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Risks and Safety for Children on the Internet: the Ireland Report

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Risks and safety for children on the internet: the Ireland report

Initial findings from the *EU Kids Online* survey
of 9-16 year olds and their parents

January 2011

Brian O'Neill, Simon Grehan and Kjartan Ólafsson

www.eukidsonline.net

Risks and safety for children on the internet: the Ireland report. This report presents the Irish findings for the *EU Kids Online* project (see www.eukidsonline.net). It includes selected findings, calculated and interpreted for Ireland only, of the survey data and analysis reported in Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A., and Ólafsson, K. (2011). *Risks and safety on the internet: The perspective of European children. Full Findings.* LSE, London: EU Kids Online.

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Previous reports and publications from *EU Kids Online* include:

- Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A., and Ólafsson, K. (2010). R*isks and safety on the internet: The perspective of European children. Initial Findings.* LSE, London: EU Kids Online.

- de Haan, J., and Livingstone, S. (2009) *Policy and Research Recommendations.* LSE, London: EU Kids Online. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/24387/

- Hasebrink, U., Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., and Ólafsson, K. (Eds.) (2009) *Comparing children's online opportunities and risks across Europe: Cross-national comparisons for EU Kids Online (2nd edition).* LSE, London: EU Kids Online. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/24368/

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1.1. Context

This report presents initial findings for Ireland from the pan-European *EU Kids Online* survey – a large 25 country survey conducted by *EU Kids Online* and funded by the EC's Safer Internet Programme. The questionnaire was designed by the EU Kids Online network, coordinated by the London School of Economics and Political Science. Fieldwork was conducted by Ipsos MORI.

In what follows, Irish findings are compared with those from other countries, as reported in Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A., and Ólafsson, K. (2010). *Risks and safety on the internet: The perspective of European children. Initial findings.* LSE, London: EU Kids Online. See www.eukidsonline.net.

1.2. Usage

What do 9-16 year olds children in Ireland say about how they access the internet?

- Nearly all children go online at home (93%), much more so than at school (66%) or at a friend's home (64%).

- Children's use of the internet at home is somewhat above the European average (87%). School or college use is much the same (66% vs. 63%).

- Using the internet 'when out and about' is also higher for children in Ireland than in Europe generally (20% vs. 9%) reflecting the growing popularity of mobile internet access (smartphones, laptops, handheld devices).

- A growing number of children in Ireland (37%) can use the internet in a private space though far more (56%) only access it in a public room at home. Fewer children in Ireland access the internet from their own room compared to the European average (37% vs. 49%). However this changes with age: more 15-16 year old children access the internet privately compared to public access (52% vs. 42%).

- Most (64%) children still access the internet via a shared personal computer (PC) or shared laptop (51%), though access via mobile phone or games console are the next most common (46% and 44%).

The use of mobile phones for internet use is above the European average (46% vs. 31%) as is going online via gaming consoles (44% vs. 26%).

- Children accessing the internet using a handheld mobile device (iPod, smartphone) is at the upper end of equivalent European findings. A group of Northern European countries including Norway (31%), the UK (26%), Ireland (23%) and Sweden 22% are well above the European average of 12%.

- The average age of first internet use for children in Ireland is 9. Overall, the age of first use is dropping in Europe. The average is 9 but in the UK and in Scandinavian countries, the average age is 7 to 8. Note though that Irish 9 year olds first age of use is 7.

- Over half of children in Ireland use the internet daily or almost daily (53%). A further 36% use it once or twice a week. Combined, this is 89% of all children who go online at all; 9% go online once or twice a month, 2% less often. For 9-10 year olds, one third (33%) go online daily. This percentage rises steadily until for 15-16 year olds, nearly three quarters (73%) go online every day.

- In comparison to overall European findings, daily internet use is somewhat below the European average (53% - IE; 60% - EU) and significantly below the top European countries with over 80% daily usage (Sweden, Bulgaria, Estonia, Denmark, Norway and the Netherlands). In the UK, daily internet use is 70%.

- The average time spent online by 9-16 year olds is just over one hour per day (61 minutes). 9-10 year olds spend 45 minutes online each day rising to nearly double that amount or 80 minutes for 15-16 year olds.

- Irish children spend somewhat less time online than their European counterparts (61 minutes vs. 88 minutes) and substantially below the UK average of 99 minutes (and over two hours per day for children aged 13 and over).

- Irish children's digital skills are at the lower end of the European spectrum: on average, children say they have four of the eight skills asked about in the survey (European average 4.2; highest 5.8 Finland). Most 11-16 year olds can bookmark a website (66%), block messages from someone they do not wish to be in

contact with (64%) or find safety information online (64%). Over half can change privacy settings on a social networking profile (58%), block junk mail and spam (49%). Less than half (43%) can delete their history on an internet browser. Only 42% say they compare websites to judge the quality of information. Less than a quarter can change filter preferences (21%).

- A little over one third of 9-16 year olds (36%) say they know more about the internet than their parents. One third say they do not know as much about the internet as their parents. This is very similar to the overall European finding.

- Ireland is very high among European countries in terms of excessive internet use: 43% of Irish children say they have experienced this to some extent. This is the same as the UK and topped only by Bulgaria (44%), Portugal (49%) and Estonia (50%). This compares with a European average of 30%.

- 45% say they have spent less time than they should with friends, family or doing schoolwork because of the time they spend online. This compares with 35% on a European level. A similar proportion has tried unsuccessfully to spend less time on the internet (46%) and/or they feel bothered when they cannot be on the internet (47%).

1.3. Activities

What do Irish 9-16 year old internet users do online?

- The most popular activities (76% in each case) are 'watching video clips' and 'playing internet games'. The next two most popular activities are 'using the internet for school work' and 'visiting a social networking profile' (58% in each case). The most common online activity in Europe as a whole is using the internet for school work (85%). The finding for Ireland is substantially below this. Playing games and watching video clips are closer to the European norms of 83% and 76% respectively.

- The average number of activities reported by Irish children of the list asked about is 5. This is below the European average of 7.1. Teenage boys across Europe reported on average 9 of the activities listed and girls cited 8.1, well above the findings for girls and boys in Ireland, aged 13-16.

- Four in ten (44%) of 9-16 year olds are very satisfied with the quality of online content. Younger children are less satisfied – only 39% of 9-10 year olds and 37% of 11-12 year olds say there are lots of good things for children of their age to do online.

- 59% of all 9-16 year olds in Ireland report having their own social networking profile. Age is the main factor in the use of SNS. One fifth (20%) of the 9-10 year olds report having their own profile, compared with half (52%) of 11-12 year olds. For teenagers, percentages are much higher – 75% of 13-14 year olds and 88% of 15-16 year olds. The fact that younger children under the age of 12 also use social networking sites is interesting (32% of boys and 41% of girls), despite the fact that for many services the minimum age is 13.

- Among social network users, the majority (63%) keep their profile private so that only their friends can see it. A further 22% report that their profile is partially private so that friends of friends and networks can see it. 12% report that their profile is public so that anyone can see it.

- The findings for maintaining a private profile are above equivalent European findings. The 63% of all children in Ireland with maximum privacy settings is, for instance, well above the European average of 43%. The European average for a public profile is 26% against just 12% for Irish children.

- Remembering that 12% of children's social networking profiles are public, 8% of children include an address or phone number. 24% of children also said that they reported an incorrect age compared to 16% at a European level.

- 39% of those aged 11-16 say 'it is a bit or very true of them' that they find it easier to be themselves on the internet than with people face to face. A quarter (24%) say they talk about different things than when speaking to people face to face and 15% say they speak about private things which they do not discuss face to face.

- Most children who communicate online are in touch with people they already know in person face-to-face (88%). One quarter of children aged 11-16 (23%) says they communicate online with people who they met online and who have no connection with their offline social networks.

- The vast majority of children say that in the last year they have not sent a photo or video of themselves (93%) or personal information (87%) to someone they have never met face-to-face. Nor have they pretended to be a different kind of person on the

internet (87%). These findings are in line with European averages and suggest that on the whole children avoid or are aware of the dangers posed by such risky behaviour.

1.4. Risk and Harm

Overall harm

- A large proportion (67%) of children aged 9-16 think that there are things on the internet that will bother children of their age. This is slightly more for teenagers than for younger children. In general, it would appear that many children do not regard the internet as a totally safe environment.

- Yet, in an example of the third person effect, just 11% of children say that they have themselves been bothered by something on the internet. Younger children are less likely to have been bothered by something online (9%) compared with older teenagers (16%).

Seeing sexual images online

- One in five (23%) say that they have seen obviously sexual images in the past 12 months, whether online or offline. This is broadly in line with the European average. Around half have seen this at least once or twice a month, while half have seen it less often. Nearly half of 15-16 year olds (45%) have seen such images compared with just 8% of 9-10 year olds; teenagers also see such images more often.

- The most common ways for children to see sexual images are on television, films or videos (14%) and on the internet (11%). Most children come across sexual images online accidentally through pop ups, though 13% of older teenagers have seen them on an adult/x-rated website.

- Among just those children who have seen sexual images online, one in three (36%) of their parents knew this has occurred. 49% were unaware and denied their child has not seen sexual images on the internet. 15% of their parents say that they didn't know.

- Ireland is relatively low, compared to many countries, both in terms of overall exposure to online pornography and in terms of the degree to which children are bothered or upset by what they saw when they were exposed to online sexual images. In Ireland, one in three of those that had seen sexual images (4% of all children) were bothered by this experience. Older teenagers are also more likely to

be bothered by what they saw (10% of 15-16 year olds who had seen such images).

Bullying online

- Bullying is experienced by a nearly a quarter of Irish children (23%), slightly above the European average of 19%. Most of this is face to face and just a small proportion (4%) has been bullied online. Furthermore, 14% say they have also bullied others in the past twelve months.

- 7% say someone has acted in a hurtful or nasty way towards them more than once a week; for 5% it is once or twice a month; and for 11% it is less often, suggesting one or a few instances have occurred in the past year.

- The most common form of bullying is face to face: 15% say that someone has acted in a hurtful or nasty way towards them in person compared with 4% who say that this happened on the internet or by mobile phone calls or messages.

- Younger children in the 9-10 year old range are the most likely to have been bullied but this is nearly always face to face rather than by mobile phone or online. It is teenagers who experience more electronically mediated forms of bullying, 15-16 year olds report the greatest levels of cyberbullying – 9% on the internet and 10% by mobile phone. Social networking sites provide the main platform for online bullying.

- Being the target of nasty or hurtful messages is the most common form of online bullying (3% of all 11-16 year olds). Having such messages passed around the peer group or posted where others can see them is less common (just 1% or 2% of 15-16 year olds). Only 1% has been threatened online.

- Among children who say "yes, I have been sent nasty or hurtful messages on the internet", one third (29%) of their parents also say that their child has been bullied online. But in 68% of cases parents were unaware or say that their child has not been bullied. In 3% of cases, the parent doesn't know.

- 14% of all children say that they have bullied others or acted in a hurtful or nasty way in the past 12 months. Bullying others is more common among 15-16 year olds (24%) and among boys (19%).

Sending and receiving sexual messages online ('sexting')

- The experience of 'sexting' in Ireland is below the European average (11% vs. 15%) and is among the four lowest countries in Europe. Just 3% also say they have posted such messages which is the same for Europe overall.

- The most common among these generally rare practices is being sent a sexual message on the internet – 7% of all 11-16 year olds. While involving few younger children, being sent a sexual message online is reported by 13% of 15-16 year olds.

- For the 11% of children overall who have received sexual messages online, just 21% of parents were aware that this had happened. 27% did not know but 52% said that this had not occurred when, according to the child, it had.

Meeting online contacts offline

- Findings in relation to Irish children maintaining online contacts and for going on to meet such contacts offline are on the lower end of European findings (3rd lowest of 25 countries).

- Nearly one third of children (28%) have made contact online with someone they did not previously know offline. The older the child, the more likely they are to have made contact with new people online: 10% of 9-10 year olds vs. 43% of 15-16 year olds have made new contacts this way.

- Overall, just 4% of 9-16 year olds have gone to a meeting face to face with someone that they first met on the internet. This primarily relates to older teenagers and for 15-16 year olds, 10% or one in ten teenagers have met an online contact offline.

Potentially harmful user-generated content

- Overall, 25% of children in Ireland have seen websites containing some form of potentially harmful user-generated content. These include sites promoting drug-taking, ways to be thin, racism or hatred, or even suicide. This is slightly above the European average of 21%, placing Ireland somewhere in the middle of the EU25.

- Potentially harmful user-generated content affects mostly older teenagers and girls in particular. Girls see more under each category with the exception of the rare but still important finding regarding suicide sites. Girls, predictably, see more sites promoting ways to be thin but also more sites containing hate messages and sites concerning drug-taking.

- 21% of 15-16 year olds (11% overall) have seen sites promoting ways to be thin.

- 20% of 15-16 year olds have seen sites talking about drug use.

- 7% of boys and 6% of girls aged 14-16 years old have seen sites talking about ways of committing suicide.

Personal data misuse

- 12% of children overall have experienced some form of personal data misuse. This is above the European average of 9% and places Ireland in the middle of the EU25.

- The most common form of personal data misuse is someone using the child's password or pretending to be them. This was experienced by 10% of children overall, and more by older teenagers than younger children.

- Smaller numbers experienced some form of misuse of their personal information or being cheated on the internet. Girls experience more forms of personal data misuse: 14% of girls compared to 10% of boys have had their password stolen or misused.

1.5. Mediation

Mediation by parents

- The vast majority of parents (91%) mediate their children's internet use in some way. This is above the European average of 87%. Most parents (72%) stay close or watch their children when using the internet, particularly in the case of younger children. Many parents also talk to their children about what they do online (67% overall and over 75% for younger children). A quarter of parents (26%) think it fairly or very likely that their child will experience something that bothers them online in the next six months.

- Irish parents are also active in promoting internet safety: 72% have explained to their children why certain websites are good or bad and have suggested ways to use the internet safely. A majority of parents also take positive steps such as suggesting how to behave towards others online (62%) and talking about things that might bother the child (64%). A smaller number has helped their child when something arose in the past (39%).

- Overall, levels of restrictive mediation, or setting of rules regarding internet use, for children in Ireland are high compared to the European average of 85%, and are in fact the highest in Europe. Most rules apply to disclosing personal information, where 91% say that they are either not allowed to do this or that restrictions apply. This applies to 99% of younger children.

- Spam filters and virus control software is used by 79% of households, according to children. Other parental tools are used much less frequently with filters being used by just 41% of parents. Time-limiting software is used only by 12%. Overall, use of technical tools is relatively low, especially by comparison with other parental mediation strategies. Still, roughly a quarter of parents blocks or filters websites (28%) and/or tracks the websites visited by the children (24%).

- 82% of children think their parents know a lot or quite a bit about their children's internet use. 13% say 'just a little' and just 4% claim that their parent knows nothing about the internet. Most parents do feel confident they can help their child with anything on the internet that bothers them: 46% say they are very confident and 39% say they can help a fair amount. Just 5% say they would not be able to help at all and 9% say they would not be very able to help.

- Just over half (51%) of children think that parental mediation limits what they do online, 20% saying it limits their activities a lot. Over three quarters of all children (77%) say they do not simply ignore parental advice. 19% say they ignore their parents a little and 4% of children say they ignore a lot.

Mediation by teachers

- Most children (87%) report some form mediation by their teachers, more in terms of rule making (91%).

- Significantly, 68% of children say their teachers have suggested ways to use the internet safely. This is somewhat higher for older teenagers in the secondary school cycle. This is well above the European average of 58% though in a number of countries where internet safety is fully embedded in the curriculum higher figures are reported (the UK is 85% for instance).

- 61% say that their teachers explain to them why some websites are good or bad. 57% of children have been helped when they find something difficult on the internet.

Peer mediation

- 67% of children say their peers have helped or supported their internet use in at least one of the five ways asked about.

- Peers are much more likely to mediate in a practical way, helping each other to do or find something when there is a difficulty (51%). Fewer say that peers help when they are bothered by something (24%).

- Overall, 28% of children say they have received some guidance on safe internet use from their friends, and 35% say that they have also provided such advice to their friends.

Sources of internet safety information

- In general, internet safety advice is received first from parents (72%), then teachers (68%), then peers (28%). For children from lower SES homes, advice from teachers overtakes that of parents.

- Other relatives (51%), interestingly, are generally as important as peers in providing advice to children on how to use the internet safely. Information received via the traditional mass media (20%) is less used, with online sources even less frequently used (10% have gained safety advice from websites).

- Around one third of children (32%) report that they have not received safety guidance from any of these sources. Younger children report receiving less advice than do teenagers.

- Parents get internet safety advice first and foremost from family and friends (57%), then traditional media (44%), the child's school (31%), internet service providers (25%) and websites (23%). 12% of parents say they have received safety information from their own children, 20% in the case of older teenagers.

- When asked where they would like to get more advice from, the child's school is the most popular choice for parents at 52%, while friends and family drop to sixth place at 28%. Traditional media, government and ISP sources are the next most popular ranging from 30% to 34%. Only 5% of parents say that they don't want further information on internet safety.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1. Overview

Children and young people are in the vanguard of the social and technological revolution of the internet. Their experience of going online at an ever younger age and gaining access to online, convergent, mobile and networked media is unprecedented in the history of technological innovation. In order to ensure the maximum benefits from the internet and to minimise its downsides, it is essential that we gain better knowledge of how children are negotiating this new world. We need to know more about how they go online, what risks they encounter and and how they deal with them.

This report presents the initial findings from a survey of 9-16 year old children and young people in Ireland, the aim of which is to provide a unique insight into the balance of opportunities and risks experienced by Irish children on the internet. The survey, undertaken between May and July 2010, compares children's experiences by age, gender and socioeconomic status. It also compares the accounts of children and their parents and it compares Irish children's experiences with those across Europe.

This survey was conducted as part of a larger 25 country survey conducted by the *EU Kids Online* network and funded by the EC's Safer Internet Programme. This project aims to enhance knowledge of European children's and parents' experiences and practices regarding risky and safer use of the internet and new online technologies, and thereby to inform the promotion of a safer online environment for children. Countries included in *EU Kids Online* are: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and the UK.

For the Ireland survey, a random stratified sample of 994 9-16 year olds who use the internet, together with one of their parents/carers, was interviewed between May and July 2010. The survey questionnaire was designed by the *EU Kids Online network*, coordinated by the London School of Economics and Political Science. Fieldwork was conducted by Ipsos MORI.

Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) and the National Centre for Technology in Education (NCTE) act as the national contact points for the project and have compiled the present report.

Where findings from Ireland are compared with those from other countries, these are taken from the pan-European report: Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A., Ólafsson, K. (2010). R*isks and safety on the internet: The perspective of European children. Initial Findings*. LSE, London: EU Kids Online, available at www.eukidsonline.net.

2.2. Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework for the project is developed in greater length in the full European report. There, a hypothesised sequence of factors relating to internet use is presented that may shape children's experiences of harm. The present report follows this sequence, presenting an account of children's internet use (amount, device and location of use), then their online activities (opportunities taken up, skills developed and risky practices engaged in) and, in this wider context, an account of the risks encountered by children.

Possible risks include encountering pornography, bullying/being bullied, sending/receiving sexual messages ('sexting') and going to offline meetings with people first met online. Also included, more briefly, are risks associated with negative user-generated content and personal data misuse. However, it is important to note that we also ask how children respond to and/or cope with these experiences. To the extent that they do not cope, the outcome may be harmful. However, there is no inevitable relation between risk and harm – for many children, the probability that risk encounters will be harmful is shown in the report to be low.

Figure 1: Relating online use, activities and risk factors to harm to children
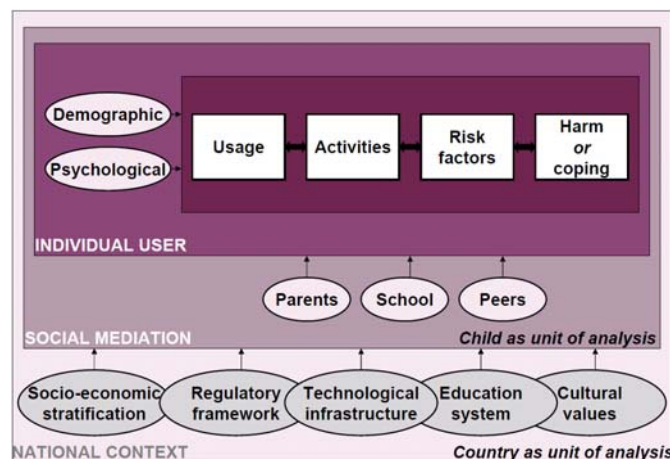
As shown in Figure 1, many external factors may influence children's experiences. In this report, we report the role of demographic factors such as the child's age, gender, socio-economic status (SES). Socio-economic status was assessed by combining two measures – the level of education and the type of occupation of the main wage earner in the household. Educational systems vary across countries, so national measures were standardised using the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED).

