

://WEBWISE 2006

**SURVEY OF
CHILDREN'S
USE OF THE
INTERNET://**

WEBWISE://

Webwise is the Internet safety initiative focusing on raising awareness of online safety issues and practice among students, their parents and teachers. Webwise provides information, advice and tools including streamed videos, Internet Acceptable Use Policy templates, interactive online resources, and advice sheets. Webwise is the Irish Internet Safety Awareness Node of the EU Information Society's Insafe network, managed on behalf of the Department of Education & Science by the National Centre for Technology in Education's (NCTE's).

The objectives of Webwise are:

- To promote the safe use of the Internet among school children (ages 4-18), their parents and teachers.
- To transform actual dangers into risks that they can master as autonomous, responsible users.

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WEBWISE 2006 SURVEY OF CHILDREN'S USE OF THE INTERNET INFORMATION:

Main objective

Map children's risk behavior on the Internet in Ireland

Target group

Children between 9-16 years

Method

Self-completed questionnaires in classroom situation

Period of data collection

December 2005 and January 2006

No. of Children Surveyed

848 students in 21 schools (urban and rural)

Weights

The results are weighted according to gender and age. Population distribution is collected from official statistics.

Analysis

The completed questionnaires were analysed by Synovate MMI, Oslo, Norway.

European Context

Parallel surveys are being conducted in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark.

Irish Context

The NCTE conducted a similar survey in 2003.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS:

- 97.8% children aged between 9-16 years surveyed in Ireland have used a PC or computer; this is slight increase from 95% in 2003.
- 91% have a PC at home. 43% of personal computers in the home are located in a public room, 33% are in bedrooms.
- 90% of the children with a PC at home stated that they have an Internet connection at home; this is an increase from 80% in 2003. 21% said they had internet access through a personal device such as a mobile phone or games console.
- 24% of those using the Internet use it almost every day at home. 52% are using it at least once a week at school.
- Over 50% said that their parents spoke with them very rarely or not at all about what they did on the internet.
- 27% said they met someone new on the Internet who asked for information like their photo, phone number, street address, or the school you attend. This is an increase from 19% in 2003.
- The survey shows a small increase in the number of children that have visited hateful websites, 22% in 2003 to 26% in 2006. Boys were three times more likely than girls to have visited hate sites a lot.
- The results show stability in the numbers of children that have visited pornographic websites at 35%.
- 23% have received unwanted sexual comments on the Internet. Boys are twice as likely as girls to receive them a lot.
- Half of the teenagers questioned said they had chatted on the Internet. Only a quarter of the preteens have ever chatted.
- One-in-ten of those using the Internet use instant messaging everyday or almost everyday.
- 19% of those who chat said they had been harassed, upset, bothered, threatened or embarrassed by someone when chatting on-line.
- 7% have met someone in real life that first met on the Internet. 24% of these said that someone who introduced themselves to them as a child on the Internet turned out to be an adult.
- 71% said they had instruction in school regarding use of the Internet. 17% said they had regular instruction.

TECHNOLOGY AND INTERNET USE://

"All" (97.8%) children aged between 9-16 years questioned in this survey have used a PC or computer; this is slight increase from 95% in 2003. Only 7% said that they didn't have access to a PC at home. There has been an increase in the number of children who have their own PC. 39% have their own PC as against 27% previously. A higher percentage of older children have their own PC (46%).

://Worryingly, there has been a shift away from PCs being located in public rooms to being used in more private rooms like bedrooms or home offices. Only 43% of children said that the PC was located in a public room in 2006 compared with 58% in 2003://

This could be related to the fact that more children own their own PCs and that 20% state they/the family have a laptop computer that is moved around.

90% of the children with a PC at home stated that they have an Internet connection at home; this is an increase from 80% in 2003. Internet usage has also increased since 2003. 70% of those interviewed had used the Internet at home in the week prior to being interviewed.

21% of those with a PC at home said they had internet access through personal devices such as mobile phones and games consoles.

