EU Kids Online 2020 Survey results from 19 countries

# Details

## Year

2020

## DOI

10.21953/lse.47fdeqj01ofo

## Issued

2020

## Language

English

## Authors

Smahel D.;Macháčková H.;Mascheroni G.;Dědková L.;Staksrud E.;Ólafsson K.;Livingstone S.;Hasebrink U.

## Type

Report and working paper

## Topics

* Risks and harms
* Wellbeing
* Internet usage, practices and engagement

## Sample

This report is based on findings from surveys conducted in 19 European countries focused on internet users aged 9-17, with a total of 25,101 participants. The data were collected between autumn 2017 and summer 2019. In this report, we present findings from a subsample of 21,964 children aged 9-16.

The target survey population were children aged 9–17 who use the internet. However, several countries did not collect data from 17-year-olds. To maximise the number of countries and the comparability of the overall findings, we thus only analyse data from children aged 9–16 in this report.

## Implications For Parents About

## Implications For Policy Makers About

# Abstract

This report presents the findings from a survey of children aged 9–16 from 19 European countries. The data were collected between autumn 2017 and summer 2019 from 25,101 children by national teams from the EU Kids Online network.

The main findings from the key topic areas are summarised, which correspond to the factors identified in the theoretical model: Access, Practices and skills, Risks and opportunities, and Social context.

Throughout the report, findings are presented according to the countries surveyed, and the gender and age of the children. The survey findings are comparable across countries, and the methodology section presents the common methods followed

Access:
The nature and frequency of children’s internet access and use shapes their outcomes in a digital world. For most children across Europe, smartphones are now the preferred means of going online. This often means that they have ‘anywhere, anytime’ connectivity, with the majority of children reporting using their smartphones daily or almost all the time.

Practices and skills:
Children’s online experiences have changed considerably over the past decade, with YouTube becoming increasingly popular, and with national social networking sites giving way to Instagram and other prominent apps.

Risks and opportunies:
The EU Kids Online survey asks children about harm in general, as they see it, before specific questions about risky activities are presented to them. The proportion of children who said ‘yes’ varied among countries, ranging from 7% (Slovakia) to 45% (Malta). Among those children who said they had had a negative experience online, most said it had happened a few times, but not frequently.
The survey asked the children about several kinds of online activities and experiences that can result in harm for some children. Some of these activities or experiences have a greater potential for harm, whereas some have greater potential for benefit. In most of the countries, less than 10% of the children reported being a victim of online bullying which happened on a monthly basis, while less than 5% reported bullying others monthly online.

Social context:
Parents are the main source of help when something bothering or upsetting happens online to the children. In all countries, about one in ten children never feel safe online.

# Outcome

Access:
-There is a substantial increase in both proportion of smartphone-using children and the amount of internet usage compared with EU Kids Online survey in 2010. The time spent online has almost doubled in many countries.
-"As the devices for internet access continue to change, in most countries less than half of the children aged 9–16 access the internet through a desktop computer or notebook. On the other hand, between 3% and 15% of the children connect though wearable device and 1% to 18% via a connected toy" (Smahel et al., 2020, 6).

Practices and skills:
-Youtube is becoming increasingly popular along with other applications, such as Instagram. -"Watching videos, listening to music, communicating with friends and family, visiting a social networking site and playing online games top the list of activities that children do on a daily basis" (Smahel et al., 2020, 6).

Risks and opportunities:
-"The question asked of 9- to 16-year-olds was: In the PAST YEAR, has anything EVER happened online that bothered or upset you in some way (e.g., made you feel upset, uncomfortable, scared or that you shouldn’t have seen it)? The proportion of children who said ‘yes’ varied among countries, ranging from 7% (Slovakia) to 45% (Malta)" (Smahel et al., 2020, 7).
-The amount of children who report such a negative online experience rises with age. Children, in most cases, tell their parents or a friend about these negative online experiences.
-"In most of the countries, less than 10% of the children reported being a victim of online bullying which happened on a monthly basis, while less than 5% reported bullying others monthly online" (Smahel et al., 2020, 7).
-The most common potential harmful content reported was exposure to hateful messages. --Majority of children in all of the countries do not experience any of the criteria of excessive internet use.
-Between one in four and one in two children have interacted online with someone they have not met in person before.
-Majority of children say they find it easier to be themselves online, at least sometimes.

Social context:
-In most of the countries children say that their parents engage in active mediation as a mean of supporting their children's online usage.
-Parents are also the main source of help when something bothering or upsetting happens online to the children
-"The findings show that in most of the countries, over four in five children receive advice on safe internet use from parents, friends or teachers" (Smahel et al., 2020, 8).
-Girls and younger children are more likely to talk to their parents about their online activities.
-Results show that parent don't often use restrictive mediation.

Age:
-There is a strong age progression for most online activities where teenagers do a wider range of activities and spend more time on them. "This could be considered part and parcel of growing older and acting more independently in the world. Or it could be considered problematic, with younger children being held back from enjoying many online activities because of parental anxieties and restrictions, or perhaps because of their lower levels of digital skills due to receiving less digital education at school" (Smahel et al., 2020, 132).

Gender:
Its worth noting that for the most part, gender differences are often inconsistent and difficult to explain where they do exist. In some countries, girls use the internet more for schoolwork than boys. Boys report better skills in some countries.
-"As for the risk of harm, harm from online bullying was more often reported by girls in almost all countries" (Smahel et al., 2020, 133).
-Boys are more likely to spend more money on in-app purchases or online games than girls. There was no gender difference in visiting social networking sites in most countries.

Results show as internet use rises in a country, so does the average number of online activities.
-"This report 2020 findings show that a large majority of children have not been bothered or upset by something online in the past year. This is important to keep in mind since the mass media highlight, even exaggerate, the problems that children experience online, and since parental anxieties are often considerable" (Smahel et al., 2020, 134).

-There is a clear positive relationship between risk and harm, the more risk, the more harm. However, in some countries there is a lot of variation that needs further research. "For example, children in Germany report more risks than those in Slovakia yet no more harm: possibly, the safer internet provision in Germany is greater, so that encountering risk is less likely to result in children being upset, by comparison with the situation in Slovakia" (Smahel et al., 2020, 134).
-Other countries who show similar results are Norway and Portugal, where higher risk is not linked to more harm.

-There is a positive association between opportunities and risks. The more opportunities, the more risks. "What this suggests to us is that if, on the one hand, a country takes steps to increase the opportunities available to children, this may bring more risks. And on the other hand, if they take steps to reduce the risks, this may also reduce children’s opportunities" (Smahel et al., 2020, 134).
-The association is, however, fairly weak. That could suggest that there may be a way to increase opportunities without increasing risks.