Subsequent *EU Kids Online* reports will analyse the role of psychological factors, such as emotional problems, self-efficacy, risk-taking, the social factors that mediate children's online and offline experiences, especially the activities of parents, teachers and friends, and the economic, social and cultural factors that may shape the online experience at the national level.

2.3. Methodology

It is particularly difficult to measure private or upsetting aspects of a child's experience. EU Kids Online has approached the online risk experiences of European children with a number of key responses to the methodological challenges faced. The survey was conducted as a face to face interview in own children's homes. The questionnaire included a self-completion section for sensitive questions to avoid being heard by parents, family members or the interviewer.

The methodology adopted was approved by the *LSE Research Ethics Committee* and appropriate protocols

were put in place to ensure that the rights and wellbeing of children and families were protected during the research process. At the end of the interview, children and families were provided with a leaflet providing tips on internet safety and details of relevant help lines.

Key features of the methodology include:

- Cognitive testing and pilot testing, to check thoroughly children's understandings of and reactions to the questions.

- A detailed survey that questions children themselves, to gain a direct account of their online experiences.

- Equivalent questions asked of each type of risk to compare across risks, and across online and offline risks.

- Matched comparison questions to the parent most involved in the child's internet use.

- Measures of mediating factors – psychological vulnerability, social support and safety practices.

- Follow up questions pursue how children respond to or cope with online risk.

- The inclusion of the experiences of young children aged 9-10, who are often excluded from surveys.

For full details of the project methodology, materials, technical fieldwork report and research ethics, see www.eukidsonline.net. The Irish survey was conducted as a face to face interview with children, using computer-based self-completion for questions on risk and harm.

Note that findings presented for Ireland are compared with those obtained in other countries. The 'Europe' of this report is distinct from, though overlapping with the European Union, being the weighted average of findings from the particular 25 countries included in this project.

Throughout this report, 'children' refers to 9-16 year olds in Ireland who use the internet. It is estimated that this is approximately 81% of children in this age group in Ireland.[1]

3. USAGE

What do 9-16 year olds children in Ireland say about how they use the internet? The face-to-face interview with children included a range of questions about 'using the internet'. 'Using the internet' refers to any and all devices by which children go online, and it includes any and all places in which the child goes online.

3.1. Where and how children go online

Using the internet at home has been the most common way of going online for children but this is diversifying. With the increasing popularity of mobile internet access (smartphones, laptops, handheld devices), gong online is no longer restricted to the desktop PC. Much safety advice has until recently assumed the desktop PC as the main means of access and has urged parents to locate this in a public room and/or to install filtering or monitoring software. Different locations for using the internet now imply different social conventions of freedom, privacy, sociality and surveillance and require a new approach to internet safety.

- Table 1 shows that nearly all children who go online do so in a public room at home (87%), more so than at school of college (66%) or at a friend's house (64%).

- The average number of different locations of use was 3.5 giving children considerable flexibility in where and how they go online.

- Compared to Europe as a whole, children's use of the internet in a public room at home is well above the European average (87% vs. 62%), while school or college use is much the same (66% vs. 63%). Using the internet 'when out and about' is also higher for children in Ireland than in Europe generally (20% vs. 9%) reflecting the growing popularity of mobile internet access (smartphones, laptops, handheld devices).

- Fewer children in Ireland access the internet from their own room compared to the European average (37% vs. 49%), while using internet cafés (9% vs.

12%) or public libraries (14% vs. 12%) for internet access is relatively similar.

- Teenagers have somewhat more independent internet use ('own room', 'when out and about') but still below European averages.

Table 1: Where children use the internet, by age and gender

% children who say they use the internet at the following locations	11-12 year old		13-16 year old		
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	All
Living room (or other public room) at home	84	91	84	88	87
At school or college	61	66	71	67	66
At a friend's home	55	60	67	75	64
At a relative's home	51	55	48	51	51
Own bedroom (or other private room) at home	26	26	48	47	37
When 'out and about'	8	4	33	33	20
In a public library or other public place	11	13	20	12	14
In an internet cafe	5	5	13	11	9
Average number of locations of use	3.0	3.2	3.8	3.8	3.5

QC301a-h: Looking at this card, please tell me where you use the internet these days.[2] *(Multiple responses allowed)*

Base: All children who use the internet.

Figure 2 provides some further details of the use of the internet at home given its importance as the most common location for online access. Here, use at home in private spaces (own bedroom) is compared to use *only* in public rooms.

- A growing number of children in Ireland (37%) can use the internet in a private space though far more (56%) only access it in a public room at home. This is a reverse of the European finding where more children had private internet access (49%) compared to public rooms only 38%). In this way, children in Ireland conform to the traditional model urging proximate supervision of internet access though this will need to be updated for the many who in fact now enjoy a more private internet experience.

- Private use in the child's bedroom is strongly differentiated by age – for younger children, use is generally in a public room; for teenagers it more occurs often in private. More 15-16 year old children access the internet privately compared to public access (52% vs. 42%). Older children thus may be said to have greater opportunities for freedom to explore, privacy and flexibility in use while younger children, it may be assumed, have more closely monitored internet use.

- The differences by SES in private/public use of the internet are notable in this regard. 43% from low SES homes can use the internet in a private room compared to 38% from medium SES homes and just 29% of children from high SES backgrounds.

- There are no gender differences when it comes to private use of the internet.

- The age profile for 'own room' access to the internet for children in Ireland would appear to be two years behind the European average, i.e. 13-14 year old Europeans enjoy the level of private access available to Irish 15-16 year olds. Similarly, 11-12 year old European children have the same level of private access that Irish 13-14 year olds have. This contributes to an overall impression that Irish children are more restricted in their access to the internet in comparison with Europe as a whole.

Figure 2: Children's use of internet at home
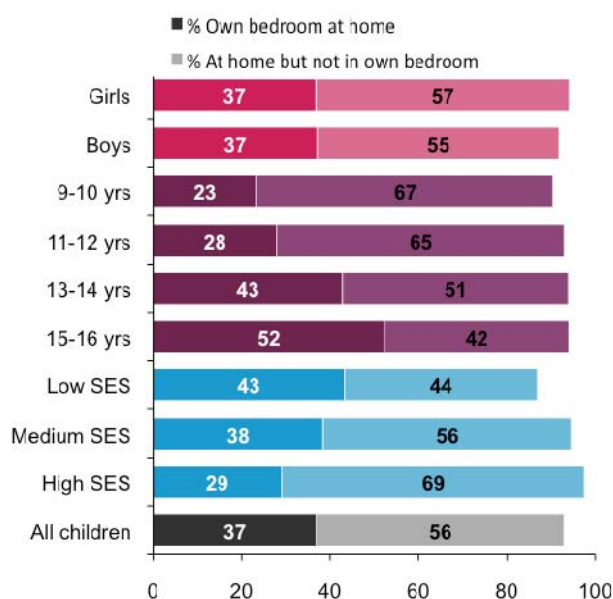
QC301a, b: Looking at this card, please tell me where you use the internet these days.

Base: All children who use the internet.

In Table 2, we see the different devices on which children access the internet.

- Most (64%) children still access the internet via a shared personal computer (PC) or shared laptop (51%), though access via mobile phone or games console are the next most common (46% and 44%).

- Going online, in other words, is no longer confined to using a computer and a variety of devices can offer internet access (just over 3 on average are used by children).

- The use of mobile phones for internet use is above the European average (46% vs. 31%), as is going online via gaming consoles (44% vs. 26%).

- Nearly one third (32%) go online through their television set, around another third do so via a mobile phone (31%), and a quarter access the internet via games console (26%). Given that computer access has long predominated, these other options have clearly been taken up in recent years

- Over a quarter go online using a personal laptop (28%) and 23% use a handheld or portable device (e.g. iPod Touch, iPhone or Blackberry) reflecting again the growing importance of mobile devices.

Table 2: Devices through which children access the internet

% children who use the internet	
Shared PC	64
Shared laptop	51
Mobile phone	46
Games console	44
Television set	32
Own laptop	28
Other handheld portable device/smartphone	23
Own PC	22
Average number of devices of use	3.1

QC300a-h: Which of these devices do you use for the internet these days? *(Multiple responses allowed)*

Base: All children who use the internet.

In Figure 3, the profile of children accessing the internet via a mobile phone or handheld device is examined more closely.

Figure 3: Child accesses the internet using a mobile phone or a handheld device
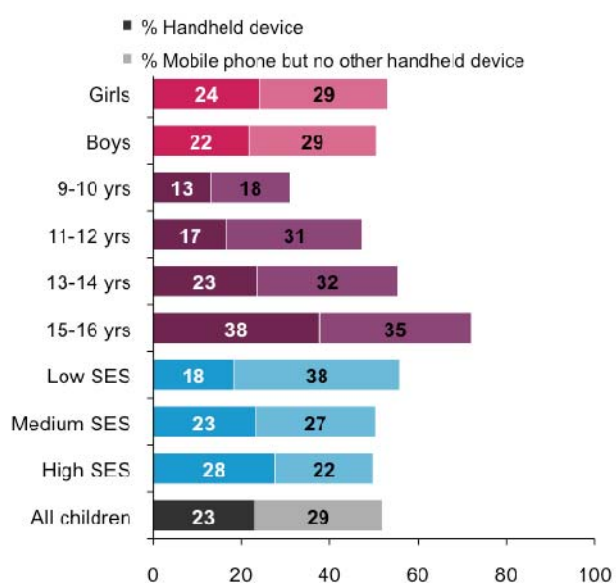
QC300h, e: Which of these devices do you use for the internet these days?

Base: All children who use the internet

- Children use of the internet via a handheld or smartphone device is at the upper end of equivalent European findings. A group of Northern European countries including Norway (31%), the UK (26%), Ireland (23%) and Sweden 22% are well above the European average of 12%. Children in Southern and Eastern European countries are least likely to have internet access via a handheld device.
- 15-16 year olds are much more likely to go online using handheld devices (38%) as are those from higher SES backgrounds.
- There are few gender differences with slightly more girls than boys using handheld devices.

Overall, access to the internet through mobile technology is, to some degree, stratified by age and SES in fairly predictable ways.

Other aspects of internet use studied include age of first internet use, frequency and time spent online.

The average age of first internet use for children in Ireland is 9. Overall the age of first use is dropping in Europe. The average is 9 but in the UK and in Scandinavian countries, the average age is 7 to 8. But as Figure 4 shows, this is declining in Ireland also.

Figure 4: Average age when children started to use the internet
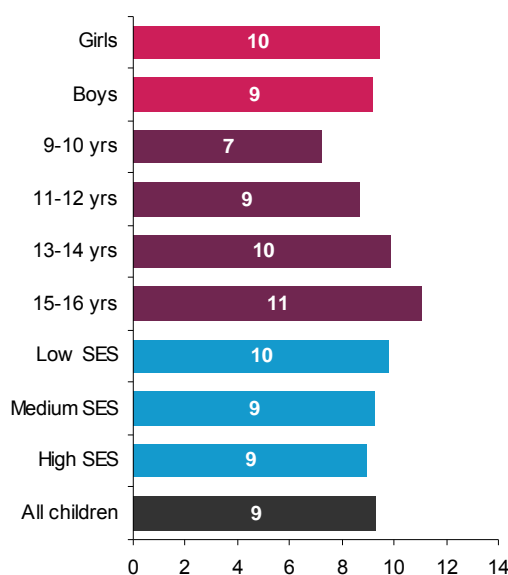
QC302: How old were you when you first used the internet?

Base: All children who use the internet.

How often children go online is shown in Figure 5. The frequency of use gives an indication of how embedded the internet is in children's lives. Daily or near daily use, it may be argued, is necessary for the communication and networking functions of the internet.

Figure 5: How often children use the internet
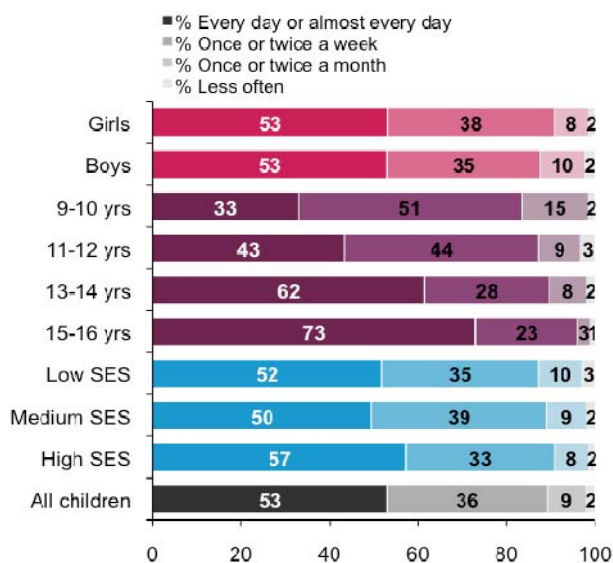
QC303: How often do you use the internet?

Base: All children who use the internet.

- The two main groups that stand out here are those who use the internet daily or almost daily (53%) and those who use it once or twice a week (36%). Combined, this is 89% of all children who go online at all; 9% go online once or twice a month, 2% less often.
- There is no gender difference in daily use of the internet, and very slight differences for weekly or less frequent use.
- Age differences in frequency of use stand out as the most marked. For 9-10 year olds, one third (33%) go online daily. This percentage rises steadily until for 15-16 year olds, nearly three quarters (73%) go online every day.
- SES differences are less evident: over half of children in the case go online daily regardless of background and a range of 52% in low SES households to 57% in high SES homes.
- In comparison to overall European findings, daily internet use is below the European average (53% - IE; 60% - EU) and significantly below the top

European countries with over 80% daily usage (Sweden, Bulgaria, Estonia, Denmark, Norway and the Netherlands). In the UK, daily internet use is 70%.

The amount of time children spend online each day is shown in Figure 6. Children were asked to give estimates for an average school day and an average non-school day. These are combined to estimate average internet use each day.

Figure 6: How long children use the internet for on an average day (in minutes)
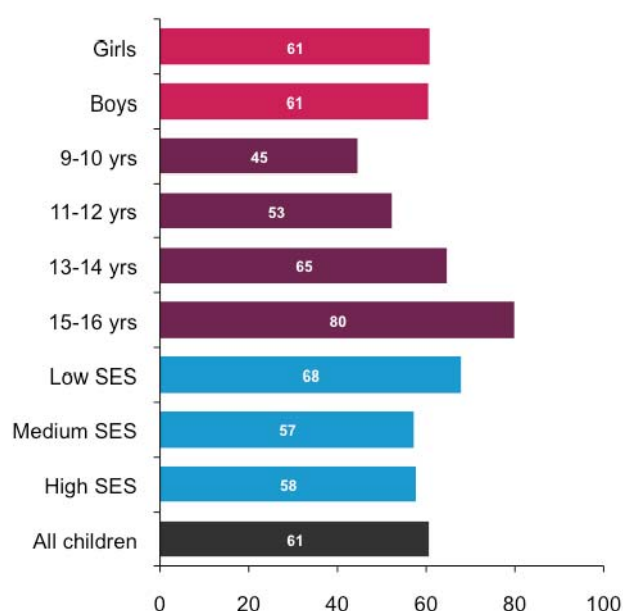
Derived from QC304 and QC305: About how long do you spend using the internet on a normal school day / normal non-school day?

Base: All children who use the internet.

- The average time spent online by 9-16 year olds is just over one hour per day (61 minutes).
- There are no gender differences in time spent online: boys and girls both estimate the same average.
- The amount of time spent online is most marked by age. 9-10 year olds spend 45 minutes online each day rising to nearly double that amount or 80 minutes for 15-16 year olds.
- There are some SES differences in time spent online with children from low SES households spending 68 minutes on average online everyday compared to 58 minutes from high SES homes.

The average time spent online for children in Ireland is below the European average (61 minutes vs. 88 minutes) and well below the UK average of 99 minutes (and over two hours per day for children aged 13 and over). Though, note below (3.3) that when it comes to "excessive use of the internet", children in Ireland are at the upper end of the European scale.

Overall, it may be said that children in Ireland lag somewhat behind their European counterparts in terms of embeddedness of internet use in everyday life. Both in terms of daily use and time spent online, Ireland lies below European norms. It is likely that as internet penetration grows, children will spend more time online and conform to those northern European countries where daily ubiquitous internet use is well established.

3.2. Digital literacy and safety skills

'Digital literacy' (or 'media literacy', 'competence' or 'skills'), plays a vital role in children's use of the internet. It is assumed to result from, and further stimulate, the range and depth of children's online activities. Policy makers anticipate that the more digitally literate or skilled children become, the more they will gain from the internet while also being better prepared to avoid or cope with online risks. While digital literacy is generally defined as including a broad range of skills and competences, digital safety skills represent a specific subset of digital or media literacy.

Table 3 shows eight specific skills which children were asked about in the survey with the focus on critical and safety skills.

Table 3: Children's digital literacy and safety skills (age 11+)

% who say they can…	11-12 year old		13-16 year old		
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	All
Book mark a website	53	45	72	74	66
Block messages from someone you don't want to hear from	34	46	68	83	64
Find information on how to use the internet safely	50	54	68	72	64
Change privacy settings on a social networking profile	32	33	66	76	58
Block unwanted adverts or junk mail/spam	30	37	52	62	49
Delete the record of which sites you have visited	27	20	54	52	43
Compare different websites to decide if information is true	30	19	55	46	42
Change filter preferences	9	8	28	24	21
Average number of skills	2.6	2.6	4.6	4.8	4.0

QC320a-d and QC321a-d: Which of these things do you know how to do on the internet? Please say yes or no to each of the following... If you don't know what something is or what it means, don't worry, just say you don't know.

Base: All children aged 11-16 who use the internet.

- On average, children say they have four of the eight skills asked about. This is slightly below the European average of 4.2 but at the lower end of the European spectrum, i.e. 7th lowest of EU25.

- Most 11-16 year olds can bookmark a website (66%), block messages from someone they do not wish to be in contact with (64%) or find safety information online (64%). These findings are very similar to the European average.

- Over half can change privacy settings on a social networking profile (58%), block junk mail and spam (49%). Less than half (43%) can delete their history on an internet browser.
- Only 42% say they compare websites to judge the quality of information. This is substantially below the European average of 61%. Across all ages, children in Ireland are below their European equivalents in this basic area of media literacy.
- Less than a quarter can change filter preferences (21%).

Looking at differences by age and gender, it is interesting to note that girls, particularly in the older age group, claim more skills than boys. Girls are better able to manage blocking, privacy settings on a social networking profile and block unwanted content than boys. This slightly reverse the European average where boys claimed more skills than girls.

Additionally, as a simple, global measure of self-confidence among European youth, the *EU Kids Online* survey also asked the children (now including the 9-10 year olds) to say how true it is for them that "I know more about the internet than my parents".

Figure 7 shows their answers by demographic variables:

- On average, a little over one third of 9-16 year olds (36%) say that the statement, "I know more about the internet than my parents," is 'very true' of them; a little less than one third (30%) say it is 'a bit true' and a third (34%) say it is 'not true' of them. This is very similar to the overall European finding.
- There are few gender differences here as was found with measures of concrete skills (above), and again slightly more girls (37%) than boys (34%) say this statement is 'very true' of them.
- Age differences are marked. It seems that, although sizeable numbers of 9-10 year olds use the internet, they have little confidence that they know more about it compared with their parents – 65% say this statement is 'not true' for them.
- By contrast, teenagers are confident: 63% of 15-16 year olds say this statement is 'very true' for them.
- SES differences are less marked but still noticeable, with children from lower SES homes more confident that they know a lot about the internet than those from higher SES homes.

