EU Kids Online

Experiences with sexual content:
What we know from the research so far

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Summary

This report reviews research about children's experiences with sexual content online from the EU Kids Online and Net Children Go Mobile projects:

• **Children discuss in diverse ways and through different sets of discourses their encounters with sexual content.**

• **The number of experiences with sexual content increases with age: as children grow older, so does their knowledge of sexual content.**

• **Cultural differences, national policies and the public debate on children's experiences with sexual content frame the way in which children talk about sexual content.**

• **What is regarded as "sexual" differs across cultures; those interested in children's safety should take this into account when arguing about children's harmful online experiences.**

• **What children define as "sexual" reflects what adults frame as such. Those definitions also reflect the political and social context in which children are immersed.**

Panic around children's exposure to pornography

Concerns about what type of and how much sexual content children encounter in the media have been widely circulated within public and academic debates. Such concerns are usually followed by campaigns against pornography and in favour of children's right to innocence, but also by stricter internet and parental regulation. Stakeholders' primary concern has been whether, or how much, children are affected by pornography.

Given the overall activity on the topic, there has been an intensification of campaigns, and as a result, further developments in research (e.g. Horvath *et al.*, 2013; Smahel and Wright, 2014). Regardless of whether such concerns are justified or not, researchers have long been gathering data about how many children encounter sexual content in the media, how frequently they do so, what kind of emotions such encounters provoke, or whether such content overall comprises a harmful experience for them. In this report, we attempt a critical evaluation of the body of knowledge provided by research with children across Europe since 2000.

From political initiatives against the diffusion of pornography to protect children, to increasing research about pornography's possible influence on children, the topic has received great attention, especially since the broad diffusion of online technologies. Inevitably, then, the intensification of the public debate has led to further research on the topic from different perspectives. Namely, effects researchers have studied the potential impact sexual content might have on children's cognitive development, attitudes towards sex and women, or behaviour when engaging in sexual relationships (e.g. Flood, 2009; Peter and Valkenburg, 2011).

From a different perspective, cultural studies researchers have provided further insight in to how children talk about their experiences, what meanings

they make out of them, and how these contribute to the formation of ethical or sexual identities (e.g. Buckingham and Bragg, 2004; Tsaliki, 2011; Chronaki, 2014). Finally, from a perspective that balances the two approaches, other researchers work within a frame of research that examines potential risks and opportunities in children's online experiences (Livingstone *et al.*, 2011; Mascheroni and Ólafsson, 2014).

What is the research on the topic?

Effects paradigm

The majority of studies within the effects tradition are based on developmental (Boies *et al.*, 2004), cognitive (Peter and Valkenburg, 2006, 2007, 2008) and clinical psychological theories (Cline, 1994).

Sexual content in this paradigm is framed as a negative aspect of children's media use. For instance, studies suggest that sexual content potentially affects children's attitudes towards romantic relationships or commitment (e.g. Braun-Courville and Rojas, 2009). They also suggest that there is a possible correlation between violence and sexual content (e.g. Valkenburg and Soeters, 2001).

Some researchers have assumed potential effects on boys' attitudes towards the female body (the "objectification" paradigm), which has frequently been a common argument between effects researchers and feminist analysts (Buckingham and Bragg, 2004). This kind of research has been extensively criticised (e.g. Buckingham and Bragg, 2004; Livingstone and Bober, 2005; Bale, 2010; McKee, 2013).

Social constructionist approach

Within the social constructionist paradigm, children's experiences are considered as cultural practices. Researchers attempt to identify children's patterns of experiencing and then talking about broader issues, such as agency and sexuality, but also about themselves as sexual beings. Social constructionist approaches provide analyses of how sexuality is being negotiated in the context of the individual (Sørensen, 2007), the peer group (Allen, 2006), or in relation to public perceptions about young people's sexuality (Bale, 2012).

So far, there is a large body of empirical evidence – mostly of a qualitative nature – through which researchers argue that children's experiences with sexual content form a kind of cultural practice that they

use to position themselves within the public debate about children's sexuality. Children demonstrate a certain socio-sexual literacy that they draw on while talking about themselves and their ethical lifestyle. This way they prove their rightful position to participate in the debate about children's own sexuality.