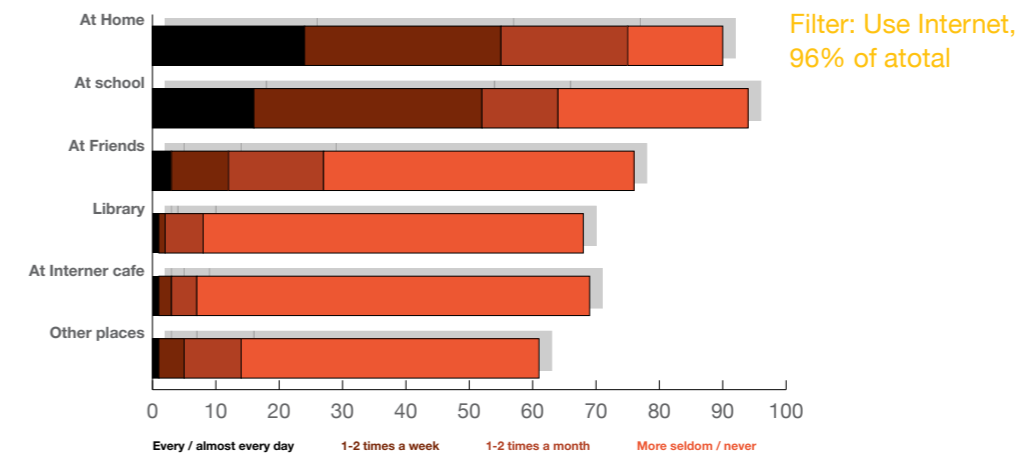
Home and school are the main places for using the Internet. There has been a dramatic increase since 2003 in the number of children using the Internet at school at least once a week. Over half now use the Internet at school every week compared with less than one third previously. This finding is consistent with the increased availability of broadband internet access through the Schools Broadband Programme.

In 2003, most children were starting to use the Internet between the ages of 9 and 10. This year's results show that children are starting even earlier with most now starting to use the Internet when they are 8 years old.

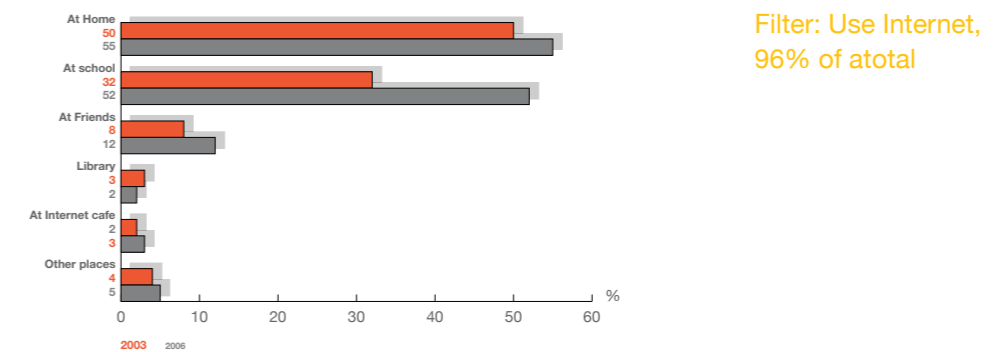
The younger children are, to a larger degree, introduced to the Internet at home resulting in their parents being key formative sources of information and guidance of future patterns of Internet behaviour.

The most popular activities on the Internet are: 1) Playing games, 2) Downloading music, 3) Surfing for fun, 4) Doing homework, 5) Getting information other than for school. Girls tend to use the internet-based communication services, such as e-mail and Instant Messaging more than boys who prefer to use more transactional functions such as gaming and downloading music.

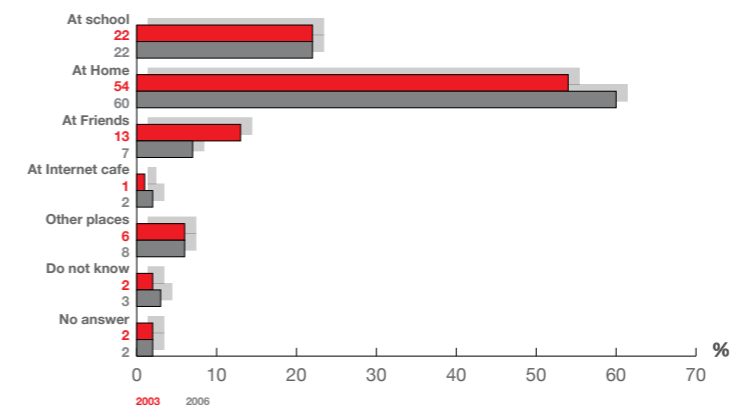
How often do you use the internet at each of the following places?



How often do you use the internet at each of the following places?



Where did you first use the internet?