Figure 7: "I know more about the internet than my parents"
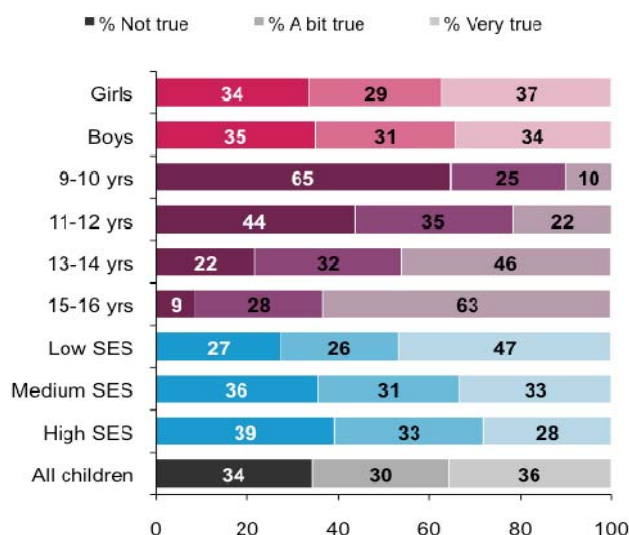
QC319a: How true are these of you? I know more about the internet

than my parents. Please answer not true, a bit true or very true.

Base: All children who use the internet.

While the majority of children were able to manage the specific skills asked about in the survey, and over one third are very confident about using the internet compared to their parents, there is plenty of scope for developing skills and confidence, particularly among younger users. The lower levels of skills and confidence claimed by younger children are especially of concern, given that they are increasingly using the internet in substantial numbers.

3.3. Excessive use of the internet

There is growing public anxiety about excessive internet use or even 'internet addiction' and the impact this may on children's cognitive or social development. While there is a lack of agreement on whether 'internet addiction' is an appropriate term, the question of 'excessive use' is worth investigating. Drawing on prior measurement of computer or games 'addiction', recent research focuses on circumstances in which the internet displaces children's social or personal needs in a way that they cannot control.

In the EU Kids Online survey, we asked 11-16 year olds, as shown in Figure 8, questions concerning overall amount of internet use as well as the conflict this may introduce with family or schoolwork, together with the experience of not being able to reduce or stop the activity.

Figure 8: Excessive use of the internet among children (age 11+)
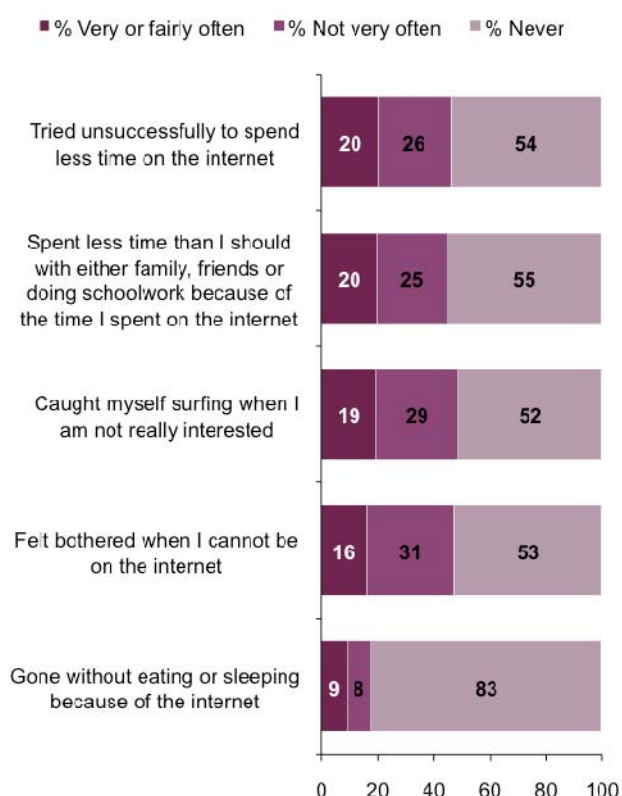
QC144a-e: How often have these things happened to you?
Base: All children aged 11-16 who use the internet.

While only a minority experiences these features of excessive internet use, the findings for Irish children are well above equivalent European findings and present some issues of concern for parents, teachers and policy makers.

- 45% say they have spent less time than they should with friends, family or doing schoolwork because of the time they spend online. This compares with 35% on a European level. A similar proportion have tried unsuccessfully to spend less time on the internet (46%) and/or they feel bothered when they cannot be on the internet (47%).

- Many agree with the statement, "I have caught myself surfing when I am not really interested". Nearly half (48%) children agree with this, though only 19% say this happens fairly or very often.

- In three of the questions concerning excessive internet use, this happens to 20% of children fairly or very often.

- Fewer children (17%) say that they have gone without eating or sleeping because of the internet – 9% say this happens fairly or very often compared to 5% in Europe as a whole.

Figure 9: Child has experienced one or more form of excessive internet use fairly or very often (age 11+)
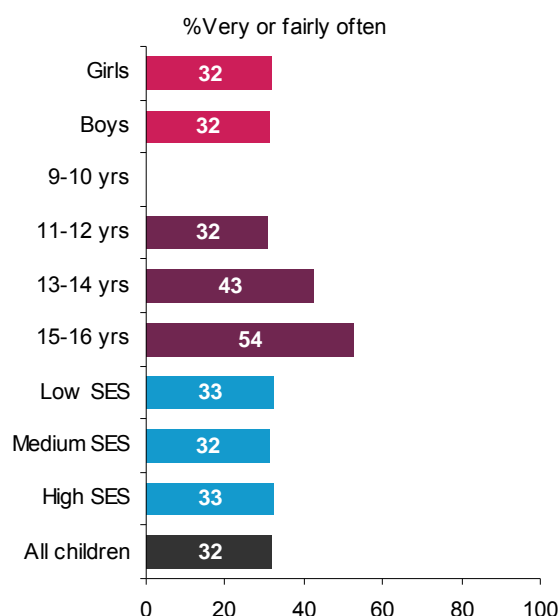
QC144a-e: How often have these things happened to you? The graph shows the percentage of children who answer 'fairly' or 'very often' to one or more of the five statements in figure 7.
Base: All children aged 11-16 who use the internet.

Looking at a breakdown by demographics (Figure 9), we see that excessive internet is particularly a problem for 15-16 year olds. 54% of this age group have experienced one or more the features describing excessive internet use. This declines with age with 43% of 13-14 year olds and 32% of 11-12 year olds saying this is a problem. There are no gender or SES difference.

It seems, therefore, that as an activity which children would like to cut down on, and which has some adverse effects on other aspects of their lives, excessive use is a problem for a minority of children.

Using a composite index based on the percentage of children who answer 'fairly' or 'very often' to one or more of these five experiences shows that Ireland is very high among European countries in terms of excessive internet use: 43% of Irish children answer 'fairly' or 'very often' to one or more of these five experiences. This is the same as the UK and topped only by Bulgaria (44%), Portugal (49%) and Estonia (50%). This compares with a European average of 30%.

4. ACTIVITIES

4.1. Range of children's online activities

What do Irish children aged 9-16 say they do when they go online? The *EU Kids Online* survey asked children about which online activities they take up, so as to understand the opportunities they enjoy and to provide a context for the investigation of online risks.

• The most popular activities (76% in each case) are 'watching video clips' and 'playing internet games'.

• The next two most popular activities were 'using the internet for school work' and 'visiting a social networking profile' (58% in each case).

• These top four findings are interesting when compared to the overall European findings. The most common online activity in Europe as a whole is using the internet for school work (93%). The finding for Ireland is substantially below this. Playing games and watching video clips are closer to the European norms of 86% and 73% respectively.

• Communicating online (emailing – 41%; instant messaging - 41%) are the next most important activities, particularly for teenagers, though again below the European averages of 62% and 61% respectively. Preferred activities among younger children are creating a character or avatar and spending time in a virtual world.

• Another important comparison with European findings is that of the average number of activities. The average number of activities for Europe as a whole is 7.1 compared to the 5 reported by Irish children. Teenage boys across Europe reported on average 9 of the activities listed and girls cited 10, nearly double the findings for girls and boys in Ireland, aged 13-16.

• Interesting gender differences that arise include the finding that teenage girls are more likely to use social networking (86% compared to 71% for boys); use instant messaging (65% compared to 50% for boys); post videos, photos or music to share with others (57% compared to 35%). The gender differences,

though less marked, also feature among younger children aged 9-12.

Table 4: Children's activities online in the past month

% who have…	9-12		13-16		
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	All
Watched video clips	73	62	83	87	76
Played internet games on your own or against the computer	78	81	78	64	76
Used the internet for school work	55	65	56	57	58
Visited a social networking profile	32	41	71	86	58
Sent/received email	21	32	52	59	41
Used instant messaging	18	28	50	65	41
Put (or posted) a message on a website	15	20	39	49	31
Put (or posted) photos, videos or music to share with others	13	18	35	57	31
Played games with other people on the internet	38	26	44	13	30
Downloaded music or films	12	14	42	40	27
Created a character, pet or avatar	32	39	16	14	25
Spent time in a virtual world	17	27	11	13	17
Used a webcam	13	14	12	18	14
Read/watched the news on the internet	15	7	19	14	14
Visited a chatroom	7	8	9	12	9
Used file sharing sites	3	2	16	13	9
Written a blog or online diary	3	2	6	14	6
Average number of activities	4.2	4.6	6.2	6.5	5.4

QC102: How often have you played internet games in the past 12 months? QC306a-d, QC308a-f and QC311a-f: Which of the following things have you done in the past month on the internet?[3] *(Multiple responses allowed)*

Base: All children who use the internet.

4.2. Perceived quality of online content

The *EU Kids Online* survey asked children for their assessment of the quality of online content (Figure 10). The availability of online resources varies considerably across Europe. In Ireland, it might be expected with availability of extensive English-language resources, that young people would be relatively well served.

Figure 10: "There are lots of things on the internet that are good for children of my age"
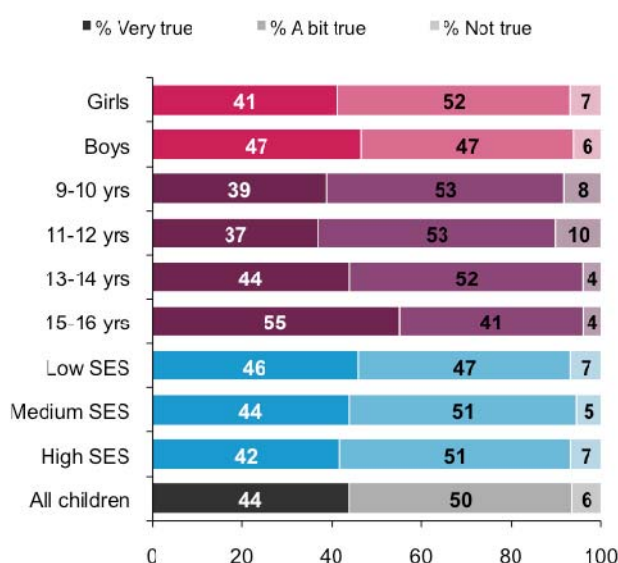
QC319c: There are lots of things on the internet that are good for children of my age. Response options: very true, a bit true, not true.

Base: All children who use the internet.

▪ Over four in ten (44%) 9-16 year olds are very satisfied with the online provision available to them.

▪ A further half of the population is somewhat satisfied: for 50% of children, it is 'a bit true' that there are lots of good things for children of their age to do online. For a smaller number – 6% – provision is, in their judgement, insufficient.

▪ There are few notable differences by SES or gender, though perhaps boys are a little more satisfied and children from high SES homes a little less. Some differences by age are intriguing.

▪ Younger children are less satisfied by online provision – only 39% of 9-10 year olds and 37% of 11-12 year olds say there are lots of good things for children of their age to do online. Teenagers, by contrast, are the most satisfied (55%), presumably because they share in wider public provision.

▪ The findings for perceived quality of online content are broadly consistent with European overall findings, for whom 44% were very satisfied and 46% somewhat satisfied with the provision of content.

More generally, the provision of quality online content is a matter of concern for European policy makers. It appears that the youngest children, aged 9-10 years, have started using the internet before there is sufficient content provided for them. It may be that there is little provided for older children also, but they are satisfied with generic content and don't require special provision. Initiatives to stimulate greater resources and investment in content suited to children have been launched by the European Commission to meet this need.[1]

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[1] See 'Quality online content for children'. URL:
http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/sip/events/competition/link_sip/index_en.htm

4.3. Children's use of social networking sites

Although not quite the most popular activity, social networking is arguably the fastest growing online activity among young people. Certainly, social networking sites (SNS) have attracted widespread attention among children and young people, policy makers and the wider public. By integrating chat, messaging, contacts, photo albums and blogging functions, SNSs potentially integrate online opportunities and risks more seamlessly than was previously possible.

On the one hand, policy makers seek to capitalise on the benefits of social networking by developing educational, participatory, creative and other resources linked to web 2.0 platforms. On the other hand, public policy concerns centre on the uneasy relation between the design of the SNS interface and emerging social conventions of use in terms of notions of 'friendship', the management of privacy and intimacy, awareness of the permanence of what is uploaded, techniques for age verification, and possibilities of 'flaming', hacking, harassment and other risky communications.

As was seen in Table 4, 71% of teenage boys and 86% of teenage girls use social networking sites. Younger children under the age of 12 also use social networking sites (32% of boys and 41% of girls), despite the fact that for many services the minimum age is 13. Such 'use' may include visiting the profiles of others, so

Figure 11 shows which children have their own profile on a social networking site.

- Among all 9-16 year olds in Ireland, 59% report having their own social networking profile.

- There are some gender differences in the use of social networking. More girls than boys report having a social networking profile (56% of boys vs. 63% of girls).

- There is also some SES variation in the use of social networking ranging from 55% of those from high SES homes to 66% of children from low SES homes.

- There are more dramatic differences in the age profile of SNS profiles. One fifth (20%) of the 9-10 year olds report having their own profile, compared with half (52%) of 11-12 year olds. For teenagers, percentages are much higher – 75% of 13-14 year olds and 88% of 15-16 year olds.

Figure 11: Children who have a profile on a social networking site
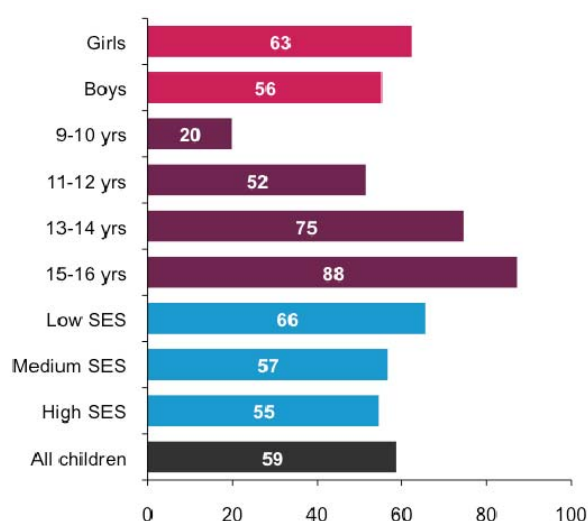
QC313: Do you have your OWN profile on a social networking site that you currently use, or not?

Base: All children who use the Internet.

The *EU Kids Online* survey also asked about the number of contacts that children had via social networking sites, reflecting the concern that large circles of contacts may constitute as a possible risk factor.

- Despite popular media stories of children with hundreds of contacts or 'friends', few overall report having more than 300 contacts on their social networking profile (7%), though one in four (24%) has between 100 and 300.

- Half (51%) have fewer than 50 contacts and 23% have fewer than 10.

- These findings are in line with the European average of just 9% with over 300 contacts with Greek, British and Portuguese children reporting the most contacts overall.

One of the concerns arising from online communication is that of privacy settings used by young people on their social networking profiles. Figure 12 shows children's privacy settings for their most used social networking profile by gender, age and SES. This includes the 20% of 9-10 year olds (Figure 9) who have a social networking profile.

Figure 12: Children's use of SNS privacy settings
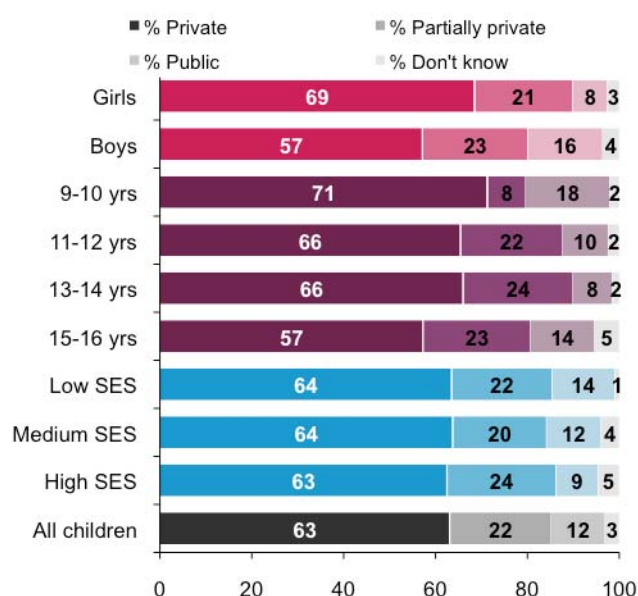
QC317: Is your profile set to …? Public, so that everyone can see; partially private, so that friends of friends or your networks can see; private so that only your friends can see; don't know.

Base: All children who have a profile on a social networking site.

- Among social network users, the majority (63%) keep their profile private so that only their friends can see it. A further 22% report that their profile is partially private so that friends of friends and networks can see it. 12% report that their profile is public so that anyone can see it.
- Girls, and younger children, appear more likely to keep their SNS profile private. Twice as many boys as girls, for instance, report that their profile is public so that anyone can see it (16% vs. 8%). 18% of 9-10 year old children report that their profile was public - though this finding needs to be treated with caution as it is possible they did not understand the question.
- There are slight differences in terms of SES regarding maintaining a public profile.

- The findings for maintaining a private profile are above equivalent European findings. The 63% of all children in Ireland with maximum privacy settings is for instance well above the European average of 43%. The European average for a public profile is 26% against just 12% for Irish children.

The maintenance of privacy settings on social networking sites has been a major focus of education and awareness raising activities and on the basis of these findings, it would appear that many children have acquired good SNS habits. There is room for improvement in that not all children know how to change privacy settings (see Table 3).

Whether it matters that children's profiles are set to public or private depends on the information they post on their profile. Of a range of different types of identifying information asked about (a photo that clearly shows your face, your last name, your address, your phone number, your school, your correct age), children in Ireland post an average of 2.4 items which is a little below the 2.8 reported for Europe overall. Remembering that 12% of children's social networking profiles are public, 8% of children include an address or phone number. 24% of children also said that they reported an incorrect age which is above the European average of 17%.

4.4. Children's approach to online communication

Online communication, as for internet use generally, offers a host of benefits which need to be balanced against possible risks. One of the questions in the *EU Kids Online* survey asked children to compare their approach to communication online and offline. In Ireland, 39% of those aged 11-16 say 'it is a bit or very true of them' that they find it easier to be themselves on the internet than with people face to face. A quarter (24%) say they talk about different things than when speaking to people face to face and 15% say they speak about private things which they do not discuss face to face.

Figure 13 shows children's approach to online communication by demographic variables.

Figure 13: Online and offline communication compared (% aged 11+ who say a bit true or very true)

- % Easier to be myself on the internet
- % Talk about different things
- % Talk about private things

Girls		37
		24
		13
Boys		42
		24
		17
9 -10 yrs		
11-12 yrs		36
		14
		8
13-14 yrs		45
		29
		15
15-16 yrs		37
		28
		20
Low SES		46
		27
		15
Medium SES		38
		23
		17
High SES		36
		23
		12
All children		39
		24
		15
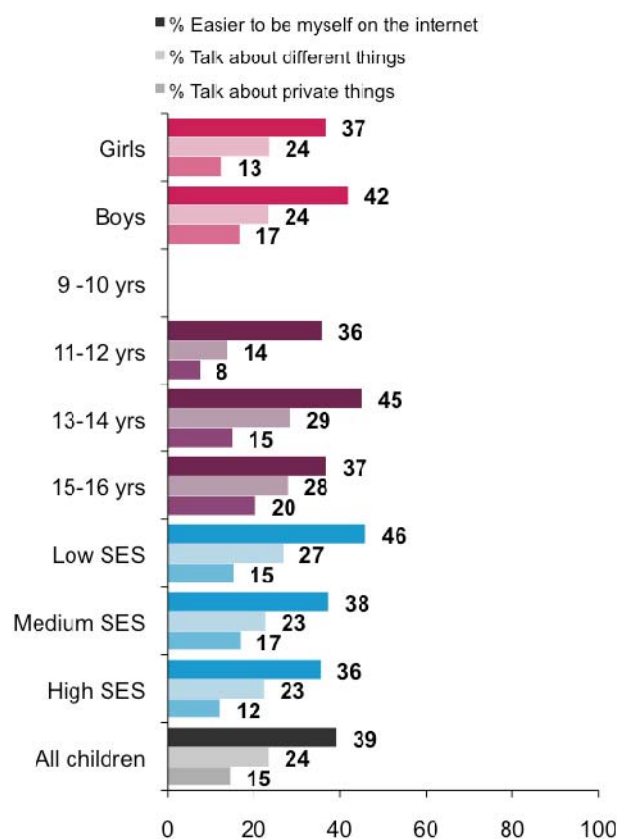
QC103: How true are these of you? Percentage who said 'A bit true' or 'Very true'

Base: All children aged 11-16 who use the internet.