Research within this approach has recently grown as a response to the need to contextualise children's experiences with sexual content in terms of how these contribute to the way in which children are developing their identities and subjectivities. Given the broader diffusion of new technologies, and therefore the ease with which children can now access sexual content, researchers within this paradigm have been addressing broader issues about how childhood is regarded within a content-saturated media landscape, how children's sexuality is negotiated (Buckingham and Bragg, 2004), and how children assert their ethico-sexual agency in talking about sexual content (Chronaki, 2014).

UK Children Go Online model

By the time the EU Kids Online and the Net Children Go Mobile surveys were conducted, the preceding UK Children Go Online project (Livingstone and Bober, 2005) had already introduced the Children Go Online model of studies in the academic agenda.

The Children Go Online studies came, to an extent, as a response to the alarmed voices of psychologists whose work has been dominant within the relevant agenda. Although in many instances the two approaches examine similar variables and share similar findings, the Children Go Online model adopts a balanced, child-centred approach. The studies focus on children's voices – via their responses to survey questionnaires, interviews and focus groups – and provide carefully contextualised discussions of children's reported experiences with sexual content (see Livingstone *et al.*, 2011; Rovolis and Tsaliki, 2012).

Livingstone and Bober's (2005) work on UK Children Go Online was the first study within this paradigm, while similar studies followed in Greece (Greek Children Go Online), Portugal, Italy, Denmark, Belgium, Ireland and Romania (Net Children Go Mobile). UK Children Go Online was the first to systemise children's patterns of online use, as well as to attempt a first classification of children's experiences. In principle, projects taking the UK Children Go Online approach – as, for instance, the Greek Children Go Online project (Tsaliki and Chronaki, 2012) – have considered their findings from

the perspective of three major variables of online use: age, gender and class.

Livingstone and Bober (2004, p. 29) found that more than half of the studies' participants who go online at least once a week say that they have encountered sexual content. Some say they have found it accidentally, whereas only a handful says they have deliberately visited such a site. Age differences, especially between the youngest and the oldest age groups, are also reported, as the older the children are, the more experiences with sexual content they have had. UK Children Go Online also identified differences regarding the medium where content was encountered: more children report seeing such material online than in other media.

Along similar lines in terms of research design and data collection, Tsaliki gathered data about Greek children's patterns of online use. Her findings indicate that access to sexual content is influenced by gender and age. According to the project report, the number of children who have had experiences with sexual content online is low. Notably, 13% of boys aged 10–14 and 4% of girls of the same age seem to have deliberately had such experiences (Tsaliki and Chronaki, 2012, p. 43). Moreover, most children within this age group have had such experiences in media other than the internet, which indicates that some of the concerns about how dangerous the internet might be for young people is possibly overstated (Tsaliki, 2011).

As it transpires, all three approaches feed research and public agendas with different kinds of findings and arguments. However, in all three, researchers comply with overarching principles regarding the sensitive and ethically challenging nature of the topic. We will not go into further detail regarding the matter at this point, as it has already been addressed by this network's activity (Lobe *et al.*, 2007).

In what follows, we briefly present the EU Kids Online findings from all 25 European countries, and then move to a cross-comparison between the EU Kids Online and Net Children Go Mobile findings from specific countries. Our aim is to offer an overview of what we now know about children's experiences with sexual content online, and what recommendations can be made on a policy, research and educational level.

EU Kids Online evidence

There is an overall classification of children's experiences in risks and opportunities within this paradigm, and a further classification of those two kinds of experiences regarding children's position within them (content, contact, conduct) (Hasebrink *et al.*, 2009, p. 8).

According to this classification, encounters with sexual content online are considered a potentially risky experience, also enabling the probability of harm for the child. The experience is examined in relation to where it took place, how many times it did, its actual nature (what exactly was depicted in the representation encountered), and whether the child felt harmed by it (Livingstone *et al.*, 2011).