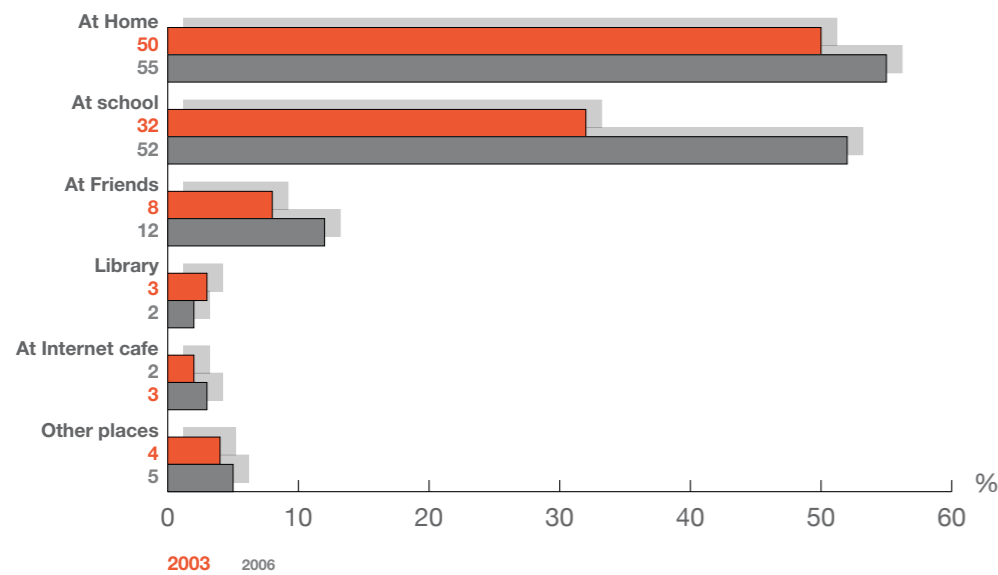
Filter: Use Internet, 96% of atotal

The Younger children have, to a large degree, than older been exposed to the internet at home

More than twice as many girls as boys say that they publish pictures of themselves on the Internet. More than five times as many boys (17%) as girls (3%) said they viewed pornography online.

Activities such as downloading music, playing games, doing homework, and instant messaging have become more popular since 2003. While using chat rooms, visiting fan sites, surfing for fun have become more peripheral activities.

Which of the following rules for the Internet are in use in your home?



PARENTS KNOWLEDGE AND SUPERVISION://

This year children are giving their parents more credit for their knowledge of the Internet than in the past. Children think that parents know a bit more about the Internet in 2006 than they did in 2003.

Fathers are still regarded as knowing the most about the Internet, but mothers are the people they talk to about what they do online.

Unfortunately, there has not been an increase in the proportion who say that they talk to their parents about what they do online. This is an area of concern as engagement by parents with their children's use of technology helps to reduce risk behaviour in the longer term.

Younger children are more likely to talk to their parents about their Internet usage than are teenagers. There is no significant difference between boys and girls when it comes to talking to parents. This indicates that teenagers keep their use of the Internet private because they want to be with their friends in a space that they perceive as "private" and isn't accessed by adults. Virtual environments are free of constraints and, to a great extent free of parental control. It is likely that teenagers' increased reliance on the internet in their social lives results in a reluctance to alert their parent to its negative aspects for fear of having access blocked by protective parents.

Most teenagers feel that they know more about the Internet than their parents while the opposite is true for younger children.

87% of the children surveyed use the Internet at home, but they said that their parents seldom sat with them or checked the sites they have visited. 72% of teenagers said that their parents never sit with them when they are online and 57% never check to see which sites they have visited.

Approximately 90% says they have rules for using the Internet at home, but

there has been a decrease in the proportion of children saying they have significant rules. In 2003 70% stated they had a rule not to give out personal information. Only 57% stated this rule in 2006.

As the Internet has become more prevalent there seems to be less of a focus on the time spent using it, hence fewer children have rules about how much time they can spend using it.

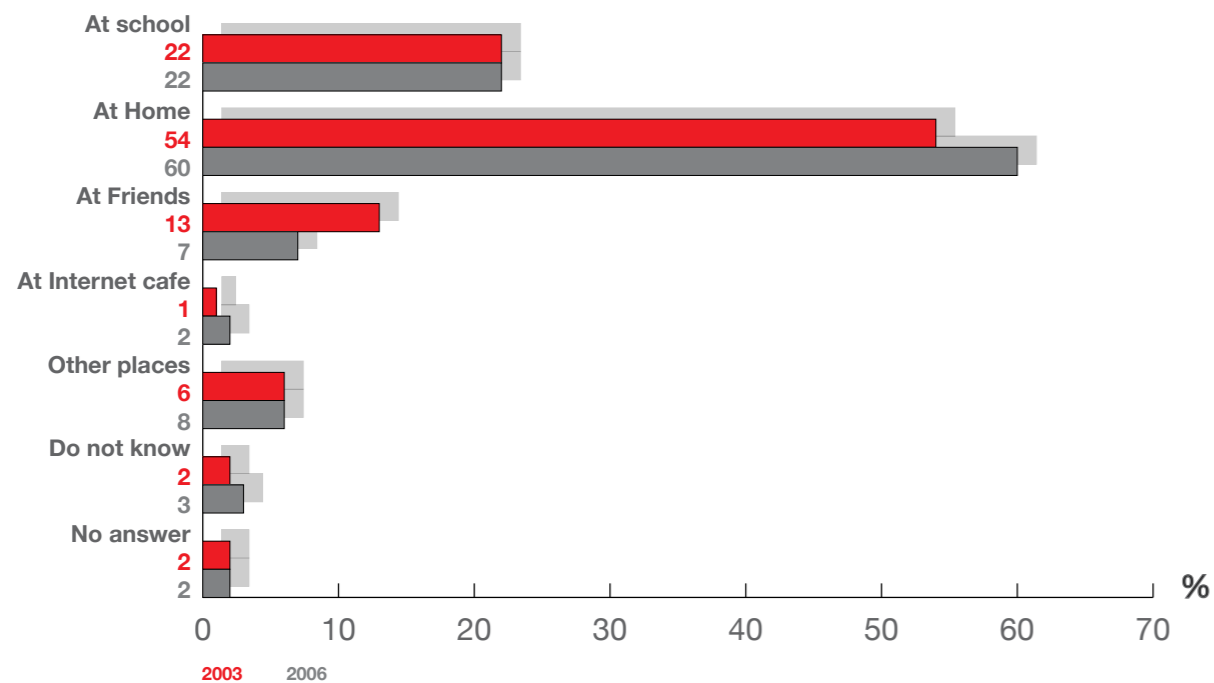
There has been an increase in the number of children who stated that they had used the Internet when they were forbidden to do so by their parents, from 15% in 2003 to 32% in 2006. There has also been a small increase in the number who said it was possible for them to use the Internet without their parents knowing or finding out about it.