- Some age trends are noticeable: older teenagers are more likely to agree that they talk about private things, suggesting that the internet offers a valued opportunity for different, perhaps more intimate, communication.
- Boys say they find it somewhat easier to be themselves on the internet.
- SES also seems to matter with regard to 'finding it easier to be myself on the internet' with 46% of children from low SES homes agreeing compared to 36% of those from high SES backgrounds.

If the internet offers some children an opportunity for more personal or intimate communication, this raises the crucial question, with whom are they communicating? For each platform (email, SNS, chatrooms, IM, games, virtual worlds) that the child had used in the past month, he or she was asked about "the types of people you have had contact with" (Figure 14).

Figure 14: Nature of children's online contacts (age 11+)

- % Met on the internet, no other connection
- % Met on the internet, friends/family of people you know
- % First met in person face-to-face

Girls		13
		32
		89
Boys		33
		33
		86
9-10 yrs		
11-12 yrs		22
		26
		85
13-14 yrs		22
		33
		85
15-16 yrs		25
		38
		93
Low SES		27
		41
		86
Medium SES		20
		34
		91
High SES		22
		24
		86
All children		23
		32
		88
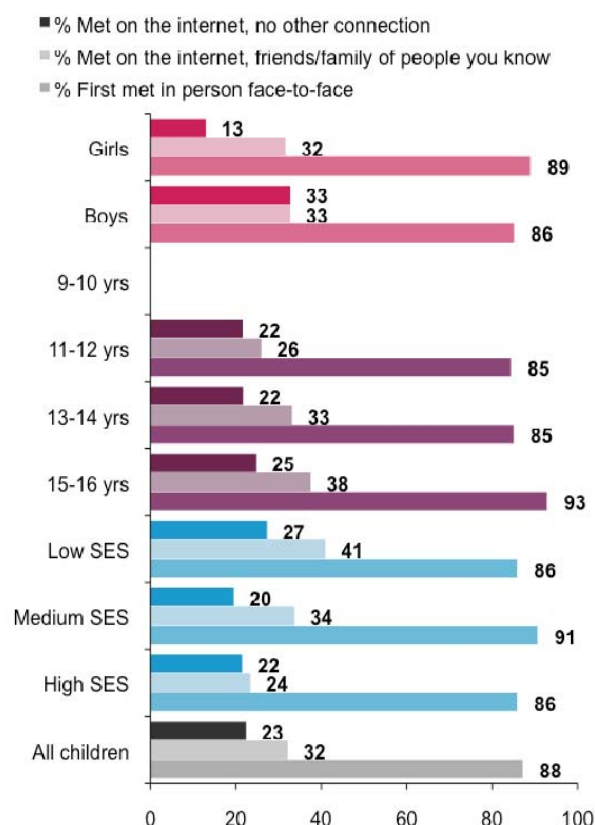
QC310: I am going to read out each of the things you have just told me you do (e.g. email or whatever). For each one, I'd like you to tell me the types of people you have had contact with when doing each of these things. Response options: people who you first met in person face-to-face; people who you first met on the internet, but who are friends or family of other people you know in person; people who you first met on the internet, but who have no other connection to your life outside of the internet. *(Multiple responses allowed)*

Base: All children aged 11-16 who use internet and have given at least one valid response about the nature of their online contacts.

- Most children who communicate online are in touch with people they already know in person face-to-face (88%). Thus online communication draws from and complements the communication that occurs in pre-existing social networks in daily life.
- A sizable minority (32%) are in touch with people that they first met on the internet but who have a connection with friends or family offline: they may be

said to be part of the child's wider circle offline though the child has not met them face-to-face.

- One quarter of children aged 11-16 (23%) says they communicate online with people who they met online and who have no connection with their offline social networks. It is these contacts, arguably, for which a better understanding is needed in the context of risk and safety issues.

- The gender difference observed mainly focuses on this last category – substantially more boys (33%) than girls (13%) communicate online with people whom they only know online. It may be that these are contacts sustained through online gaming (as shown earlier, gaming is the main online activity that distinguishes girls and boys).

- The vast majority of children in each age group communicate online with their existing offline social circle. As children grow older this pattern is extended rising to 93%, emphasising the social nature of communication with peers for older teenagers.

Finally, children were asked about some risky practices related to engaging with online contacts.

Table 5: Children's actions in relation to online contacts

% who have, in the past 12 months . . .	Never/ not in past year	Less than monthly	More often
Looked for new friends on the internet	63	17	20
Added people to my friends list or address book that I have never met face to face	66	18	15
Pretended to be a different kind of person on the internet from what I really am	87	7	6
Sent personal information to someone that I have never met face to face	87	10	3
Sent a photo or video of myself to someone that I have never met face to face	93	5	2

QC145a-c and QC146a-b: Have you done any of the following things in the PAST 12 MONTHS; if yes, how often have you done each of these things?

Base: All children who use the internet.

- The vast majority of children say that in the last year they have not sent a photo or video of themselves (93%) or personal information (87%) to someone they have never met face-to-face. Nor have they pretended to be a different kind of person on the internet (87%).

- Similarly, a large number have not added to their friends list people they have never met face to face (66%) or looked for new friends on the internet (63%).

- These findings are in line with European averages and suggest on the whole children avoid or are aware of the dangers posed by such risky behaviour. However, in looking at their practices of engaging with online contacts, the question of risk needs to be placed within a broader context balancing risks and opportunities and assessing the extent to which risk behaviour may lead to harm, analysed in subsequent sections.

Checking people's status all the time judging them over their pictures and hearing gossip or having mean things said to you. That's exactly why cyber-bullying is so huge!

(Girl, 15, Ireland)

5. RISK AND HARM

5.1. Overall experiences of harm

Before asking children about their specific online experiences associated with risk, the *EU Kids Online* survey included a number of both closed and open-ended questions inviting an overall subjective perception of harm from the children. Quotations from their answers to the open-ended question are included throughout this report.[4]

Children were asked two closed questions:

▪ *Do you think there are things on the internet that people about your age will be bothered by in any way?*

▪ *In the past 12 months, have you seen or experienced something on the internet that has bothered you in some way?*

Also parents were asked:

▪ *As far as you are aware, in the past year, has your child seen or experienced something on the internet that has bothered them in some way?* [closed-ended question]

Children's and parents' answers are shown in Figure 15:

▪ A strikingly large proportion (67%) of children aged 9-16 think that there are things on the internet that will bother children of their age. Clearly, many children do not regard the internet as a totally safe or unproblematic environment. This is slightly more for teenagers than for younger children.

▪ At the same time, children are nearly five times more likely to say that there are things on the internet that will bother other children (67%) compared to saying that there are things that have bothered them personally in the past year (11%).

▪ More girls than boys have been bothered by something online (13% vs. 9%); more older teenagers than younger children (16% vs. 9%); and slightly more high SES than medium or low SES (16% vs. 7% and 10% respectively).

Figure 15: Online experiences that have bothered children, according to child and parent

- ■ % My child has been bothered by something online (parent)
- ■ % I have been bothered by something online (child)
- ■ % There are things online that bother children my age (child)

	parent	child	age
Girls	12	13	67
Boys	9	9	67
9-10 yrs	5	9	44
11-12 yrs	15	9	69
13-14 yrs	14	9	75
15-16 yrs	10	16	78
Low SES	11	10	66
Medium SES	9	7	63
High SES	14	16	72
All children	11	11	67
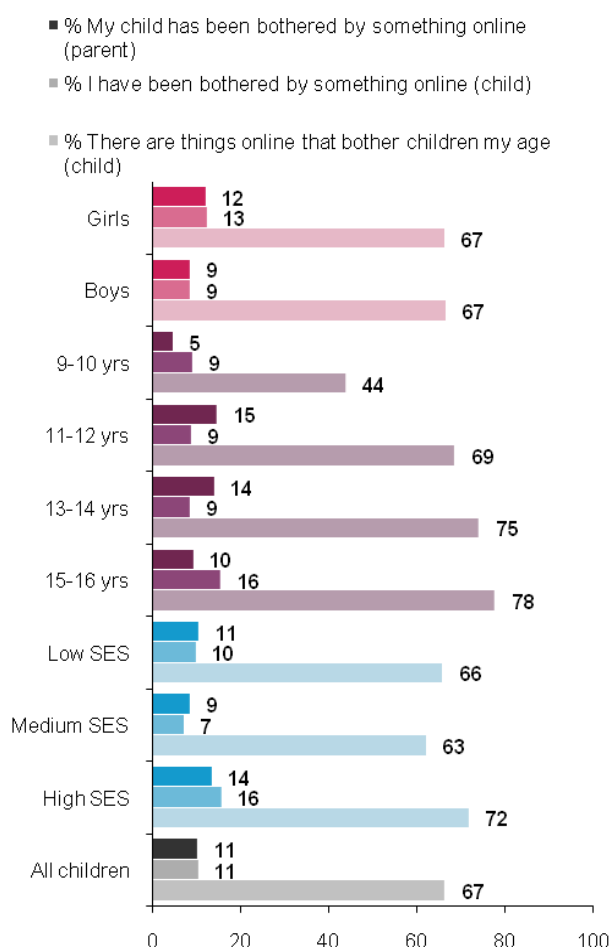
QC110: In the PAST 12 MONTHS, have you seen or experienced something on the internet that has bothered you in some way? For example, made you feel uncomfortable, upset, or feel that you shouldn't have seen it. QP228: As far as you are aware, in the past year, has your child seen or experienced something on the internet that has bothered them in some way? QC322: Do you think there are things on the internet that people about your age will be bothered by in any way?

Base: All children who use the internet and one of their parents.

- In terms of their own experiences of problematic events, a sizeable minority – 11% (or one in eight children) – says that they have been bothered by something on the internet in the past year. Both parents and children report the same level of upset.

- There are some differences by SES of household, with higher SES parents reporting a greater likelihood that their child has been bothered (around 16% from high and 10% from low SES homes).

- Younger children are less likely to have been bothered by something online (9%) compared with older teenagers (16%). Interestingly, parents underestimate upset of both 9-10 years and 15-16 olds.

> Scary things - I saw something at my friend's house and I can't get it out of my head. Things that wouldn't be appropriate to our age.
> (Boy, 11, Ireland)

5.2. Seeing sexual images online

Pornography is not easy to define. It covers a wide range of material from the everyday to the illegal. For ethical reasons, pornography cannot be defined very explicitly in a closed-ended survey with children, for to do so might introduce new ideas to children who are hitherto unaware of such phenomena. Consequently, although this section broadly concerns pornography, the term itself was not used in the interview with children.

Questions about pornography were introduced thus:

"In the past year, you will have seen lots of different images – pictures, photos, videos. Sometimes, these might be obviously sexual – for example, showing people naked or people having sex."

To contextualise online pornography in relation to exposure to pornography across any media, children were first asked, "*Have you seen anything of this kind in the past 12 months?*"

Figure 16: Child has seen sexual images online or offline in past 12 months
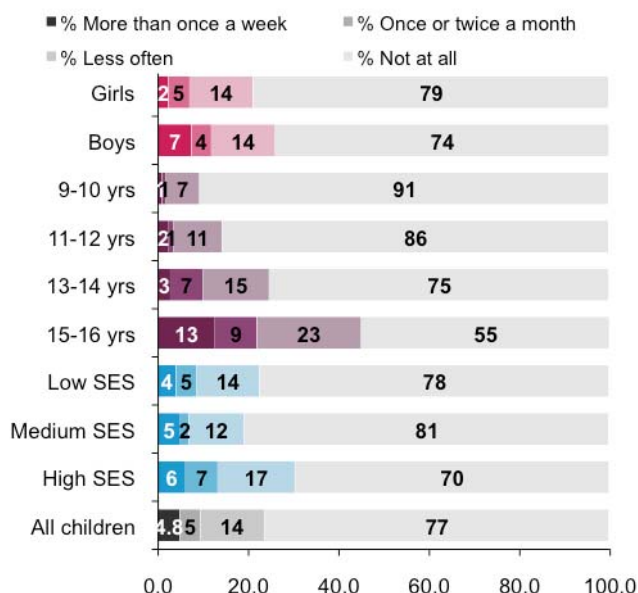
QC128: Have you seen anything of this kind [obviously sexual] in the past 12 month? QC129: How often have you seen [images, photos, videos that are obviously sexual] in the past 12 months.

Base: All children who use the internet.

Figure 16 shows that:

- One in five (23%) say that they have seen obviously sexual images in the past 12 months, whether online or offline.

- Among the 23% who have seen sexual images, online or offline, around half have seen this at least once or twice a month, while half have seen it less often.

- Seeing sexual images at all is related to age. 13% of older teenagers have seen sexual images online or offline more often than once a week. Nearly half of 15-16 year olds (45%) have seen such images compared with just 8% of 9-10 year olds; teenagers also see such images more often.

- There are few differences by gender or SES with slightly more boys and higher SES reporting seeing sexual images.

This exposure may derive from seeing pornography in any of a range of media.

Table 6: Child has seen sexual images online or offline in past 12 months, by age and gender

| % | 9-12 years | | 13-16 years | | |
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	All
On television, film or video/DVD	9	6	18	21	14
On any websites	5	2	21	17	11
In a magazine or book	5	2	11	8	7
By text (SMS), images (MMS), or otherwise on my mobile phone	1	0	8	5	4
By Bluetooth	0	0	3	1	1
Has seen at all, online or offline	14	9	37	33	24

QC128: Have you seen anything of this kind [obviously sexual] in the past 12 month? QC130a-f: In which, if any, of these places have you seen [images, photos, videos that are obviously sexual] in the past 12 months? QC131: Have you seen [images, photos, videos that are obviously sexual] on any websites in the past 12 months? *(Multiple responses allowed)*

Base: All children who use the internet.

▪ The most common ways for children to see sexual images are on television, films or videos (14%) and on the internet (11%).

▪ Less common is seeing sexual images in magazines or books (7%) and only 4% report seeing such images on their mobile phone.

▪ Overall, as children grow older, they are more likely to see sexual images across all media. Interestingly, boys are more likely to see sexual images online while more girls are likely to see such images on traditional media.

▪ The overall reported exposure to sexual images is the same as the European average (23%) who have seen sexual images online or offline. More older teenagers report seeing such images: 45% of 15-16 year olds in Ireland compared to 36% in Europe as a whole; the figures for 13-14 year olds are the same at 25%.

Table 7 shows the different ways children may have seen sexual images online in the past 12 months.

Table 7: How child has seen sexual images online in past 12 months, by age

| % | Age | | | | |
	9-10	11-12	13-14	15-16	All
By images that pop up accidentally	1	3	4	17	6
On an adult/X-rated website	0	0	4	13	4
On a social networking site	0	0	2	9	3
On a video-hosting site	0	2	0	6	2
Some other type of website	0	1	1	1	1
On a peer to peer file-sharing website	0	0	0	2	1
In a gaming website	0	0	1	0	0
Any online	1	6	9	29	11

QC131: Have you seen these kinds of things on any websites in the past 12 months? QC132: Which types of website have you seen [any kind of sexual images] on in the last 12 months? *(Multiple responses allowed)*

Base: All children who use the internet.

▪ Most children come across sexual images online accidentally through pop ups, though 13% of older teenagers have seen them on an adult/x-rated website.

▪ 9% of 15-16 year olds report coming across such images on a social networking site.

▪ A small number of 9-10 year olds come across sexual images through images that pop up accidentally re-emphasising the importance of filtering software for younger children.

In general, parents and children give similar accounts of whether children may have see sexual images online (11% of all children; 12% of parents likewise thought their children had seen such images). The child/parent pair was also analysed to ascertain how far parents were aware of their *own* children's experiences online.

Table 8: Comparison between children's and parents' accounts of whether child has seen sexual images online

Child has seen sexual images on the internet?	Child's answer	
	Yes	No
% Parent answer:		
Yes	36	16
No	49	75
Don't know	15	9
	100	100

QP235: [Has your child] seen images on the internet that are obviously sexual - for example, showing people naked or people having sex. QC131: Have you seen these kinds of things on any websites in the past 12 months?

Base: All children who use the internet and one of their parents.

- Among just those children who have seen sexual images online, one in three (36%) of their parents agree this has occurred. 15% of their parents say that they don't know and, significantly, 49% say their child has not seen sexual images on the internet.

- Among children who have not seen sexual images online, most (75%) parents say the same, though 10% are uncertain and 16% think their child has seen this on the internet.

- Parents in Ireland are less aware than the European average of when their children have seen sexual images online (49% vs. 40%). This is at the upper end of an awareness gap between children and parents topped by countries such as Portugal, Italy, Hungary and Spain in 53-54% of parents were unaware that their children had seen sexual images online.

> (…) went to put on game and pornography came up may have happened because of misspelling
>
> **(Parent of 11 year old girl, Ireland)**

> ..porn ii dont think kids my age should be looking at this but its up on websites ..!!
>
> **(Girl, 14, Ireland)**

A key question for the *EU Kids Online* survey is 'when does risk translate into harm?' It is not assumed, for instance, that exposure to sexual images is inevitably harmful. While acknowledging that children may not evaluate an experience in the same way as adults, the value of the *EU Kids Online* survey is that we asked children directly about their online experiences. So as not to presume that all risks result in harm, we asked further questions to all those children who said they had seen sexual images online. These questions were prefaced as follows:

Seeing sexual images on the internet may be fine or may not be fine. In the LAST 12 MONTHS have you seen any things like this that have bothered you in any way? For example, made you feel uncomfortable, upset, or feel that you shouldn't have seen them.

- Across Europe 14% of 9-16 year olds have encountered sexual images online, one in three of those who have seen it (4% of all children) were bothered by this experience.

- In Ireland, 11% of all children have encountered sexual images online. Again, one in three (4% of all children) were bothered by this experience.

- Ireland is thus relatively low, compared with many countries, both in terms of overall exposure to online pornography and in terms of the degree to which children are bothered or upset by what they saw when they were exposed to online sexual images.

Figure 17 shows who has seen sexual images on the internet and been bothered by this.

Figure 17: Child has seen sexual images online and was bothered by this

■ Seen sexual images on the internet

■ Bothered after seeing such images
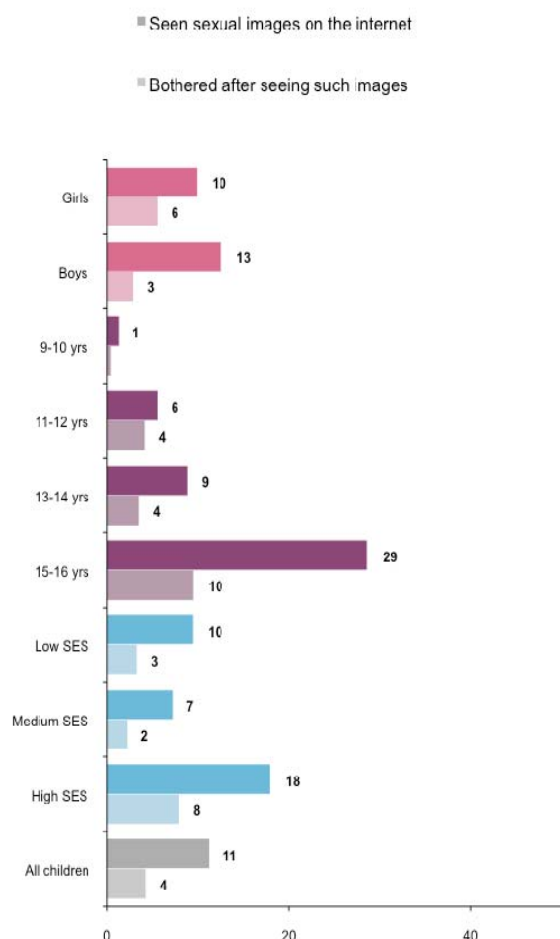
QC131: Have you seen these kinds of things on any websites in the past 12 months? And QC134: In the LAST 12 MONTHS have you seen any things like this that have bothered you in any way? For example, made you feel uncomfortable, upset, or feel that you shouldn't have seen them.