Table 1: Risks relating to children's internet use (*exemplars only*)

	Content Receiving mass-produced content	*Contact* Participating in (adult-initiated) online activity	*Conduct* Perpetrator or victim in peer-to-peer exchange
Aggressive	Violent/gory content	Harassment, stalking	Bullying, hostile peer activity
Sexual	Pornographic content	"Grooming", sexual abuse or exploitation	Sexual harassment, "sexting"
Values	Racist/hateful content	Ideological persuasion	Potentially harmful user-generated content
Commercial	Embedded marketing	Personal data misuse	Gambling, copyright infringement

Source: Hasebrink *et al.* (2009).

In that respect, researchers first asked children the following question: *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 people having sex.* This and other questions regarding the frequency, medium and emotions about the experience led to some core findings about the context of children's experiences (Hasebrink *et al.*, 2009).

As derives from the data, children have not had so many experiences with sexual content as moralistic, alarming voices have been arguing thus far. In fact, as shown in the network's full findings report (Livingstone *et al.*, 2011):

- 23% of 9- to 12-year-olds have encountered sexual content in the last 12 months, either online or offline;

- among the most popular media where children encountered sexual content, the internet ranks almost as high (14%) as television, films or videos (12%);

- it is predominantly older teenagers, 15–16 years old, who report having had such an experience (36%), rather than younger children, 9- to 11-year-olds (11%);

- there is no significant difference between boys and girls, either when it comes to younger (15% vs 13%) or to older children (33% vs 28%);

- there is no significant difference regarding the experience, in what concerns children's socio-economic status (SES); however, it seems that higher SES children have had more experiences with sexual content, possibly because of their increased media ownership and advanced digital skills.

Overall, experiences with sexual content appear to be a rather complex issue. EU Kids Online has provided the European agenda with recent, robust and representative data about children's experiences. In this way, it offers a rigorous mapping of the phenomenon, creating space for more research, primarily of a qualitative nature, that will seek to fill emerging questions of how and why different groups of children respond to experiences with sexual content in particular ways. However, there is still a need for more research of a qualitative nature, something that EU Kids Online III has initiated since 2013.

EU Kids Online qualitative study

Network researchers have recently conducted a qualitative study aiming at understanding the ways in which children perceive notions such as risk and harm, and how they engage with issues about particular incidents that have been classified as risky in public and academic discourse (e.g. bullying, sexual content, stranger danger, sexting; see Smahel and Wright, 2014).

Table 2: Children's references to risky experiences

	Coverage of the topic within interviews (%)
Belgium	16
Czech Republic	18
Greece	10
Italy	19
Malta	13
Portugal	30
Romania	19
Spain	12
United Kingdom	20

As Table 2 shows, many of the interviews conducted included references to the ways children understand researchers' classification of risky experiences. Within the overall "references to risky experiences", references to sexual content are also included. For this reason, we would like to make a comment about children's perceptions of using or encountering sexual content. Nine EU Kids Online countries participated in this qualitative study, and their researchers collected, overall, 1,893 references to sexual content:

Table 3: Children's references to experiences with sexual content

	Coverage of the topic within interviews (%)
Belgium	9
Czech Republic	1
Greece	11
Italy	3
Malta	4
Portugal	5
Romania	3
Spain	11
United Kingdom	4

The number of references to sexual content for each country reflects, we suggest, the way in which the issue is contextualised within it. So, for example, in countries like Greece and Spain, sexuality and the use

of sexual content are culturally loaded concepts, and it looks reasonable for researchers and participants alike to pay particular attention to how a topic such as "experiences with sexual content" is talked about.

At the same time, looking at the data more closely, it becomes evident that the issue of children's encounters with sexual content is something that children discuss in diverse ways and through different sets of discourses. For example, we came across feminist arguments about the aesthetics of the body, or pedagogical arguments about the extent to which access to sexual content might be risky for young children (third person effect).

We also came across dominant narratives about pornography addiction, or the effects of such content on people, as well as medical discourses that reflect an ethical framework of children's approach to sexuality. All in all, the data gathered throughout the qualitative phase of the project raise more questions about what exactly and how much we know about children's ways of talking about sexuality, and also questions about what exactly children claim about themselves when talking about sexuality the way they do.

Comparing EU Kids Online and Net Children Go Mobile findings

Country-specific data may provide a different picture about how children from different cultures experience sexual content and shed light on any cultural factors that may contextualise the experience further. That said, findings from different countries can be attributed to differences in the politics of sexuality, political initiatives regarding the self- and co-regulation of children's sexuality, or the ways sexuality is understood and talked about in various cultures.

