EU Kids Online: The latest insights from research

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Hear from the researchers
Survey update: 2010 - 2014

- **EU Kids Online** conducted detailed face-to-face interviews with 25,000 European 9-16 year old internet users and their parents in 25 countries in **2010**.
  
  [http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/33731](http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/33731)

- **Net Children Go Mobile** replicated major parts of the EU Kids Online survey, adding a focus on mobile devices, with c.3,500 European 9-16 year old internet users in 7 countries in **2013/14**.
  
  [http://www.netchildrengomobile.eu/reports/](http://www.netchildrengomobile.eu/reports/)

Selected findings follow, for the **7 countries**: Belgium, Denmark, Italy, Ireland, Portugal, Romania, UK.
In 2010, on average half of 9-16 year olds in the 7 countries ever used the internet in their bedroom. Now 2/3 have access, and around half use it there weekly.

There are still big differences by age: a third of 9-10 year olds, over 4/5 of 15-16 year olds go online weekly in their bedroom.

There are also still big differences by country – half of Belgian children rising to nearly all in Denmark.

The home remains the main location of internet use, with the bedroom the main location for smartphone use.

Nearly half rarely or never go online in other places, and 3/4 never go online when out and about.

But in 2010, a shared PC was the most common way of accessing the internet (58%) with 31% using their phone. Today, the balance has shifted – every day, 46% use a laptop and 41% use a smartphone to go online.
Facebook is the main SNS used even though teens are diversifying their choice of SNS. The use of Twitter is rather distinctive to the UK.

SNS use has increased for boys and for teens overall. The proportion of SNS use that is on Facebook has also increased.

1/4 of 9-10 year olds and over half of 11-12 year olds use SNS – with 22% and 53% on Facebook respectively. Four in 10 give a false age on SNS.

In some countries, SNS use is becoming ‘safer’ (more privacy, fewer contacts, less under-age use) – notably the UK and Ireland. In other countries, this is far from the case. In Romania, SNS use rose from 46% to 79% in the past four years – and 39% of those have 300+ contacts (vs. 18% average).
### Survey update (3)
#### Online risk and harm

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% who...</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Seen hate messages</strong> (11-16 years)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Received sexual messages</strong> (11-16 years)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Seen sexual images online</strong> (9-16 years)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Been cyberbullied</strong> (9-16 years)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Seen pro-anorexic sites</strong> (11-16 years)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Met online contact offline</strong> (9-16 years)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bothered or upset online</strong> (9-16 years)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Some risks have increased – hate messages, pro-anorexia sites and, to a lesser degree, porn, cyberbullying and meeting online contacts offline. Only sexual messaging has decreased (except in Denmark).
- Arguably the increase in risk is because of parallel increase in opportunities.
- However, the overall proportion bothered or upset by something online has also risen slightly – especially among girls and among older teens.
- The biggest increase in % upset online are in Denmark (from 28% to 39%), Ireland (from 11% to 20%) and Romania (from 21% to 27%). The percentages are fairly stable in the other countries.
Survey update (4)
Digital skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% 11-16 year olds who know how to:</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bookmark a website</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find information on how to use the internet safely</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block messages from someone you don’t want to hear from</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block unwanted adverts or junk mail/spam</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change privacy settings on a social networking profile</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compare different websites to decide if information is true</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delete the record of which sites you have visited</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change filter preferences</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Children now report being a bit more able to do most things related to internet safety.

Given the increase in use and the efforts of industry and educators, the increase in skills is maybe lower than would be expected.

Net Children Go Mobile’s full report notes inequalities by gender, age and country also.

Since substantial minorities still lack digital skills, this suggests that more can be done to teach children how to use the internet and, further, that internet could be made easier to use.
Survey update (5)
Parental actions - kids’ views

- % Suggested ways to use the internet safely 2010
- % Suggested ways to use the internet safely 2014
- % Parental controls, blocking or filtering 2010
- % Parental controls, blocking or filtering 2014

Children report little change in their parents’ actions to support their internet safety.

- Danish parents do a little less than before; British and Irish parents do a little more social support; Belgian parents use more parental controls.

- Talking about internet safety is far preferred over use of parental controls in all countries and for all age groups.
The meaning of online problematic situations

A qualitative report on what 9-16 year olds said in interviews and focus groups in Belgium, the Czech Republic, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Romania, Spain and the UK (N = 378).

It reveals multiple upsets and problems, as kids see it . . . But also many ways of coping . . .