Base: All children who use the internet. Only children who have seen sexual images online.

Note: 95% confidence intervals for some of the breaks among 9-10 year olds are fairly high at +/- 5-10%.

▪ Boys are a little more likely to see sexual images online than girls (13% vs. 10%) but girls are rather more likely to be bothered by it if they do see such images. These findings are very similar to those for Europe overall.

▪ Age is important here as 15-16 year olds are by far the most likely to see online sexual images (29%),

compared to 19% of 13-14 year olds, and 6% of 11-12 year olds. Older teenagers are also more likely to be bothered by what they saw (10% of 15-16 year olds who had seen such images). This is above the European finding of 6% who had been bothered in this age group. The findings for younger children (4% of 13-14 year olds and 11-12 year olds) are similar to equivalent European figures.

▪ To keep this in perspective, it means that overall, 3% of 9-10 year olds, rising to 6% of 15-16 year olds have been bothered by seeing sexual images online.

▪ Children from higher SES homes are more likely to be exposed to sexual images online (18%, vs. 10% for low SES children). High SES children are also more likely to be bothered by what they saw.

Overall, it may be said that most children have not experienced seeing sexual images online and, even of those who have, most say they were not bothered or upset by the experience. The full European report, *Risks and Safety on the Internet,* presents further analysis about how upset children felt, for how long they were upset, who they told and what they did in response to such an experience. However, for a single country report the sample sizes are too small to report in detail how children coped, or not, with upsetting online experiences.

(..) looked at a website which one of his classmates had told him to look up and it was of a sexual nature.

(Parent of 12 year old boy, Ireland)

(..) entered a word on the internet and a sexual image appeared as his mum entered the room

(Parent of 9 year old boy, Ireland)

5.3. Bullying online

Being bullied is one of several conduct risks that may harm children when they use the internet. In some sense, bullying builds on children's availability through and/or conduct in peer-to-peer exchanges and, significantly, the threat comes from a peer.

Although the term 'bullying' has a distinct and familiar meaning in some countries, this is not universal, making the term difficult to translate. So, as with 'pornography', the term 'bully' was not used in the children's questionnaire. Instead, it was defined thus:

"Sometimes children or teenagers say or do hurtful or nasty things to someone and this can often be quite a few times on different days over a period of time, for example. This can include: teasing someone in a way this person does not like; hitting, kicking or pushing someone around; leaving someone out of things." [5]

Following this introduction, children were asked whether *someone has acted in this kind of hurtful or nasty way to you in the past 12 months.*

- Nearly one in four (23%) 9-16 year olds in Ireland say that someone has acted in a hurtful or nasty way towards them in the past 12 months. This is higher than the figure of one in five or 19% reported for Europe as a whole.

- 7% say someone acts towards them in a hurtful or nasty way more than once a week, for 5% it is once or twice a month, and for 11% it is less often, suggesting one or a few instances have occurred in the past year.

- Slightly more boys than girls claim to have been bullied (25% vs. 21%).

- Younger children, 9-10 year olds, claim to be bullied the most (28%), well above the European average of 17%.

- There are only slight demographic differences in that slightly more children from low and medium SES homes report more frequent forms of bullying.

Figure 18: Child has been bullied online or offline in past 12 months
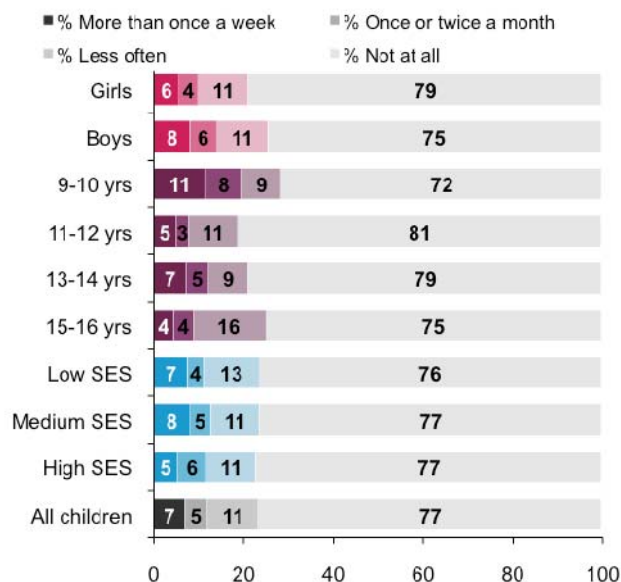
QC112: Has someone acted in this kind of hurtful or nasty way to you in the past 12 months? QC113: How often has someone acted in this kind [hurtful and nasty] way towards you in the past 12 months?

Base: All children who use the internet.

people can go onto other peoples pages and .. call them names like fat or ugly and everyone can then see it which is embarrassing for them

(Girl, 16, Ireland)

might start a group like i hate someone you can make groups on msn and someone made a group saying please join the group called i hate (..)

(Girl, 11, Ireland)

Online bullying is often understood as an extension of a persistent offline behaviour. In the European survey, the highest levels of online bullying were reported in countries where there was a high prevalence of bullying. For Ireland, Table 9 shows the different ways in which bullying has occurred.

Table 9: Ways in which children have been bullied in past 12 months, by age

%	Age				All
	9-10	11-12	13-14	15-16	
In person face to face	19	13	14	15	15
On the internet	1	1	5	9	4
By mobile phone calls, texts or image/video texts	1	1	4	10	4
Has been bullied at all online or offline	28	19	23	23	23

QC114: At any time during the last 12 months, has this happened [that you have been treated in a hurtful or nasty way]? QC115: At any time during the last 12 months has this happened on the internet. *(Multiple responses allowed)*

Base: All children who use the internet.

- The most common form of bullying is in person, face to face: 15% say that someone has acted in a hurtful or nasty way towards them in person face to face compared with 4% who say that this happened on the internet or by mobile phone calls or messages.

- Younger children in the 9-10 year old range are the most likely to have been bullied but this is nearly always face to face rather than by mobile phone or online.

- It is teenagers who experience more electronically mediated forms of bullying, 15-16 year olds report the greatest levels of cyberbullying – 9% on the internet and 10% by mobile phone.

> things that would bother me would be people would say things like i hate you and man u suck
>
> (Boy, 10, Ireland)

Table 10 shows some of the different ways children have been bullied online in the last 12 months.

Table 10: Ways in which children have been bullied online in past 12 months, by age

%	Age				All
	9-10	11-12	13-14	15-16	
On a social networking site	0	1	3	6	3
By instant messaging	0	0	1	1	1
By email	0	1	0	0	0
In a gaming website	0	1	0	1	0
In a chatroom	0	1	0	0	0
Some other way on the internet	0	0	2	1	1
Any online	1	2	5	8	4

QC115: At any time during the last 12 months had this happened on the internet? QC116: In which ways has this happened to you in the last 12 months? *(Multiple responses allowed)*

Base: All children who use the internet.

- Table 10 shows that social networking sites constitute the main platform for online forms of bullying (3% of all children, 6% of 15-16 year olds)

- While the numbers are small, bullying among teenagers occurs by instant messaging. To a lesser extent, gaming websites also provide a context for bullying.

> Other people bullying them calling them names. putting untrue things about them up on a website. deleting them as a friend getting moody with them for no reason.
>
> (Girl, 13, Ireland)

Just what has happened when children are bullied is difficult to determine. For the 11-16 year olds who had been bullied online, we asked what they had experienced (Table 11).

Table 11: What happened when child was bullied online in past 12 months, by age (age 11+)

%	Age				All
	9-10	11-12	13-14	15-16	
Nasty or hurtful messages were sent to me	n.a.	1	2	4	3
Nasty or hurtful messages about me were passed around or posted where others could see	n.a.	0	1	2	1
I was threatened on the internet	n.a.	0	1	1	1
Other nasty or hurtful things on the internet	n.a.	0	0	1	1
I was left out or excluded from a group or activity on the internet	n.a.	0	0	0	0
Something else	n.a.	0	0	3	1
At all on internet	1	2	5	8	4

QC115: At any time during the last 12 months has this happened on the internet? QC117: Can I just check, which of these things have happened in the last 12 months? *(Multiple responses allowed)*

Base: All children 11-16 years old who use the internet.

- Being the target of nasty or hurtful messages is the most common form of online bullying (3% of all 11-16 year olds). Having such messages passed around the peer group or posted where others can see is less common (just 1% or 2% of 15-16 year olds). Only 1% has been threatened online.
- Although being bullied online is generally more common among older children, no particular age trend in forms of bullying is evident.

As with exposure to sexual images, the survey findings reveal the degree to which parents are aware of children's online experience of being bullied (Table 12).

Table 12: Comparison between children's and parents' accounts of whether child has been bullied online

Child has been sent nasty or hurtful messages on the internet?	Child's answer:	
	Yes	No
% Parent answer:		
Yes	29	6
No	68	90
Don't know	3	4
	100	100

QP235: [Has your child] been treated in a hurtful or nasty way on the internet by another child or teenager? QC115: At any time during the last 12 months [have you been treated in a hurtful or nasty way] on the internet?

Base: All children who use the internet and one of their parents.

- Among children who say "yes, I have been sent nasty or hurtful messages on the internet", one third (29%) of their parents also say that their child has been bullied online. But in 68% of cases parents were unaware or say that their child has not been bullied. In 3% of cases, the parent doesn't know.
- By contrast, in those cases (of which there are many more) in which the child says no, they have not been bullied, only 6% of the parents think they have been bullied.

Since bullying is an activity that occurs largely among peers, children may not only be bullied but they may also bully others, either on the internet or in other ways. After asking children about their experiences of being bullied, children were also asked if they themselves had acted in a hurtful or nasty way to others in the past year.

- Figure 19 shows that 14% of all children say that they have bullied others or had acted in a hurtful or nasty way in the past 12 months. This compares to the 23% of children who have been bullied in the past year (see Table 9).
- Bullying others is more common among 15-16 year olds (24%) and among boys (19%).

Figure 19: Child has bullied others online or offline in past 12 months
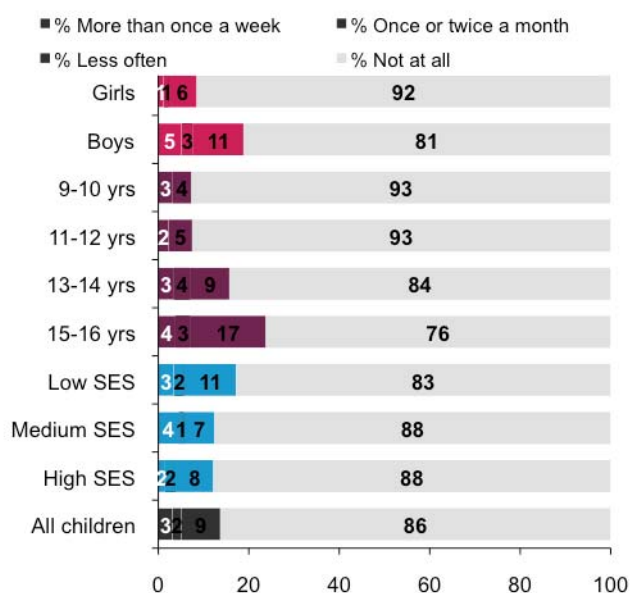
QC125: Have you acted in a way that might have felt hurtful or nasty to someone else in the past 12 months? QC126: How often have you acted in this kind [hurtful and nasty] way in the past 12 months?

Base: All children who use the internet.

Again, the full European report provides more detailed analysis of what strategies children employ to deal with experiences of bullying. The numbers involved are too small to present a similar analysis at a country level.

In summary, bullying is experienced by a nearly a quarter of Irish children (23%), slightly above the European average. Most of this is face to face and just a small proportion (4%) have been bullied online. 14% furthermore they have also bullied others in the past twelve months.

hacking in to bebo pages when people can make up a bebo page pretending that its you
(Girl, 13, Ireland)

A page was made about her on Facebook which she found upsetting.

(Parent of 12 year old girl)

5.4. Sending and receiving sexual messages online

There is some evidence, and much speculation, that the internet facilitates the exchange of sexual messages among peers. Originating with the spread of mobile phone messaging more than online communication, and thus popularly labelled 'sexting' (an amalgam of 'sex' and 'texting'), such practices have given rise to popular and policy concern.[6]

The term 'sexting' was not used in the questionnaire. Children (and parents) were introduced to the questions on sending and receiving sexual messages as follows:

"People do all kinds of things on the internet. Sometimes, they may send sexual messages or images. By this we mean talk about having sex or images of people naked or having sex."

Figure 20 shows the survey findings for seeing/receiving sexual messages on the internet.

- 11% of children aged 11 to 16 years in Ireland say that they have seen or received sexual messages on the internet in the past 12 months.

- The age trend is marked – 3% of 11-12 year olds, 7% of 13-14 year olds, and 21% of 15-16 year olds have seen or received such messages. The latter figure is similar to the European figure for this age group (22%).

- There are slight differences in gender and SES with boys and low SES more likely to have received such messages.

- For over half of those who have seen or received sexual messages, this is an infrequent experience (less than once a month), while for 4%, it occurs more often, and more than once a week for 7% of 15-16 year olds.

- The experience of 'sexting' in Ireland is below the European average (11% vs. 15%) and is among the 4 lowest countries in Europe. Just 3% also say they have posted such messages which is the same for Europe overall.

Figure 20: Child has seen or received sexual messages online in past 12 months (age 11+)
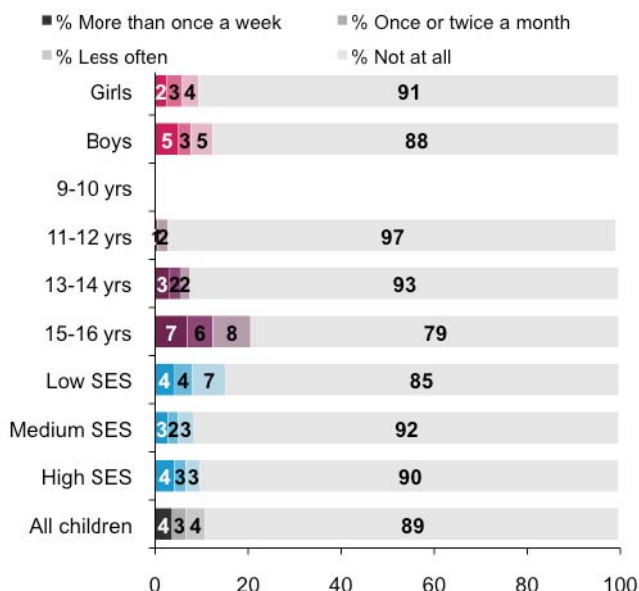
Legend:
- % More than once a week
- % Once or twice a month
- % Less often
- % Not at all

Category	More than once a week / Once or twice a month / Less often	Not at all
Girls	2 3 4	91
Boys	5 3 5	88
9-10 yrs		
11-12 yrs	2	97
13-14 yrs	3 2 2	93
15-16 yrs	7 6 8	79
Low SES	4 4 7	85
Medium SES	3 2 3	92
High SES	4 3 3	90
All children	4 3 4	89

QC167: In the past 12 months have you seen or received sexual messages of any kind on the internet? QC168: How often have you received sexual messages of any kind on the internet in the past 12 months? This could be words, pictures or videos.

Base: All children aged 11-16 who use the internet.

> ## bullied on bebo by peers consistent over 4 weeks of a sexual nature
>
> (Parent of 12 year old boy)

Table 13 shows the type of sexual messages received by children on the internet. The low percentages once again reflect the fact that the table shows the occurrence of sexual messaging as a percentage of all children who use the internet.

Table 13: Kinds of sexual messaging child has encountered online in past 12 months, by age (age 11+)

%	Age				All
	9-10	11-12	13-14	15-16	
I have been sent a sexual message on the internet		2	5	13	7
I have seen a sexual message posted where other people could see it on the internet		1	2	7	4
I have seen other people perform sexual acts		1	2	7	3
I have been asked to talk about sexual acts with someone on the internet		0	1	6	3
I have been asked on the internet for a photo or video showing my private parts		0	1	4	2
Has seen or received at all		3	7	20	10

QC169: In the past 12 months, have any of these happened to you on the internet?

Base: All children aged 11-16 who use the internet.

- The most common among these generally rare practices is being sent a sexual message on the internet – 7% of all 11-16 year olds. While involving few younger children, being sent a sexual message online is reported by 13% of the 15-16 year olds.

- Seeing a sexual message posted where others could see it is reported by 4% overall, with 6% of 15-16 year olds saying they had seen this.

- Just 3% of 11-16 year olds (most of them teenagers) say they have seen other people perform sexual acts on the internet. 3% have also been asked to talk about sexual acts with someone on the internet and 2% to show a photo or video of their genitals to someone via the internet.

It would appear that most sexual messaging is relatively mild, with few occurrences involving direct portrayals, discussion about or incitement to sexual activity.

As with other risk factors in the EU Kids Online survey, Table 14 compares parents and children's answers to assess levels of awareness or gaps that may exist in relation to sexual messages online.

Table 14: Comparison between children's and parents' accounts of whether child has seen or received sexual messages online (age 11+)

Seen or been sent sexual images on the internet?	Child's answer	
	Yes	No
% Parent answer:		
Yes	21	4
No	52	84
Don't know	27	12
	100	100

QP235: [Has your child] seen or been sent sexual messages on the internet? QC167: In the past 12 months have you seen or received sexual messages of any kind on the internet? This could be words, pictures or videos?

Base: All children aged 11-16 who use the internet and one of their parents.

- For the 11% of children overall who have received sexual messages online, just 21% of their parents were aware of it. 27% were not aware that this had happened and 52% contradicted their child and said it hadn't happened.

- There is a high level of misunderstanding, but this is much the same across Europe with a similar number reportedly unaware even when it had. Given the private nature of such messaging, a lack of awareness parental is understandable.

Whether such messages caused upset or bothered children is presented in Figure 21.

Figure 21: Child has seen or received sexual messages in past 12 months and was bothered by this (age 11+)
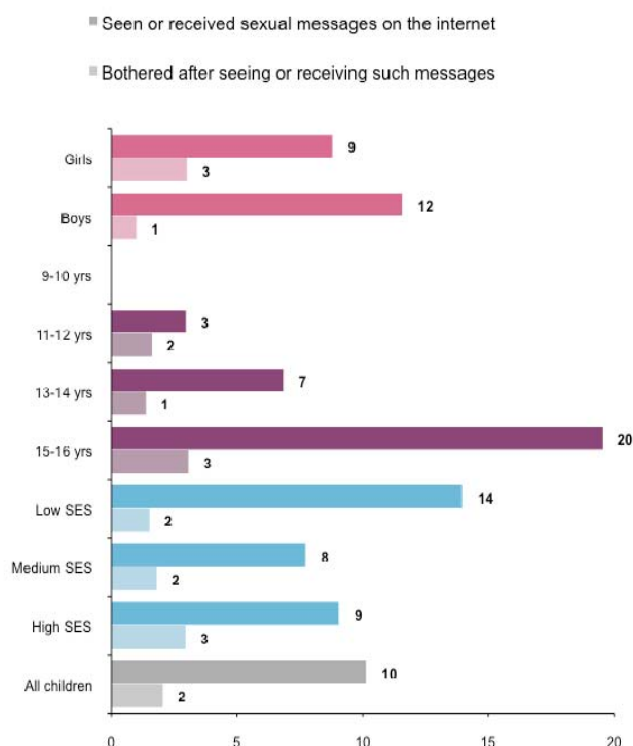
QC167: In the past 12 months have you seen or received sexual messages of any kind on the internet? This could be words, pictures or videos. QC171: In the last 12 months, has any sexual message that you have seen or received bothered you in any way?

Base: All children age 11-16 who use the internet. Children who have seen or received sexual messages online in the past 12 months.

