day	Daily or almost daily	At least every week	Never or almost never
Talking on a mobile or smartphone	19	37	30	15
Sending texts	10	39	33	18
Sending emails	1	0	4	94
Contact on SNS	3	12	24	62

NCGM: Q13, Q14, Q15, Q19: How often are you in contact with the following people by talking on the mobile phone/smartphone, by sending SMS/text or multimedia messages (MMS) with pictures or videos from your mobile phone/smartphone, by sending email, on all the SNS you use? Base: All children who use each means of communication.

- Few children are in touch with their parents via SNS daily, though around a third use SNS to stay in touch at least on a weekly basis. **Talking by phone, followed by sending texts, is clearly the preferred way for children to stay in contact with parents.** These figures differ little from the European average except that more UK children text their parents (European daily average 29%; 35% never do this).

Table 18: Ways of being in contact with friends

% of children in contact with friends by...	Several times each day	Daily or almost daily	At least every week	Never or almost never
Talking on a mobile or smartphone	32	40	22	6
Sending texts	35	43	16	6
Sending emails	0	6	23	71
Contact on SNS	41	39	17	3

NCGM: Q13, Q14, Q15, Q19: How often are you in contact with the following people by talking on the mobile phone/smartphone, by sending SMS/text or multimedia messages (MMS) with pictures or videos from your mobile phone/smartphone, by sending email, on all the SNS you use?
Base: All children who use each means of communication at all.

- **The contrast with friends is strong, with SNS now the most popular form of contact, and talking or texting nearly as popular.** In the focus groups and interviews it is clear that mobile-to-mobile messaging, e.g. iMessage or BBM, has replaced text messaging for many as the adoption of proprietary smartphones brands and their messaging services becomes more commonplace.

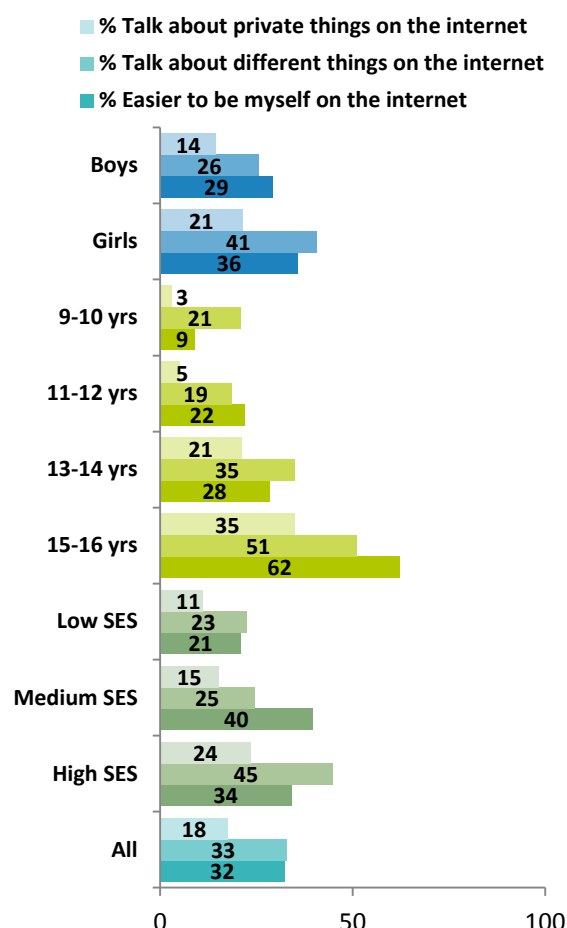
"We text well iMessage that's the same as text."
(Eliza and Imogen, 16)

"On iPhone there's a thing called Facetime, which is exactly like Skype for iPhones and laptops. So I normally do that to my brother who's not in London right now." (Anuj, 11-13)

- Talking, texting and SNS communication with friends are all a little more frequent in the UK than the European average.

4.4 Children's approach to online communication

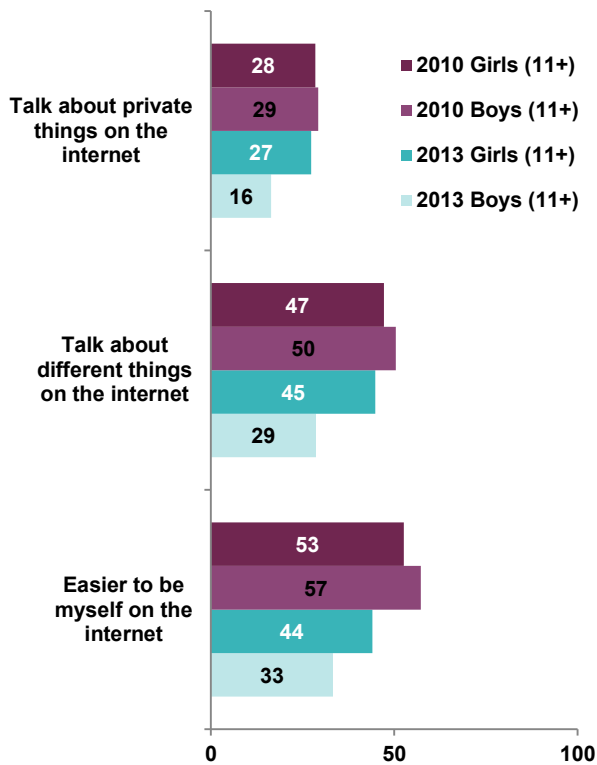
Figure 10: Online and offline communication compared, by gender, age and SES



NCGM: Q47: How true are these of you?
Base: All children who use the internet (9-16 years).

- Some children find online communication appealing in key respects, although by implication, most prefer face-to-face (or perhaps telephone) communication.
- In this respect, UK children are similar to other European children.

Figure 11: Online and offline communication compared, comparing 2010 and 2013



NCGM: Q47: How true are these of you?

EU Kids Online: QC103: How true are these of you? Percentage who said 'A bit true' or 'Very true'

Base: All children who use the internet aged 11+.

However, **comparisons with 2010 show a notable decline in the appeal of online communication.** Overall, the percentage of children aged 11+ who talk about private things on the internet has dropped from 29% to 21%, and there has also been a drop in those who talk about different things online (from 49% to 36%) and those who find it easier to be themselves online (from 55% to 38%). This drop is mainly to be seen in boys' answers, interestingly.

5 Skills

Digital literacy – variously encompassing media, information, communication and technological understanding – is widely considered crucial for the 21st century. Research has already established that, **contrary to the myth of the digital native, children and young people do not naturally or automatically acquire digital literacy** (Helsper & Eynon, 2010). Using and engaging with online and mobile platforms, along with the guidance they may receive from parents, teachers, family members or peers, is surely contributing to young people’s competence, though whether this is sufficient for their needs is as yet unclear.

The very breadth, complexity and fast-changing nature of digital literacy makes it hard to measure. Commonly, researchers combine multiple measures, which correlate with each other yet each capture different dimensions of digital literacy (Sonck *et al.*, 2011). These include self-reported competence (or self-confidence), along with self-reported ability with a specific list of skills. In formulating the latter, we paid particular attention to the skills needed for mobile/online devices.

5.1 Self-confidence

Table 19: Self-reported digital media competence

% of children who say...	Not true	A bit true	Very true
I know more about the internet than my parents	34	29	37
I know lots of things about using the internet	13	39	47
I know how to use ‘report abuse’ buttons	32	18	51
I know more about using smartphones than my parents	14	15	71
I know lots of things about using smartphones	4	27	69

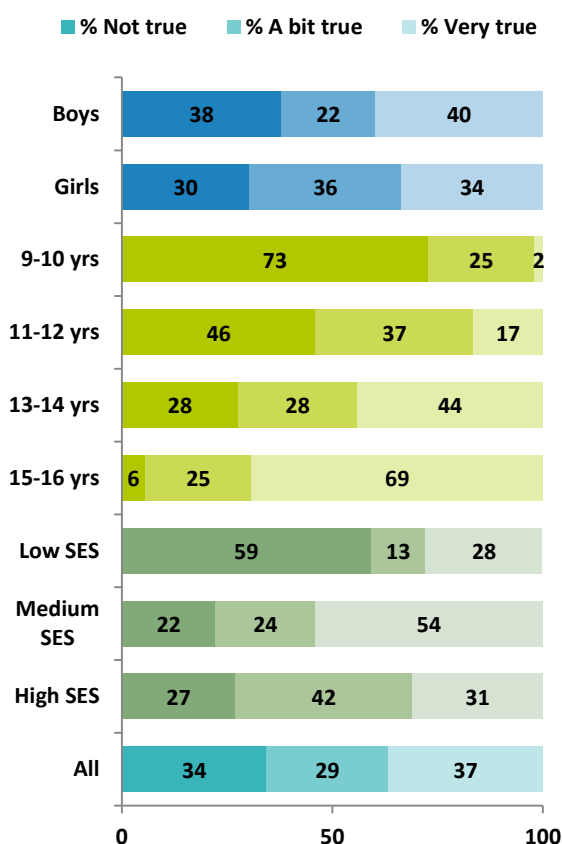
NCGM: Q47: How true are these of you?
Base: All children who use the internet.

- Two out of three children know more than their parents about the internet, they say, and 86% claim to know more than their parents about smartphones. Yet given the at-times hyperbolic vision of children outsmarting their parents, it’s interesting that **one-third do not think they know more about the internet than their parents**. It is also noteworthy that one in three does not know how to report abuse online if they encounter a problem. One parent recounted an experience her friends had of being outsmarted when they tried to manage internet use by their 16-year-old daughter:

“All the internet connections and everything went off at 11, and they used to go to bed, and then they’d wake up at three o’clock in the morning, and she’d be on, doing things she shouldn’t be doing, and they were like, how, how? And what she’d done is she’d gone into the computer and changed the time of the computer, so that it wasn’t 11 o’clock. It was... so, you have to keep moving with them generally.” (Helen, parent)

- UK children generally claim more digital media competence than the European average** (where 42% do not know about ‘report abuse’ buttons, and only 36% say it’s ‘very true’ that they know lots about using the internet or 54% for smartphones).

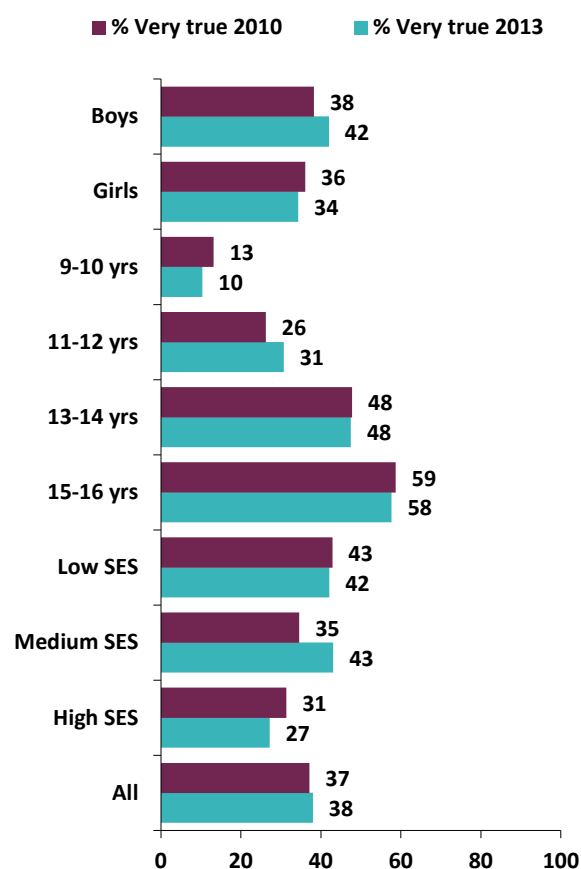
Figure 12: 'I know more about the internet than my parents', by gender, age and SES



NCGM: Q47: How true are these of you?
Base: All children who use the internet.

- **The youngest age group is particularly aware that their parents know more about using the internet than they do.** So, interestingly, are children from low SES homes.
- More UK 9- to 10-year-olds assess their competence as less than that of their parents, compared with the European average. This may reflect a generally higher level of competence among UK parents.

Figure 13: 'I know more about the internet than my parents', comparing 2010 and 2013



NCGM: Q47: How true are these of you?

EU Kids Online: QC319a: How true are these of you? I know more about the internet than my parents. Please answer not true, a bit true or very true.

Base: All children who use the internet.

Perhaps surprisingly, **the percentage who said they know more about the internet than their parents is unchanged since 2010** – suggesting that the growth in parental knowledge has kept pace with that of their children (as perceived by children), although this is not necessarily how some parents view it.

"I think we're in a very unique time span at the moment where adults, those in charge, don't have the technical knowledge that the young people have now, so we don't know what we're saying. They know a lot more about it than we do, and think they know it all. Whereas I think in another generation, well, things will obviously move on, but I just think we're stuck in that, you know, with that kind of lack of knowledge." (Mary, youth worker)

5.2 Skills and competences related to internet use

Table 20: Skills related to internet use and critical understanding, by age and gender

% who say they can...	9-12 years		13-16 years		All
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
Skills related to internet use and critical understanding					
Change filter preferences	6	5	54	50	33
Bookmark a website	38	33	81	79	61
Compare different websites to decide if information is true	19	34	74	67	52
Skills related to internet safety in general					
Block unwanted adverts or junk mail spam	28	10	65	72	47
Delete the record of which sites they have visited	22	5	81	66	48
Change privacy settings on a social networking profile	25	15	81	77	54
Block messages from someone they don't want to hear from	30	17	89	84	60
Block pop-ups	25	15	71	73	50
Find information on how to use the internet safely	48	36	77	78	62
Communicative abilities					
Publish a comment on a blog, website or forum	14	20	65	72	47
Upload images, videos or music onto social media	27	32	75	70	55
Create a blog	8	4	49	58	33

NCGM: Q26 a-d, Q27 a-e: Which of these things do you know how to do?

Base: All children who use the internet.

- **There are strong age and only minor gender differences in the skills related to internet use.** While the skills levels vary according to the specific skill asked about, it is striking that most of these skills are generally considered necessary for today's digital

generation, yet not all children possess them. That only half can compare websites to evaluate them, or create and upload images and videos, suggests digital media teaching is much needed.

- Among those who use smartphones, however, the level claimed for each of these skills is considerably higher than those who do not use smartphones. This suggests a new form of the digital divide is opening up, insofar as ownership of a more technically sophisticated device is a mark of status and excellence in skill. Tablet users, by contrast, do not report many more skills than non-tablet users, a finding repeated across Europe.
- In their self-reported levels of skill, UK children have about the same competence online as those in other European countries.


Table 21: Children's digital literacy and safety skills 2010 and 2013 compared (age 11+)

% who...	2010	2013
Bookmark a website	75	71
Find information on how to use the internet safely	70	71
Block messages from someone they don't want to hear from	69	72
Block unwanted adverts or junk mail/spam	64	57
Change privacy settings on a social networking profile	59	66
Compare different websites to decide if information is true	58	61
Delete the record of which sites they have visited	51	59
Change filter preferences	36	41

NCGM: Q26 a-d, Q27 a-e: Which of these things do you know how to do?