Where children say that their parents aren't monitoring their Internet use it may be that parents are, in fact, checking log files or history files without their knowledge.

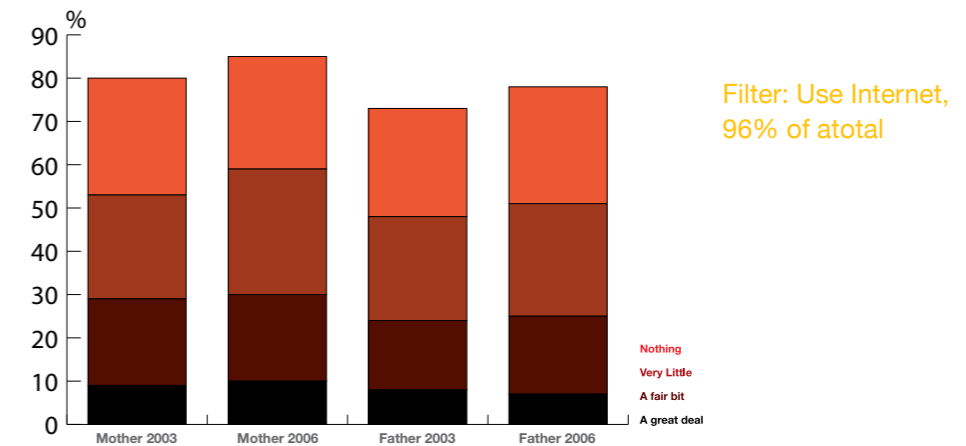
Similarly, rules and responsible Internet behaviour may be established when children start using the Internet and might not necessarily need to be restated on a regular basis.

In much the same way that we teach children how to cross the road at the appropriate stage in their development and once they have learned the skill the rules are accepted implicitly.

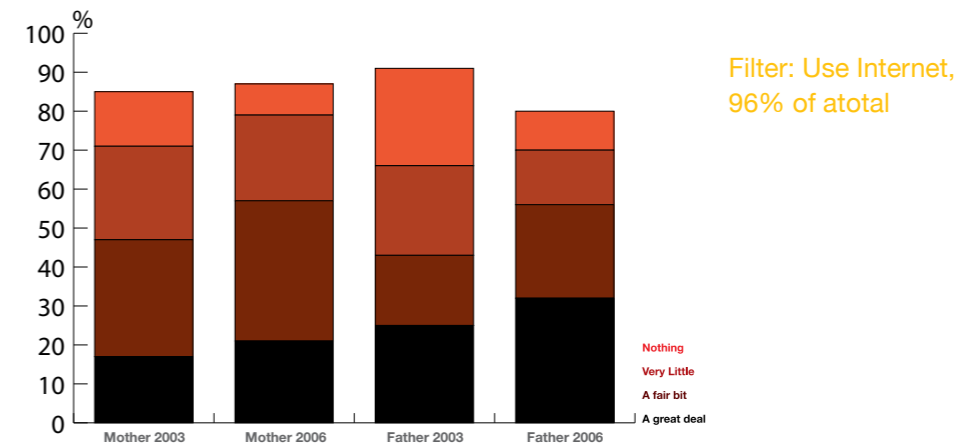
Which of the following rules for the Internet are in use in your home?