Note: 95% confidence intervals for some of the breaks among 11-12 year olds are fairly high at +/- 5-10%.

- Recognising that the numbers involved are small, and that receiving sexual messages is a relatively rare occurrence, just 2% overall said they were bothered by such messages. This is mainly an issue for older teenagers, 15-16 years, and affects girls more than boys, though interestingly more boys than girls have received such messages.

5.5. Meeting online contacts offline

Possibly the greatest public and policy concern for children's safety on the internet has focused on the risk that a child will meet someone new online who then abuses them in a subsequent face to face meeting.

However, previous research suggests that the risk of harm from a face to face meeting with someone whom one first met on the internet is low, not least because children increasingly use the internet to widen their circle of friends, with very few using online communication to meet adults (whether deliberately or inadvertently). Further, although it is possible for contacts with new people online to result in harm, public concern tends to be unclear regarding just what harm might result.

How many children in Ireland make new contacts on the internet? Do these lead to face to face meetings offline? See Figure 22:

- Nearly one third of children (28%) have made contact online with someone they did not previously know offline.

- The older the child, the more likely they are to have made contact with new people online: 10% of 9-10 year olds vs. 43% of 15-16 year olds have made new contacts this way.

- There is very little difference between boys and girls when it comes to making contact with new people online. Neither is there any strong difference in SES (29% of children from low SES homes have made new contacts online compared with 26% of children from high SES homes).

- Overall, just 4% of 9-16 year olds have gone to a meeting face to face with someone that they first met on the internet. This primarily relates to older teenagers and for 15-16 year olds, 10% or one in ten teenagers have met an online contact offline.

- The demographic differences mirror those for making new contacts online, with lower SES children slightly more likely to go to such meetings.

- Findings for Ireland for online contacts and for going on to meet such contacts offline are on the lower end of European findings (3rd lowest of 25 countries).

Figure 22: Child has communicated online with, or gone to an offline meeting with, someone not met face to face before
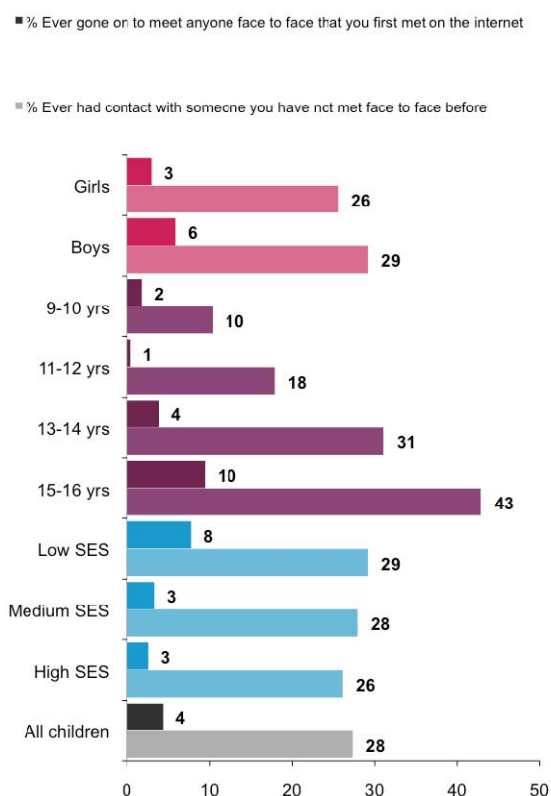
QC147: Can I just check, have you ever had contact on the internet with someone you have not met face to face before? QC148: Have you ever gone on to meet anyone face to face that you first met on the internet in this way.

Base: All children who use the internet.

To what extent are parents aware of such meetings with new contacts made online? Child and parent responses were compared to assess parents' awareness of such meetings.

- Noting the very small sample involved (4% for online meetings), most parents were unaware of this. In other words, in nearly all cases where a child met someone they first met online, their parents were aware of this happening.

Making new contacts online and then arranging to meet these people offline is, perhaps, one of the more contested activities children may engage in. This may be a harmless means of widening a social circle. Or it may be

a risky or even dangerous means of contacting an abusive stranger.

For the overall European sample, some follow up questions on children's responses to such meetings can be reported. But for a single country sample, the number of children involved is too small to report reliable findings.

Strangers being secretive about who they are or why they're talking to you.
(Girl, 11, Ireland)

An older male contacted her with a view to meeting up
(Parent of 15 year old girl, Ireland)

stranger came on skype and was evasive in relation to questions so (…) decided after talking to her mother to block the site
(Parent of 11 year old girl, Ireland)

5.6. Potentially harmful user-generated content

The rise of user-generated content has created new kinds of online experiences that, although potentially harmful to children, have attracted little research as yet. These include exposure to potentially harmful user-generated content – i.e. not mass-produced commercial content but content generated through peer- to-peer activity.

Given the sensitive nature of the potentially harmful user-generated content shown in Table 15, only 11-16 year olds were asked if they had seen this. The question introduction clarified the potentially harmful nature of the content:

On some websites, people discuss things that may not be good for you. Here are some questions about these kinds of things. In the PAST 12 MONTHS, have you seen websites where people discuss…

Potentially harmful user-generated content affects mostly older teenagers and girls in particular. Girls see more under each category with the exception of the rare but still important finding regarding suicide sites. Girls, predictably, see more sites promoting ways to be thin but also more sites containing hate messages and sites concerning drug-taking.

Table 16: Child has seen potentially harmful user-generated content on websites in past 12 months, by age and gender (age 11+)

| % | Age | | | | |
| | 11-13 years | | 14-16 years | | |
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	All
Hate messages that attack certain groups or individuals	7	6	20	32	16
Ways to be very thin (such as being anorexic or bulimic)	4	6	11	21	11
Talk about or share their experiences of taking drugs	2	1	14	20	9
Ways of physically harming or hurting themselves	5	3	12	12	9
Ways of committing suicide	1	2	7	6	4
Has seen any	14	12	31	45	25

QC142: In the past 12 months, have you seen websites where people discuss...?

Base: All children aged 11-16 who use the internet.

In summary, Table 17 shows that:

- 16% of all children, including 20% of 13-14 year olds, and 32% of girls 14-16 year olds, have seen hate messages on the internet.
- 21% of 15-16 year olds (11% overall) have seen sites promoting ways to be thin.
- 20% of 15-16% year olds have seen sites talking about drug use.

- 7% of older boys and 6% of older girls have seen sites talking about ways of committing suicide.
- Overall, 25% of children have seen websites containing some form of potentially harmful user-generated content. This is slightly above the European average of 21%, placing Ireland somewhere in the middle of the EU25.

> people getten beaten up or people getting harmed in any way ..some people put these types ov videos up and its just not nice to see
> (Girl, 14, Ireland)

> the internet is allowed free speech and there is a lot of racist sites e.g. if i looked up nazi for a school project there may be sites crediting the nazi's
> (Boy, 14, Ireland)

> things about death and how people kill thenselves...some think its normal ! ! taking drugs
> (Girl, 15, Ireland)

5.7. Personal data misuse

Also asked in the survey was the issue of personal data misuse. There is little research on this topic even though young people themselves frequently cite it as a topic of concern. Questions on the misuse of personal data online, involving identity theft and/or access by others to personal information, were asked of children aged 11-16:

In the PAST 12 MONTHS, has any of the following happened to you on the internet? In the PAST 12 MONTHS, has any of the following happened to you on the internet?

> Her Bebo Account was hacked into her status was changed to if you

> want some sexy time ring me and a mobile number was given.
> (Parent of 11 year old girl)

In Table 18, we see that:

- 12% of children overall have experienced some form of personal data misuse. This is above the European average of 9% and places Ireland in the middle of the EU25.
- The most common form of personal data misuse is someone using the child's password or pretending to be them. This was experienced by 10% of children overall, and more by older teenagers than younger children.
- Smaller numbers experienced some form of misuse of their personal information or being cheated on the internet.
- Girls experience more forms of personal data misuse: 14% of girls compared to 10% of boys have had their password stolen or misused.

Table 17: Child has experienced misuse of personal data in past 12 months, by age and gender (age 11+)

%	Age				
	11-13 years		14-16 years		
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	All
Somebody used my password to access my information or to pretend to be me	5	8	10	14	10
Somebody used my personal information in a way I didn't like	3	3	5	6	4
I lost money by being cheated on the internet	2	1	3	1	2
Misuse of any kind	9	10	15	15	12

QC143: In the past 12 months, has any of the following happened to you on the internet?

Base: All children aged 11-16 who use the internet.

6. MEDIATION

In addition to uses, activities and risks, the *EU Kids Online* survey also asked children (and their parents) about different types of mediation as practised by parents, teachers and peers. Mediation in this context reference to various forms of social, practical or technical means of monitoring, guiding or otherwise supporting children's use of the internet. Active mediation on the part of parents and children may include forms of co-use and assistance, as well as mediation of actual internet safety. Each of these forms were asked about in the survey as were preferred sources of information about internet safety and the use of filters or parental controls.

6.1.   Parental mediation

Active mediation of internet use: The first form of mediation asked about is that of active mediation of the child's internet use, where the parent is present, staying nearby, encouraging or sharing or discussing the child's online activities.

Table 18 examines parental mediation, focusing first on encouraging and supportive forms of active mediation (and co-use). These figures show the child's perception of the parent-child interaction.

Table 20 shows that:

- The vast majority of parents (91%) mediate their children's internet use in some way. This is above the European average of 87%.
- Most parents (72%) stay nearby children when using the internet, particularly for younger children. This is the most popular way to actively mediate children's internet use.
- Many parents also talk to their children about what they do on the internet (67% overall and over 75% for younger children).
- Less than half (42%) sit with children while on the internet or do shared activities (35% overall). The exception is for younger girls 9-12 years (56%).

Table 18: Parent's active mediation of the child's *internet use,* **according to child**

% who say that their parent does…	9-12 years		13-16 years		
	Boys	**Girls**	**Boys**	**Girls**	**All**
Stay nearby when you use the internet	83	85	59	64	72
Talk to you about what you do on the internet	75	77	51	69	67
Encourage you to explore and learn things on the internet on your own	50	53	49	43	49
Sit with you while you use the internet	50	56	33	28	42
Do shared activities together with you on the internet	46	43	26	26	35
At least one of the above	94	95	87	90	91

QC327: Does your parent / do either of you parents sometimes… *(Multiple responses allowed)*

Base: All children who use the internet.

To inapropiete for children only when 12 look at You-Tube without supervision

(Boy, 9, Ireland)

...He went to his mam and told her of pornographic images he had seen. His Mam spoke to him and reassured him and explained to him what a site like that was. Since then they have changed the block in the computer.

(Parent of 12 year old boy, Ireland)

Figure 23 presents a comparison of children's and parents perspective on active mediation, broken down by age, gender and SES.

Figure 23: Parent's active mediation of the child's internet use, according to child and parent
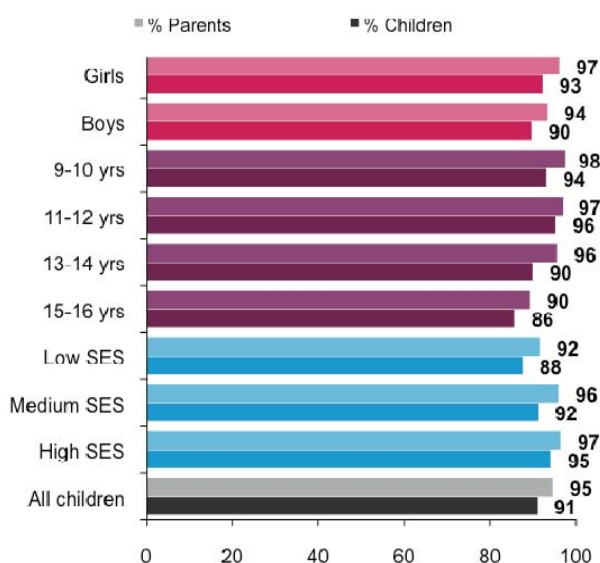
QC327 and QP220: Does your parents/do either of your parents sometimes [which of the following things, if any do you (or your partner/other carer) sometimes do with your child]…
Base: All children who use the internet and one of their parents.

Figure 23 shows that:

▪ Parents claim to actively mediate their children's internet slightly more than recognised by children (95% vs. 92%).

▪ Active mediation is highest with younger children ranging from 98% claimed by parents for 9-10 year olds to 90% for 15-16 year olds.

▪ There are just slight gender difference - 93% of girls compared to 90% of boys say their parents mediate their internet use.

▪ SES differences are slight also, with marginally more mediation claimed by higher SES homes.

Active mediation of internet safety: Turning to active mediation of the child's internet safety in particular, the survey asked a series of questions about the role parents might play, with answers given by children shown in Table 19.

Table 19: Parent's active mediation of the child's internet safety, according to child

| % who say that their parent does…	9-12 years		13-16 years		
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	All
Explained why some websites are good or bad	74	77	68	70	72
Suggested ways to use the internet safely	76	75	67	70	72
Helped you when something is difficult to do or find on the internet	80	85	55	59	69
Talked to you about what to do if something on the internet bothered you	62	71	59	65	64
Suggested ways to behave towards other people online	55	69	58	66	62
Helped you in the past when something has bothered you on the internet	38	48	35	36	39
At least one of the above	91	96	90	90	92

QC329 Does your parent / do either of your parents sometimes… *(Multiple responses allowed)*
Base: All children who use the internet.

- Explaining why websites are good or bad and suggesting ways to use the internet safely (72%) are the most common strategies. This is closely followed by helping when something is difficult to do or find (69%)

- A majority of parents also take positive steps such as suggesting how to behave towards others online (62%) and talking about things that might bother the child (64%). A smaller number has helped their child when something arose in the past (39%).

- Once again, gender differences are small, though older girls receive a little more support regarding things that have or might bother them online.

- Younger children, it seems, receive guidance in more critical mediation – in evaluating websites, and in managing internet use effectively.

- Active mediation of internet safety is above the European average (92% vs. 86%) and places Ireland in the top 5 of the EU25 in the countries surveyed.

Demographic differences in parental mediation of children's internet safety are presented in Figure 24.

Figure 24: Parent's active mediation of the child's *internet safety*, according to child and parent
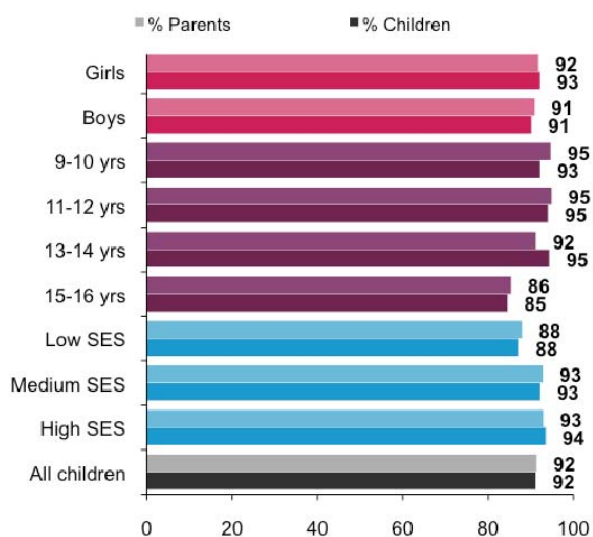
QC329 and QP222: Has your parent/either of your parents [have you] ever done any of these things with you [your child]?

Base: All children who use the internet and one of their parents.

- There are few gender differences in parental safety mediation, according to the child, and a small but steady decline in mediation with the age of the child. There are slight SES differences with higher SES homes practicing somewhat greater levels of mediation of internet safety.

Restrictive mediation: In addition to active mediation, which enables both opportunities and enhances safety, parents have long been advised to set rules or restrictions in order to manage their child's internet use. These may be simple bans – telling the child they are not permitted to undertake a particular online activity, or the child may be permitted to do that activity only with permission or under supervision. Both these were treated as measures of restrictive mediation, compared with children for whom no restrictions apply (Table 20).

Table 20: Parents' restrictive mediation of the child's internet use, according to child

% who say that rules apply about…	9-12 years		13-16 years		
	Boys	**Girls**	**Boys**	**Girls**	**All**
Give out personal information to others on the internet	99	99	80	86	91
Download music or films on the internet	92	92	46	47	69
Upload photos, videos or music to share with others	92	93	48	40	68
Use instant messaging	87	80	32	29	56
Have your own social networking profile	80	79	28	25	52
Watch video clips on the internet	64	72	21	15	42
At least one	100	100	84	88	93

QC328: For each of these things, please tell me if your parents CURRENTLY let you do them whenever you want, or let you do them but only with your parent's permission or supervision, or NEVER let you do them.
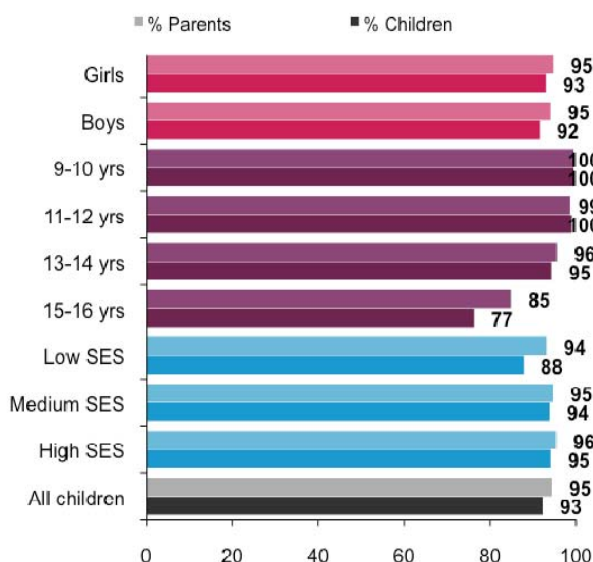
Note: The latter two options are combined to calculate the percentage for whom rules or restrictions apply.

Base: All children who use the internet.

- Most rules apply to disclosing personal information, where 91% say that they are either not allowed to do this or that restrictions apply. This applies to 99% of younger children.

- Next most regulated is downloading music or films (69%) and uploading material (68%), though possibly this reflects rules in cases where photos or videos are of the children themselves.

- 56% have restrictions in their use of instant messaging. A little over half of children (52%) are restricted in their use of social networking sites, and 42% experience rules watching video clips.

Demographic variations in parental restrictive mediation are show in Figure 25.

Figure 25: Parents' restrictive mediation of the child's internet use, according to child and parent

QC328 and QP221: Whether your parents let you [your child is allowed to] do this all of the time, only with permission/supervision or never allowed.

Note: The latter two options are combined to calculate the percentage for whom rules or restrictions apply.

Base: All children who use the internet and one of their parents.

- Age differences are strongly apparent in the case of restrictive mediation, with near universal mediation of younger children 9-12 years of age, falling slightly to 95% for 13-14 year olds and 77% for 15-16 year olds.

- Overall, levels of restrictive mediation for children in Ireland are high compared to the European average of 85%, and are in fact the highest in Europe.

- Still, the majority of teenagers are still expected to follow rules when using the internet. This applies with very few differences by gender or by SES.

Monitoring of children's internet use: A related aspect of mediation is that of parental monitoring or checking children's use. While restrictive mediation can be difficult insofar as it causes arguments at home, monitoring is difficult insofar as it seems to undermine the trust relation between parent and child. Table 21 presents findings in relation to parent's monitoring of the child's internet use, according to the child.

Table 21: Parent's monitoring of the child's internet use, according to child

% who say parents check...	9-12 years		13-16 years		
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	All
Which websites you visited	72	67	37	42	54
Your profile on a social network or online community	66	70	30	43	47
Which friends or contacts you add to social networking profile	61	68	22	36	40
The messages in your email or instant messaging account	56	44	9	15	23
At least one of the above	67	65	41	56	57

QC330: Does your parent/either of your parents sometimes check any of the following things?

Base: All children who use the internet at home.

- Compared to other forms of mediation, monitoring of children's internet use is practised by just over half of parents, and more for younger than older children. Checking which websites children visit is the most common form of monitoring (54%), perhaps reflecting the relative ease of doing this.

- Checking social networking profiles (47%) or the friends who are added to those profiles (40%) is less common, though still more practised than actually checking the content of children's messages.

- Monitoring internet use by parents is close to the European norm of 50%.