Much of what they talked about was how ‘weird’ the internet can be

I was on one of those online games. And there’s a chat that allows you to speak with everyone else in the game. And I was speaking, I don’t remember what, I was a beginner and I asked different things and they offended me; and I told them to cut it out. And it got even worse, but I don’t understand why they got mad, for something silly. He said, ‘Just wait, I’ll find you and beat you up,’ and stuff like that. (boy, 15–16, Romania)

http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/56972/
### Methodology & coding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Focus groups</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of groups</td>
<td>N (males + females)</td>
<td>Average duration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>36 (17 + 19)</td>
<td>69 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26 (13+13)</td>
<td>88 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malta</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>27 (13+14)</td>
<td>95 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30 (15 +15)</td>
<td>85 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22 (10+12)</td>
<td>66 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>28 (14+14)</td>
<td>80 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30 (15+15)</td>
<td>77 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30 (15+15)</td>
<td>90 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>25 (15 + 10)</td>
<td>80 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Summary</strong></td>
<td>56</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Varieties of risk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context of development</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Communication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Relationships – Peers and friendship | Vulgar content shared with peers  
Viruses automatically sending spam emails or viruses to friends | Hate, vulgar and nasty messages  
Bullying by peers or strangers  
Creating fake SNS profile about somebody  
Exclusion from a group in games  
Being killed or cursed in games  
Hacked SNS or games profile by peers |
| Relationships – Romantic relationships | Advertisements for dating sites (including sexual or vulgar content) | Reporting fake romantic relationships  
Publishing sexual pictures of ex-partner as “revenge”  
Publishing attractive pictures to attract peers  
Meeting online strangers for dating purposes |
| Relationships – Parents | Seeing inappropriate content without parents’ permission | Parent–child conflicts because of the internet  
Parents force child to be offline because of addiction  
Posting vulgar comments about parents |
| School | Untrue online information used for homework  
Tech problems at school (e.g. viruses, filters) | Offensive comments/fake profiles about teachers  
School problems after being online too much |
| Sexuality | Commercials with sexual content (YouTube, games, web, pop-ups, email)  
Pornographic material  
Sexual pictures / videos online (e.g. ask.fm)  
Watching live pornography  
Viruses put pornography on computers | Sexual communication, requests and comments  
Bullying with sexual content  
Publishing sexual pictures to attract peers / get “likes”  
Shared revenge porn or virtual sex |
## Varieties of risk (2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context of development</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Communication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Identity and personal data | Pop-ups or web pages asking for personal data  
Viruses automatically sending emails, or posting stuff or messages on Facebook | Stolen/sharing virtual identity (email, SNS profile, avatar)  
Hacked/ hijacked account or posting untrue/private info  
Pretending to be someone else (e.g., celebrities, fake)  
Lying about personal data  
Sharing personal data (e.g., address, phone number, photos) or too many private details  
Requests for personal information from strangers  
Meeting online strangers offline |
| Health and well-being | Over-use or addiction problems, including headaches, reduced eating, reduced sleeping, losing friends, eye problems  
Seeing pro-anorexia websites  
Preoccupation by sexual videos or gaming | Emotional problems after bullying or bothering contact  
Losing contact with reality |
| Morality | Racist content  
Illegal activities, like downloading programs, movies, and music  
Finding untrue or false information  
Commercials telling you to buy, download, or win something  
Vulgar, nasty, hate sites/ images/ videos | Racist messages  
Sharing illegal materials (e.g., programs, movies, music) in P2P networks  
Fake emails telling you that you could win something  
Commercial emails |
Younger kids are very influenced by parents and by sensationalist mass media, so they worry about risks that are not very common (strangers, kidnapping, etc.)

Teens are focused on peer problems, based on their direct experience and the stories/rumours of what has happened to their friends or is being discussed among their peers.
Preventive measures

- Children often try to avoid problems (esp. for porn) but for bullying and harassment, they want pro-active measures to deal with a problem then and there and stop problems escalating out of control.
- Teens are rather fatalistic about problems online – ‘bad stuff happens’ – especially if advice focuses on simple restrictions rather than preventive measures they can take as agents (since they don’t want to restrict their online activities).