At this point, we compare findings about children's experiences with sexual content as provided by the EU Kids Online and Net Children Go Mobile projects. We focus in particular on Belgium, Denmark, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Romania and the UK.

The Net Children Go Mobile project was set up following EU Kids Online, which conducted research across 25 European countries with 25,000 children and their parents. There are therefore many similarities in terms of initial assumptions, such as what kinds of experiences might potentially bother children online, but also in terms of methodology, such as the structure and phrasing of questions asked. However, as Net Children Go Mobile researchers did not ask parents

about their children's experiences, we focus here only on children's reported answers.

In the case of Net Children Go Mobile, researchers used a shorter questionnaire, slightly restructured from the EU Kids Online one. Regarding the section about sexual content, however, Mascheroni and Ólafsson state that, "drawing on EU Kids Online methodology, questions about pornography were introduced in the following way" (2014, p. 61):

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

The difference between the two projects lies mainly in the way the questions were structured. In fact, Net Children Go Mobile asked whether the child had seen a representation, as described above, and whether such an encounter was upsetting. However, the EU Kids Online created two separate questions to measure children's experiences and the possible degree of self-reported harm. In principle, similarities in research design and data collection allow for a cross-examination of the findings of the two projects from particular countries so as to extract any conclusions about how children's experiences change, and in which ways.

Overall exposure to sexual images

Within the Net Children Go Mobile project, children's use and experiences via mobile technologies were examined separately from those via mainstream devices, such as PCs and laptops, given the increasing popularity of smartphones and tablets among young people. This indicates, as researchers argue, a "post-desktop media ecology" (Mascheroni and Ólafsson, 2014, p. 13).

National level data from the EU Kids Online project show pretty much a similar picture with Net Children Go Mobile when it comes to children's experiences with sexual content. The Net Children Go Mobile survey found that, overall, 27% of boys and 30% of girls reported any encounters with sexual images (online or offline). Of those, 18% of boys and 12% of

girls report "not being at all upset" by the experience (Mascheroni and Ólafsson, 2014, p. 73).

As reported in the EU Kids Online findings, experiences with sexual content increase with age (Livingstone *et al.*, 2011). The same appears to be the case with the Net Children Go Mobile findings: 15% of 9- to 10-year-olds report experiencing sexual content, compared to 44% of 15- to 16-year-olds (Mascheroni and Ólafsson, 2013, p. 73).

Figure 1: Child has seen sexual images online or offline in the past 12 months, by gender, age and SES
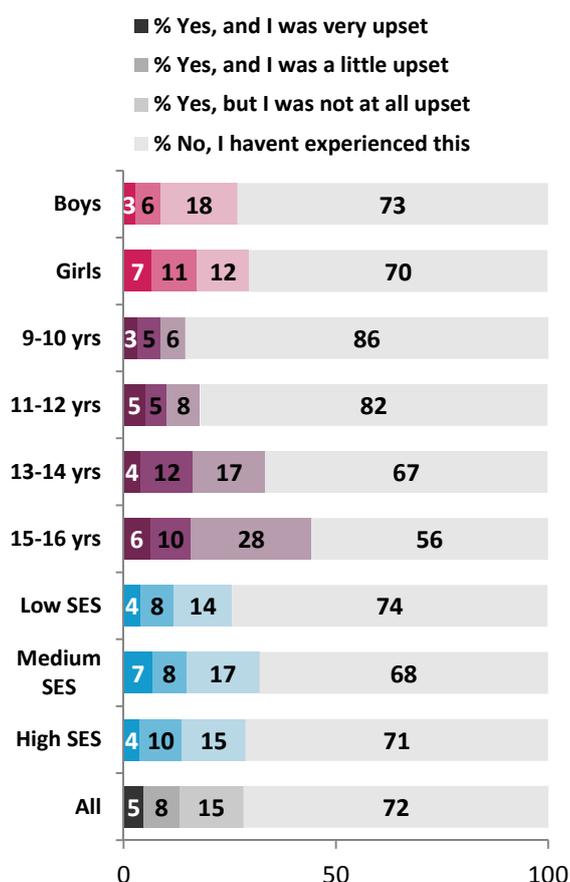
Source: Mascheroni and Ólafsson (2014, p. 73).

