Risks and opportunities on the internet: The perspective of European children

Findings from EU Kids Online, September 2011
Sonia Livingstone & Uwe Hasebrink
Welcome from the network

Children, risk and safety online

An international conference

Aims to put research and policy challenges in comparative perspective

Co-funded by the Safer Internet Programme
EU Kids Online’s aims

In the context of widespread interest in the opportunities and risks the internet affords children . . .

We sought to enhance knowledge of the experiences and practices of European children and parents . . .

In order to produce a rigorous evidence base to inform the promotion of a safer online environment for children.

www.eukidsonline.net
Surveying ‘Europe’

- Random stratified sample: ~ 1000 9-16 year olds per country; a total of 25,142 internet users across 25 countries
- Fieldwork in spring/summer 201; interviews (with child, with parent), conducted at home, face to face
- Questions validated via cognitive/pilot testing; self-completion for sensitive questions; care with research ethics
- Informed by national stakeholders and an international advisory panel
- The survey covered access, use, activities, risks (sexual images, sexual messages, bullying, meeting strangers), parental mediation, vulnerability, coping – directly comparable across countries
How do children use the internet?

Usage
- Where
- How
- Amount
- Skills
- Etc.

What do children do online?

Activities
- Learn
- Create
- Play
- Meet people
- Hang out
- Try new things
- Bully others
- Etc.

What online factors shape their experience?

Opportunities / Risks
- Positive content
- User-generated content
- Sexual content/messages
- Stranger contact
- Bullying
- Personal data misuse
- Etc.

What are the outcomes for children?

Benefits / Harms
- Learning
- Self-esteem
- Sociality
- Values
- In/excluded
- Coping/resilience
- Bothered/upset
- Abuse
- Etc.

Project scope

Project focus

Usage

Activities

Opportunities / Risks

Benefits / Harms
Classifying risks (exemplars)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Conduct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child as receiver (of mass productions)</td>
<td>Child as participant (adult-initiated activity)</td>
<td>Child as actor (perpetrator / victim)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive</td>
<td>Violent / gory content</td>
<td>Harassment, stalking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual</td>
<td>Pornographic content</td>
<td>‘Grooming’, sexual abuse or exploitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>Racist / hateful content</td>
<td>Ideological persuasion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>Embedded marketing</td>
<td>Personal data misuse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Risks in bold are included in the survey
‘Ladder of opportunities’

Type of opportunities taken up by 9-16 yrs old

- Used the internet for school work (84)
- Played games on your own or against the computer (80)
- Watched video clips (76)
- Visited social networking profile (62); Used instant messaging (62); Sent/received emails (61); Read, watched the news online (48)
- Played games with other people online (44); Downloaded music or films (44); Shared photos, videos or music with others (39); Used a webcam (31); Posted a message on a website (31)
- Created a character, pet or avatar (18); Spent time in a virtual world (16); Written a blog or online diary (11)
- Visited chat room (23); Used file-sharing sites (18); Shared photos, videos or music with others (39); Used a webcam (31); Posted a message on a website (31)
- Percentage of children on the levels

14% Used the internet for school work
19% Visited social networking profile; Used instant messaging; Sent/received emails; Read, watched the news online
23% Visited chat room; Created a character, pet or avatar; Spent time in a virtual world; Written a blog or online diary
33% Played games with other people online; Downloaded music or films; Shared photos, videos or music with others; Used a webcam; Posted a message on a website

www.eukidsonline.net
Types of risk and harm

- **Sexual images off/online**
  “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 naked or having sex. Have you seen anything of this kind?”

- **Bullying off/online**
  “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. It can include teasing someone in a way the person does not like; hitting, kicking or pushing someone around; leaving someone out of things. Has someone acted in this kind of hurtful or nasty way to you in the past 12 months?/ Have you been treated in a hurtful or nasty way on the internet?”

- **Sending/receiving sexual messages online (11+ yrs)**
  “People do all kinds of things on the internet. Sometimes they may send sexual messages or images. By this, we mean talk about having sex or images of people naked or having sex. Have you seen/sent/received/posted a sexual message (words, pictures or video) of any kind on the internet?”

- **Meeting new people**
  “Have you ever had contact on the internet with someone you have not met face to face before? Have you ever gone on to meet anyone face to face that you first met on the internet in this way?”
## Experiences of risk and harm

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

Base: All children, n=25,142
*) only 11-16 years
## Types of young online users

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>% of sample</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>% girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low risk novices</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>+ schoolwork</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young networkers</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>+ Social networking sites</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate users</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>+ schoolwork and other content based activities</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risky explorers</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>+ all communication and participation related activities</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensive gamers</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>+ games</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experienced networkers</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>+ Social networking sites and other communication activities; - games</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### User types classified by risk and harm

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low Risk</th>
<th>High Risk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lower Harm</strong></td>
<td><strong>Risky explorers</strong>&lt;br&gt;Fairly high skills, low restrictive mediation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Moderate users</strong>&lt;br&gt;Moderate skills, moderate restrictive mediation</td>
<td><strong>Experienced networkers</strong>&lt;br&gt;Fairly high skills, moderate restrictive mediation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Medium Harm</strong></td>
<td><strong>Intensive gamers</strong>&lt;br&gt;Fairly high skills, fairly low restrictive mediation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Young networkers</strong>&lt;br&gt;Moderate skills, moderate restrictive mediation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Higher Harm</strong></td>
<td><strong>Low risk novices</strong>&lt;br&gt;Very low skills, high restrictive mediation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low risk novices</strong>&lt;br&gt;Very low skills, high restrictive mediation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INDIVIDUAL USER

Demographic
Psychological

Usage → Activities → Risk factors → Harm or coping

SOCIAL MEDIATION

Parents → School → Peers

Child as unit of analysis

NATIONAL CONTEXT

Socio-economic stratification
Regulatory framework
Technological infrastructure
Education system
Cultural values

Country as unit of analysis
Top ten myths

1. Digital natives know it all
2. Everyone is creating their own content
3. Under 13s don’t use social networking sites
4. Everyone watches porn online
5. Bullies are baddies
6. People you meet on the internet are strangers
7. Offline risks migrate online
8. Putting the PC in the living room will help
9. Teaching digital skills reduces online risk
10. Children can get around safety software
EU Kids Online’s work 2009-11

- Risks and safety on the internet: The perspective of European children. Full findings
- Final recommendations: Policy implications, methodological lessons and research recommendations
- Patterns of risk and safety online: In-depth analyses from the EU Kids Online survey
- Cross-national comparison of risks and safety on the internet
- Risky communication online
- Digital literacy and safety skills
- Social networking, age and privacy
- Who bullies and who is bullied online?
- Best practice research guide: How to research children and online technologies in comparative perspective