Internet and Digital Technology Use among Children and Youth in Serbia EU Kids Online Survey Results, 2018

# Details

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## Topics

* Internet usage, practices and engagement
* Wellbeing
* Literacy and skills
* Risks and harms
* Access, inequalities and vulnerabilities
* Social mediation

## Sample

The study was conducted on a random, multistage stratified sample of students representative of the school population aged 9-17 (grades 3 through 8 in primary schools and grades 1 through 3 in secondary schools and high schools) and in four major statistical regions in Serbia (Belgrade,
Vojvodina, Eastern and Southern Serbia, Sumadija and Western Serbia). The sample is additionally semi-balanced with regard to the size of the municipality in which the school is located (up to 19,999 inhabitants; from 20,000 to 99,999 and over 100,000 inhabitants), and according to the type of school (gymnasium/high school vs. vocational school) in the sample of secondary schools.

## Implications For Parents About

## Implications For Educators About

Other

## Implications For Policy Makers About

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

## Implications For Stakeholders About

* Researchers
* Industry
* Healthcare
* Other

## Other Stakeholder Implication

Family and Children welfares, Public and private digital literacy initiatives

# Abstract

Internet access
 Most of the surveyed children and teens from
Serbia (86%) use the Internet on a daily basis,
which is similar to findings from other
European countries that participated in this
research (e.g. Norway, Italy). Two-thirds (65%)
of the youngest respondents from the sample
(ages 9-10) and almost all students (98%) in the
oldest age group (ages 15-17), according to
their own statements, access the Internet daily
from a mobile / smart phone.
 Kids begin to use the Internet at a young age,
in a personalized way (from their own, mobile
devices) without proper parental/caregiver
insight into their activities, which has
important policy and practice implications.
Time and activities on the Internet
 On average, interviewed students spend more
than three hours a day on the Internet, the
oldest age group reports up to four and a half
hours. More than a fifth of students, according
to their own statements, spend up to seven
hours a day on weekends, while two-thirds
spend between four and seven hours.
 Given the multiple functions that digital
devices have in the lives of today's youth, time
as such is not necessarily an indicator of
problematic use. In fact, rather than the
amount of time, the quality of the time, or
the type of Internet activity, is much more
important. According to the findings of this, as
well as several previous studies conducted on
a national sample, our students use the
Internet mainly for leisure (watching videos
and listening to music), communicating with
family and friends, playing video games and
visiting social networking sites.
 40% of students use the Internet for school
assignments at least once a week; 88% of
students say they have never used the Internet
to join a campaign or sign a petition, and 79%
have never discussed political or social issues
online. Nearly two-thirds of children say they
never use the Internet for creative purposes, to
share content they have created.
 More than two-thirds of children and young
people (73%) say they have a profile on some
social networking or gaming platform; of
these, 42% of 9-10-year olds as well as 72% of
11-12-year olds say they have a profile,
although the minimum age set by social
networking sites is usually 13 years. In addition
to the types of activities undertaken online, we
also consider the negative consequences
associated with Internet use. Thus, about a
third of the surveyed students report to have
problems due to the amount of time they
spend online or getting into conflicts with
family or friends. Slightly less than half of the
students say they try yet fail to spend less time
on the Internet and neglect socializing and
responsibilities (e.g. school assignments),
feeling unwell when unable to be on the
Internet, while nearly one fifth neglect basic
biological needs (e.g. need for food, sleep).
Students’ digital skills
 Students from Serbia rate their digital literacy
skills as above average. The average score for
the five groups of digital skills ranges from 6.7
to 8.6 (on a scale of 1 to 10). The lowest average
score is in the field of digital content creation
skills (6.7), followed by information and
information retrieval skills (7.7), mobile device
use skills (8.0), operational skills (8.6), while the
highest average score is on social skills (9.2).12
 When it comes to information, digital content
creation and mobile device skills, gender
differences have been identified, with male
students being more skilful, according to their
self-assessment. Students who spend more
time online evaluate their digital skills as more
developed.
 About half of the younger and about twothirds of the older students know how to make
a video or music and post it online. Fewer
children say they know how to modify content
created and uploaded by others (one fifth of
younger and less than a half of older students).
 Assessment of one's digital skills correlates
positively with age, with one exception, which
is the use of a programming language (e.g.
Scratch, Python, C ++). This is the only skill in
which younger students feel more competent
than older ones.
 Approximately half of students ages 9-12 do
not know how to change their privacy settings
on social networking sites (a similar
percentage of these students do not use social
networking sites), while more than a third of
students of this age do not know how to save
a picture they find on the Internet. However,
almost all older students, in their own
estimation, know how to set up privacy on
social networking sites or save a picture they
found online.
 While 92% of students, by their own
assessment, know how to install an application
on a mobile phone, just over half (53%) say
they know how to keep track of the cost of
using the application.
 72% of students strongly or partially agree
with the statement that it is easy for them to
verify if some of the information they have
found on the Internet is true; and 68% find it
easy to tell if they can trust a piece of
information they find on the Internet.
Upsetting experiences and
cyberbullying
 Every third student in the sample was
bothered by something online in the past year.
In such situations, almost a quarter of students
did not talk to anyone about their problem,
ignored the problem thinking that it would go
away by itself, or closed the window or
application, and nearly a third blocked the
harasser. The number of children who
frequently had disturbing experiences was the
highest in the age group of 13-14 years.
 16% of students experienced cyberbullying,
while 15% experienced bullying in person.
Students are more likely to admit to being
victims than to have perpetrated digital
bullying themselves. A third of the students
surveyed were victims and perpetrators at the
same time. Consistently with previous findings
on a nationally representative sample about
face-to-face bullying and cyberbullying –we
find that the two tend to happen hand in hand.
Risky behaviour on the Internet and
contacts with strangers
 A number of students (ranging from 13% to
51%, depending on the type of behaviour),
engaged in some other type of risky behaviour
online. Most often, this involved sharing
personal information, adding strangers on
social media and otherwise making contact
with strangers whom they may later meet
offline, or hiding behind a false identity.
 Among the students surveyed, one quarter of
them (slightly more boys than girls) met in
person someone they had first met online. As
one can see from the findings, these
behaviours are not necessarily harmful and
they can be quite benign, but they constitute
risks.13
Exposure to sexual content
 In the sample of surveyed students (ages 9-17),
every other student encountered sexual
content in the past year, significantly more
frequently in digital than in print media.
Exposure to this type of content is more
prevalent among older students, so threequarters of high school students report to have
had this type of experience, compared to one
tenth of children of younger school age.
 Most respondents found sexual content in a
number of different sources, namely television, magazines or books, and on the Internet.
 Almost a third of the children and young
people aged 11-17 visited a pornographic
website (adult or X-rated site) over the course
of the past year. These websites were accessed
by the majority of young people in the age
group of 15-17 years (two thirds of male and
one quarter of female students, including 43%
male and 6% of female students who visited
them daily).
Exposure to harmful content on the
Internet
 The percentage of students ages 11-17 who
were exposed to various types of harmful
content on the Internet varied between 30%
and 50%. Exposure to harmful content is
related to age and gender and is more
common in older as well as in female students.
 As many as three-quarters (71%) of students
ages 14-17 years and 56% of male students
saw images of blood and violence against
other persons or animals on the Internet.
About 50% of students encountered hate
messages online; 59% of female students and
54% of male students aged 14-17 saw selfharming content; 57% of female students and
38% of male students of the same age saw
content or discussions about ways to be very
thin, or content that encourages anorexic and
bulimic behaviours (pro-ana and pro-mia
content); 57% of female and 47% of male
students saw content showing or discussing
someone else's drug use experience. 44% of
girls and 36% of boys of the same age have
seen the way suicide can be committed online.
Parents’/caregivers’ mediation
 The younger the children, the more the adults
are expected to mediate their use of digital
technology and the Internet. When they
mediate, it is primarily aimed at protecting
safety and preventing negative behaviour and
much less at meaningful use of digital
technology.
 Less than half (44%) of the surveyed students
(ages 9-17) state that their parents often
explain to them how to use the Internet safely,
a slightly smaller percentage (41%) of those
get help from parents when something
bothers them on the Internet, while just over a
third (35%) of the students surveyed talk with
parents about what they do online. Less than a
third of students (29%) say they are often
encouraged by their parents to research and
learn online, but 30% say they never or rarely
do so. Parents are more aware and more likely
to mediate girls' than boys’ activities.
 Even in the younger age group (9-12), more
than half of the students surveyed often help
parents when parents are unable to do
something on the Internet, while in the older
age group (13-17), three quarters of the male
students (more often girls than boys) do it.
 Parents in Serbia rarely use technical measures
of protection, that is, “parental controls”, to
ensure the safety of children online (less than a
fifth of the students surveyed reports this),
much less often than parents in other
countries.14
Teachers’ and peers’ mediation
 Judging from students' responses, teachers do
not encourage them enough to use the
Internet in a meaningful way, the same as in
the case of parents. Less than a third of the
surveyed students (28%) said that teachers at
school often encouraged them to explore and
learn using digital devices, 32% said that
teachers did this occasionally, and as many as
30% said that teachers at school never or
almost never encourage them to use digital
technology in this way.
 Generally, a small percentage of teachers often
talk to their students about what they do on
the Internet (reported by a dozen students),
with more than a half saying that teachers
never or almost never do so.
 Only 3% of the surveyed students sought
support from their teachers after they
experienced something upsetting online.
 Only one fifth of the surveyed students are
encouraged by peers to research and learn
online. The same number of students receive
help from their peers when they are troubled
by something on the Internet or receive
instruction from the peers on how to use the
Internet safely (the percentage is higher in the
older age group than in the younger age
group).
 However, after a negative online experience,
almost half of the students say they talk to a
friend or girlfriend their age.