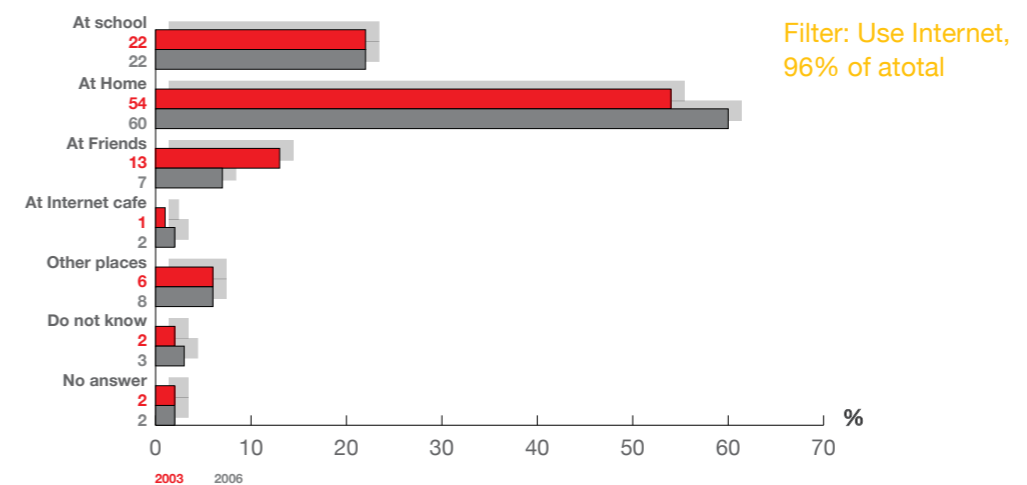
How much do your parents know about the Internet?



How much do you and your parents talk about what you do on the Internet?



Is it possible for you to use the Internet somewhere without your parents knowing about it or finding out?



DISCLOSING PERSONAL INFORMATION://

There has been an increase in the number of children willing to give out their full name, photographs, name of school, phone number and password over the Internet.

However, in Ireland, children are generally protective of their personal information with only 27% prepared to disclose their full name and email address over the Internet. The main reason cited by children for not giving out information was the worry of being contacted by someone they don't know (66%). They were also concerned that they didn't know who will use the information (58%) and about getting viruses (52%). 36% said that their parents told them not to disclose personal information online.

The results show an increase from 19% to 27% of children that have met someone new on the internet who asked for personal information like photographs, phone number, street address, and school name.

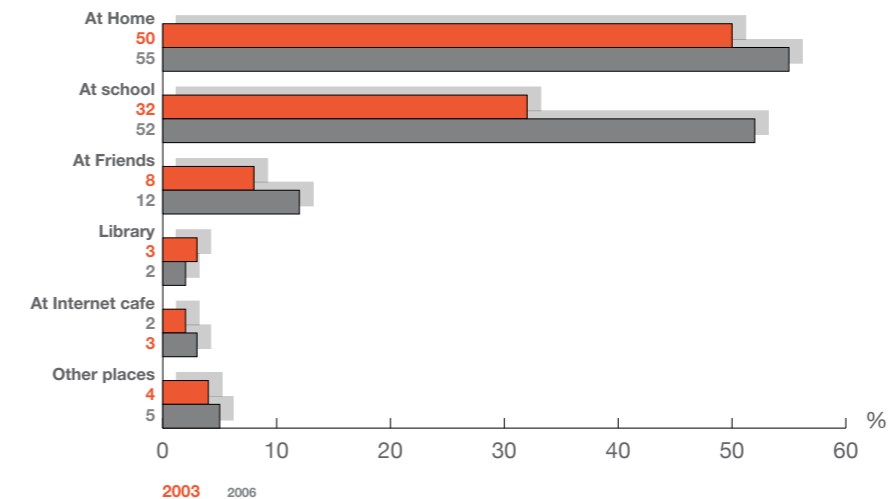
The children that were asked for this kind of personal information mainly gave false information or ignored the request. Younger children were much more likely to give all the information they were asked for. Boys were more likely than girls to give false information while girls were more likely to ignore the request and tell their mothers. One-in-ten children gave all the information they were asked for.

Overall there is some cause for concern that children are more likely to disclose all the information they are asked for; that they are less likely to talk to their parents about requests of this nature and that they are less likely to take steps to block the sender.