EU Kids Online QC320a-d and QC321a-d: Which of these things do you know how to do on the internet?

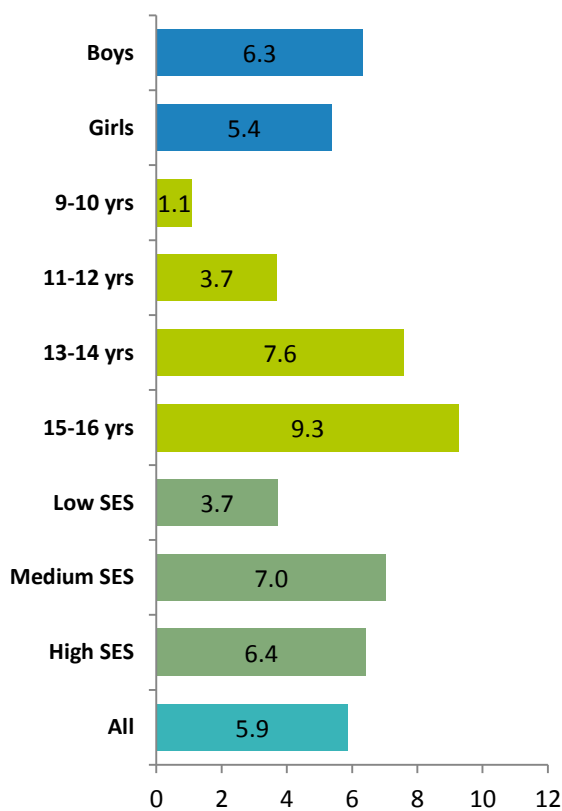
Base: All children who use the internet, aged 11+

 **EU Kids Online asked skill questions only of those aged 11+. The comparison over time shows that children are now less able**

to block junk/spam but more able to manage their privacy settings and delete their history.

5.3 Average number of skills

Figure 14: Average number of skills related to internet use (out of 12)



Q26 a-d, Q27 a-h: Which of these things do you know how to do? (Average out of 12 items.)

Base: All children who use the internet.

- Skills, like access but unlike activities, is a domain where traditional forms of inequality are manifest. Boys, older teens and children from higher SES homes all claim more skills. This may be partly a matter of greater confidence, but nonetheless, it suggests a **clear need to target internet and mobile skills teaching at girls, younger children and poorer children.**

- It is also thought-provoking that differences by gender, age and, especially, SES, are more marked in the UK than across Europe. In Denmark the average number of skills related to the internet is, at 6.9, higher than the UK, which fits in with EU Kids Online's finding that less restrictive mediation (by parents) is correlated with a higher level of skill (among children).

5.4 Skills related to smartphones and tablets

While the above skills are relevant to internet use on any platform, the survey also asked those who use smartphones and tablets about a further list of skills specific to those devices.

Table 22: Skills related to use of smartphones and tablets, by age and gender

% who say they can...	9-12 years		13-16 years		All
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
Download apps	98	89	100	99	98
Connect to a Wi-Fi network from smartphone	68	59	99	98	89
Have the same documents, contacts and apps on all devices that they use	59	30	89	79	74
Compare different apps with similar functions in order to choose the one that is most reliable	80	37	67	71	66
Deactivate the function showing their geographical position	26	55	81	69	66
Block push notifications from different apps	67	14	89	66	68
Block pop-ups which promote apps, games or services they have to pay for	49	49	79	58	64
Protect a smartphone with a PIN, with a screen pattern	81	81	98	97	93
Find information on how to use smartphones safely	75	49	77	70	71
Update status on SNS used most	64	37	97	86	81
Take a picture or a short video with smartphone and upload it on to social media	63	49	97	92	85

NCGM: Q28 a, Q28 c, Q28 e, Q29 b: Which of these things do you know how to do?

Base: All children who own or have for their own use a smartphone or a tablet.

- Bearing in mind that, as we have already seen, smartphone users generally claim more skills than non-users, the findings also show that **smartphone users are generally skilled in the use of their personal devices.**
- Nonetheless, certain skills should be more widespread if children are to use these devices effectively. **Around one-third cannot block pay-for pop-ups or compare and choose the best or most reliable app or deactivate the function showing their geographical position.** Younger girls seem particularly to lack the skill to use their personal devices effectively.
- Generally UK children claim similar or slightly more skills relating to the use of smartphones or tablets than the European average.

Boys in this 11-13 focus group discussion of how they manage downloads on their smartphones revealed their awareness of the issues involved:

"Also if you do buy a paid app your parents, if it's connected to their credit card, will get an email confirmation saying that your son has bought this, do you agree da-da-da." (Abdur)

"And then if you don't agree then they'll cancel it." (Pranav)

"I think so. And that's not on many of them. Most of them agree straightaway when you buy it, it just tells you, you can't really cancel it but some websites say you have to agree online. It depends on what website." (Abdur)

"It's like when you download it, it's like, so would you like to download this? Yes, and then there's a little explanation of what this app is but you hardly ever read it because you're like, actually I just want to play this, I want to do this, I want to get on it quickly." (Wilson)

"Yes, let's do it." (Abdur)

"And you never read it and you never know, at the

bottom it could say....” (Wilson)

“Viruses are possible.” (Pranav)

“Yes viruses are possible, yes, and you don’t read it so you click it and suddenly you’ve got a virus.” (Wilson)

“And also the advantage of a smartphone is that there are so many free games and those free games can turn out to be triple the cost of a paid game because ads.” (Pranav)

6 Risk and harm

Research on the risks of the internet for children has grown considerably in the past decade.³ A range of different risks have been examined, and a particular feature of the 2010 EU Kids Online survey was that it traced each child's report of a risk encounter through to possible (though not inevitable) harm – as perceived by the child and, then, to how the child and the parent responded. That project concluded that **not all risk leads to harm, and that it is important to identify which children find which risks problematic and which are able to cope** (see Livingstone, Hasebrink, & Görzig, 2012).

As children's lives – and the internet – continue to change, it also remains important to track the incidence of both risk and harm so as to identify changing patterns, practices and problems.

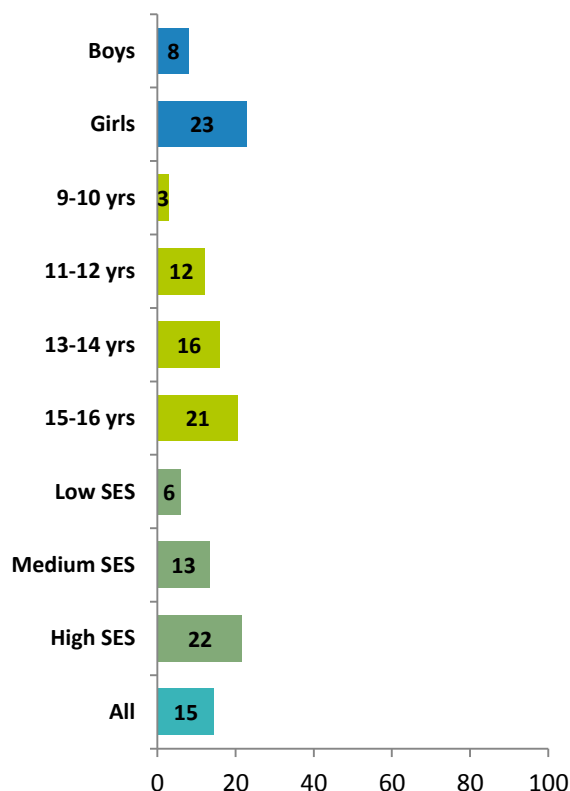
In the EU Kids Online and Net Children Go Mobile surveys, the risks were carefully described to children in ways that could be reliably translated into the survey languages, without using the terms often associated with media panics (e.g., pornography, paedophile, cyberbullying). Having described a risk to see if a child had encountered it, children were then asked if it had 'bothered' them, where 'bothered' was defined as something that **'made you feel uncomfortable, upset, or feel that you shouldn't have seen it'**.

In the survey design, before asking children any questions about particular risks, we asked whether anything online had bothered them in the past year. This was to gain an overall estimate of harm, as reported by the child, before they knew of our interest in pornography, bullying, etc.

³ For a review of the European evidence see Ólafsson et al. (2013).

6.1 Overall perception of risk and harm

Figure 15: Online experiences that have bothered children (%), by gender, age and SES

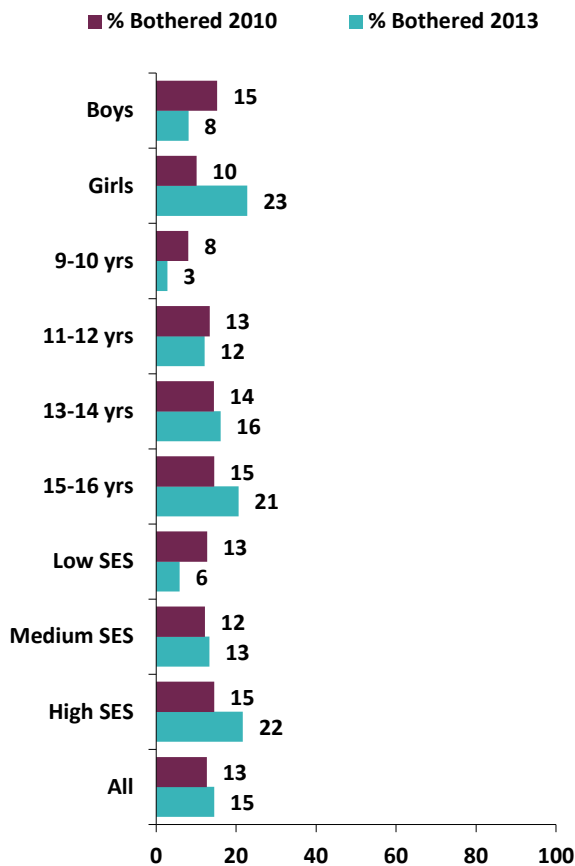


NCGM: Q30: In the PAST 12 MONTHS, have you seen or experienced something on the internet that has bothered you in some way? For example, made you feel uncomfortable, upset, or feel that you shouldn't have seen it?

Base: All children who use the internet.

- Overall, **15% of UK children aged 9-16 have been bothered, uncomfortable or upset by something online in the past year**. Such experiences are reported much more by girls, older teens and those from high SES homes.
- **Across Europe, the overall figure is 17%**, with less marked differences by age, gender and SES – this was largely because boys (14%), 9- to 10-year-olds (11%) and children from low SES homes (15%) all report more such experiences than in the UK.

Figure 16: Online experiences that have bothered children (%), comparing 2010 and 2013



NCGM: Q30: In the PAST 12 MONTHS, have you seen or experienced something on the internet that has bothered you in some way? For example, made you feel uncomfortable, upset, or feel that you shouldn't have seen it?

EU Kids Online: QC110: In the PAST 12 MONTHS, have you seen or experienced something on the internet that has bothered you in some way? For example, made you feel uncomfortable, upset, or feel that you shouldn't have seen it.

Base: All children who use the internet.


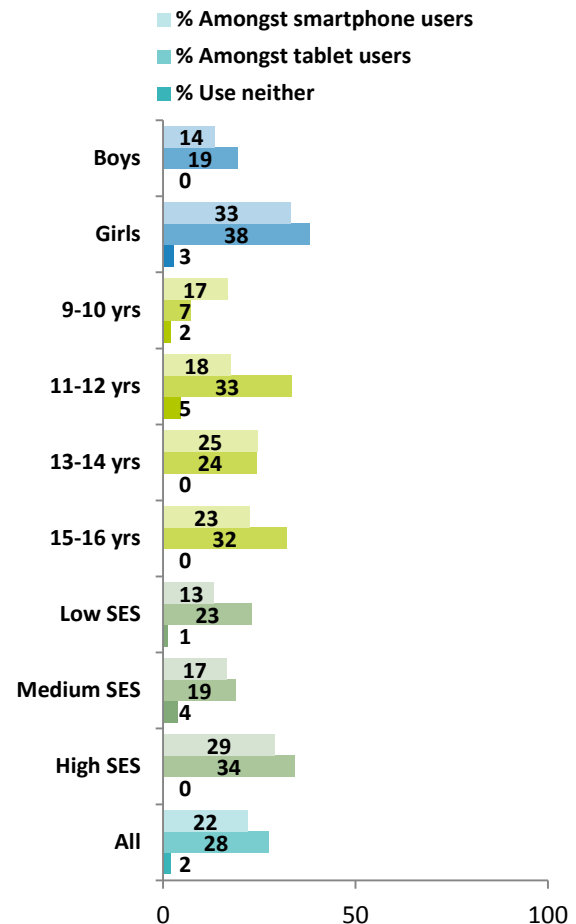
 **In 2010, the figure was a little lower, at 13%**, with less marked though still present differences by demographics. Most notably, in 2013, girls were much more likely to report something upsetting online. At the same time, there has been a drop in the percentage of 9- to 10-year-olds and a rise in 15- to 16-year-olds experiencing problems online.

Figure 17: Online experiences that have bothered children, by gender, age and SES (mobile versus non-mobile internet users)



NCGM: Q30: In the PAST 12 MONTHS, have you seen or experienced something on the internet that has bothered you in some way? For example, made you feel uncomfortable, upset, or feel that you shouldn't have seen it.

Base: All children who use the internet.

- **Online upsetting experiences are much higher among smartphone and tablet users than non-users.** This fits with previous findings that more risk is linked to more online opportunities and more, not less, digital skills (both of which characterise smartphone and tablet users) (see Livingstone *et al.*, 2012). In interviews, children gave examples of finding inappropriate videos on YouTube.

"YouTube is getting a bit ... to me it seems a bit

mature for people, especially children, because I've been watching some My Little Pony videos which no one knows about and it's supposed to be dedicated to children, My Little Pony, and then you see, suddenly, Flora on a bed just putting entirely mature things. Yes, and I think it's just a bit too mature for girls, like young girls at seven years old and they shouldn't be learning about the stuff, even until my age. So let's say Year 8 or Year 7, they shouldn't be knowing about any of this yet and it may affect their future. I do use YouTube. To me there's nothing wrong with YouTube because it suits all kinds of things for me. So all the things I want to watch: comedy, videos and animations, blogs, vlogs." (Erica, 12, interview)

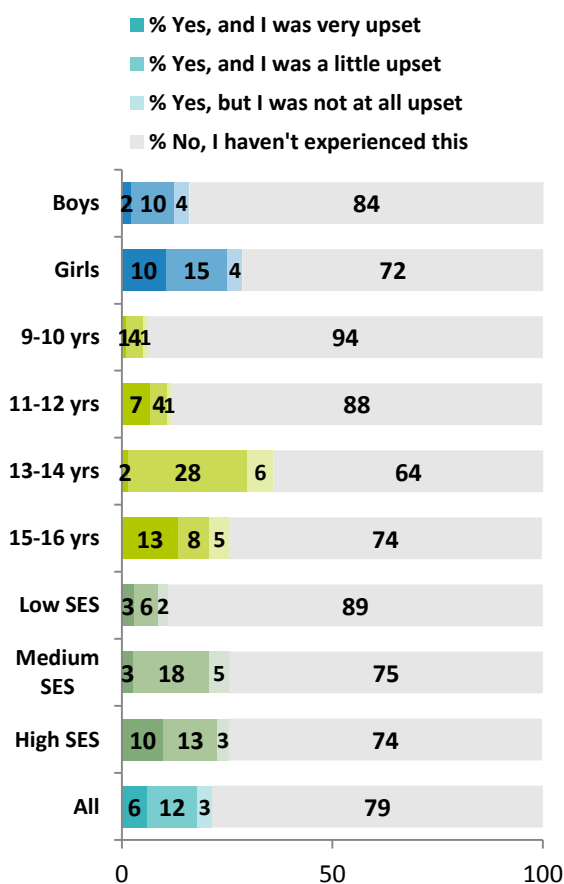
- Some parents were unaware that parental controls were available for smartphones until an incident occurred that required mediation.