Figure 26: Parent's monitoring of the child's internet use, according to child and parent
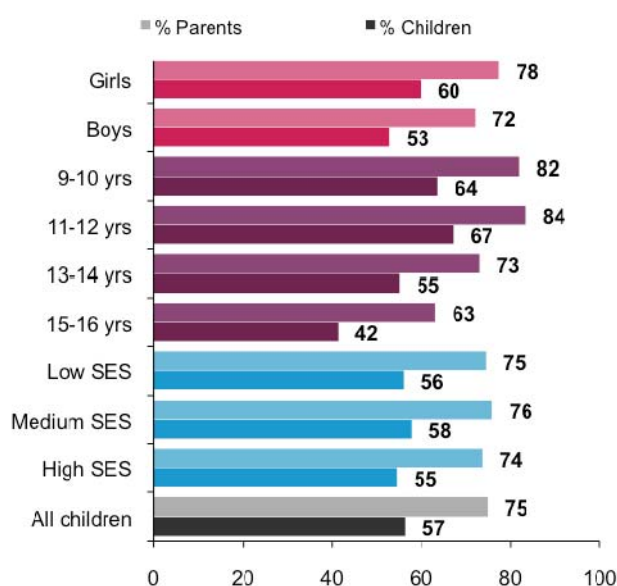
QC330 and QP223: Does your parent/either of your parents sometimes check any of the following things?

Base: All children who use the internet at home and one of their parents.

- Figure 26 shows slight gender differences in that more girls than boys say their parents check their internet use.

- Age differences are marked with a substantial decline in monitoring as children grow older: 64% of the parents of 9-10 year olds use one or more forms of monitoring, but only 42% do so for their 15-16 year olds. There is virtually no difference by SES.

- Parents state more often (by nearly 20%) than children that they check their children's internet use. It may be that such monitoring is invisible to children or that parents are overclaiming the extent to which they supervise their children's internet use.

Technical mediation: 'Parental controls' have been widely promoted as technical solutions to the challenge of parental mediation though there is much discussion regarding their effectiveness. Parents and children were asked if the parents use any technical means to monitor what the child does online.

Table 22: Parents' technical mediation of the child's internet use, according to child

% who say parents check...	9-12 years		13-16 years		
	Boys	**Girls**	**Boys**	**Girls**	**All**
Software to prevent spam/junk mail or viruses	85	77	76	79	79
Parental controls or other means of keeping track of the websites you visit	61	57	33	36	42
Parental controls or other means of blocking or filtering some types of website	49	48	36	42	41
A service or contract that limits the time you spend on the internet	19	15	12	8	12
Any of the above	88	73	82	83	82

QC331: Does your parent/either of your parents make use of the following?

Base: All children who use the internet at home.

- The most widely used software is not so much about safety concerns but relates rather to security. Spam filters and virus control software is used by 79% of households, according to children.

- Other parental controls are used much less frequently with filters being used by just 41% of parents. Time-limiting software is used by only 12%

- Beyond this, use of technical tools is relatively low, especially by comparison with other parental mediation strategies. Still, roughly a quarter of parents blocks or filters websites (28%) and/or tracks the websites visited by the children (24%).

Figure 27: Parents' use of parental controls or other means of blocking or filtering some types of websites
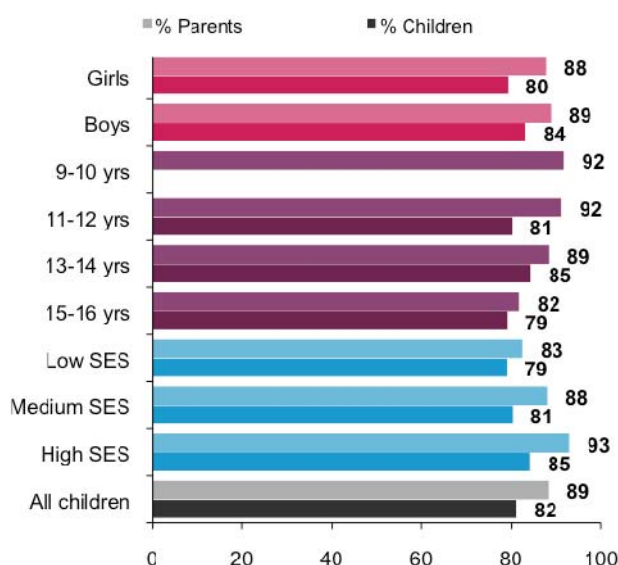
QC331: Does your parent/either of your parents make use of the following? Use of parental controls or other means of blocking or filtering some types of websites. QP224: Do you make use of any of the following? Parental controls or other means of blocking or filtering some types of website

Base: All children who use the internet at home and one of their parents.

- There is considerable variation between parents' and children's accounts on the use of parental controls. More parents (89%) claim to use them than children (82%).

- There is a steady decline with age from 92% for children 9-12 dropping to 79% for 15-16 year olds (while noting that this high figure includes the use of spam filters).

- There is slight SES variation with higher SES homes more likely to use some form of technical parental control.

- With specific reference to the use of 'parental control' filtering technology, parents' use in Ireland (41%) is significantly above that of the European average (28%) and is second only to the UK (46%).

6.2. Effectiveness of parental mediation

Reflecting on the effectiveness of parental mediation, the *EU Kids Online* survey asked children how much their parents knew about their internet use.

Table 23: How much parents know about their child's internet use, according to child

	9-12 years		13-16 years		
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	All
A lot	62	66	35	36	49
Quite a bit	27	22	36	45	33
Just a little	8	9	21	15	13
Nothing	2	3	8	4	4

QC325: How much do you think your parent(s) knows about what you do on the internet?

Base: All children who use the internet.

- Table 25 shows that most children think their parents know a lot or quite a bit about their children's internet use. 13% say 'just a little' and just 4% claim that their parent knows nothing.

- Younger children are more likely to think their parents know more, in line with the finding that parents mediate their experiences more than they do older children.

- Girls are a little more inclined than boys to think that their parents know a lot or quite a bit about their internet use.

On the other, parents may not feel confident that they can help their child deal with anything on the internet that bothers them. And they may feel that their child is better able to cope with their own online experiences. According to the *EU Kids Online* survey:

- Most parents do feel confident they can help their child with anything on the internet that bothers them: 46% say they are very confident and 39% say they can help a fair amount. Just 5% say they would not be able to help at all and 9% say they would not be very able to help.

- Parents are also confident of their children's abilities to cope with anything on the internet that may bother them. 26% of parents feel very confident and over half (53%) say they are able to cope a fair amount. 13% say their children would not be very able to cope and 8% say they would not be able to cope at all.

It is possible that parental mediation may limit opportunities as well as support online safety. Thus, children and parents were asked whether parental activities limit what the child can do online (Figure 28).

Figure 28: Whether parental mediation limits the child's activities on the internet, according to child
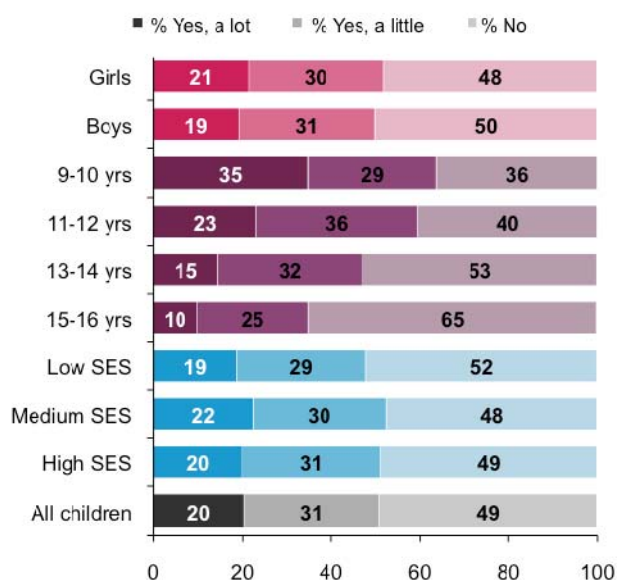
QC333: Do the things that your parent does (parents do) relating to how you use the internet limit what you can do on the internet or not really?

Base: All children who use the internet.

- Just over half (51%) of children think that parental mediation limits what they do online, 20% saying it limits their activities a lot.
- Younger children, 9-10 years of age, feel the most restricted (35% say they are restricted a lot). While greater parental mediation of this younger age group is to be expected, it is interesting to note that it is young children who express this. The opposite result might have been predicted, namely that teenagers

would feel more restricted by parental activities than would younger children.

- Figure 28 shows that there are few gender and SES differences. As already noted, there are clear age differences: the older the child, the less parental mediation limits them.

But do children say that they simply ignore parental efforts to mediate their internet use, as is popularly supposed?

Figure 29: Whether child ignores what parents say when they use the internet, according to child
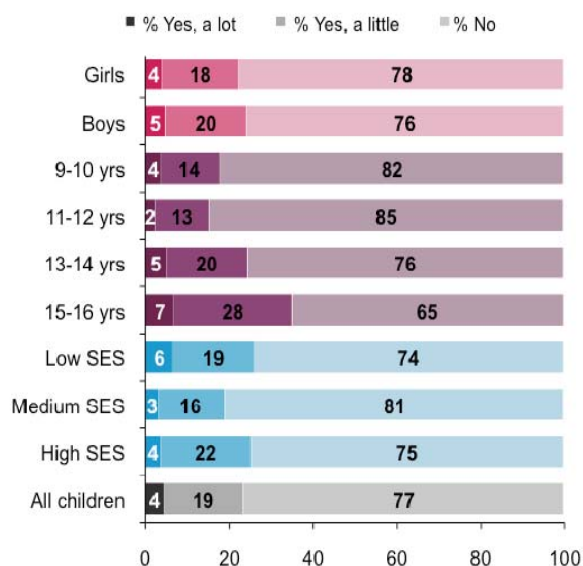
QC334: And do you ever ignore what your parent(s) tell you when use the internet, or not really?

Base: All children who use the internet.

- Figure 29 shows that for many children parental mediation is effective and advice is heeded. Over three quarters (77%) say they do not simply ignore it. 19% say they ignore their parents a little and 4% of children say they ignore a lot.
- Teenagers are more likely than 9-10 year olds especially to say they ignore what their parents do or say about their internet use, though only a little.
- There are few gender differences with boys slightly more likely to ignore parental advice.

Parents were also asked if they expected that their child will experience problems on the internet in the next six months.

Figure 30: Whether parent thinks their child will experience problems on the internet in the next six months
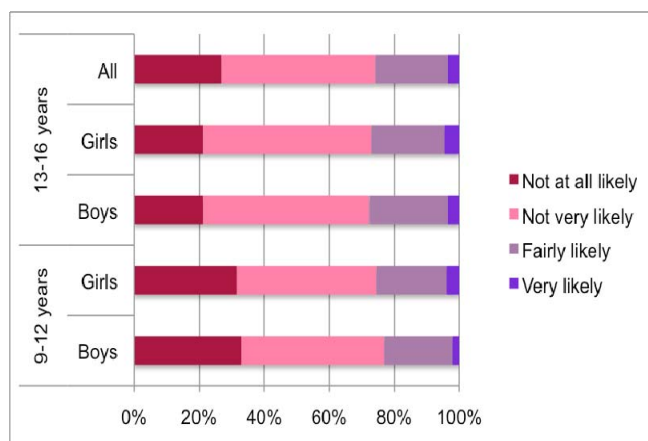
QP232: In the next six months, how likely, if at all, do you think it is that your child will experience something on the internet that will bother them?

Base: Parents of children who use the internet.

▪ Most parents (74%) are confident that it is not very or at all likely that their child will encounter anything that bothers them in the next six months.

▪ However, 26% think it fairly or very likely that their child will experience something that bothers them online in the next six months.

▪ There seems little variation in this regard by the age or gender of the child.

Last, it may be asked whether children and parents think the level of parental mediation they receive is about right. We asked children if they would like their parents to take more or less interest in what they do online. And we asked parents if they think they should do more or not.

Table 24: Whether the child would like their parent(s) to take more or less interest in what they do online

% who say that rules apply about…	9-12 years		13-16 years		
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	All
A lot more	10	12	4	4	7
A little more	12	13	10	9	11
Stay the same	72	68	78	80	75
A little less	3	7	6	5	5
A lot less	3	0	2	2	2

QC326: Overall, would you like your parent(s) to take more or less interest in what you do on the internet, or stay the same?

Base: All children who use the internet.

▪ From the perspective of most children (75%), and even more for teenagers, parents have got it about right, since these children think the level of parental interest in their online activities should stay the same.

▪ Younger children, more so than older children, would like their parents to take more interest (22% of boys and 25% of girls).

6.3. Teachers

Parents are not the only adults with a responsibility to mediate children's internet use or safety. To aid comparison, children (though not their teachers) were asked about the kinds of mediating activities undertaken by their teachers at school.

One question asked about active mediation in general ('have your teachers ever talked to you about what you do on the internet?'), another asked about restrictive mediation ('have your teachers ever made rules about what you can do on the internet at school?'),[7] and the remainder asked about mediation of internet safety, using the items also asked about parents.

Table 25: Teachers' mediation of child's internet use, according to child

% who say teachers at their school have ever…	9-12 years		13-16 years		
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	All
Suggested ways to use the internet safely	62	69	71	71	68
Explained why some websites are good or bad	50	60	64	69	61
Helped you when something is difficult to do or find on the internet	47	58	57	64	57
Suggested ways to behave towards other people online	45	54	60	61	55
Talked to you about what to do if something on the internet bothered you	38	46	50	55	47
Helped you in the past when something has bothered you on the internet	17	25	24	18	21
One or more forms of active mediation	79	84	91	92	87
Made rules about what you can do on the internet at school	75	81	88	89	83
Talked to you about what you do on the internet	51	55	61	61	57
One or more of all the above	87	88	97	94	91

QC338: Have any teachers at your school ever done any of these things? *(Multiple responses allowed)*

Base: All children who use the internet.

- A large majority report some form mediation by teachers (87%), more in terms of rule making (91%).
- Significantly, 68% of children say their teachers have suggested ways to use the internet safely. This is somewhat higher for older teenagers in the secondary school cycle. This is well above the European average of 58% though in a number of countries where internet safety is fully embedded in the curriculum higher figures are reported (the UK is 85% for instance)
- 61% say that their teachers explain to them why some websites are good or bad. 57% of children have been helped when they find something difficult on the internet.

Demographic variables for teachers' mediation of child's internet use is shown in Figure 31.

Figure 31: Teachers' mediation of child's internet use, according to child
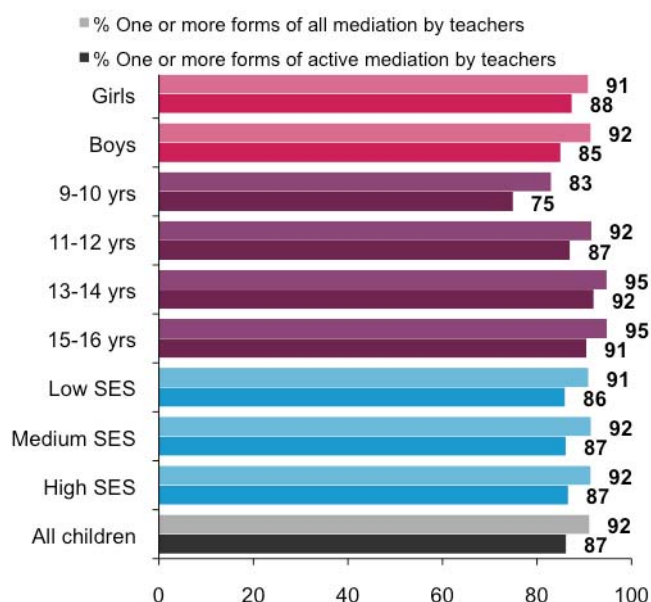
QC338: Have any teachers at your school ever done any of these things? *(Multiple responses allowed)*

Base: All children who use the internet.

- Age differences stand out in the above: teachers engage least with 9-10 year olds internet use, reflecting need for greater attention to internet safety at the primary level.

6.4. Peers

Some of the same questions regarding forms of mediation were also be asked of children in relation to support from peers. Previous research has often shown that children would rather turn to their friends than to an adult when something online bothers or worries them.[8] But little is known about whether or how children really support each other in terms of internet safety.

Five of the questions on active mediation of internet safety were also asked in relation to friends.

Table 26: Peer mediation of child's internet use, according to child

% who say friends at their school have ever…	9-12 years		13-16 years		
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	All
Helped you when something is difficult to do or find on the internet	40	48	51	66	51
Explained why some websites are good or bad	35	32	35	37	35
Suggested ways to use the internet safely	26	31	27	29	28
Suggested ways to behave towards other people online	23	26	22	31	25
Helped you in the past when something has bothered you on the internet	16	24	22	34	24
Any of the above	60	64	66	79	67

QC336: Have your friends ever done any of these things? *(Multiple responses allowed)*

Base: All children who use the internet.

- 67% of children say their peers have helped or supported their internet use in at least one of the five ways asked about.

- As with teachers, this suggests that children do consider other children quite supportive in general, more so in the case of older children.

- Peers are much more likely to mediate in a practical way, helping each other to do or find something when there is a difficulty (51%). Fewer say that peers help when they are bothered by something (24%), but as noted before, this may reflect the fact that few are bothered.

- Compared with help from teachers, it seems peers are less likely to give safety or ethical advice.

- Generally, older children claim their peers help them more than do younger children.

- The main gender difference is found specifically with older girls claiming that their peers help them more in a variety of ways compared to boys of that age – although the gaps are just a few percentage points.

Figure 32: Peer mediation of child's internet use, according to child

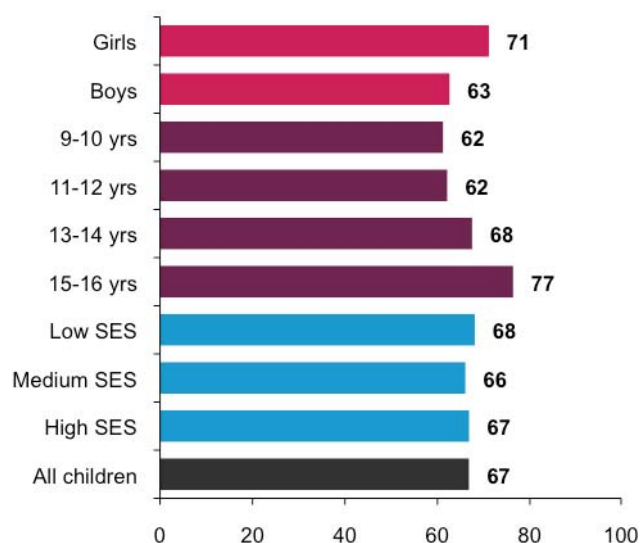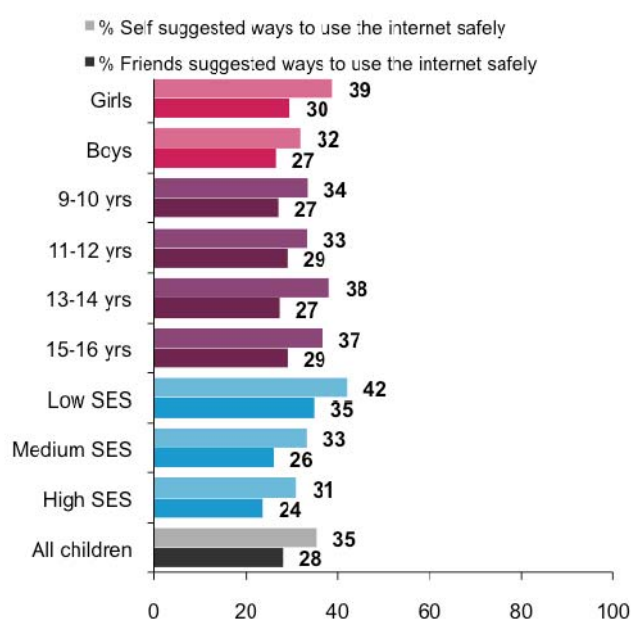

QC336: Have your friends ever done any of these things? *(Multiple responses allowed)*

Base: All children who use the internet.

- Figure 32 indicates that overall there are few gender or SES differences in peer support, but it reaffirms the finding that older children think their peers mediate more, especially compared with the youngest group of 9-10 year olds.

Distinctively, peer mediation can work both ways. Thus children were also asked if they help friends online in similar ways, specifically as regards how to use the internet safely.