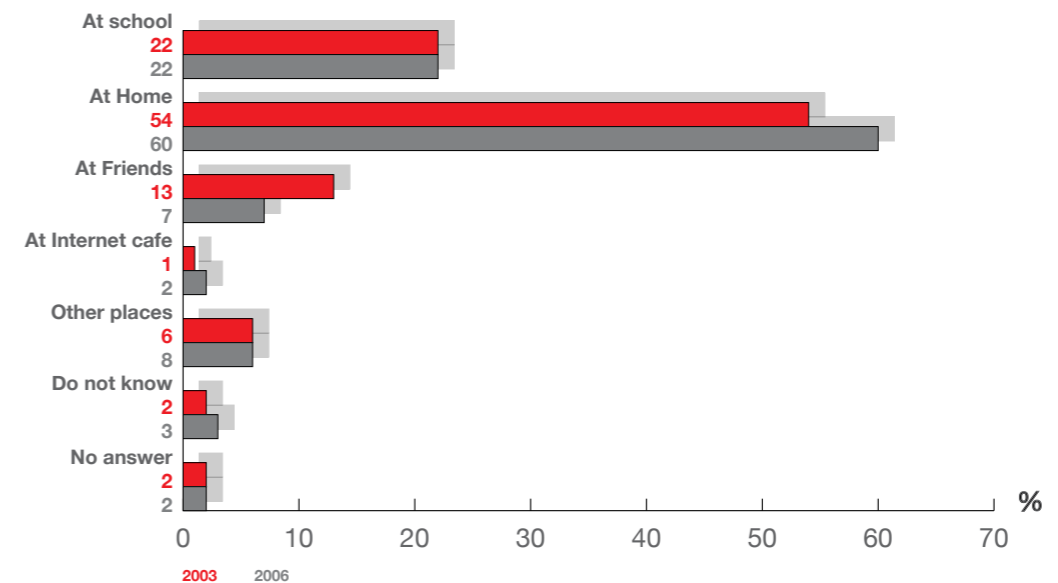
In the past, Internet safety messages for children have always warned against giving out information in the virtual world that would enable strangers to identify and locate them in the real world.

The safety message is that children need to be extremely cautious about disclosing photographs, personal information and school details as this combined information can be used to identify and locate them.

Have you ever met someone new on the Internet who asked for information like your photo, phone number, street address, or the school you attend?



The last time you were asked for personal information, what did you do about it?



INFORMATION AND HOMEWORK://

There is little change in the attitude that “all information on the Internet must be true”. More than 40% believe they can trust most of it. Boys, to a larger degree than the girls, believe the veracity of internet content. However, boys are more likely to take action to find out if information is true/can be trusted. This does not necessarily have to do with content, but they may be checking that files/music/etc. are free from viruses. Only 24% of children say they do something to confirm whether information is true or not.

In addition to asking teacher or family member (67%), the Internet is now one of the main ways children seek information when doing homework (43%), more than books from school (36%), home (29%) or the public library (21%).

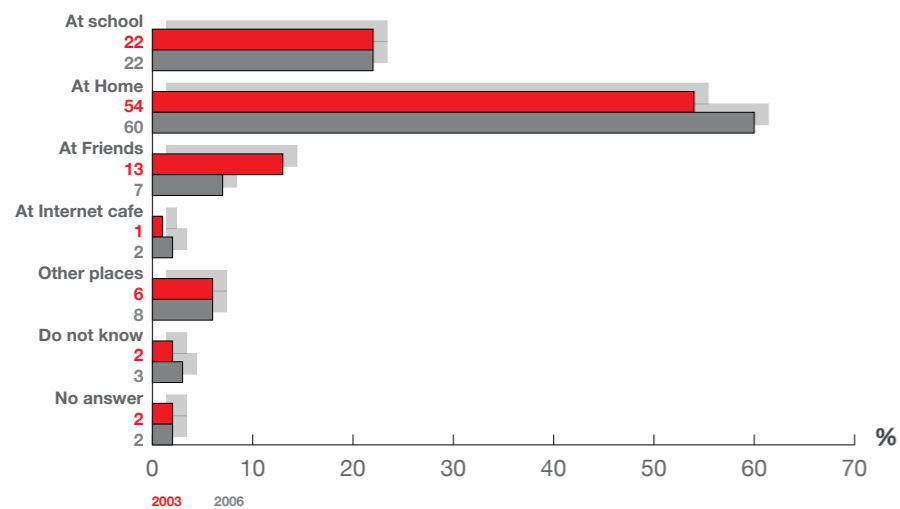
The proportion with positive experiences in using the internet for schoolwork has increased significantly from 35% to 52%.

The issue of source criticism becomes more relevant for schools due to the increased use of the Internet for homework

. Since anyone can post information on the web and because many radical organisations deliberately publish propaganda in the guise of educational material, students need to be aware of specific strategies for validating material they source in this way.

Responsible Internet practice is also concerned with avoiding plagiarism both in homework, in continuous assessment assignments and general project work.

Do you ever do anything to confirm that the information you find on the Internet is true and can be trusted?

