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THE LONDON SCHOOL
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EU Kids Online Portugal

USES, COMPETENCES, RISKS AND INTERNET MEDIATION REPORTED BY PORTUGUESE CHILDREN (9-17 YEARS OLD)

Executive Summary

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The **1974** children who answered this questionnaire are equally distributed by gender, and the 13-17 age group constitute 62% of the sample.

Regarding their everyday, they point out that they have more fun and meet face-to-face friends offline than they do online. Girls report more activities related with studying and helping in household chores, while boys report more practicing sports and physical activities.

21% fully agree that the internet is a space of opportunities. This rate is half of the one given by children interviewed in 2010.

Access and use

Smartphones are the device most used everyday (87%), more than twice the rate reached by **computers** (41%). They reach 57% of the aged 9-10, 83% among the 11-12 and 95% among the oldest. The use of **tablets** (25%) decreases with age.

The most widespread **activities** among children concern **entertainment** and **communication**: about 80% use the internet every day for listening to music and watching videos. About 75% use it to communicate with family and friends or spending time on social media. Online games are reported by almost half of the respondents (about two-thirds are boys); 29% participate in online groups that share similar interests. About a quarter of respondents use the internet very often to read the news or to get help with homework. Activities related to content editing and civic participation are little mentioned.

Competences

Technological and relational competences used in social networking sites are the most mentioned. About nine in ten children and young people using the internet report knowing what information to share, how to remove people from the contact list, and installing applications. Informational and creative competences are less mentioned: 66% say they know how to choose keywords for their searches and how to control expenditure on applications, 62% know how to create and publish videos or music online, 52% reported on how to verify if the information they found online is true and 37% say they know how to edit content created by others.

Risks and harms

Almost a quarter (23%) of the Portuguese children and young people have lived in the last year **situations on the Internet that bothered or disturbed them**. Compared to 2014, this number more than doubled. The biggest growth occurred among the youngest (**9-10 years**): from **3% in 2014 to 25% in 2018**.

Bullying continues to be the most bothering situation. Bullying numbers, online and offline, (**24% in 2018**) in the last year more than doubled when compared to 2014 (10%). 44% of the aged 9-10 were very bothered or disturbed, the highest value by age. The percentage of girls reporting that they were disturbed (44%) doubled that of boys (22%).

Bullying by **technological means** is more mentioned than bullying face to face. The most reported aggression is to **receive digital messages that hurt** (64%). To do bullying (17%) is more commonly reported by boys and adolescents.

Exposure to **sexual content** was reported by **37%** of children and young people. Seeing sexual content is more frequent among

adolescents: 41% between 13-14 years old; 59% between 15-17 years old.

The most common reactions are **indifference** (49%) and **contentment** (31%), with significant variations by gender: being content is referred by 47% of boys and 8% of girls who saw these images.

The **negative feelings** about these images decrease with age: 24% of those who are 9-10 years old, 12% of those who are 11-12 years old and 6% of those who are 15-17 years old have reported being very upset.

Young people **meeting new people** on the internet has been a major concern for adults. For adolescents, however, this is mainly seen as an opportunity to widen social ties: **71% between 15-17 years and 62% between 13 and 14 years of age contacted people they did not know face to face**, with no gender differences.

Without gender differences, **44%** of respondents met **face to face** with people they met online. Almost half of the adolescents reported having these encounters and about a third of the younger respondents as well.

The reaction highlighted concerning that moment, more expressed by girls, was **to be content (79%)**. In turn, **19%** were **neither content nor disturbed; 2%** (especially 9-10 years old) **were disturbed**.

About one-quarter (26%) of respondents aged 11 and over reported having received or sent **sexting** messages in the past year. The older, aged 15-17 years (37%), and the boys (30%) were the ones who reported having received these messages. Having **sent messages with sexual content (6%)** was more reported by adolescents, without significant gender differences.

Exposure to **negative content generated by the user** appears high in 2018: **46%** of 11-17 years old found sites with **disgusting or violent images** of people and animals; **45%**

saw sites that spoke of **self-mutilation; 43%** saw sites with **hate messages against certain groups and individuals** because of their race, religion, nationality or sexual orientation. Also reported were **drug use (35%), incitement to anorexia (32%), or ways to commit suicide (29%)**.

Exposure to all this negative content increases with age. Gender differences stand out in respect to websites with information on how to lose weight, mentioned by 36% of girls and 25% of boys.

Viruses are reported by 17%, and 9% refer to **commercial risks**. Both situations are much more reported by boys.

The publication of videos, images and texts by the parents (**sharenting**) without asking them if they agree, reaches 28%. Of these, half asked parents to delete publications and more than one out of four had negative or offensive comments due to these contents.

As for an **excessive use of the internet**, respondents (11-17 years old) point out that **sometimes** they get **annoyed** when they can not be online (**60%**) and find themselves **using the Internet without a clear purpose (46%)**. Moreover, **11%** said that they **very often neglect study** and spent **less time with family and friends** due the internet.

Responding to risk

- **22%** of children and young people aged 9-17 **have not talked to anyone** about Internet situations that have bothered or disturbed them.
- **Friends of the same age (42%) and parents (33%) are the main sources of support** when a negative experience occurs.
- The **most frequent responses** to bothering situations through unwanted or aggressive interaction in social media

cover both active strategies, such as blocking the person (33%), and passive strategies, such as ignoring the problem and waiting for it to go away on its own (33%) or close the window and the application (25%).

- Only **12% changed their privacy settings** after a negative event, and **11% reported the problem online**.
- **Girls** show higher values of **active intervention** than boys.

Mediation

The vast majority of Portuguese children and young people point the **family's home** as a place where they feel safe and supported. However, only about one-third were convinced of being listened to with attention by their family.

Parental mediation of the internet is more about giving advice on how to use it safely and helping when something bothers –expressed by almost half of the respondents – rather than talking about activities (about one third) or encouraging exploration and learning, expressed by a fifth. There are significant variations by age and gender. Girls are more targeted by family's attention than boys and are also the ones who mostly look for family's support when they encounter problems on the internet.

Forms of restrictive and technical mediation, such as the use of filters, presented very low values, being more used with younger internet users (9-12 years old).

The majority of respondents seem to be well integrated at the **school**, since they report having good relationships with colleagues and teachers.

Frequent internet mediation by teachers - about online safety and the acquisition of social, communicational and informational skills - is pointed out by about **one-third**.

Friends, besides being the ones to whom children and young people most resort in situations of discomfort on the Internet, may be also mediators in everyday life: about a fifth of Internet users report having actively counted on their encouragement and help with their online activities.

The **neighbourhood** where they live is recognized by 90% as being safe. About three-quarters (74%) believe that children can play on the street during the day. Confidence in people living around them is indicated by 63%.