GLOBAL KIDS ONLINE Research synthesis 2015-2016

# Details

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## Topics

* Learning
* Social mediation
* Literacy and skills
* Risks and harms
* Access, inequalities and vulnerabilities

## Sample

children aged 9-17 in the Philippines, Serbia and South Africa, children aged 13-17 in Argentina
Argentina (N=1,106), Serbia (N=197), South Africa (N=913) and the Philippines (N=121).

## Implications For Parents About

Parental practices / parental mediation

## Implications For Educators About

Other

## Implications For Policy Makers About

Other

## Other PolicyMaker Implication

pay special attention to those who may be of greater vulnerability, such as indigenous or ethnic minority children, migrants, children in poor or rural settings or those who have some form of disability

## Implications For Stakeholders About

Researchers

# Abstract

With children making up an estimated one third of
internet users worldwide, living in the ‘digital age’ can
have important implications for children’s lives.1
Currently close to 80 per cent of people in Europe,
North America and Australia have internet access,
compared with less than 25 per cent in some parts of
Africa and South Asia.2 But this is bound to change
soon, as there is already a steady increase in internet
access in the global South where most investments
are taking place. The international community has
recognised the importance of internet access for
development, economic growth and the realization of
civil rights and is actively seeking ways to ensure
universal internet access to all segments of society.
Children should be an important part of this process,
not only because they represent a substantial
percentage of internet users but also because they
play an important part in shaping the internet. The
internet in turn plays an important part in shaping
children’s lives, culture and identities.
The many stakeholders responsible for children’s safe
and positive use of the internet (governments, civil
society and the private sector alike) have an important
task to formulate policies that are inclusive, balanced
and based on solid evidence. But at present, the
evidence on which such policies can rely is very
scarce, especially in the global South. Through
evidence-generation and research, one can identify
both the commonalities and specificities of children’s
online access and opportunities, skills and practices,
risks and safety. Research is also invaluable for
contextualising online experiences in relation to
children’s and families’ lives and the wider cultural or
national circumstances. Prevailing social norms and
value systems, prevalence of violence offline, places
and access to use of the internet, children’s support
networks, can all contribute to the benefits or harm
associated with internet use. At the global level,
evidence is needed to help build a consensus among
international actors on international standards,
agreements, protocols and investments in order to
make the internet a safer and better place for children.
Responding to evidence gaps, the Global Kids Online
research project (www.globalkidsonline.net) was
developed as a collaborative initiative between the
UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti, the London
School of Economics and Political Science, and the
EU Kids Online network. Supported by the WeProtect
Global Alliance, the project developed a global
research toolkit that would enable academics,
governments, civil society and other actors to carry out
reliable and standardized national research with
children and their parents on the opportunities, risks
and protective factors of children’s internet use. The
research toolkit and other resources available to the
public include:
 Modular survey and a range of quantitative
research tools
 Qualitative research protocols and tools
 A series of expert method guides on key issues
related to researching children’s online risks and
opportunities (e.g. how to carry out research on
online sexual exploitation and how to follow
appropriate ethical procedures when conducting
research with children);
 National reports from Argentina, the Philippines,
Serbia and South Africa;
 A research synthesis of the national reports from
the four pilot countries;
 Website (portal) for hosting the research toolkit,
national reports, and a synthesis report. Available
at www.globalkidsonline.net
Global Kids Online (GKO) follows a child rights
framework, as this offers a unifying approach to
children’s everyday experiences online, as well as
offline, while also recognising the diverse contexts in
which children live. The project aims to connect
evidence with the ongoing international dialogue
regarding policy and practical solutions for children’s
well-being and rights in the digital age, especially in
countries where the internet is only recently reaching the mass market.
National research partners from Argentina, the
Philippines, Serbia and South Africa, with support from
UNICEF country offices, piloted the research toolkit
and wrote national reports. These partners were
instrumental in building and testing research resources
and in demonstrating how research results can be
used for policy and practice. The model that emerged
was one of co-creation and co-ownership with
centralized coordination and technical support and a
de-centralized approach to national research and
dissemination of the findings. The countries were
selected originally as being middle-income,
representing different continents, having a strong
interest in pursuing research on this topic, and keen
interest from both governmental and nongovernmental sectors to provide universal access and
promote safer and better internet for children. Each
country also had its unique interests in investigating
particular issues as follows:
 Argentina – rural/urban divide and opportunities for strengthening digital literacy;
 Serbia – conditions of internet use among different population groups (Roma, children with disabilities);
 South Africa – barriers to access and availability of online content in local languages;
 The Philippines – challenges of online sexual exploitation.

# Outcome

"Children predominantly access the internet at home and through mobile devices. The majority of children learn something new by searching the internet
Younger internet users lack the digital skills of their older peers. Younger children’s digital safety skills also need support. A substantial minority of young internet
users have had contact with unknown people online. Argentinian children are most likely to report having been bothered or upset online in the past year. Countries vary in the amount of risks encountered and the balance with online opportunities. Children are most likely to seek support from a friend, and rarely from a teacher." (Byrne et al., 2016, p. 4)