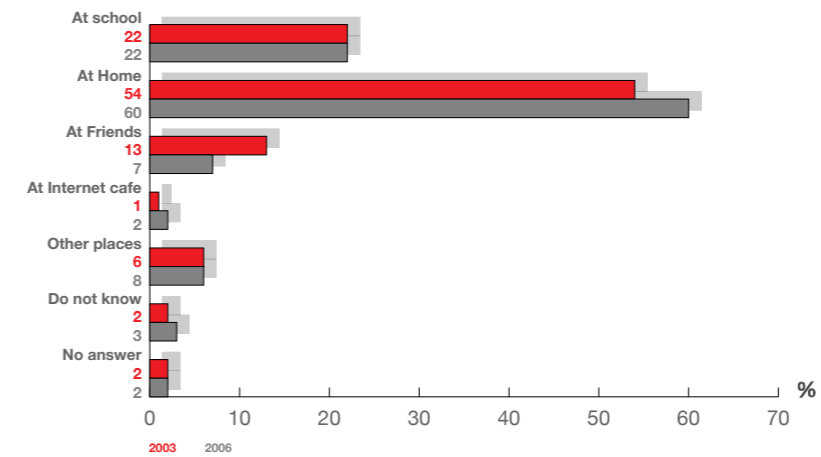


OFFENSIVE MATERIAL –HATEFUL

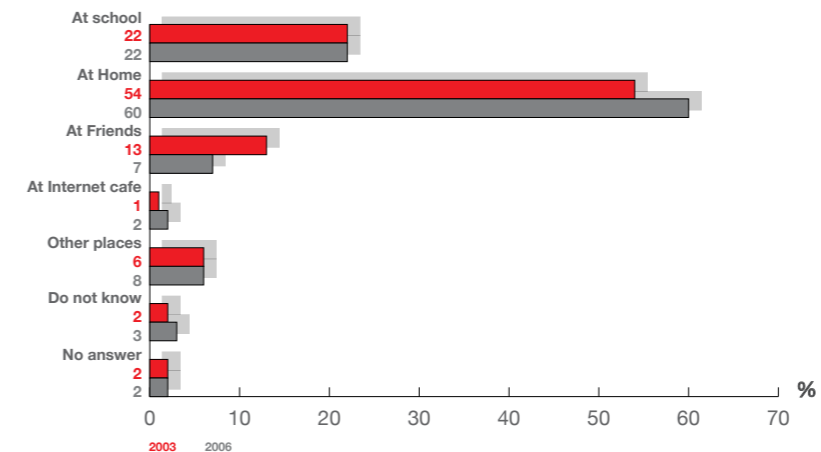
The survey shows a small increase in the number of children that have visited hateful websites either accidentally or on purpose, 22% in 2003 to 25% in 2006. Boys were three times more likely than girls to have visited hate sites a lot.

The results show an increase in the number of children who felt upset after seeing the website (24%), but they mainly didn't think too much about it (29%). Most did not tell anyone that they saw a site of this nature (40%) although some told a friend (19%), and a few told an adult (3%). 8% have posted hateful comments on the Internet. This shows no change compared to 2003. Teenage boys were the most likely to have posted hateful comments. Most of these children didn't think too much about visiting a hateful site like this. Usually they ignored the site or never went back to it. Only 3% told an adult about their experience.

How often have you Accidentally come across a website that was really hateful to anyone(in person or as a group)?



How do you feel about being in a hateful site like that?



OFFENSIVE MATERIAL – SEXUAL

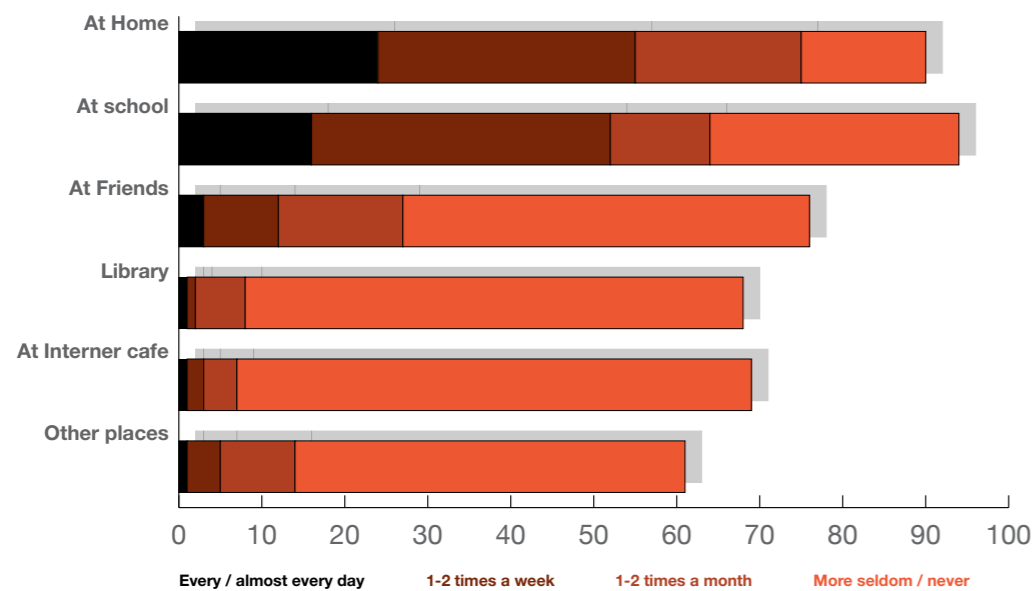
The results show stability in the numbers of children that have visited pornographic websites accidentally or on purpose (37%). Boys and older children are more likely to have visited these websites. One third of the children who saw a pornographic web site ignored it and didn't think too much about it. Half of the children told their friends about what they had seen, while only 6% told their mother or father. Younger children to a larger degree told their parents.