"... he'd been Googling something on our house computer, and simultaneously on his phone, and something either popped up or he stored something on his phone, I can't remember, and so he'd been looking at porn and obviously we knew how to check his history and stuff. He had no idea that we could do that, [...] I said, let's unlock your phone, and let's look at your phone, and he was totally mortified, so we had to go into the shop, because we haven't, when we got his contract phone, we hadn't put any parental settings on it, it just came as it came, and we didn't really know about that." (Alice, teacher/parent of 11-year-old boy)

6.2 Bullying

Bullying was defined as follows: ‘Sometimes children or teenagers say or do hurtful or nasty things to someone and this can often be quite a few times on different days over a period of time, for example. This can include: teasing someone in a way this person does not like; hitting, kicking or pushing someone around; intentionally leaving someone out of things. When people are hurtful or nasty to someone in this way, it can happen: in person face to face (a person who is together with you in the same place at the same time); by mobile phone (texts, calls, video clips); on the internet (email, instant messaging, social networking, chat rooms); on whatever device you use to go online.’

Figure 18: Child has been bullied online or offline in the past 12 months, by gender, age and SES



Q32: In the PAST 12 MONTHS, has someone treated you in this kind of way, and if so, how upset were you about happened?
Base: All children who use the internet.

- **Looking across online and offline bullying taken together, 21% of children aged 9-16 said this had happened to them, and 18% overall were upset by what happened.** The incidence of bullying is higher among girls, those in their mid-teens (13-14 years), and children from high SES homes. Most children who report such incidents found it upsetting, especially the girls and the 15- to 16-year-olds.

Alice, a teacher at a secondary school, recounts how she tries to avoid bullying incidents:

“Particularly with girls and school [they have a] bit of a disagreement and then they’ll have gone home, and then everybody is on [line] that night, did you see what she says? She said this, and then before you know it, and then the next day, there’s another level of involvement, from people who weren’t involved in the beginning, are not these people’s friends, but can’t help themselves but get involved, so it starts extending out, and then you’ve got other year groups getting involved, so then at the end of every conversation I tend to have, when you leave this room, even if the incident wasn’t about phones, even if it was just about something that happened this week, when you leave this room, don’t BBM anyone, don’t put it on Facebook. This is the end of the conversation, between you and I, and it goes no further.

“I have to have that conversation every single time, remember what I said. If you leave this room, and I hear or somebody brings it in, it will obviously escalate and then there will be another conversation.” (Alice)

“How many times a week does that go on?” (Interviewer)

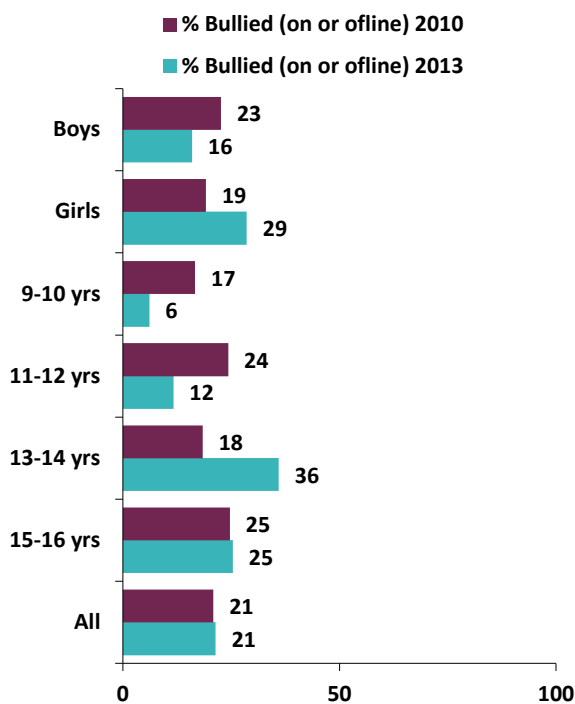
“That I say that? I say it four times a day, ten times a day.” (Alice)

- Across Europe, the figures are very similar (23% overall), though the demographic differences are less marked.

 **In 2010, the incidence of bullying overall was also 21%, but there is a marked**

change for 13- to 14-year-old girls who experience more bullying in 2013. Also notable is that the number of younger children who have been bullied has decreased in the UK but increased in the seven countries

Figure 19: Child has been bullied online or offline in the past 12 months, by gender and age, comparing 2010 and 2013



NCGM: Q32: In the PAST 12 MONTHS, has someone treated you in this kind of way, and if so, how upset were you about happened?

EU Kids Online: QC112: Has someone acted in this kind of hurtful or nasty way to you in the past 12 months?

Base: All children who use the internet.

Table 23: Ways in which children have been bullied or bullied others in the past 12 months (mobile versus non-mobile internet users⁴)

%	Smartphone users	Tablet users	Use neither	All
Have experienced any form of cyberbullying	19	18	1	12
Have been bullied in person face to face	8	9	10	9
Have engaged in any form of cyberbullying	5	3	0	3
Have bullied others in person face to face	7	9	3	6

Q33: If someone has treated you in this kind of way, how did it happen? (Multiple responses allowed.). Q34 In the PAST 12 MONTHS, have you ever behaved in this way to someone else and if so, in which way did you do it? (Multiple responses allowed.)

Base: All children who use the internet.

- Among internet users who do not use a smartphone or tablet, those who are bullied are bullied face to face, and few of them bully others.
- Among smartphone and tablet users, cyberbullying is twice as common as face-to-face bullying (which occurs at a similar rate as for non-users) and they are a little more likely to bully others both online and face to face.
- These findings are similar to those across Europe, except for the very low UK figures for those without either a smartphone or tablet. **By far the most common way of being cyberbullied was on SNSs.**




"One of my friends, Maisy [fictional name], she gets bullied quite often on the internet, in school. It's been happening for years now, they just don't leave her alone, and they have to always pick everything out. Say...she would upload a picture, this girl, she used to be in my year but she isn't anymore... Everyone had to pick out little things, like she had a

⁴ Note that 21% of children said that they had been treated in a hurtful or nasty way, but not all of them specified how this had happened.

spot and then someone had to pick it out. Now she's still being bullied, people still pick on her. Teachers have got people in trouble but they just carry on, they don't stop." (Adrian, 11)

"So, we've had quite a few female, slag, slut, cow written in blood, you know, sent to a student on Snapchat, because of course it disappears ten seconds later, but what they didn't realise was that their mother said, screenshot that, so they came into school and went, these are all the... oh, mother or father of said child, would you like to see what your child has been sending, and again, it's that understanding of it can be copied, it is there still, it can be made more permanent, but why do people develop things like this?" (Alice, Teacher)

 **In 2010, 16% of children reported being bullied face to face, 8% on the internet and 5% via mobile phone (generally not then a smartphone). By 2013, this ratio had reversed, making cyberbullying (12%) more common than face-to-face bullying (9%) – though recall that the overall rate of bullying (21%) has not changed over time). For bullying others, the rates are little changed. Thus, apart from in the 13-14 age group, bullying has not increased, but it has transferred from face-to-face to online via mobile devices.**

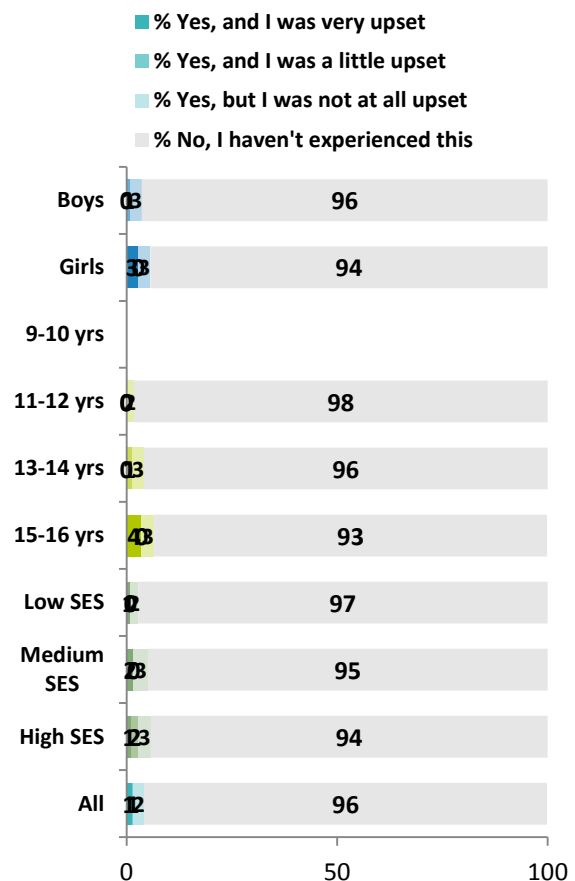
6.3 Sexual messages

Sexting was defined in the survey in terms of **'sexual messages or images**. By this we mean talk about having sex or images of people naked or having sex. Here are some questions about this. Think about any way in which you use the internet and your mobile phone/smartphone'.

Children were asked, 'In the past 12 months, have you received sexual messages of this kind (this could be words, pictures or videos), and if so, how upset were you about happened? Think about any way in

which you use the internet and your mobile phone/smartphone.⁵

Figure 20: Child has received sexual messages online in the past 12 months (age 11+), by gender, age and SES⁶



Q42: In the PAST 12 MONTHS, have you received sexual messages of this kind (this could be words, pictures or videos), and if so, how upset were you about happened?

Base: All children aged 11-16 who use the internet.

- Just 4% of 11- to 16-year-olds say that they have received sexual messages by internet/mobile, and there are few notable demographic differences.

⁵ The question asked in the EU Kids Online survey was if children had 'seen or received sexual messages'. Here, we excluded the word 'seen' as potentially overlapping with seeing sexual images.

⁶ For ethical reasons, this question was not asked of 9- to 10-year-olds.

- **UK children report receiving fewer sexual messages than the European average (11%)**, where among girls and 15- to 16-year-olds this is even more common, as it is in Romania and Denmark. By far the most common way of receiving sexual messages was on SNSs.


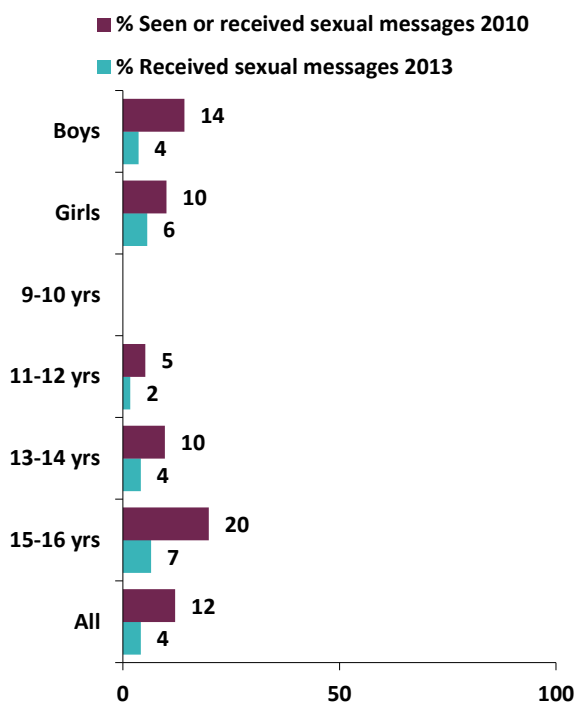
 In 2010, 12% of 11+ year olds said they had received such messages (rising to 20% of 15- to 16-year-olds and a little higher among girls). **There seems, therefore, to have been a sizeable decrease in sexting.**

Figure 21: Child has received sexual messages online in the past 12 months (age 11+), by gender and age,⁷ comparing 2010 and 2013



NCGM: Q42: In the PAST 12 MONTHS, have you received sexual messages of this kind (this could be words, pictures or videos), and if so, how upset were you about happened?

EU Kids Online: QC167: In the past 12 months have you seen or received sexual messages of any kind on the internet?

Base: All children aged 11-16 who use the internet.

⁷ For ethical reasons, this question was not asked of 9- to 10-year-olds.

Table 24: Ways in which children have received sexual messages in the past 12 months (mobile versus non-mobile internet users, aged 11+)

%	Smart-phone users	Tablet users	Use neither
By text messages sent to phone	2	1	0
On a SNS	4	4	0

Q43: Again, if you have received any messages of this kind, how did it happen? (Multiple responses allowed).

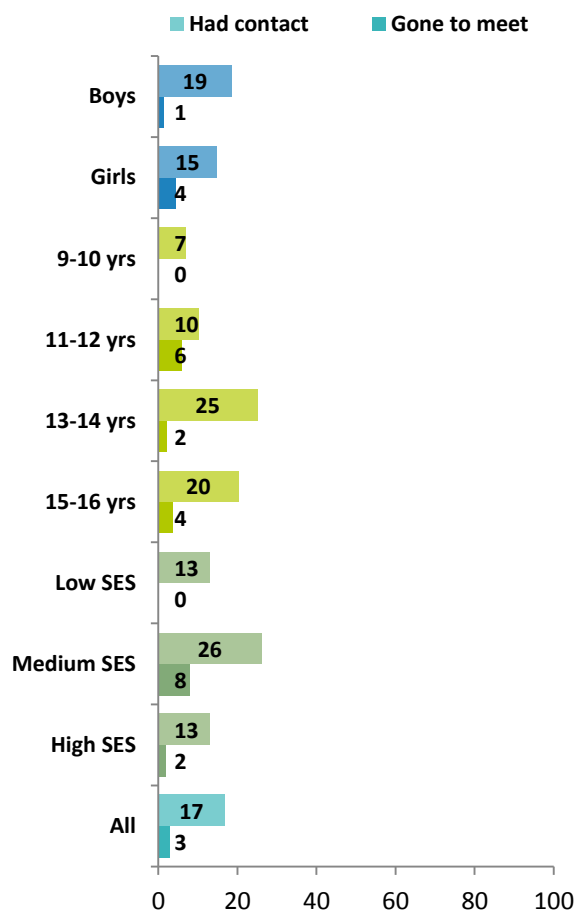
Base: All children aged 11-16 who use the internet.

- As with cyberbullying, **receiving sexual messages is reported more often by smartphone and tablet users**, especially via SNSs.

6.4 Meeting new people

One of the major anxieties regarding young people's online communication concerns **'stranger danger'**, that is, the idea that young people might meet someone online, be persuaded to meet them offline and end up being abused in the face-to-face encounter. Such incidents do occur, although prior research suggests they are rare as a proportion of children who do go to meet an online contact offline (Barbovschi *et al.*, 2012).