Base: All children who use the internet.

Of the 15% of Net Children Go Mobile children who reported being upset by the experience, girls report being bothered more than boys (18% vs 10%), and older children more than younger ones (Mascheroni and Ólafsson, 2013, p. 73). Although older children report being upset to a greater extent, this is related to the fact that there are more of them reporting *having* such encounters. Also, as children grow up, they build a wider and more complex set of perceptions about

sexuality, because of their access to more detailed knowledge about the issue, and, therefore, the shared codes through which they interpret something as "sexual" also increase. For example, as children grow older, parents allow them access to a range of content, allegedly appropriate for their age – a 15-year-old is more likely to watch Game of Thrones which includes explicit scenes of nudity and sex than someone younger. This, in itself, could well be an explanation for the increased number of responses of older teenagers about "bothersome" sexual content.

Therefore, instead of arguing that older children are at greater risk of experiencing sexual content, we would argue that such findings are confirmation that as children grow older, their knowledge of the politics of sexuality increases, and they therefore use more and more diverse codes to interpret what they encounter as sexual.

Children's experiences as reported in the two projects show some differences regarding access (we considered the fact that the Net Children Go Mobile definition was based on the EU Kids Online one): Romanian, Danish and Italian children appear to report more experiences with sexual content in the Net Children Go Mobile project than in the EU Kids Online project:

Table 4: Child has seen sexual images online or offline in past 12 months, by country

%	EU Kids Online (2010)	Net Children Go Mobile (2013–14)
Belgium	33	28
Denmark	42	52
Ireland	23	21
Italy	12	23
Portugal	24	28
Romania	28	31
United Kingdom	24	17

Source: Livingstone *et al.* (2011); Mascheroni and Ólafsson (2014).

Base: All children who use the internet.

However, Irish children appear to report a similarly low amount of experiences in both projects (slightly decreased for the Net Children Go Mobile one), while a more significant decrease appears in the UK. Lower ratios in Ireland and the UK might be a result of more than one factor: political initiatives for children's protection online and a greater visibility of children's online safety agenda. In this respect, we consider the intensification of campaigns for children's protection
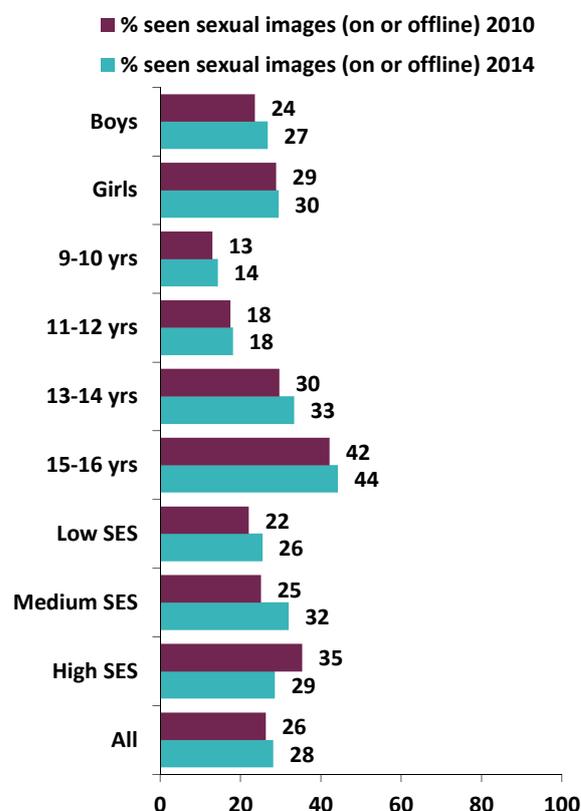
online, governmental initiatives of pornography banning, and the increasing visibility of research about children's experiences online as possible explanatory factors of lower self-reporting of sexual content. Children's advanced internet literacy and self-regulation, alongside parents' enhanced literacy and regulation strategies, could also play an important part in this change.

