DIVSI U25-Studie: Kinder, Jugendliche und junge Erwachsene in der digitalen Welt. Eine Grundlagenstudie des SINUS-Instituts Heidelberg im Auftrag des Deutschen Instituts für Vertrauen und Sicherheit im Internet (DIVSI)

Engl. transl.: DIVSI U25-Study: Children, adolescents and young adults in the digital world. A baseline study by SINUS Institute Heidelberg on behalf of the German Institute for Trust and Security on the Internet (DIVSI)

# Keywords

* Quantifying the web
* online trust and safety

# Details

## Year

2014

## Issued

2014

## Language

German

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## Type

Report and working paper

## Place

Hamburg

## Topics

* Internet usage, practices and engagement
* Risks and harms
* Literacy and skills

## Sample

focus groups: n = 96
online media chats: n = 83
survey: n = 1512

## Implications For Parents About

Parenting guidance / support

## Implications For Educators About

Professional development

## Implications For Policy Makers About

# Abstract

A ream of hardened conceptions on a wide variety of topics cling tenaciously to the public consciousness. Repeated often enough, platitudes whose veracity can rarely be checked against naked truth at some stage become purported fact. And the persons appraised, all too often with nonchalant superficiality, never experience a fair and balanced appreciation of their behaviour.

This fate has also befallen children, adolescents and young adults in the assessment of their approach to the Internet. For until now there has been a dearth of academically sound analysis, intended to purposefully, precisely and without bias explore behaviour among the 9 to 24 age group in the digital world.
The DIVSI U25 Study is the first of its kind to deliver substantiated answers to questions relating to how the younger generation con- ducts itself when it comes to the net. And it is comprehensive. It transcends the mere forms of use to analyse the logical structures of reflection and action and the real-life backgrounds of those within the study group. Maintaining the principles of work we have estab- lished and continue to uphold, we have succeeded once more in presenting profound insight into an eminently important complex. The study was created in cooperation with SINUS Institute Heidelberg.

Allow me to emphasise a few facts that I believe possess particular interest:
- 98 per cent of 14- to 24-year-olds use the Internet. In contrast, 19 per cent of the overall population are offliners.
- The dividing line between on- and offline time has all but disappeared. Smartphones have become our constant companions in all areas of life. Thus equipped, sometimes also clutching a tablet computer, we have become constantly capable of uninterrupted access to a variety of options for use and communication. Most of us can no longer imagine a life ‘without’ all this.
- From year to year, Internet use nudges its way pervasively through each aspect of everyday life. And for children, this mainly means games. The focus is drifting gradually towards incessant communication via online communities and messaging services. Communicating with friends has become the most important facet of Internet use for adolescents and young adults.
- But not everyone perceives being online the same way. The study has identified seven distinct Internet milieus. They differ according to the lifeworlds they inhabit, their modes of access to the net and their attitudes towards trust and security on the Internet.

- Educational background is an equally important aspect of social inequality when it comes to media use. The style and manner of media use among children, adolescents and young adults differ substantially along the lines of formal education. And the consequences can be fatal in an age where digital participation is tantamount to social participation.
- The actual meaning of Facebook friendships is misrepresented in most instances. Our study indicates that those surveyed do indeed make clear distinctions between online friends, personal acquaintances and their genuine, close friends.

In these six facts presented above we see already that the study delivers facts that may indeed prompt a shift to new perspectives. The study will contribute to fostering a more nuanced appreciation in Germany when it comes to how children, adolescents and young adults conduct themselves in the digital world.

# Outcome

"The lives of children, adolescents and young adults are inconceivable without digital media. 98 per cent of adolescents and young adults, even 86 per cent of children, are online.

But not everyone perceives being online the same way. Seven distinct U25 Internet milieus were identified, differing according to the lifeworlds they inhabit, their modes of access to the net and their attitudes towards trust and security on the Internet.

Both the Self-assured and the Pragmatists, see themselves as part of a digitised future – and are unable to imagine a coming world in which the Internet does not exist. But the Con-scientious and Sceptics consider it at least a possibility. Freewheelers perceive the Internet as playing a lesser role in their personal – private and professional – future.

Freewheelers display distinct insouciance when faced with possible risks of the Internet and are unlikely to take any safety precautions. Pragmatists, like the Self-assured, deploy a broad range of security precautions. The Cautious and the Insecure frequently display a more reluctant use of the Internet based on their heightened perception of risk.

But being online is among the central elements of social participation for the younger generation. Parental income and levels of formal education are revealed as the ‘gatekeepers’ to this world. Accordingly, more educated persons display greater self-assurance in handing the Internet and are less frequently asked to carry the costs of Internet at home from their own pockets.

Children are permitted only strongly regulated access to the Internet. Online behaviour is predominantly self-regulated above the age of 14. Parents define few rules – and are unable to monitor the standards they do set.

Today’s children, adolescents and young adults are expert networkers. Online communities are used early on and intensely. Facebook and the messaging service WhatsApp are the dedicated lines between friends.

The term ‘Friend’ has acquired a multidimensional denomination whose range of nuanced meanings and assigned qualities is handled confidently and across a broad spectrum; Facebook friends, personal acquaintances and close friends are distinct entities. And in this the number of close friends remains largely untouched by the number of online friends.

A new perception of privacy is evident: Personal data is considered less worthy of protection. But information that may impact on social reputation becomes increasingly pivotal. Online communities especially demand a certain degree of openness with regard to personal data." (DIVSI 2014, 11-12)