Figure 22: Child (%) has been in contact with someone not met face to face before, by gender, age and SES



NCGM: Q37: In the PAST 12 MONTHS, have you ever had contact on the internet (on all platforms/devices) with someone you had not met face to face before? This could have been by email, chatrooms, SNS, instant messaging or gaming sites.
Base: All children who use the internet.

- **Seventeen per cent of children aged 9-16 said that have been in contact online with someone they hadn't previously met offline.** This incidence is a little higher among boys, those from medium SES homes, and teenagers – especially those aged 13-14. Overall, just 3% of children said they had been to meet such a person face to face. Although we did ask, it is notable that no child reported that this experience was upsetting. Children in interviews reported incidents they knew about involving siblings and peers, but none had direct experience of meeting someone in this

way. One interviewee explained how he plays computer games with older people online he doesn't know.

"I just met them ... I've known them for quite a long time online now. A few months. And they're really nice to me, they're not mean. They're just fun to play with as well." (John, 10)

- **Across Europe, more children than in the UK are in contact with people they haven't met face to face (26%),** with figures approaching half of all children in Denmark and Romania, and as high as 15% among the 9- to 10-year-olds. Moreover, 12% of children had met such a person face to face and for 3% (of all children), this had made them upset.

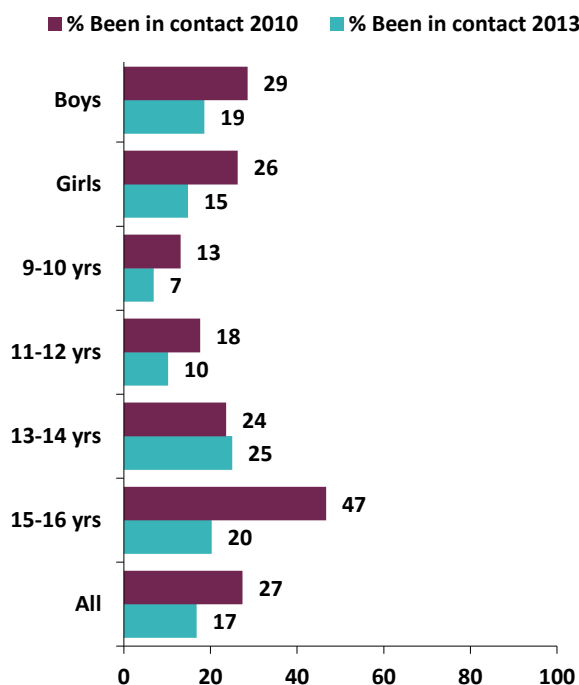


The UK findings represent a reduction on those from 2010, when 27% were in contact with people online that they hadn't met face to face, and 5% had met such a person offline. This is related to greater awareness among children:



"But now... I think kids in our generation...we are more protected on Facebook because of all the stories...a girl got killed, so now we're more like, 'Oh no, I'm not going to do that, because I've read this...and it says that this girl got killed, so I'm not going to do this or I'm not going to do this.'" (Tina, 12)

Figure 23: Child (%) has been in contact with someone not met face to face before, by gender and age, comparing 2010 and 2013



NCGM: Q37: In the PAST 12 MONTHS, have you ever had contact on the internet (on all platforms/devices) with someone you had not met face to face before? This could have been by email, chatrooms, SNS, instant messaging or gaming sites.

EU Kids Online: QC147: Can I just check, have you ever had contact on the internet with someone you have not met face to face before?

Base: All children who use the internet.

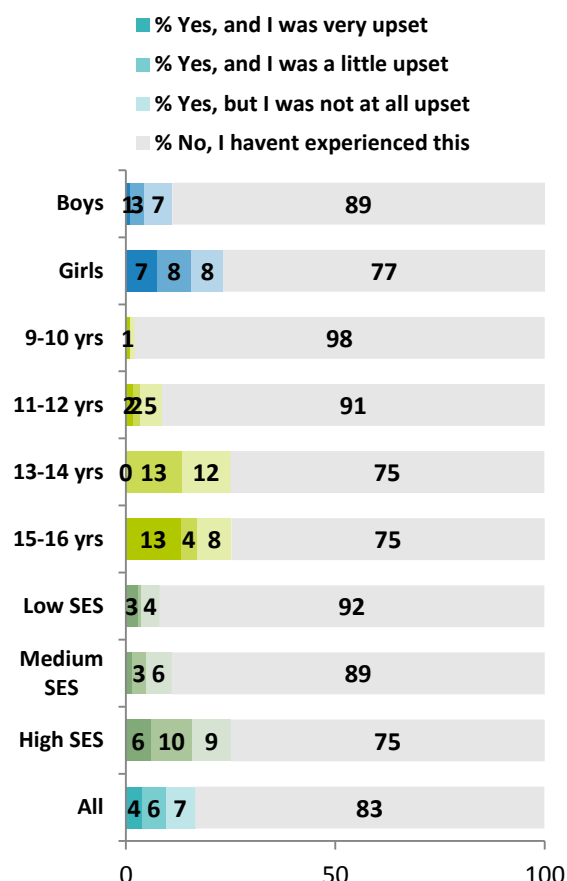
6.5 Sexual images

Drawing on the EU Kids Online methodology, questions about pornography were introduced in the following way: 'In the past year, you will have seen lots of different images – pictures, photos, videos. Sometimes, these might be obviously sexual – for example, showing people having sex, or naked people in sexy poses.⁸ You might never have seen anything like this, or you may have seen something like this on a mobile phone, in a magazine, on the TV,

⁸ The original EU Kids Online text did not include the phrase 'in sexy poses' but this was changed as cognitive testing suggested that naked images might not be linked to pornography in children's minds.

on a DVD or on the internet, on whatever device you use to go online.'

Figure 24: Child has seen sexual images online or offline in the past 12 months, by gender, age and SES



NCGM: Q35: In the PAST 12 MONTHS, have you seen anything of this kind, and if so, how upset were you by what you saw?

Base: All children who use the internet age 11-16.

- **Seventeen per cent of children aged 9-16 have seen sexual images in the past year, online or offline.** This is more common among teenagers, children from high SES homes, and girls. Girls and older teenagers are also more likely to report being upset, even very upset by this.



"I went on this gaming site...and it came up...like... 'Click here to see free...um...porn'...and I didn't want to click it...but then...it looked

disgusting." (Sarah, 12)

"And they have emblems in Call of Duty where it's really disgusting. It's a pair of a woman's, like, breasts. And then there was a man's privates and then a woman's mouth. It's just really disgusting." (John, 10)



"There are some really disgusting adverts like the ladies in bikinis...it's so annoying...it's really inappropriate. Well, it's like...on YouTube...it's just a giant picture of ladies' boobs...and next you see men staring at it...eyeballs like that...er, that's disgusting...and that happened to my cousin once...and he called me...and I said, 'Why did you call me for such a thing like that, that's disgusting?'"

Interviewer: What, he had the same picture?

Yeah, he got the same picture...and then he called me...and started laughing at it...I'm like staring at him... 'You're just...ah... You're just gross'...and I felt sick... I nearly vomited." (Philip, 10)

- **Seeing sexual images is more common across Europe overall (28%) than in the UK, especially among older teenagers.**



In 2010, 24% of children had seen sexual images, so **the 2013 findings suggest a reduction in exposure**. Then, too, the findings were skewed by age, though less so by gender.

Table 25: Ways in which children have seen sexual images, by age

	Age				All
	9-10	11-12	13-14	15-16	
%					
In a magazine or book	0	0	6	12	5
On television, film	1	0	7	15	6
On a video sharing platform	1	0	2	13	4
On a photo sharing platform	0	0	3	9	4
By pop-ups on the internet	0	3	11	4	5
On a SNS	0	4	7	13	7
By instant messaging	0	0	1	11	3
In a chatroom	0	0	1	0	0
By email	0	0	0	0	0
On a gaming website	0	0	0	0	0

NCGM: Q36: If you have seen images of this kind, how did it happen? (Multiple responses allowed).

Base: All children who use the internet.

- **Most exposure to sexual images occurs via television and film, and on SNSs**, though 13- to 14-year-olds especially report pornographic pop-ups on the internet, and 15- to 16-year-olds emphasise instant messaging.



"There was, like, there was this game I was playing, it was a good game, like, I went on the site and then the adverts on the side were showing like naked girls like animate and literally they were going, going at it, like, dirty advert and, yes, and this was from games, like normal fun games." (Stuart, 14)

Adults, too, are more concerned for online sexual content, as this youth worker and parent explains:

"But some of these sites, they choose words that you can search on that children will use. So there might be Disney characters, and young children are maybe searching for Disney characters and they'll come up with porn sites." (Rachel, Youth Worker and parent)

- Mass media (television, film), SNSs and online pop-ups are also the most common ways that children, especially teenagers, encounter sexual images across Europe.


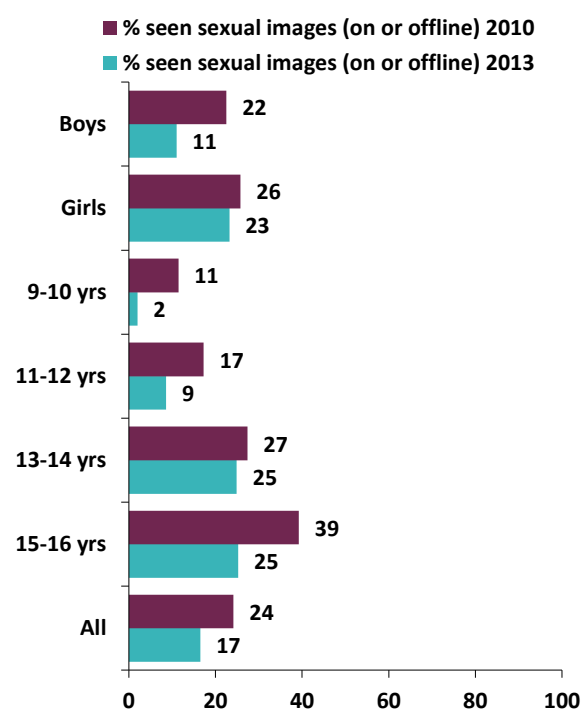
 In 2010, mass media (television, film, video/DVD) were a more common source of exposure to sexual images than the internet. **In 2013, the internet has become just as common a source, though mass media still matter in this regard. This may be due to the increase in viewing films and TV via iPlayer and similar products rather than viewing on television.**

Figure 25: Child has seen sexual images online or offline in the past 12 months, by gender and age, comparing 2010 and 2013



NCGM: Q35: In the PAST 12 MONTHS, have you seen anything of this kind, and if so, how upset were you by what you saw?

EU Kids Online: QC128: Have you seen anything of this kind [obviously sexual] in the past 12 month?

Base: All children who use the internet age 11-16.

Table 26: Ways in which children have seen sexual images (mobile versus non-mobile internet users)

%	Among smartphone users	Among tablet users	Use neither
On television, film	10	12	1
By pop-ups on the internet	6	9	1
On a SNS	14	12	1

NCGM: Q36: If you have seen images of this kind, how did it happen? (Multiple responses allowed).

Base: All children who use the internet.

- In terms of sexual content, smartphone and tablet users are more likely to see such content both online and offline. This is most likely because those with personal devices are generally older.

6.6 Other inappropriate content

Social media enable an unprecedented circulation of UGC. While the creation and sharing of content is a primary opportunity of the so-called Web 2.0, and an important component of digital literacy, some UGC is arguably problematic: content that promotes eating disorders, self-harm behaviour and drug consumption, along with online materials that promote discrimination and violence against certain groups are among the main examples of **negative user-generated content (NUGC)**.

- **Twenty-nine per cent of 11- to 16-year-olds had seen one or more of the potentially negative forms of UGC** asked about, with hate messages (23%) being the most common, followed by self-harm sites (17%) and pro-anorexia sites (14%). Such exposure was more common among teens, especially 15- to 16-year-olds.
- Potentially NUGC was a little less common across Europe overall (25%), although the patterning of findings was similar.


 **Such exposure has become much more common in 2013 than it was in 2010**, when 19% of children reported seeing such material. In 2010 also, only 13% reported exposure to hate messages, 8% to pro-anorexia content and 6% to self-harm sites.

Table 27: Child has seen potentially harmful user-generated content in past 12 months, by age (11+)⁹

% seen websites in past 12 months where people...	Age				All
	9-10	11-12	13-14	15-16	
Discuss ways of physically harming or hurting themselves	n/a	4	16	28	17
Discuss ways of committing suicide	n/a	1	6	4	4
Discuss ways of being very skinny, anorexic or bulimic	n/a	2	21	16	14
Publish hate messages that attack certain groups or individuals	n/a	3	24	39	23
Talk about or share their experiences of taking drugs	n/a	5	14	15	12
Has seen any such material at all on websites	n/a	10	31	45	29

NCGM: Q44: In the PAST 12 MONTHS, have you seen websites where people discuss...

Base: All children who use the internet aged 11-16.

6.7 Other risks

Other risks include: commercial, such as losing money by being victims of online fraud; technical, such as viruses and malicious software; and risks connected to the **misuse of personal information**. These latter include having an SNS profile hacked or violated; the creation of fake profiles; or people pretending to be someone else.

⁹ For ethical reasons, we did not ask 9- to 10-year-olds about such content.

While the literature on this issue remains sparse, such incidents surely deserve attention, as it is a concern for many children:



"Because sometimes they can like hack you and stuff and they can hack your PC and they can do anything. They can take information about you, they could fly over and kidnap you, they could do anything." (Robert, 9)

Table 28: Child has had other negative online experiences in the past 12 months, by age

% of children who experienced	Age				All
	9-10	11-12	13-14	15-16	
Somebody used personal information in a way they didn't like	0	1	1	2	1
The computer got a virus	4	3	6	28	11
The mobile phone/smartphone got a virus	0	0	0	4	1
Lost money by being cheated on the internet	0	1	1	1	1
Somebody used their password/used their phone, accessed their phone to access information or to pretend to be them	0	6	7	20	9
Experienced one or more of the above	4	9	6	40	16

NCGM: Q45: In the PAST 12 MONTHS, has any of the following happened to you on the internet/on your smartphone/mobile phone?

Base: All children who use the internet.

- **Sixteen per cent of children reported one or more of the negative online experiences we asked about.** Most common was viruses and someone misusing their personal information, though very few said this was in a way they didn't like. Such experiences were most common among 15- to 16-year-olds.
- **Across Europe, computers getting a virus was more common** (21%), but someone misusing the child's personal information was less common (5%). Overall, 24% reported at

least one of these problems.



 In 2010, 10% said someone misused their personal information (and 4% said it was in a way they didn't like), suggesting **little change** in recent years.


Table 29: Comparison of children's risk experiences in 2010 and 2013

% who...	2010	2013
Seen hate messages (only 11+)	13	23
Visited websites where people discuss ways of physically harming or hurting themselves (only 11+)	6	17
Seen pro-anorexic sites (only 11+)	8	14
Been cyberbullied	8	12
Seen sexual images online	11	12
Received sexual messages (only 11+)	12	5
Met online contact offline	4	3
<i>Bothered or upset online</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>15</i>

See previous tables and figures in this report.

