Social networking among European children: new findings on privacy, identity and connection

# Details

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* Risks and harms
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## Sample

In this project, focused on European children’s and parents’ experiences of risky and safer use of the internet and new online technologies, a random stratified sample over 25,000 children aged 9-16 years, approximately 1000 in each country, were interviewed face to face, at home during spring and summer of 2010.

# Abstract

Social networking is arguably the fastest growing online activity among youth. This
article presents new pan-European findings from the EU Kids Online project on how
children and young people navigate the peer-to-peer networking possibilities afforded by
SNSs, based on a survey of around 25,000 children (1000 children in each of 25
countries). In all, 59% of European 9-16 year olds who use the internet have their own
social networking profile. Despite popular anxieties of lives lived indiscriminately in
public, half have fewer than 50 contacts, most contacts are people already known to the
child in person, and over two thirds have their profiles either private or partially private.
The focus of the analysis, then, is to understand when and why some children seek
wider circles of online contacts, and why some favour self-disclosure rather than
privacy. Demflivingographic differences among children, cultural factors across
countries, and the specific affordances of social networking sites are all shown to make
a difference in shaping the particularities of children’s online practices of privacy, identity
and connection.

# Outcome

- "Across the 25 countries researched by EU Kids Online, 59% of European 9-16 year olds
who use the internet have their own social networking profile (Livingstone et al, 2010).
Social networking varies little by gender (60% girls, 58% boys)" (Livingstone, Mascheroni, and Murru, 2011, 3).
- Most differentiated are the findings by age. Even though many popular social networking
sites (e.g. Facebook, MySpace) are age-restricted, 26% of 9-10 year olds reports having
their own profile, as do 49% of 11-12 year olds, 73% of 13-14 year olds and 82% of 15-
16 year olds
-"Substantially more boys (31%) than girls (20%) communicate online with people whom they only know online" (Livingstone, Mascheroni, and Murru, 2011, 3).
- The survey shows that most children keep their social networking profile either private og partially private (friends of friends). Less than one third (26%) has a public profile, more among boys.
- "For most children, then, face to face and online communication are not especially distinct, but for up to half, the internet offers possibilities for more varied, intimate or authentic communication – something qualitative research shows that teenagers especially can find difficult to manage in face to face situations" (Livingstone, Mascheroni, and Murru, 2011, 4).
- The one in six who post an incorrect age reveals a similar tension: children will claim to be older than they really areto gain access to age-restricted sites, though their peers will, of course, know their true age.