Interviewer: So what type of things would you not want to ask your parents about?
Boy: Like...stuff where I go on it. It could be like they don’t trust me on some sites. And then they start checking my history and all that.
Interviewer: So if you like...the dilemma is how not to lose your parents’ trust?
Boy: Yeah, like you’ve got to stay on a safe website so you don’t lose your parents’ trust. Really...that’s all it is. (Boy, 11–13, UK)

One of my friends, she gets bullied quite often on the internet, in school. It’s been happening for years now, they just don’t leave her alone. People still pick on her. Teachers have got people in trouble but they just carry on, they don’t stop. (Boy, 11–12, UK)

Girl 1: When you are at home with your friends one evening doing silly things, and one might say, ‘Let’s do this and so and so’... We may laugh about or make jokes to people or we may see some older people who may say, ‘Take off your t-shirt or do so and so...’ And we say, ‘What do you mean, you have gone mad!’
Interviewer: And where do you go for that?
Girl 1: On ChatRoulette.
Girl 2: There are loads... You type ‘chat’ into Google and you get a long list of places you can go.
Girl 1: The last one I used, with some friends at my house, was ChatRoulette.
Girl 2: You set up the webcam, and you go round meeting different people from different countries. And every so often, whenever you want, you can change people. (Girls, 11–14, Spain)
Coping measures

- Talking to others, especially friends, is still their preferred coping mechanism after an incident.
- While bullying occurs, more common is ‘normalised aggression’, and many lack non-aggressive coping strategies to manage everyday conflict, especially among 11-12 year olds.

It happened in our school. Someone took a picture of someone in a pose and then they edited the picture making a small comment and then...my schoolmate was pretty sad about it, then I told everyone to delete the photo because I just asked them, if that was you, how would you feel, so they deleted the photo and everything’s fine now. *(boy, 11, UK)*

I immediately found out who it was. Because they referred to all the people I have in my friends, with whom I associate. And then I found out who was not there. And it certainly had to be him. And I wrote that he was a jerk, or I was swearing like that. So I found out who it was like that. So I came to him, I began to bitch at him. And I immediately changed the password. *(boy, 12–14, Czech Republic)*

Girl: They were scared too. They supported me when we were not at school, when we were at my place or out, but at school they were afraid of being mocked too. *(girl, 14–16, Italy)*

Girl: Yes...I mean, one girl kept on insulting the other one on Facebook, but then at school didn’t say a single word so in this case...but I did it face to face, on Facebook I read it, but...

Interviewer: And what did you tell her?
Girl: No, I ended up saying her ‘why don't you talk to each other? ‘cause that you insult her on Facebook and then in class you do as if she weren't here is not fair. So talk to each other and end it.’ Even because the atmosphere in class was so... *(girl, 14–16, Italy)*

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Parental mediation

- Parents who lack knowledge of the internet get less respect from/are seen to offer less support for their kids – esp. kids fear having to explain what they were doing, being blamed, losing their privacy

- Parents often confuse their kids through embarrassment, lack of clarity, uncertainty about how to help – everyone ends up muddled

*Girl*: It can get all ruined and sometimes when that happens that, like that sex thing, when you can’t remove it and it stays a long time. Then sometimes when people get there, they see that and think it’s because I wanted to see that, but it’s not! And then they blame me and I have to be grounded, and that’s a lie, but I can’t talk to explain what happened… *(girl, 9–10, Portugal)*

*My dad knows my Messenger and Facebook passwords. He sometimes checks to see if I’ve spoken with strangers after the cases they’ve heard of…* *(girl, 12, Romania)*

*I have caught my mother looking at my FB and my sister’s. Watching all our things. I saw her once looking at my sister’s FB and later she would ask her, ‘Who’s that who was doing so and so?’ I think that behaviour does not respect our privacy, she doesn’t trust us* *(Spain FG, boys, 11-13 years)*
Focusing in on the model
EU Kids Online is a multinational research network which seeks to enhance knowledge regarding European children’s online opportunities, risks and safety. It employs multiple methods to map children’s and parents’ changing experience of the Internet. It also sustains an active dialogue with national and European policy stakeholders. It has been funded by the EU’s Better Internet for Kids programme.

New reports and presentations
The meaning of online problematic situations for children. Results of qualitative cross-cultural investigation in nine European countries (June)
Policy influences and country clusters in Internet safety (May)
TEDx talk: How children engage with the internet (May)

Recently released
EC workshop on parental controls. (May)
Presentation to ICT Coalition (April)
Researching children’s rights in the digital age (April)
New Book: Towards a better Internet for children?
Recent reports: Preventive measures. Zero to Eight. Innovative approaches

Participating countries include:
Belgium, България, Česká republika, Danmark, Deutschland, East, England, España, France, Hrvatska, Ireland, Island, Italia, Latvia, Lichtenberg, Lituania, Magyarország, Maltà, Nederland, Norge, Österreich, Polska, Portugal, România, Poccian, Schweiz, Slovenija, Slovensko, Suomi, Sverige, Türkiye, UK. Also Australia and Brazil (affiliated)