Base: All children who use the internet.

 **Looking across several of the risks asked about, it appears that some have increased in the last few years – hate messages, self-harm, cyberbullying, pro-anorexia sites – while sexual messaging has decreased.**

 It is also noteworthy, however, that the overall proportion bothered or upset by something online in the past year has barely changed. Since a number of risks have increased, it is possible that children are gaining in resilience.

6.8 Responding to risks

When children encounter a negative experience online they may employ **strategies to cope with the problematic situation** and to reduce emotional and psychological stress (Vandoninck *et al.*, 2013). It is widely considered that seeking help

or social support is the most effective strategy, although children do draw on a range of strategies.¹⁰

Table 30: Children who are rather or very likely to talk about things that bothered them on the internet, by age and gender

%...	9-12 years		13-16 years		All
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
Father	86	77	33	41	56
Mother	89	90	56	72	74
Brother or sister	68	34	25	40	39
Other relatives	56	18	31	25	32
Friends	67	31	50	69	54
Teachers	60	17	19	9	24
Someone whose job is to help children	33	10	18	29	22
Another trusted adult	45	27	31	33	34
Would talk to at least one of the above	95	95	78	91	88

NCGM: Q48: If you were to experience something on the internet or when you were online from different devices that bothered you or made you upset, how likely or unlikely is it that you would talk with the following people?

Base: All children who use the internet.

- **Parents, especially mothers, are the most popular sources of support when children are upset by something online.** Friends come next, and the younger boys would also talk to their teacher.
- **UK children are much more likely than the European average to talk to others** (to mothers 48%, friends 26%, and teachers, near the bottom, at 7%). Indeed, most do have someone to tell when something bothers them online – although 12% apparently do not.

¹⁰ See Livingstone *et al.* (2011).

7 (Over)dependence

The fear that children might lose control over their use of new media is a key component of media panics over the internet and mobile phones. The notion of **‘internet addiction’** has been widely debated, although the lack of sound evidence leads most researchers to talk instead of **‘excessive internet use’**, something that may or may not be problematic for the user (Smahel *et al.*, 2012). Indeed rather than being addictive, the use of smartphones in particular could be described as habit forming, with usage that reflects attachment to content the device delivers (Vincent, 2006), more so since Snapchat, Twitter and WhatsApp provide a constant flow of feeds leading to fear of missing out, being left out.

The more that digital/online devices become part of our everyday lives – increasingly on our person and constantly attended to (Licoppe, 2004) – the more important it is to conceive of a balance between the risks and opportunities. In terms of measurement, therefore, **simple metrics in terms of ‘hours spent’ with the technology make ever less sense**, and direct questions about benefits or harms are preferable.

7.1 Perceived benefit of use

Table 31: Managing the complexity of everyday life, by age and gender

%...	9-12 years		13-16 years		All
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
Since I have had a smartphone I find it easier to organise my daily activities	9	10	33	24	24
Thanks to my smartphone I feel more connected to my friends	60	53	75	40	59
Thanks to my smartphone I feel more connected to my family	64	28	41	26	37
Thanks to my smartphone I feel safer	31	39	34	11	26
Since I have had my smartphone I feel I have to be always available to family and friends	50	28	49	25	38
Thanks to my smartphone it is easier to do my homework and class assignments	0	5	21	21	16
Thanks to my smartphone I feel less bored	29	43	68	54	55

NCGM: Q50: How true are these of you?

Base: All children who own or have for their own use a smartphone.

- **By far the main benefit of their smartphone perceived by UK children is feeling more connected to friends.** Connections to family (especially boys), along with ease of organisation and safety (especially younger children) are also noteworthy. However, this sense of connectivity has a coercive dimension, as **one in three children (especially boys) feel they must be available for contact.** Many also value their smartphone for staving off boredom, and far fewer find it has educational benefits.

“Mostly I check it [smartphone] most of the time because when I’m on my phone I just ... everyone’s talking on that and posting things so I just check that

most of the time.” (Emma, 12)

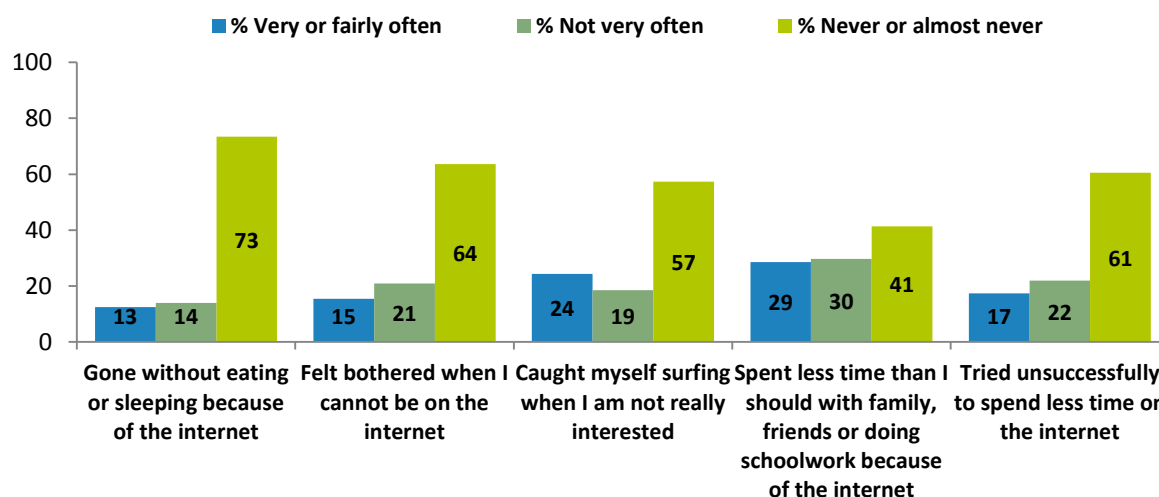
- The value of being connected to friends and family, and of staving off boredom, are stated more often by UK children than the European average.

Eliza, aged 16, talks about the video bloggers she follows when she’s bored. “There’s a lot of American girls who basically YouTube their life and when I’m bored I just sit and watch them constantly ‘cos I think

they’re really interesting people.”

7.2 Perceived harm of (over)use

Figure 26: Excessive use of the internet among children



NCGM: Q46: In the PAST 12 MONTHS, how often, have these things happened to you?

Base: All children who use the internet.

- **Most children say they do not miss out on eating or sleeping because of their use of the internet** – though one-quarter do say this. About a third also feel bothered when they can’t get online.
- However, **nearly two-thirds say that the internet gets in the way of time they should spend with family, friends or schoolwork.**

“Even when I have to go to bed and it’s school, I’m not allowed to use the phone, only so it can wake me up in the morning, because I put an alarm on it, so it can wake me up. And when it’s in the night, I’ll go under the covers and start playing games or looking at my pictures to delete, things like that.” (Angela, 9-10, interview)

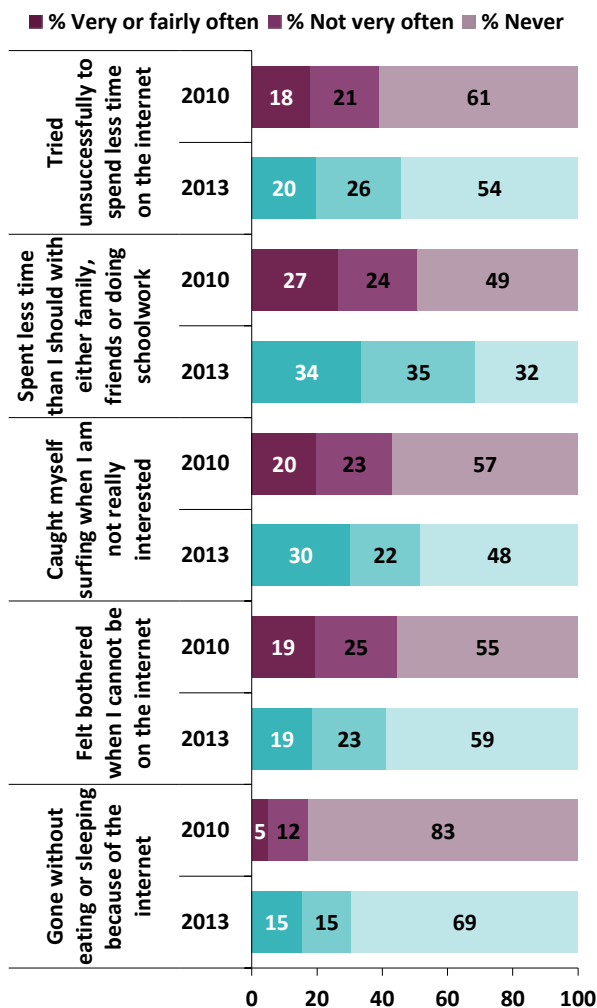
- In this respect, **UK children confess to more problems with time spent online getting in the way of time with family, friends or schoolwork than their counterparts across Europe**, although other findings are similar across countries.

“I think things are a lot more disrespectful now because you can go into a room and, you know, 90% of them will have their phones in their hands, and another 60% will be looking at the screen, and another 30% will be pressing the buttons or touching the screen. And that does wind me up, I admit.” (Keith, youth worker)

“All the time, if I say that you’ve had enough on the PlayStation, they will go and pick up an iPad. If I say, you’ve had enough on the iPad and the PlayStation,

they'll go and find a laptop, and then I end up saying, no, it's just no screens whatsoever, no screen, nothing with a screen." (Sally, parent of boys aged 9-11)

Figure 27: Child (%) has experienced two or more forms of excessive internet use fairly or very often, by gender, age and SES, comparing 2010 and 2013 (11+)



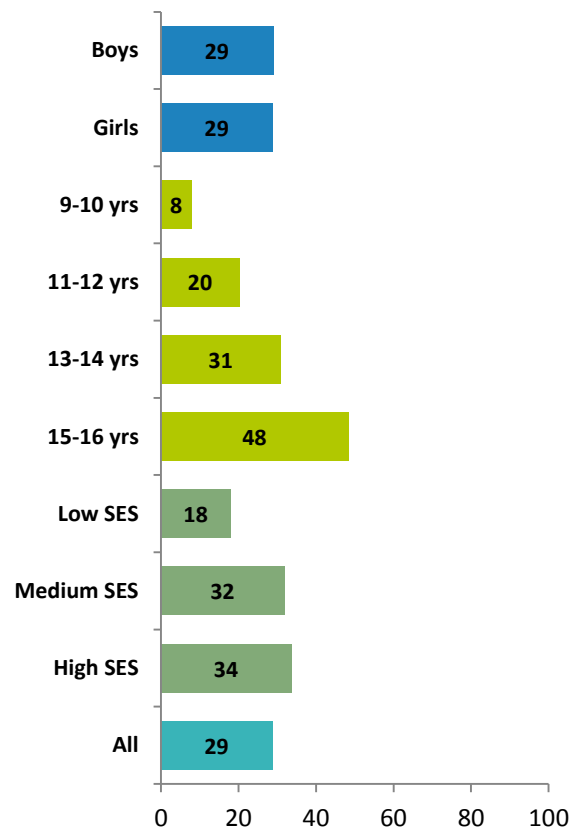
NCGM: Q46: In the PAST 12 MONTHS, how often, have these things happened to you?

Base: All children who use the internet.

2013: 34% (vs. previous 27%) say this happens very or fairly often. Similarly, the percentage who say they have often caught themselves surfing when not really interested has risen from 20% to 30%.

Also, in 2010, UK children were much more likely than other European children (27% vs 13%) to say that very or fairly often they spent less time with friends, family or schoolwork than they thought they should, because of their internet use. Now the difference for this particular item has disappeared: 34% say this not only in the UK but, on average, across all seven countries that participated in the 2013 survey. The UK still leads on excessive use overall but the difference overall with other countries is smaller as excessive use rises across Europe.

Figure 28: Child (%) has experienced two or more forms of excessive internet use fairly or very often, by gender, age and SES

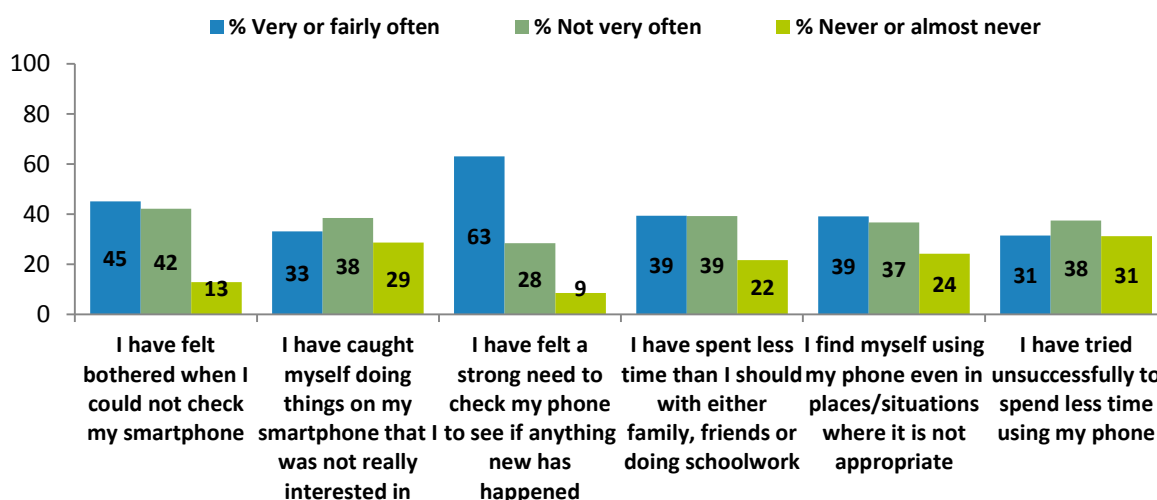


NCGM: Q46: In the PAST 12 MONTHS, how often, have these things happened to you? The graph shows of children who answer 'fairly often' or 'very often' to at least two statements. Base: All children who use the internet.

Comparing accounts from children aged 11-16, the percentage who say that their internet use means they have spent less time than they should with family, friends or schoolwork has risen from 2010 to

- For Net Children Go Mobile data in 2013, among 9- to 16-year-olds, excessive internet use does not differ by gender, but it increases considerably with age. That it is less common among children from low SES homes probably reflects their lesser personal/fast access.

Figure 29: Excessive use of smartphones among children



NCGM: Q49: In the PAST 12 MONTHS, how often, have these things happened to you?
Base: All children who own or have for their own use a smartphone.

When it comes to smartphones in particular, children even regard these as **‘extensions’ of their body** that can be easily stored in a pocket and carried around all day long (Vincent & Fortunati, 2009).

- Regarding smartphone use, children are much more likely to say they have difficulties limiting their use** – the above graph is almost the inverse of that for excessive internet use. Most notable is the two-thirds who have a strong need to keep checking their phone for anything new, and almost half feel bothered when they cannot check it. It is more likely that smartphone use than the internet in general interferes with time spent with friends, family or schoolwork.

