Towards a better internet for children: findings and recommendations from EU Kids Online to inform the CEO coalition

# Details

## Issued

2012

## Language

English

## Authors

Livingstone S.;Ólafsson K.;O'Neill B.;Donoso V.

## Type

Report and working paper

## Topics

* Social mediation
* Content-related issues
* Online safety and policy regulation
* Internet usage, practices and engagement
* Risks and harms

## Sample

EU Kids Online conducted a face-to-face, in home survey during 2010 of 25,000 9-16 year old internet users and their parents in 25 countries, using a stratified random sample and self-completion methods for sensitive questions.

## Implications For Parents About

* Parental practices / parental mediation
* Parental digital literacy
* Parenting guidance / support

## Implications For Policy Makers About

* High-quality content online for children and young people
* Creating a safe environment for children online
* Stepping up awareness and empowerment

# Abstract

This report presents new findings and further analysis of the EU Kids Online 25 country survey. It also brings together our previously published findings relevant to European Commission Vice President Kroes’ CEO Coalition recent initiative to
make the internet a better place for children.

New results show that, of nine different kinds of parental worries about their child, online risks – being contacted by strangers (33% parents) or seeing inappropriate content (32% parents) - rank 5th and 6th. Will the Coalition’s principles help manage online risk of harm, and so address parental concerns?

Our evidence supports recommendations about initiatives that industry can take under four of the five headings considered by the CEO Coalition.

Simple and robust reporting tools:
13% of children who were upset by an online risk say they have used reporting tools, and two thirds of those who used them found them helpful.

Country differences are considerable: 35% of children who were bothered by an online risk have used reporting tools in Turkey, but just 2% of such children in Hungary.

Children are more likely to use reporting tools when upset online if they come from a poorer home, if they are a girl, if they experience psychological difficulties, or if they are more active online.

This suggests the tools meet a need and should be promoted more widely. Limited ease of use and effectiveness are likely to impede take-up.

Age-appropriate privacy settings:
43% of 9-16 year old SNS users keep their profile private, 28% have it partially private and 26% have it public. Children who have their profile set to public are also more likely to display their phone number or address on their SNS profile.

More efforts are needed to promote the use of privacy settings and make them user-friendly.
Children are more likely to have a public profile if they cannot understand or manage the privacy settings, if they are a boy, if their parents have banned their SNS use, or if they experience psychological difficulties.

Wider use of content classification
14% of 9-16 year olds have seen sexual images on websites. This included 8% of 11-16 year olds who saw images of people having sex and/or genitals, and 2% who saw violent sexual images. 32% of all 9-16 year olds who had seen sexual images said they were upset by them.
Among 11-16 year olds upset by seeing online sexual images, 26% hoped the problem would just go away, 22% tried to fix it, 19% deleted unwelcome messages and 15% blocked the sender. Only 13% reported the problem online, though most of those found the result helpful.
21% of 11-16 year olds have seen potentially harmful user-generated content such as hate sites (12%), pro-anorexia sites (10%, rising to 19% of 14- 16 year old girls) and self-harm sites (7%).
Those with more digital skills are more likely to encounter these content-related risks.

Wider availability and use of parental controls:
One in three parents (33%) claims to filter their child’s internet use and one in four (27%) uses monitoring software. Overall, onnly a quarter of children (27%) and a third of parents think parents are effective in helping to keep children safe online.
Parents are more likely to use filtering if they are regular and/or confident users of the internet themselves, if they are worried about online risks to their child, or if their child is younger and/or less experienced in internet use.
Although it seems that the more filtering, the less online risk, this is because younger children encounter less risk since they use the internet less) and are more subject to parental controls – and vice versa.

# Outcome

Reporting tool key findings:
-Only 13% of 9-16 year olds used the reporting tool when bothered or upset by something online
-Girls are more likely to use the reporting tool than boys (50%)
-Overall "It seems that reporting tools offer a particular benefit to girls, more vulnerable children, and those from poorer homes." (Livingstone et al., 2012, p. 6)
-More internet usage correlates with increasing report button usage.

Privacy settings key findings:
-"38% of 9-12 year olds and 77% of 13-16 year olds who use the internet in Europe have their own SNS (social networking service) profile - 59% overall" (Livingstone et al., 2012, p. 8)
-43% keep their profile private (only for friends to see), 28% have their profile partially private (friends of friends can see) and 26% have their profile public

Content classification key findings:
-Boys are more likely to have seen sexual or pornographic content online
-One in five 14-16 year old girls has visited a pro-anorexia website
-One in twenty 11-16 year olds has visited a suicide-related site
-"The findings show that the level of digital skills can predict the likelihood of exposure to content-related risks" (Livingstone et al., 2012, p. 13)
-One fifth tried seeking a technical solution (deleting messages or blocking contacts) when seeing something bothering online

Parental controls key findings:
-One in three parents claims to filter their child's internet use
-Parents are more likely to use filters if they are regular users of the internet, if they worry a lot about what their child is seeing online and are older parents
-"Use of parental controls appears to reduce both children’s online risk and their digital skills and opportunities. However, active mediation (i.e. greater parental engagement) reduces risk but not skills or opportunities" (Livingstone et al., 2012, p. 17)