We should not forget that an increase in responses of sexual encounters may come as a result of a more inclusive definition of what constitutes "sexual" or "pornographic". Sex-related issues (including pornography) are talked about in terms of nudity, sexiness, appropriateness and normality – both at the society and individual level. This results in fluid and broad definitions of what counts as sexual or pornographic, and thus increases the numbers of children who report seeing something as "inappropriate", "sexual" or "pornographic".

Therefore, all these factors might somehow shape children's conceptualisations of experiences with sexual content, and explain the ways numerical data has changed since 2010, when the EU Kids Online survey was conducted.

In this respect, a combination of these factors may explain the following:

Figure 2: Child has seen sexual images online or offline in the past 12 months, by gender, age and SES, comparing 2010 and 2013

■ % seen sexual images (on or offline) 2010
■ % seen sexual images (on or offline) 2014

	2010	2014
Boys	24	27
Girls	29	30
9-10 yrs	13	14
11-12 yrs	18	18
13-14 yrs	30	33
15-16 yrs	42	44
Low SES	22	26
Medium SES	25	32
High SES	35	29
All	26	28

Source: Mascheroni and Ólafsson (2014); Livingstone *et al.* (2011), but calculated for the same seven countries as in the Net Children Go Mobile study.

Base: All children who use the internet.

When it comes to different countries, it is interesting to note that cultural differences, national policies and the nature of the public debate around children's experiences with sexual content could possibly explain differences in findings. In Denmark, children appear to have the most experiences (52%), while in the UK, they have the least (17%). At the same time, children in Denmark appear to be the least upset from their experiences (24%), perhaps as a result of liberal attitudes towards sexuality in the Nordic countries (Nikunen, 2007).

This is in contrast to the UK (10%) (Mascheroni and Ólafsson, 2014, p. 62), where attitudes can be more conservative (McNair, 2002). Drawing on this finding, we would suggest that differences in children's experiences are predominantly dependent on the contextualisation of children's sexuality in these countries. If we look at the EU Kids Online findings on the issue, the emerging picture is similar: in Denmark,

48% have seen sexual content and 28% were upset by it, while in the UK, 24% have seen sexual content and 24% were upset by it. Again, compared to how many children encountered sexual content in both countries, the proportion that report being bothered in Denmark is considerably less. This difference could be attributed to the more liberal perception of sexual content in the country in relation to the UK. Similarly, although fewer children report such encounters in Italy and Ireland, more report being bothered by such content (26% and 38%, respectively) (Livingstone *et al.*, 2011, p. 56). This is, perhaps, due to the dominant construction of sexuality within the Catholic culture in these countries.

To be more precise, recently in the UK there has been considerable political and non-governmental organisation (NGO)-driven campaigning about pornography's potential harm on children (Topping and Georgieva, 2013). Such alarmed voices have not emerged for the first time. Instead, they have been feeding an ongoing public debate regarding children's sexualisation. As a result, anti-porn policies have emerged, making it understandable why children might report less experiences of sexual content. This might be because of increasing parental mediation, new regulatory developments in the UK, the banning of online pornography unless closely monitored, or simply because of how children engage with such information and regulate their sexual conduct accordingly.

Another set of variables that both Net Children Go Mobile and EU Kids Online projects examine concern the media through which children access sexual content.

Accessing sexual images

The degree of explicitness of the images seen vary according to the medium. For example, these might be personal photos, mainstream pornographic videos, advertisements for sex services or depictions of sex, and love or romance as appearing in popular HBO series and movies. Taking this into account, Net Children Go Mobile found that younger children report acquiring most of their experiences in sexual content on television, films, video-sharing platforms (varying from, for example, YouTube, to mainstream pornographic Tube-like platforms), on social networking sites or by pop-ups.

Table 5: Net Children Go Mobile (2013): 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	2	1	5	8	4
On television, film	6	6	13	17	11
On a video-sharing platform	3	2	4	11	5
On a photo-sharing platform	0	1	2	6	2
By pop-ups on the internet	1	4	10	13	7
On a social networking site	1	4	9	14	7
By instant messaging	0	0	1	3	1
In a chatroom	0	0	1	2	1
By email	0	1	0	1	1
On a gaming website	1	0	2	1	1
Seen at all, online or offline	15	18	33	44	28

Source: Mascheroni and Ólafsson (2014, p. 74).