“It’s worse on WhatsApp, I say, because there are

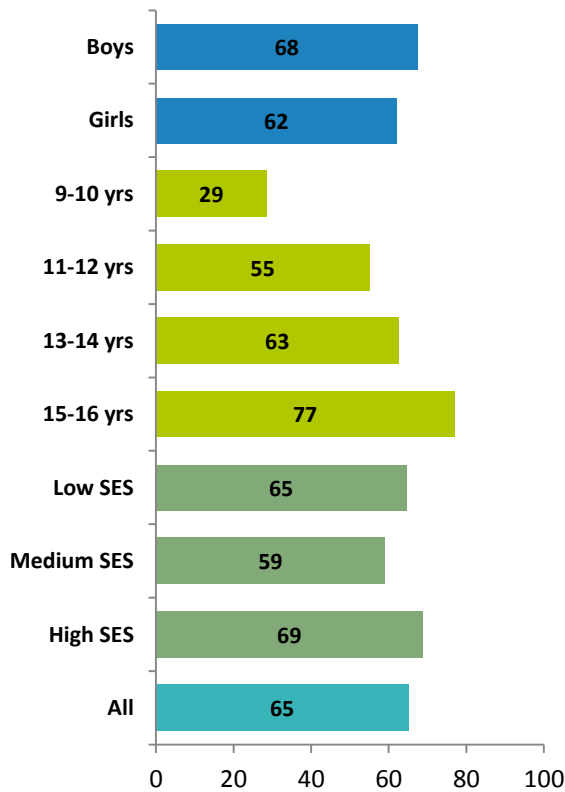
groups, and then say I went for dinner there’d be like 100 messages and you just can’t be bothered to read them, and then you miss something. So it’s just like, whoa!” (Emma, 12)

“I feel frustrated at times when both my children, I’ve sent them to bed, and Rob’s gone up ten minutes later, and they’re both, the lights are still on in their room, and they’re both chatting to their friends still, because you can hear their phone go, bling, bling and messages come back and forth, and I just want to say, give me your phone.” (Sula, parent 14 and 16 year olds)

- These findings are higher in the UK than for the European average and are, in fact, the highest of any European country by quite a margin.**
- While 65% of UK children have experienced two

or more forms of excessive use (more boys and older teens), equivalent figures are 57% in Portugal, 50% in Italy and only 34% in Belgium.

Figure 30: Child (%) has experienced two or more forms of excessive smartphone use fairly or very often, by gender, age and SES



NCGM: Q49: In the PAST 12 MONTHS, how often, have these things happened to you? The graph shows children who answer 'fairly often' or 'very often' to at least two statements.
Base: All children who own or have for their own use a smartphone.

8 Mediation

Children's online experiences are always contextualised within intersecting socio-cultural, technological and politico-economic spheres. Family, peer cultures and the school context are all influential sources of direct mediation of children's internet use, whose relevance has been widely recognised within policy debates. The increasing availability of mobile internet access via smartphones, tablets and laptops has demanded new or different mediation approaches by parents, teachers and other adults with responsibilities for children.

Parents have been especially valued for their role in regulating the benefits and risks of the internet for children, primarily within regulatory approaches that promote empowerment and self-regulation (Mascheroni *et al.*, 2013). Some argue that the growing influence of **peer culture** in children's socialisation can also be harnessed for positive outcomes (Pasquier, 2005).

The role of **teachers also plays a key role in mediating children's safety**. Schools are strategic sites of e-safety education (O'Neill & Laouris, 2013) as we examine in the next section. They are often heralded as having the potential to compensate for parents' low digital literacies in countries with persisting inequalities in adults' access to the internet.

8.1 Parents

Parents' strategies for managing the transition from computer to mobile devices such as smartphones are examined here by looking first at four of the main types of parental mediation EU Kids Online proposed and evaluated (Livingstone *et al.*, 2011):

1) **Active mediation of internet use**, where parents engage in activities such as talking about internet content while the child is engaging with it, and sharing the online experience of the child by remaining nearby.

2) **Active mediation of internet safety**, where the parent promotes safer and responsible uses of the internet.

3) **Restrictive mediation**, which involves setting rules that limit and regulate time spent online, location of use and online activities.

4) **Technical restrictions**, that is, the use of software and technical tools to filter, restrict and monitor children's online activities.

EU Kids Online findings show that restrictive strategies are most effective in protecting children from risk of harm, but they also limit children's online opportunities and skills. Of the others, only active mediation of internet use promises a way of maximising opportunities while also minimising risks (Dürager & Livingstone, 2012). However, the feasibility of these strategies is altered with the shift to smartphones and other handheld access to the internet.

Table 32: Parent's active mediation of the child's internet use, by age and gender

	9-12 years		13-16 years		All
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
%...					
Talk to child about what they do on the internet	90	71	62	56	68
Encourage child to explore and learn things on the internet on their own	66	70	48	45	56
Stay nearby when child uses the internet	86	64	34	45	54
Sit with child while they use the internet	66	63	38	44	51
Do shared activities together with child on the internet	51	60	41	30	45
At least two of the above	94	86	74	43	72

Q53: Does your parent/do either of your parents sometimes...
Base: All children who use the internet.

- **According to their children, parents' main form of active mediation of internet use is to talk to their child (68%)**, though 56% also encourage their child to explore and learn

online – and all forms of mediation are practised by around half of parents, especially for younger children.

- Across Europe, the figures are generally similar, some of them a bit lower.


 Nonetheless, some of the 2013 UK figures are bit lower than in 2010 – when 74% said their parents talked to them about the internet and 58% stayed nearby. Overall, 89% of parents did at least one of the things listed here, according to their children.

Table 33: Parent's active mediation of the child's internet safety, by age and gender

%...	9-12 years		13-16 years		All
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
Suggested ways to use the internet safely	86	88	79	71	80
Helped child when something was difficult to do or find on the internet	94	94	63	76	79
Explained why some websites were good or bad	84	81	75	70	77
Suggested ways to behave towards other people online	79	77	79	66	75
In general, talked to child about what to do if something on the internet ever bothered them	73	73	53	56	63
Helped child in the past when something bothered them on the internet	57	47	32	35	41
At least two of the above	89	93	93	71	86

Q54: Has your parent/have either of your parents ever done any of the following things with you?

Base: All children who use the internet.

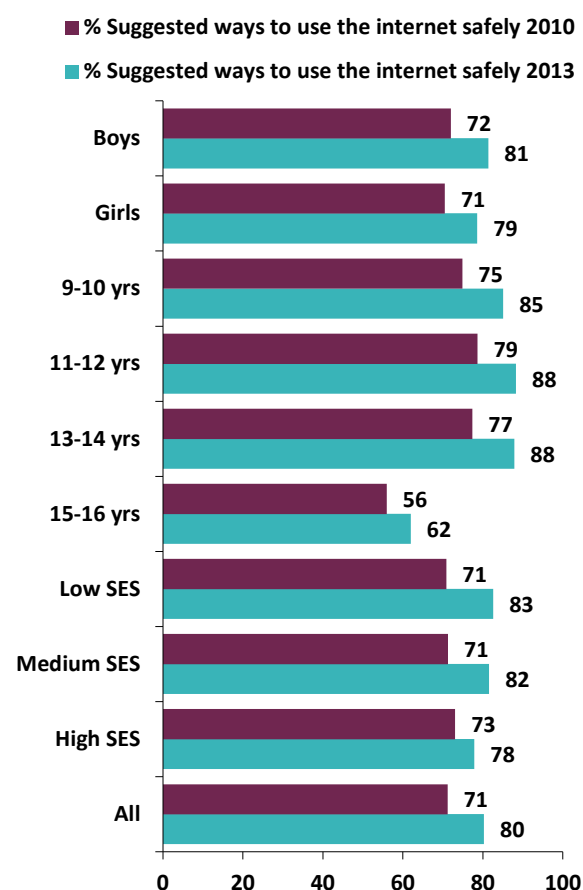
- Findings for parental mediation of the child's internet safety are also high, though nearly half have not talked to their teenager about what to do if something ever bothered them online.
- In the UK, parents as well as children attend internet safety sessions at schools, and along with internet safety campaigns, these provide essential information for parents to manage

their children's safe internet use.

- **UK parents do more such mediation than in other European countries, especially those in Southern and Eastern Europe. This is likely to be due to the amount of information made available to them via schools and in the national media.**

 **By comparison with 2010, the above figures are all higher: UK parents are doing more than they used to, in terms of actively mediating their child's internet safety in particular.**

Figure 31: Parents have suggested ways to use the internet safely, by gender, age and SES, comparing 2010 and 2013



NCGM: Q54: Has your parent/have either of your parents ever done any of the following things with you?

EU Kids Online: QC329 Does your parent/do either of your parents sometimes...

Base: All children who use the internet.

Across the demographic groups, parents are now slightly more likely to suggest to their children ways to use the internet safely.

Table 34: Parent's restrictive mediation of child's internet use, by age and gender

% NEVER allowed to:	9-12 years		13-16 years		All
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
Give out personal information to others on the internet	84	98	45	50	67
Register geographical location	90	87	44	44	64
Purchase apps	61	74	30	23	45
Have own social networking profile	71	79	10	30	43
Use instant messaging	69	55	24	20	39
Upload photos, videos or music to share with others	64	66	20	5	36
Download music or films from the internet	39	44	9	3	21
Download free apps	31	43	8	3	19
Watch video clips on the internet	28	24	7	1	14
At least two of the above	99	91	54	35	67

NCGM: Q55: For each of these things, please tell me if your parents CURRENTLY let you do them whenever you want, or let you do them but only with permission or supervision, or NEVER let you do them. Percentages show which children are 'NEVER' allowed to do the activity.

Base: All children who use the internet.

- **Parents apply restrictions across a wide range of activities**, especially giving out personal information and revealing their geographic location, according to their children.
- The above numbers are generally higher than across Europe, suggesting **UK parents are more restrictive than in other European countries. While this is positive in awareness terms, it could be argued that UK children are not adventurous enough with the internet as a result of higher levels of awareness of risk and harm and parental and school intervention in what they are permitted to access.**

However, in terms of engaging with the internet (uploading, downloading, viewing), **parents have become very much less restrictive than in 2010**. In terms of social media (SNS, IM), there is no change, however.

Table 35: Parent's technical mediation of the child's internet use, by age and gender

%...	9-12 years		13-16 years		All
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
Software to prevent spam, junk mail, viruses	62	74	54	60	61
Parental controls or other means of blocking or filtering some types of website	70	61	36	43	48
Parental controls or other means of keeping track of the websites visited	71	67	26	38	44
A service or contract that limits the time child spends on the internet	30	35	15	26	25
At least two of the above	40	83	50	21	45

Q56: As far as you know, does your parent/do your parents make use of any of the following for the computer that you use the MOST at home?

Base: All children who use the internet.

- Technical mediation such as end-user filters or other kinds of parental control have been the focus of considerable policy efforts. While it may be that children are not fully aware of their parent(s)' actions in this regard, it is interesting that **nearly half of children say their parents do use parental control monitoring and filtering software**, with virus software more popular and software to limit time use less so. All of these are reported more often by younger than older children.

"My husband got a parental block on the computer and the laptop, and then, he can go and he will have a look to see what they've been viewing." (Sula, parent, 14- to 16-year-olds)

- Across Europe, only 26% of children say their parents use filtering software (compared with 48% in the UK), and the other findings are similarly lower (except in Ireland, where the figures are similar to the UK).

By comparison with 2010, apart from a reported decrease in use of virus software, **there is little change in use of parental controls**. In 2010, 46% of UK children said their parents used filtering and 42% monitoring software (and their parents agreed – 54% said they used filters).

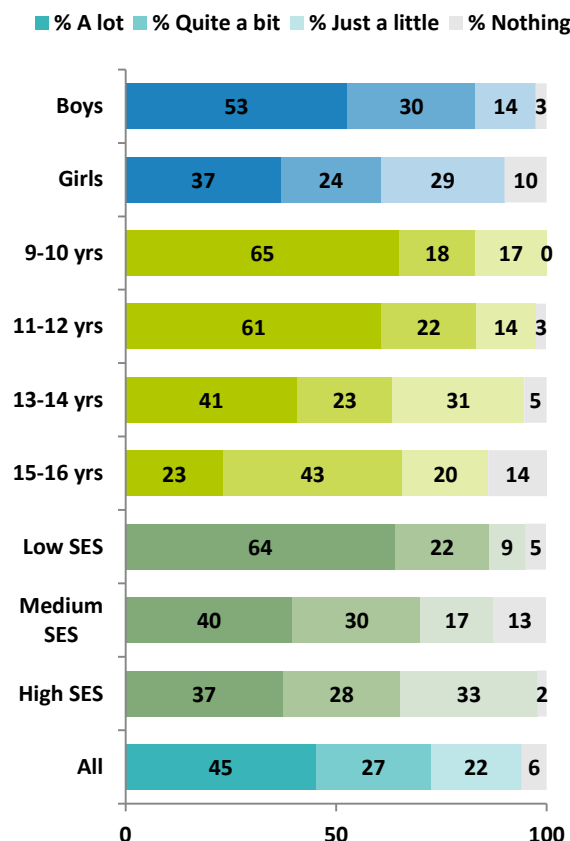
Table 36: Parent's technical mediation of the child's smartphone use, by age and gender

%...	9-12 years		13-16 years		All
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
Parental controls or other means of blocking or filtering some types of websites	61	38	29	24	31
Parental controls that filter the apps child can download	57	69	17	10	25
A service or contract that limits the time child spends on the internet	62	52	25	21	31
Software that limits the people child can be in touch with	46	33	21	23	26

Q57: Are any of the following installed on your smartphone?
Base: All children who own or have for their own use a smartphone.

- Questions about technical mediation were also asked of smartphones. It seems that **parental controls are less often used on smartphones than on domestic computers**, according to children.
- Nonetheless, the above percentages are almost twice than of the European average.

Figure 32: How much the child thinks their parents know about what they do on the internet, by gender, age and SES



Q51: How much do you think your parent(s) knows about what you do on the internet? Would you say a lot, quite a bit, just a little, or nothing?

Base: All children who use the internet.

- **Nearly half of UK children think their parents know a lot about what they do online** – especially among the younger children and least among the 15- to 16-year-olds. Children from low SES homes are also more likely to think this, as are boys. Very few children say their parents know nothing of what they do online.
- UK children's views are similar to those of children in Belgium and Ireland. In the other countries surveyed, children are less confident that their parents know what they do online.