The results also show stability in the proportion who receives pornographic junk mail (25%). There has been a slight reduction in the number of children that have received unwanted sexual comments on the internet (9%). A quarter said they have received such comments with boys being more than twice as likely as girls.

As the internet is here to stay, and as it is impossible to block all offensive material, it is important that children have a relationship of trust with their parents who should advise them on safe internet practices. Parents should encourage their children to adopt a sense of responsibility and a healthy ethic in their Internet use.

Many of the results show that the younger children are more likely to tell their parents.

Have you ever recieved unwanted sexual comments on the Internet?



CHATTING AND IM://

Almost half of the teenagers questioned said they had chatted on the Internet, this was twice the number of preteens. Significantly, more teens used chat services that were targeted specifically at their age group rather than ones related to common interests such as music or sport. They expressed a preference for monitored services.

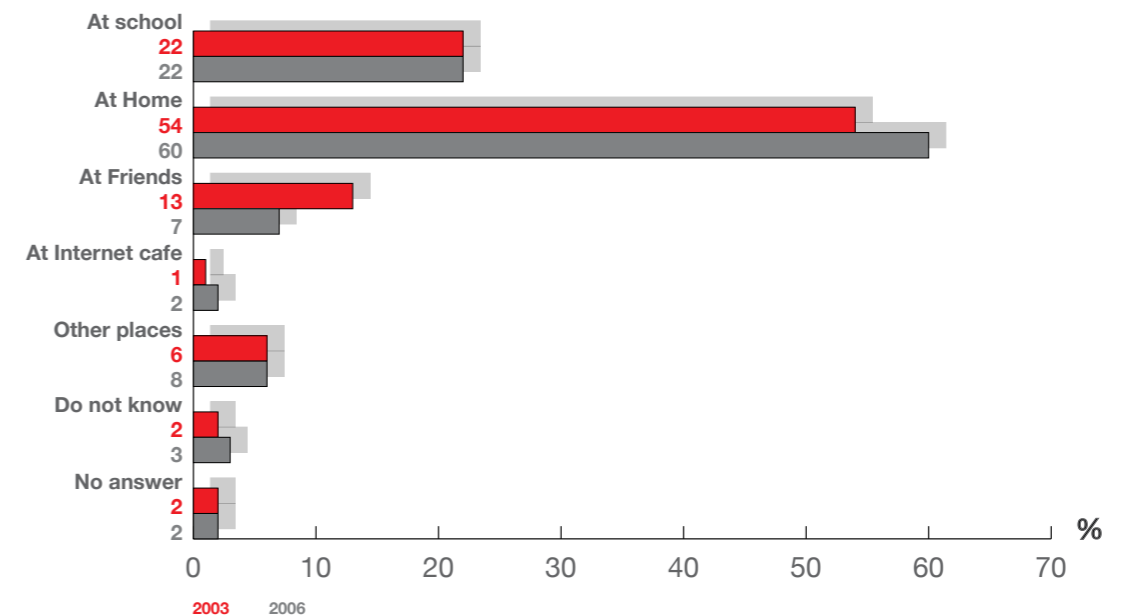
One-in-ten teens claimed to use instant messaging services every day or almost every day. 19% of those that chatted on the Internet said that they had been harassed, bothered, threatened or embarrassed in the past 6 months by someone chatting online; 21% of boys and 18% of girls. This is an increase from 14% in 2003.

When receiving a message of this kind most delete it, some tell a friend or adult.

Children should keep a temporary record of these messages and block the sender. It is of concern that this advice is not being reflected in practice.

20% of those who chatted online had been asked to meet face-to-face with someone that they had only previously met on the Internet.

How often do you use Instant Messaging (IM), like MSN or ICQ Instant Messenger?



FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS://

According to this year's survey 7% of those aged between 9 and 16 years old have met someone in real life that they first met on the Internet. This is an increase from 4.5% in 2003.

Most said that one of their friends went with them to their first meeting, while a quarter of teens said that they went alone. The majority of children said that they had a good time during the meeting. However, 11% of those who met with someone said that the other person tried to physically hurt them, and 7% said that the other person said nasty things to them. Only 22% said that they would tell their parents or teachers about anything bad that happened when they met someone.

Worryingly, of those who went to face-to-face meetings almost 25% said that they had experienced an encounter where the person who introduced themselves to them on the Internet as a child, turned out to be an adult.

This was the case in all the abusive meetings.

In all cases where children had only met face-to-face with other children they first met online, they reported having positive or neutral experiences.

What happened during the meeting?