# Outcome

Two-thirds (65%) of the youngest respondents from the sample (ages 9-10) and almost all students (98%) in the oldest age group (ages 15-17), according to
their own statements, access the Internet daily from a mobile / smart phone.
On average, interviewed students spend more than three hours a day on the Internet, the oldest age group reports up to four and a half hours. More than a fifth of students, according to their own statements, spend up to seven hours a day on weekends, while two-thirds spend between four and seven hours.
More than two-thirds of children and young people (73%) say they have a profile on some social networking or gaming platform; of these, 42% of 9-10-year olds as well as 72% of 11-12-year olds say they have a profile, although the minimum age set by social networking sites is usually 13 years.
Students from Serbia rate their digital literacy skills as above average.
Every third student in the sample was bothered by something online in the past year. In such situations, almost a quarter of students did not talk to anyone about their problem, ignored the problem thinking that it would go away by itself, or closed the window or application, and nearly a third blocked the harasser.
A number of students (ranging from 13% to 51%, depending on the type of behaviour), engaged in some other type of risky behaviour online. Most often, this involved sharing personal information, adding strangers on social media and otherwise making contact with strangers whom they may later meet offline, or hiding behind a false identity.
The percentage of students ages 11-17 who were exposed to various types of harmful content on the Internet varied between 30% and 50%. Exposure to harmful content is related to age and gender and is more common in older as well as in female students.
Judging from students' responses, teachers do not encourage them enough to use the Internet in a meaningful way, the same as in the case of parents.