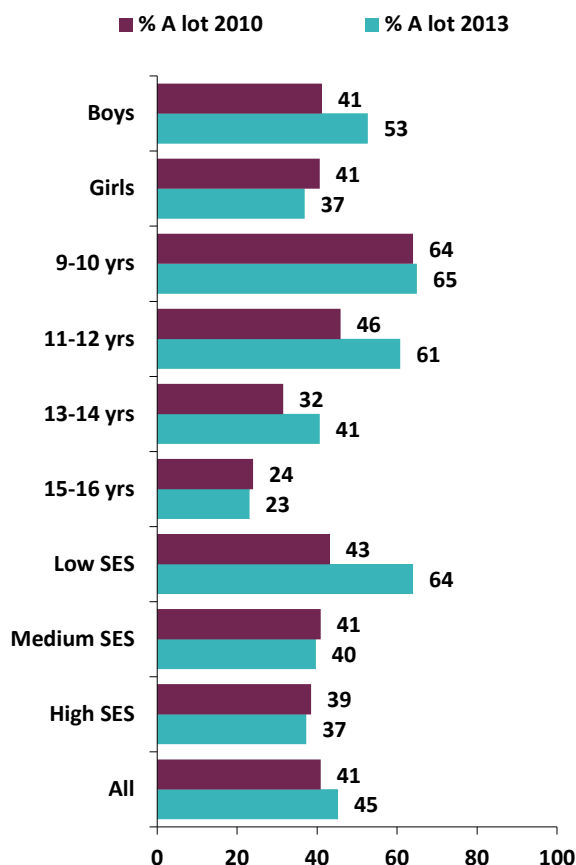
 In 2010, 41% of children thought their parents knew a lot, and 35% said quite a bit, suggesting only a small change, if any.


Figure 33: How much the child thinks their parents know about what they do on the internet, by gender, age and SES, comparing 2010 and 2013



NCGM: Q51: How much do you think your parent(s) knows about what you do on the internet? Would you say a lot, quite a bit, just a little, or nothing?

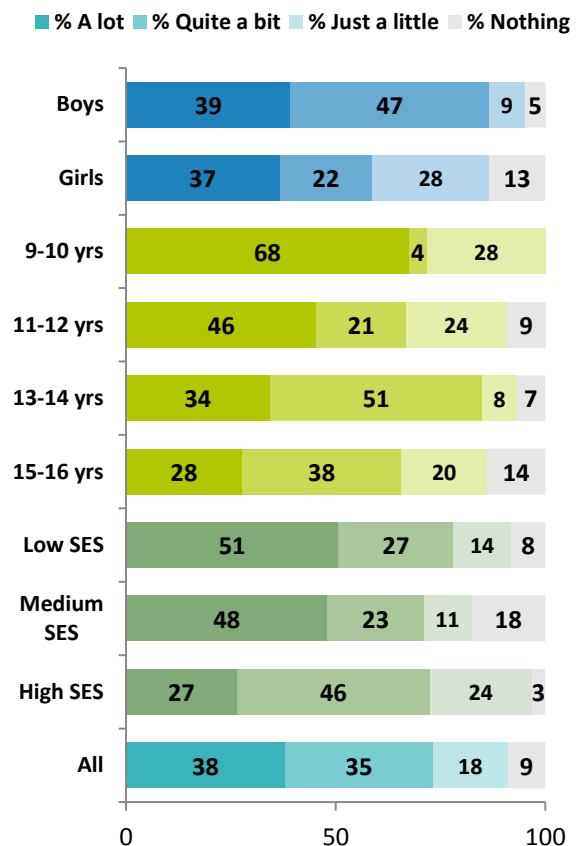
EU Kids Online: QC325: How much do you think your parent(s) knows about what you do on the internet? Would you say a lot, quite a bit, just a little, or nothing?

Base: All children who use the internet.

 There is only a slight increase in children's perception that their parents know what they do online. However, boys seem to think their parents now know more about their internet use than they did before; so do 11- to 12-year-olds, and also children from low SES homes.

These are possibly the groups that have been reached by recent awareness-raising efforts.

Figure 34: How much the child thinks their parents know about how they use their phone, by gender, age and SES



Q52: How much do you think your parent(s) knows about how you use your phone/smartphone? Would you say a lot, quite a bit, just a little, or nothing?

Base: All children who own or have for their own use a smartphone.

- **When it comes to their phone, children are a bit less confident that their parents know how they use it**, but still, few say 'just a little' or 'nothing', even among the teenagers.
- As with the internet, perceived parental knowledge of the internet is higher in Ireland, Belgium and the UK, and noticeably lower in Denmark.

8.2 Peers

Support from peers is positively associated with online opportunities and digital literacy. Friends are often the main reason for taking up creative and interactive activities such as social media and blogging. The effects of peer mediation on online risky and harmful experiences are, however, less clear: EU Kids Online findings suggest that peer mediation is more likely to follow than prevent negative experiences (Kalmus *et al.*, 2012).

friends had suggested ways to behave to others online, and this has now dropped to 24%. Further 33% in 2010 (vs. 24% in 2013) had suggested ways to use the internet safely. One might infer that, as parents step up their actions, friends are less needed to play this role.


Table 37: Friends' active mediation of child's internet safety, by age and gender

%...	9-12 years		13-16 years		All
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
Helped when something was difficult to do or find on the internet	57	34	63	77	59
Explained why some websites were good or bad	11	23	33	46	30
In general, talked about what to do if something on the internet ever bothered them	22	17	35	42	30
Helped in the past when something bothered child on the internet	20	13	30	50	29
Suggested ways to use the internet safely	20	22	24	27	24
Suggested ways to behave towards other people online	12	17	26	37	24
At least two of the above	73	66	72	48	64

Q58: Have your friends ever done any of these things? Please say yes or no to each of the following...

Base: All children who use the internet.

- **Friends are often helpful when something is difficult to do online**, but they are less involved in helping make evaluative or social judgements.
- Interestingly, the **UK findings above are a little lower than the European average**, with friends supporting each other more in Romania, Portugal and Denmark.

 These figures are little different from 2010, though it's interesting that, in 2010, 32% of

9 Mobile internet in schools

Within policy discourses, education is attributed a strategic role in providing internet safety. Schools are best positioned to reach all children, and they can introduce internet safety in a pedagogic context that allows for solid learning over time. Thus schools can complement parental mediation, even compensating for those parents who are not sufficiently informed or competent.

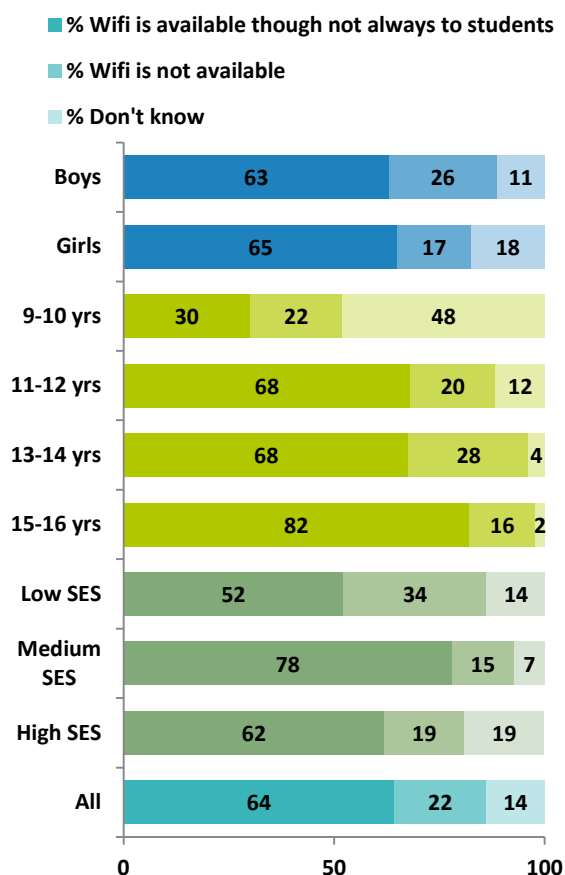
Consequently, schools and teachers are invested with more responsibilities and challenges than they may be prepared to address. In order to fulfil their role and promote children's digital literacy, schools need to be equipped with ICT and integrate digital technologies in the teaching and learning processes. Moreover, the introduction of internet safety in educational curricula should go beyond 'don't do' lists, as overprotective measures in schools have proven detrimental to the take-up of online opportunities (O'Neill & Laouris, 2013).

Rules for using smartphones and tablets vary greatly from school to school and appear to be tailored to particular cohorts of pupils within schools too. Misdemeanours that affect an entire year can lead to withdrawal of privileges to use mobiles and tablets during the school day. In addition to managing the awareness aspects of safe mobile phone use, teachers are also required to confiscate mobile phones and give out punishments for breaking rules. Being responsible for a child's mobile phone that is both expensive and emotionally associated with friends and family is at times more than a teacher feels they should be expected to manage.

"If you're confiscating phones in lessons, and then you've got to teach a whole lesson, or maybe even two, if it's the first lesson before a break, with their phone that you know how much they cost in your drawer, and because you've taken it, that's your responsibility that it doesn't go walkies or anything."
(Rachel, teacher)

9.1 Use of Wi-Fi in schools

Figure 35: Availability of Wi-Fi at school, by gender, age and SES

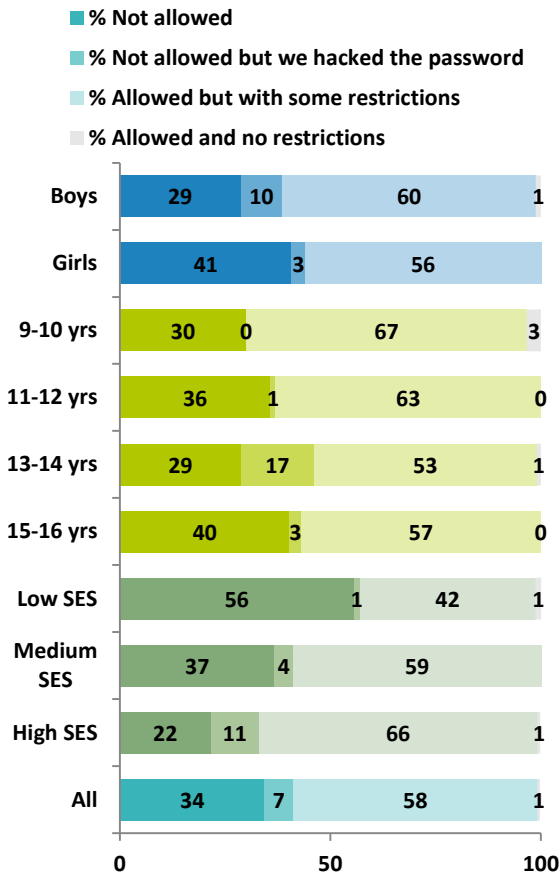


NCGM: Q60: Is Wi-Fi available at your school, and if so, are the students allowed to use it?

Base: All children who use the internet.

- **Two-thirds of children, especially in secondary schools, say there is Wi-Fi at school. Only one-third of those in primary school (9-10 years) say this, and only half of those from low SES homes say this.**
- The UK findings are the same as the European average, except that both younger children and poorer children have less access at school in the UK. Countries with Wi-Fi more available at school include Denmark (85%), Ireland (76%) and Portugal (73%).

Figure 36: Accessibility of Wi-Fi to students at schools where Wi-Fi is available, by gender, age and SES



NCGM: Q60: Is there Wi-Fi available at your school, and if so, are the students allowed to use it?

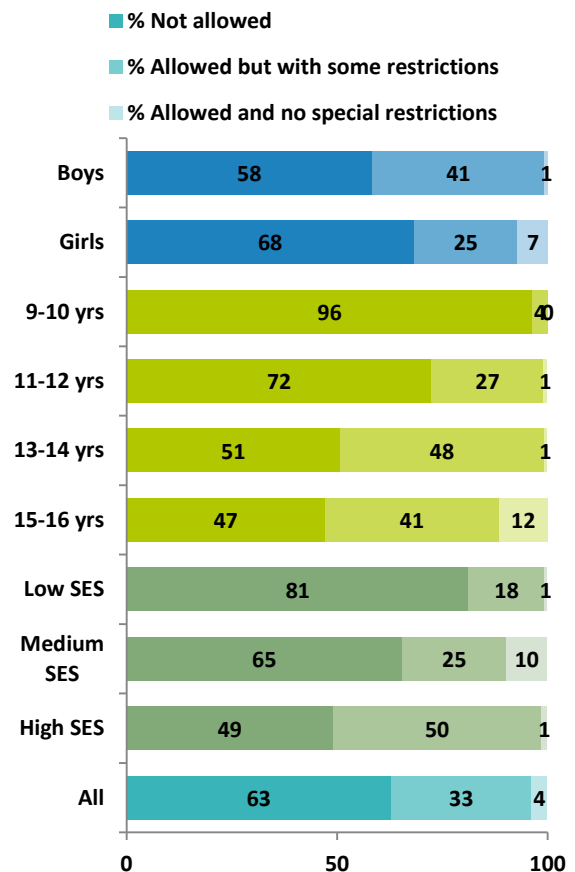
Base: All children who say Wi-Fi is available at school.

- For the two-thirds of children who do have Wi-Fi at school, one-third are not allowed to use it but most can with some restrictions. Very few children say they (or their peers) have hacked the password (though 13- to 14-year-olds are most likely to say they have done this), and almost none are permitted Wi-Fi access without restrictions. Even if poorer children do go to a school with Wi-Fi, over half say they are not allowed to use this.
- Across Europe, the same average findings are found, but the SES differences are not evident – access is much more equal, in short. Also striking is that 56% of children in Denmark whose school has Wi-Fi are permitted to use it

without restrictions.

9.2 Rules about smartphones in school

Figure 37: Rules about smartphone use at school, by gender, age and SES



NCGM: Q61: Are students allowed to use their smartphones when at school?

Base: All children who use the internet.

- Two-thirds of children are not allowed to use a smartphone in school – more restrictions apply to younger children and, also, to children from lower SES homes.**
- Across Europe, the overall figures are similar, except that 70% of Danish children may use their smartphones at school without restrictions. Similar age but not SES findings to the UK are found across Europe.

9.3 Teachers' mediation and learning opportunities

Table 38: Teachers' active mediation of child's internet use, by age and gender

%...	9-12 years		13-16 years		All
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
Talked about what to do on the internet	72	69	80	71	74
Made rules about what can be done on the internet at school	75	72	85	71	77
Helped when something was difficult to do or find on the internet	72	76	82	71	76
Explained why some websites were good or bad	72	72	80	69	74
Suggested ways to use the internet safely	73	72	82	80	77
Suggested ways to behave towards other people online	62	66	75	65	68
Helped in the past when something bothered child on the internet	34	25	39	36	34
In general, talked about what to do if something on the internet ever bothered them	63	67	49	53	57

NCGM: Q59: Have any teachers at your school ever done any of these things?

Base: All children who use the internet.

- **Three-quarters of children say their teachers have talked to them about what to do on the internet**, and similar numbers have made rules about use, helped the child to manage something difficult, explained the value of websites, discussed internet safety and how to behave to others. Over half have talked about what to do if something bothered them online. Most teacher mediation crosses age and gender, with few differences.

"Interestingly, I was talking to people, a year group at my last school, and there were three teachers. One

is 22, one is 32 and one is 42. The 22-year-old is teaching the children how to make their own apps in ICT. But the older two teachers don't understand it at all. So it was quite interesting that the younger teacher is moving the year group on with her knowledge that the older teachers ... they were doing it but they were having to be taught by the 22-year-old teacher." (Rachel, youth worker/teacher)

- All of these figures for the UK are 10-25% higher than the European average.