Base: All children who use the internet.

Older children's experiences appear to take place in a wider variety of platforms or media, including chatrooms, email accounts and gaming sites. However, we should highlight that most of these experiences are reported to have been encountered on television or film, where the explicitness of representation is significantly lower than in those termed "hardcore pornographic".

This indicates that what is meant and understood by the term "sexual" differs, and those interested in children's safety should take this into consideration when arguing about the harm afforded in children's experiences online.

The same pattern can be observed in the EU Kids Online findings:

Table 6: EU Kids Online (2010): Ways in which children have seen sexual images, by age

%	Age				
	9-10	11-12	13-14	15-16	All
In a magazine or book	5	5	8	13	8
On television, film	8	9	15	25	15
By text (SMS), images (MMS), or otherwise on my mobile phone	1	2	5	8	4
By Bluetooth	0	0	2	3	1
On any websites	6	9	16	28	15
Total seen, on or offline	13	18	30	42	26

Source: Livingstone *et al.* (2011), but calculated for the same seven countries as in the Net Children Go Mobile study.

Base: All children who use the internet.

Finally, Net Children Go Mobile provides a classification of experiences based on whether children report using smartphones, or tablets, or neither.

Table 7: Ways in which children have seen sexual images, comparing mobile and non-mobile internet users

%	Daily use of mobile devices			
	Smart phones	Tablets	Neither	All
On television, film	13	11	9	11
By pop-ups on the internet	11	10	5	7
On a social networking site	12	10	4	7

Source: Mascheroni and Ólafsson (2014, p. 75).

Base: All children who use the internet.

EU Kids Online findings suggest that the use of more devices increases the likelihood of different experiences (Livingstone *et al.*, 2011). However, as Rovolis and Tsaliki (2012) argue, the ownership of more devices and the opportunities for more privatised use do not necessarily lead to more experiences with sexual content. In this respect, Net Children Go Mobile looked for differences between mobile and non-mobile users. Of the 11% of children who have had experiences with sexual content on television, 13% report using smartphones, and 11% report using tablets, while of the 11% who encountered sexual content by pop-ups, 11% are smartphone users and

10% use tablets (Mascheroni and Ólafsson, 2014, p. 91). That said, although assumptions can be made that such devices offer an easier and more privatised access to sexual images, a causal relationship has not been proved (Rovolis and Tsaliki, 2012). It seems that only a small number of those who use similar devices have had such experiences, while television is still a popular source of representations which children consider sexual.

Conclusions

Our discussion of the findings of the two projects indicates that there has not been a significant change in children's experiences with sexual content between 2010 and 2013, for the countries examined.

The data also indicate that children's experiences with sexual content reflect the ways in which they define what they have seen as sexual. Such experiences depend a lot on what adults frame as sexual, as well as on the parallel political and social context in which children are immersed. Thus, children employ these ready-made frameworks in order to interpret and classify something as sexual.

What children define as sexual content usually comes more from 'traditional' media, such as television. However, sexually explicit content (i.e., pornography) is banned from television screens (and Facebook) by legislation in most countries. Hence, alarmist arguments about the internet suddenly posing a major threat to childhood should be contextualised and downplayed. This indicates that researchers, policymakers, educators and parents alike need to take into account children's definitions so as to avoid a spiral of moral panic regarding online pornography.

Children's experiences with sexual content are, after all, limited, as research has indicated. In addition, as already noted in other EU Kids Online reports, many children are well aware of effective coping strategies which they apply if annoyed or bothered by such encounters (d'Haenens and Tsaliki, 2013).

Political and educational challenges

The empirical evidence indicates that there is a need for policy, political and educational actors to consider the diverse ways in which children talk about sexual content and sexuality, more broadly. Children's voices need to be taken into account as well as claims about how they wish to participate in the discussions about young people's sexuality.

Such evidence could also possibly inform current and emerging sex education curricula, especially when it comes to countries that have no organised sex education.

Finally, we need to consider how public accounts of children's sexuality influence children and parents' approach to sexuality itself. Children's experiences with such media content are, to a large extent, shaped by the way sexuality is publically discussed and regulated.

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