 Nonetheless, these figures represent a slight drop compared with 2010. There is no evidence, then, that teachers are mediating more now compared with a few years ago. The largest reductions are in suggesting ways to use the internet safely (was 85%, now 77%) and explaining why some sites are good or bad (was 81%, now 74%).

Table 39: Use of the internet and smartphones at school

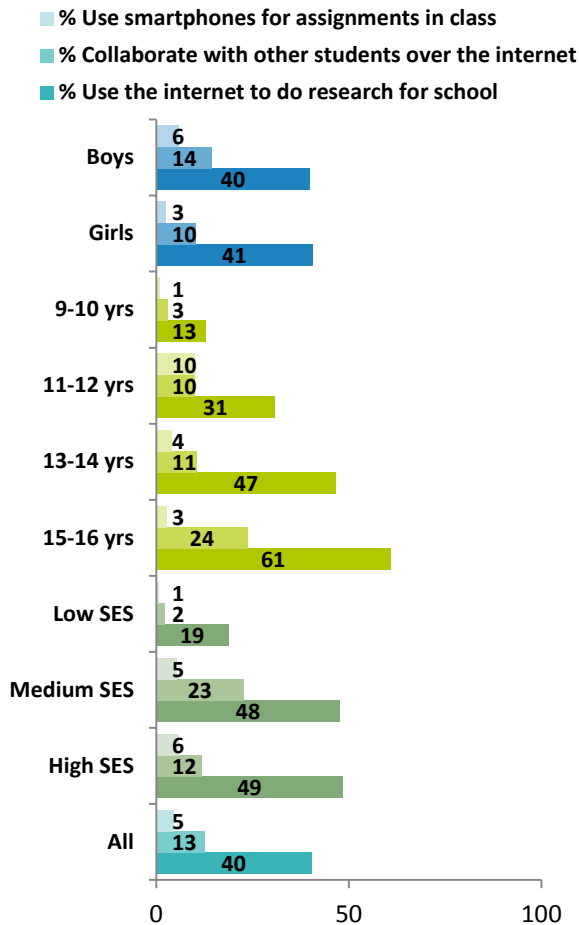
%	Several times each day	Daily or almost daily	At least every week	Never or almost never
Use the internet to do research for school assignments	10	31	39	20
Collaborate with other students over the internet	1	12	33	54
Use smartphones for assignments in class	0	4	11	85

NCGM: Q62: If you think about your school how often do the teachers want students to do these things?

Base: All children who use the internet.

- Three-quarters of children say they use the internet for schoolwork, and around a half uses the internet weekly to collaborate with other students. Far fewer use their smartphones for assignments in class, however.

Figure 38: Students who use the internet or smartphones daily at school, by gender, age and SES



NCGM: Q62: If you think about your school, how often do the teachers want students to do these things?
 Base: All children who use the internet.

- **Use of the internet or smartphones for schoolwork is more common among secondary school than primary school children, and it is least common among those from low SES homes.** (Note that using a mobile phone at school may not mean that the child is using it for schoolwork; rather, they are using it on school premises.)

10 Conclusions

In this chapter, we provide an overview of the main findings presented throughout the report, and try to address the main research questions: what has changed regarding the balance of children's online risks and opportunities in the past few years, and what, if anything, is specific to mobile internet users?

According to the **country classification** based on the EU Kids Online survey (Helsper *et al.*, 2013), the UK belongs to the category of countries where children are **'protected by restrictions'** – the countries are characterised by relatively low levels of risk, probably because internet use is also more limited and largely restricted to practical activities. Among many other questions, this report asks whether this situation has changed.

Access and use

The technological environment is changing rapidly, and children's adaption to this reflects that of adults. **Portable devices to access the internet have become more prevalent, and it is perhaps no surprise that children's most popular device used to go online is the smartphone.** Meanwhile, use of the desktop PC has halved, but there is still considerable use of larger screen devices, as shown by the fact that use of the laptop is second only to the smartphone.

It is intriguing that most of children's online access continues to be from the home, given that the smartphone has become so popular.

This might seem a little strange in that we call the predecessor to the smartphone a 'mobile' phone, and some of the concerns about the risks associated with this new device were about 'mobile access' – that it might allow children to access the internet outside the home, making parental monitoring more problematic. However, children used to use mobile phones at home (apart from for cheap texting), partly because the device was a personal and private one, as opposed to using the shared landline. Now the smartphone is used far

more when at home than in other locations or on the move.

To put the UK into context, British children are more likely to use diverse devices than the other countries surveyed. British children are more likely than most counterparts to go online in multiple locations (even if home use continues to dominate), and they first go online a little younger. Although use by young children is limited, this means they are at least learning skills from an early age – although, possibly, also encountering risks earlier. UK children embrace the smartphone more than children in some of the other countries in the Net Children Go Mobile survey. This may explain why there's a greater difference in activities between UK smartphone users and non-users than in other countries. The downside of that is that **non-users may be more disadvantaged, and in this respect we always have to be mindful of the possibility that digital divides are being enhanced by the changing nature of internet access.**

Turning to what children do online, the UK results are fairly typical for Europe. The main change is that children simply do more of everything online compared to a few years ago. In this respect the internet is a larger part of their lives. Further, British children are more satisfied with the content available online than in other countries.

Although there are always concerns over what children may access on YouTube or do on a SNS, **some activities where there have been more concerns (such as visiting chatrooms, spending time in virtual worlds, registering one's geographic location) are relatively rare.**

As regards gender differences, as they grow older, girls are more likely than boys to go online using laptops and tablets and other handheld device while boys still favour games consoles. While a gaming culture is, therefore, particularly strong among boys, it is striking that **in most online activities, girls participate to a considerably greater extent than boys.** The specific activities girls and boys favour are worth bearing in mind when considering the ways in which they might

encounter risk.

Communication practices

SNS use has declined among some groups (especially girls and younger children), as has the use of Facebook in particular (even if it remains the most popular platform on which to maintain a profile). Both reflect elements of fashion, noted also in the qualitative interviews, but also the fact that alternative modes of communication have emerged and gained popularity in recent years, such as Instagram and WhatsApp, with Twitter finding a particular following in the UK.

In this more complex communications environment, some channels have become more specialised, with Facebook most likely being used for maintaining contact with large circles of friends. However, children still shun using SNS to communicate with parents, preferring more traditional phone calls and texts – this is also probably more practical given that such communication is often about logistics when children are out of the home.

Among those using SNS, the number of contacts has dropped, although the UK remains above the European average. More UK children accept ‘friends’ requests than the European average, although to put that into perspective, this only amounts to 14%, and the qualitative data would support the survey finding that this is rare among the younger children. On the other hand, **the safety message that children should be careful of having profiles set to ‘public’ seems to have some success.**

Skills

Despite the claims that children in general are digital natives and more at home with the online world, **a third still do not think they know more than their parents, and the percentage is larger for younger children.** Perhaps surprisingly, the percentage who said they know more about the internet than their parents is unchanged since 2010 – suggesting that the growth in parental knowledge

has kept pace with that of their children.

In comparison with the other countries, UK children in general claim to have more digital competence, but when looking at particular skills, there is not much difference from several other countries. In fact, overall, Danish children report having more of the skills we specifically asked about.

Over the three years since the 2010 survey, progress in skill acquisition has been uneven rather than automatic: more British children now say they are actually less able to block junk mail, although more say they can manage their privacy settings and delete their history. In general smartphone users claim to be more skilled, and they report more specific skills. That said, **around one-third cannot block pay-for pop-ups or compare and choose the best or most reliable app or deactivate the function showing their geographical position.**

Risk and harm

Fifteen per cent of UK children said they were bothered by something online in the past year, slightly below the European average, but slightly up from the 2010 survey. Smartphone and tablet users are more **likely to report being bothered, and this fits with** previous findings that more risk is linked to more online opportunities and more, not less, digital skills (both of which characterise smartphone and tablet users).

Overall, the percentage bullied in the UK has not changed (21%), and is similar to the European average, although it has increased for 13- to 14-year-old girls. However, **it is now cyberbullying that is more prevalent than face-to-face bullying, and this occurs most commonly on SNS.** Again, smartphone and tablet users report more cyberbullying, in line with the overall pattern that these more skilled users encounter more risk.

In the UK there has been a decrease in sexting (from 12% to 4% of 11- to 16-year-olds saying they have received sexual messages), which is also lower than the European average. However, smartphone

and tablet users experience more sexting.

In the UK, the percentage of children who have met someone online who they had not met offline has declined (from 27% to 17%), and that figure is lower than the European average (26%). **The proportion of children who go to a meeting offline with a person they first met online is very small, and there were no cases where the child described this encounter as upsetting.**

Seeing sexual images (online or offline) (24% to 17% of 9- to 16-year-olds) has also declined and is less common than the European average (28%). In 2010 traditional mass media were more common channels for encountering these images, but **now the internet is as common a source of pornography as are other media** (though this may in part be due to viewing audio-visual material through the internet rather than the TV). Smartphone and tablet users encounter more images offline and online, but this may, in part, be because these children are older.

As regards other risks, children now encounter substantially more NUGC than in 2010 (up from 19% to 29%), a little above the European average (25%). To give specific examples, **seeing hate messages rose from 13% to 23% and seeing self-harm sites rose from 6% to 17%.**

Overall, since 2010 some risks have increased and others have decreased. In responding to risks in general, **UK children are more likely than the European average to talk to others about problematic experiences. However, one in eight children do not tell anyone.**

(Over) dependence

The UK still leads in terms of measures of excessive internet use, although the rest of Europe appears to be 'catching up' in this regard. Still, UK children are increasingly reporting the negative consequences of excessive internet use over time.

While UK children embrace smartphones more, and are more positive about their benefits (especially

for keeping in touch with friends), **smartphones clearly have their downsides too**; for example, a third of children felt the pressure to be available for contact through these devices, and more children in the UK than across Europe are also now reporting a range of negative consequences.

Parental mediation

UK parents have similar levels of active mediation to the other countries, although some strategies have declined a little – e.g. talking to their children about the internet has fallen from 74% to 68%. More positively as regards **mediation of their child's internet safety** (i.e., talking to children about the internet), parents do more compared to 2010 and more than in the other countries, probably reflecting the considerable awareness-raising efforts that have been made in the UK.

More problematically, parents in the UK apply slightly more restrictions across a range of activities. Although restrictive strategies and making rules can protect children from risks, previous EU Kids Online research has shown that this can come at a cost in terms of limiting benefits, discouraging children from exploring and developing skills (Dürager and Livingstone, 2012). Since 2010 there are signs that UK parents are focusing rules on use of social media rather than mass-produced online content and information – perhaps accepting the value (or even the necessity) of the internet in their children's lives.

Turning to the other parental mediating strategy, **far more UK parents use technical controls, such as filtering software compared to the European average** (48% vs. 26%), and this has changed little since 2010, notwithstanding the public policy efforts devoted to this practice. Lastly, **the use of technical controls on smartphones is lower than on PCs**, suggesting that parents struggle to manage these (although the UK figure is twice the European average).

It appears that many parents have heeded the

advice to take an interest in what their children do online, since nearly half of children think their parents know a lot about what they do online. Overall, the figures showing levels of knowledge have not changed very much since 2010, but they put the UK among the countries where parents know a fair amount about what their children do online. The figures are also age-dependent – the older the child, the less parents seem to know – which may reflect a combination of more trust in children by that age, and teenagers' greater desire for privacy as they get older (Smahel and Wright, 2014).

Peer mediation

As regards peer mediation, 59% of peers had supported those interviewed when they could not do or find something on the internet. It seems that **the chief form of support is of a practical nature, helping their friends to do things online**. That said, 29% of children reported they were also helped by their peers when something bothered them. This is not as high as help from parents to deal with a problematic online situation (41%). Previous quantitative and qualitative EU Kids Online studies had shown that in some sensitive issues children would rather turn to peers than parents, so the fact that nearly a third of peers have at some point been a source of such support is important.

Schools

This report also examined children's access to the internet in schools. **Two-thirds of UK schools have Wi-Fi, according to children, but in about a third of these they are not allowed to use it at all, while 58% of children say they are allowed to use it with some restrictions**. While this is similar to a range of other countries in the survey, the fact that in Denmark 56% can use Wi-Fi without any restrictions shows country-specific variation in on internet access should be controlled at school. Smartphone use is even more restricted in the UK, with two-thirds saying they are not allowed to use the smartphone in schools (again compared to the 70% who can use smartphones without restrictions

in Denmark).

In the qualitative research teachers talked about disruptive phones, the dangers of them being stolen and children spending too much time in front of screens, but since there is variation even across UK schools, it would be desirable to have some more public or centralised discussion about the rationale for school policies on this issue.

As regards providing support, **in many ways teachers are as supportive as parents as regards helping with and providing guidance about the internet**. This has not changed much since 2010; in fact, it seems they do rather less than before – even though UK teachers still do considerably more than many European counterparts.

Recommendations

In just a few years, UK children have shifted from accessing the internet via a desktop computer to also accessing it – even primarily – via a smartphone or laptop. This demands an equally profound shift in how their internet safety is to be managed. **Parental or teacher supervision of children's internet use is becoming ever harder**. On the one hand, this strengthens the case for developing user-friendly technical strategies – ranging from the provision of filtering solutions (now being implemented) to 'safety by design' (where much remains to be done still).

On the other hand, it strengthens the case for **children to be educated to become competent and resilient digital citizens** (at last a matter of educational policy, even in primary schools, but yet to be implemented or evaluated). Given that children are also using the internet at ever younger ages, often before they have sufficient skills to prevent or cope with what they may encounter online, we urge that both approaches are pursued.

In many ways, the UK is leading in children's internet safety, adopting both social and technical forms of mediation with vigour. As a result, our findings show that the last few years have seen greater improvements in children's

safety online than is the case in other European countries. Given the considerable multi-stakeholder effort devoted to this task, the present findings suggest these are proving successful.

Yet particular groups still need attention – a **new gender gap in risk seems to be opening up, with girls more likely to report being bothered or upset by online encounters**, necessitating a gender-sensitive approach to safety provision. Inequalities in SES are also apparent, and these are greater in the UK than in other European countries.

Moreover, complacency would be ill-advised, as the present findings also show that children's exposure to online risk of harm is increasing, albeit not hugely. Such increases are particularly marked in relation to peer-to-peer interactions online rather than engagement with mass-produced content. Specifically, **we have documented notable increases in children's exposure to cyberbullying, race hate, pro-anorexia content and self-harm websites**. At the same time, children's self-reported levels of harm have only increased very slightly, suggesting that children are also better prepared for what they find: risk, after all, does not inevitably make for harm, and some degree of risk is even necessary if children are to become resilient.

By comparison with some other European countries, Britain appears to prioritise minimising risk over maximising the opportunities of the internet. The present report documents this in several ways – UK children not gaining some of the online opportunities in creative or civic spheres, younger children struggling to find sufficient age-appropriate and stimulating content, restrictions on internet or mobile use in school by comparison with some other countries. Henceforth we suggest that managing risk should continue to be important, but that greater effort should now be devoted to optimising the benefits of the internet for ever more children. Then, perhaps, rather than categorising the UK as 'protected by restrictions' we can propose a new country category, 'empowered by education and design'.

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