Figure 33: Peer mediation of child's safe internet use, according to child

QC337: Have you ever suggested ways to use the internet safely to your friends. QC336c: Have your friends ever done any of these things – suggested ways to use the internet safely.

Base: All children who use the internet.

- Overall, 28% of children say they have received some guidance on safe internet use from their friends, and 35% say that they have also provided such advice to their friends.
- Girls help and are helped somewhat more than boys in suggesting how to be safe online. Levels of peer support also rise with age, suggesting a constructive peer culture among those aged 11 and over.
- For the youngest group, children say they benefit from the support of others more than they themselves provide such help.
- The lower the SES the greater the degree to which children say peers help.

6.5. Parent, teacher and peer mediation compared

One of the questions that was repeated across all the contexts discussed above is 'have your parents/teachers/friends 'suggested ways to use the internet safely?'

Figure 34 therefore provides a comparison children's receipt of internet safety advice from parents, teachers and peers.

Figure 34: Whether parents, peers or teachers have ever suggested ways to use the internet safely, according to child
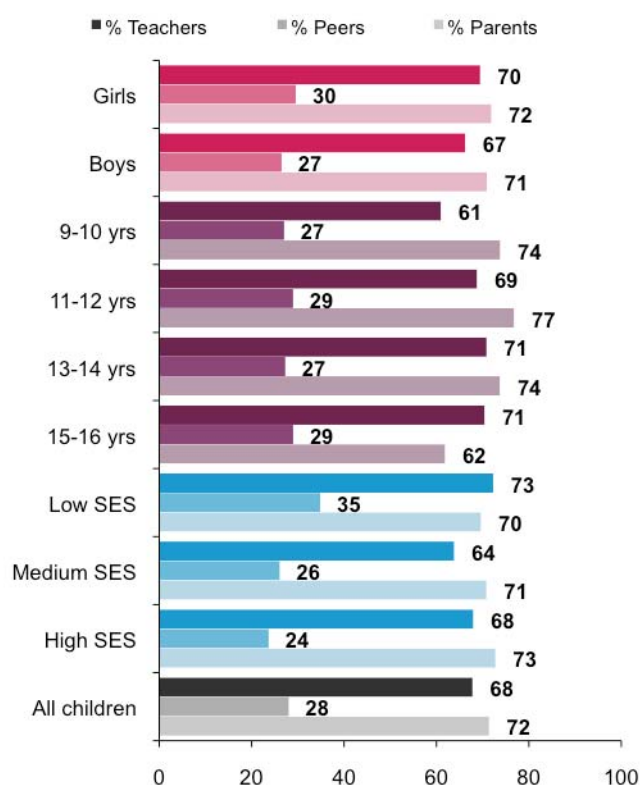
QC329c: Have your parents ever suggested ways to use the internet safely? QC336c: Have your friends ever suggested ways to use the internet safely? QC338d: Have your teachers ever suggested ways to use the internet safely?

Base: All children who use the internet.

- It seems that internet safety advice is received first from parents (72%), then teachers (68%), then peers (28%).
- Interestingly, the rank order varies by demographics. So, for most groupings, the order is as for children

overall (most from parents, then teachers, then peers). But for children from lower SES homes, advice from teachers overtakes that of parents.

6.6. Sources of safety awareness

Parents, teachers and peers are clearly important, but there are also additional sources of information available to children regarding how to use the internet safely. How important are these? Use of a range of further sources is reported in Table 27.

Note that the response options in these tables did not include parents, teachers or friends, as these are reported above.

Table 27: Children's sources of advice on internet safety (other than parents, teachers or friends)

%	9-12 years		13-16 years		
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	All
Other relative	49	51	50	55	51
Television, radio, newspapers or magazines	12	14	19	34	20
Websites	4	3	20	13	10
Internet service provider	4	4	12	10	8
Someone whose job is to give advice over the internet	6	3	8	9	7
Youth or church or social worker	3	5	9	7	6
Librarian	5	4	5	5	5
I haven't received advice from any of these	41	36	29	22	32

QC339: Have you EVER received advice about how to use the internet safely from any of these people or places? *(Multiple responses allowed)*

Base: All children who use the internet.

- Other relatives (51%), interestingly, are generally as important as peers in providing advice to children on how to use the internet safely.

- Information received via the traditional mass media (20%) is less used, with online sources even less frequently used. 10% have gained safety advice from websites).

- Few report turning to other adults for guidance, though some get advice from online advisors, youth workers, their internet service provider or a librarian.

- Older children get more advice from more other sources, with the exception of relatives. There are few gender differences, though it seems girls get more advice from the media.

- Most significant in Table 27 is that around one third of children (32%) reports that they have not received safety guidance from any of these sources, and that younger children report receiving less advice than do teenagers.

Similar questions were also asked of parents, although a somewhat different list of advice sources was provide. Additionally the *EU Kids Online* survey asked parents where they would like to get information and advice about internet safety from in the future, so as to focus further awareness-raising activities (see Tables 30 and 31).

Table 28: Parents' actual sources of information on internet safety, by age of child

%	Age of child				
	9-10	11-12	13-14	15-16	All
Family and friends	54	59	60	55	57
Television, radio, newspapers or magazines	38	46	46	46	44
Your child's school	23	33	34	32	31
Internet service providers	28	24	23	25	25
Websites with safety information	23	24	23	21	23
Manufacturers and retailers selling the products	14	11	12	17	14
From my child	4	11	11	20	12
Other sources	10	9	6	6	8
Children's welfare organisations/charities	6	8	8	9	8
Government, local authorities	5	5	8	9	7
None, I don't get any/want more information about this	8	4	5	8	6

QP238: In general where do you get information and advice on safety tools and safe use of the internet from? *(Multiple responses allowed)*

Base: Parents whose child uses the internet.

- Table 28 indicates that parents get internet safety advice first and foremost from family and friends (57%), then traditional media (44%), the child's school (31%), internet service providers (25%) and websites (23%).

- Interestingly, 12% say they have received safety information from their own child, 20% in the case of older teenagers.

- A small proportion, 6%, report getting no advice from any of these sources.

- When asked where they would like to get more advice from (Table 29), the child's school is the most popular choice for parents at 52% (EU: 42%), while friends and family drop to sixth place at 28%. The school as both a current and a preferred source of internet safety is above the European average.

- Traditional media, government and ISP sources are the next most popular ranging from 30% to 34%.

- Only 5% of parents say that they don't want further information on internet safety.

Table 29: Parents' desired sources of information on internet safety, by age of child

%	Age of child				
	9-10	11-12	13-14	15-16	All
Your child's school	57	55	51	47	52
Television, radio, newspapers or magazines	33	30	34	37	34
Government, local authorities	31	30	31	32	31
Internet service providers	32	28	32	28	30
Websites with safety information	33	30	29	27	30
Family and friends	32	28	32	20	28
Manufacturers and retailers selling the products	22	22	24	21	22
Children's welfare organisations/charities	22	25	22	17	21
From my child	10	8	11	11	10
Other sources	4	5	4	6	5
Don't want any	3	4	5	7	5

QP239: In general where would you like to get information and advice on safety tools and safe use of the internet from in the future? *(Multiple responses allowed)*

Base: Parents whose child uses the internet.

7. CONCLUSIONS

7.1. Children in Ireland going online

Children and young people in Ireland, as shown throughout the *EU Kids Online* survey, in many respects are among the leaders in most aspects on internet use compared to their counterparts from across Europe. Use of the internet at home among Irish children is well above the European average (87% vs. 62%). Access via school or college is much the same (66% vs. 63%). Using the internet 'when out and about' is also higher for children in Ireland than in Europe generally (20% vs. 9%) reflecting the growing popularity of mobile internet access through smartphones, laptops and other handheld devices.

Yet, this diversification of internet use nor its privatisation has not quite reached the levels experienced elsewhere. As revealed in this survey, fewer children in Ireland access the internet from their own room compared to the European average (37% vs. 49%). Other means of access, such using internet cafés (IE 9% vs EU 12%) or public libraries (IE 14% vs. EU 12%) for internet access are relatively similar.

In some other respects, it is interesting to see that children in Ireland lag somewhat behind their European counterparts. 53% of children use the internet daily or nearly daily. This rises to nearly three quarters of 15-16 year olds. But this is somewhat behind the European average of 60% and well below the high figures of 80% daily use reached among Northern European and Scandinavian countries. Similarly in relation to time spent online, Ireland lies below European norms. Irish children spend just over one hour per day online (61 minutes). In the United Kingdom, by contrast, children spend about 50% more time online (99 minutes per day on average). Such patterns are a good indication of the general embeddedness of the internet in daily life which in the Irish context is well established. But as internet penetration grows, children will undoubtedly spend more time online and close the gap on to those northern European countries where daily ubiquitous internet use is now a fact of life.

Curiously, even though Irish children are not amongst the heaviest users of the internet in Europe, they are among the highest when it comes to declaring some concern in relation to excessive use of the internet. 43% of Irish children compared to 30% in European generally have suggested that their internet use has been at the expense of some other aspect of social or family life and which they regret. While it is debateable as to whether this amounts to internet addiction, the findings do pose some issues of concern for parents, educators and policy makers.

Another aspect that gives rise to concern is the fact that a large majority of children in Ireland (67%) believe that there are things that will bother their age group. 11% of children, rising to 16% of 15-16 year olds have themselves been bothered or have had a negative experience of something online.

Despite high usage even among children, there is still plenty of scope for adults – parents, teachers, and so on – to teach and guide children's internet use. When asked about a general range of skills related to going online, children in Ireland say they have four of the eight skills asked about. This compares to the European average of 5.7. Most 11-16 year olds can bookmark a website (66%), block messages from someone they do not wish to be in contact with (64%) or find safety information online (64%). Over half can change privacy settings on a social networking profile (58%), block junk mail and spam (49%). Less than half (43%) can delete their history on an internet browser. Only 42% say they compare websites to judge the quality of information. Less than a quarter can change filter preferences (21%).

7.2. Risk factors and Irish children

A summary of online risk factors experienced by children aged 9-16 in Ireland is presented in Table 30. This brings together the different forms of content or contact encountered by children that may also lead to risk of harm. Note that this does not itself suggest that harm

arises from such experience or that children are not able to cope with risks or problematic content they come across. More detailed analysis of children's responses to risks and coping strategies is presented in the full European report. Given the smaller numbers involved, detailed analysis is not possible for the individual country report.

Table 30: Summary of online risk factors encountered by children in Ireland

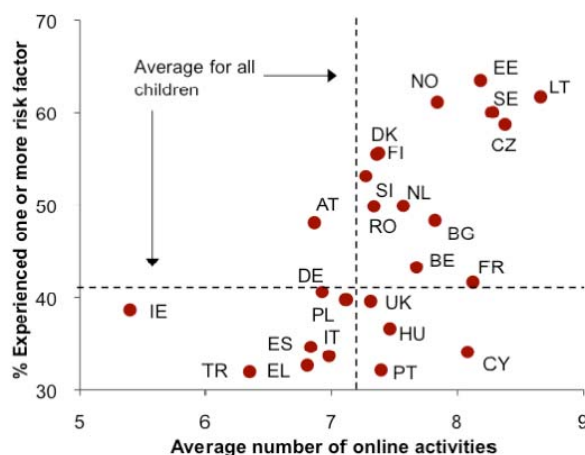| % who have…	9-10	11-12	13-14	15-16	All
Ever had contact on the internet with someone not met face to face before	11	18	32	43	28
Have come across one or more types of potentially harmful user-generated content in past 12 months	n.a.	12	21	42	25
Have experienced one or more types of misuse of personal data in past 12 months	n.a.	10	12	15	12
Seen sexual images on websites in past 12 months	1	6	9	29	11
Seen or received sexual messages on the internet in past 12 months	n.a.	3	7	21	11
Ever gone on to meet anyone face to face that first met on the internet	2	1	4	10	4
Have been sent nasty or hurtful messages on the internet in past 12 months	1	2	5	8	4
Encountered one or more of the above	8	35	47	63	39

Table 30 shows that:

▪ Having contact online with someone they have not met face to face before is the most common of the risk factors encountered (28% of all children; 43% of older teenagers). The nature of such contacts remains to be determined and may reflect the growing use of online communication as a social medium used for making new friends and contacts. The extent to which this risk may lead to harm needs to be carefully assessed by policy makers.

▪ Coming across harmful user generated content is the next most common risk, encountered by a quarter of all children and 42% of older teenagers. Again, this is not to suggest that children are not able to cope with coming across such content but educators and awareness raisers need to be vigilant regarding the range of harmful content online. The need for positive content is also an important implication.

▪ Personal data misuse is the third most prevalent risk encountered by children and has been experienced by 12% of children overall and by 15% of older teenagers.

▪ 11% of children have seen sexual images online (29% of older teenagers). 11% have also seen or received sexual messages on the interent (21% of older teenagers).

▪ 4% have had face to face meetings with contacts they first met online, mostly teenagers including 10% of 15-16 year olds.

Regarding other forms of risk, such as behaviour where the child is an actor rather than a passive recipient, 2% of children have acted in a hurtful nasty way towards others (6% of older teenagers), and 3% have posted or sent a sexual message in the past 12 months (5% of older teenagers).

This overall experience of risk is placed in a European context in Figure 35 which sets out average risk factors by average number of online activities for all countries included in the survey.

Figure 35: Children who have encountered one or more online risk factors by average number of online activities, by country

7.3. Risk and safety on the internet

One of the features to emerge strongly from the *EU Kids Online* survey is that parents overall do take an active interest in their children's internet safety. The vast majority of parents (91%) mediate their children's internet use in some way. This is above the European average of 87%. Most parents (72%) stay close or watch their children when using the internet, particularly in the case of younger children. Many parents also talk to their children about what they do online (67% overall and over 75% for younger children).

Irish parents are also active in promoting internet safety: 72% have explained to their children why certain websites are good or bad and have suggested ways to use the internet safely. A majority of parents also take positive steps such as suggesting how to behave towards others online (62%) and talking about things that might bother the child (64%). Many parents have also helped their child when something arose in the past (39%).

This high level of parental mediation is reflected most particularly in the setting of rules regarding internet use. Restrictive mediation, in this sense, is in fact the highest in Europe and 91% of children say that restrictions of some form apply to their internet use. A similar number report that such restrictions apply also in a school setting. Teachers are also a very important source of internet safety and 68% of children have received information about using the internet safely from school. Children in the secondary school cycle receive most support from their teachers. Clearly, with ever younger children going online, there is an urgent need to address internet safety more directly at primary school level. It is also clear that the school is pivotal as a source of internet safety advice: when asked where they would like to get more advice from, the child's school is the most popular choice for parents (52%). Traditional media, government and ISP sources also feature (30% to 34%). Only 5% of parents say that they don't want further information on internet safety.

In this graph, Ireland is placed in the bottom left quadrant with a relatively low average number of online activites (for a country of reasonably high usage) and a relatively low experience of risk (39%). There is much to be further explored here but it does provide an overall impression that children's internet use is less adverturous and consequently safer, or more conservative, than other European countries. This finding is supported by the fact that forms of restrictive mediation, the setting of rules and restrictions, regarding internet use were found to be highest in ireland for all European countries.

There is, as further explained and argued in the full European report, a clear association between opportunities and risks and which is evident in all the countries studied: the more use (daily use, amount of time spent online), the more opportunities but also the more risks. For a range of Northern European countries – including Scandinavian countries and the Baltic states, it is clear that with very high usage, there is also much greater experience of the range of risk factors studied in the report. But with high use, there are also greater skills and coping strategies and there is no evidence in the European report of greater use leading to greater harm.

ANNEX 1: EU KIDS ONLINE

Overview

EU Kids Online II: Enhancing Knowledge Regarding European Children's Use, Risk and Safety Online is funded from 2009-2011 by the EC Safer Internet Programme.[9]

The project aims to enhance knowledge of European children's and parents' experiences and practices regarding risky and safer use of the internet and new online technologies, in order to inform the promotion of a safer online environment for children among national and international stakeholders.

Adopting an approach which is child-centred, comparative, critical and contextual, *EU Kids Online* has conducted a major survey of children's experiences (and their parents' perceptions) of online risk in 25 European countries. The findings will be disseminated through a series of reports and presentations during 2010-2.

Objectives

- To design a robust survey instrument appropriate for identifying the nature of children's online access, use, risk, coping and safety awareness.
- To design a robust survey instrument appropriate for identifying parental experiences, practices and concerns regarding their child's internet use.
- To administer the survey in a reliable and ethically-sensitive manner to national samples of internet users aged 9-16 and their parents in Europe.
- To analyse the results systematically to identify core findings and more complex patterns among findings on a national and comparative basis.
- To disseminate the findings in a timely manner to a wide range of relevant stakeholders nationally, across Europe, and internationally.
- To identify and disseminate key recommendations relevant to the development of safety awareness initiatives in Europe.
- To identify remaining knowledge gaps and methodological guidance to inform future projects on the safer use of online technologies.

Work packages

WP1: Project Management and Evaluation: ensure effective conduct and evaluation of work packages.

WP2: Project Design: design a robust survey instrument and sampling frame for children and parents.

WP3: Data Collection: tender, select and work with the subcontractor appointed to conduct the fieldwork.

WP4: Data Reporting: cross-tabulation, presentation and report of core findings.

WP5: Statistical Analysis of Hypotheses: analysis and hypothesis testing of relations among variables.

WP6: Cross-National Comparisons: interpretation of similarities and differences across countries.

WP7: Recommendations: guide awareness and safety initiatives and future projects in this field.

WP8: Dissemination of Project Results: dissemination to diverse stakeholders and the wider public.

International Advisory Panel

- María José Cantarino, Corporate Responsibility Manager, Telefonica, Spain.
- Dieter Carstensen, Save the Children Denmark, European NGO Alliance on Child Safety Online.
- Prof. David Finkelhor and Janis Wolak, Crimes against Children Research Center, University of New Hampshire, USA.
- Will Gardner, CEO of Childnet International, UK.
- Dr Ellen Helsper, Department of Media and Communications, London School of Economics, UK.
- Amanda Lenhart, Pew Internet & American Life Project.
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- Annie Mullins, Global Head of Content Standards, Vodafone, UK.
- Kjartan Ólafsson, University of Akureyri, Iceland.
- Janice Richardson, project manager at European Schoolnet, coordinator of Insafe, Brussels, Belgium.
- Agnieszka Wrzesień, Project Coordinator, Polish Safer Internet Node, Nobody's Children Foundation

ANNEX 2: SURVEY DETAILS

Sampling

- For each country, samples were stratified by region and level of urbanisation.

- Sampling points were selected from official and complete registers of geographical/administrative units.

- Addresses were selected randomly by using Random Walk procedures in most countries. In a few countries we used an alternative approach to recruitment which fitted better with local standard practice, keeping to the principle of random selection.

- At each address which agreed to interview we randomly selected one child from all eligible children in the household (i.e. all those aged 9-16 who use the internet) on the basis of whichever eligible child had the most recent birthday. If a household contained more than one parent/carer, we selected the one who knew most about the child and their internet use.

Fieldwork

Fieldwork was carried out between April and August 2010. A parent interview was conducted for every child interviewed.

The child interview was conducted face to face, with a self-completion component for the sensitive questions on online risks as well as the interviewer-administered one. Incentives were used to encourage participation in some countries.

The questionnaires were developed by *EU Kids Online* with guidance from Ipsos MORI. They were tested and refined by a two-phase process of cognitive interviewing and pilot testing.

- Phase one cognitive testing involved 20 cognitive interviews (14 with children and six with parents) in England using English language questionnaire. Several refinements were then made to the questionnaires.

- The amended master questionnaires were then translated and cognitively tested via four interviews in each of 16 other countries, to ensure testing in all main languages. A small number of parent interviews were also conducted in some cases. Again, amendments to the questionnaires were made for the final versions.

- Before the main fieldwork, a pilot survey was conducted to test all aspects of the survey including sampling, recruitment and the interview process. A total of 102 pilot interviews

were carried out across five countries: Germany, Slovenia, Ireland, Portugal and the UK.

Data processing

- The questionnaires, with all response options and full interviewer instructions, are online at www.eukidsonline.net.

- Weighting: three forms of weighting have been applied to the data – (i) design weights which adjust for unequal probabilities of selection; (ii) non-response weights which correct for bias caused by differing levels of response across different groups of the population; (iii) a European level weight which adjusts for country level contribution to the overall results according to population size. As there are no available data on the population of children aged 9-16 who use the internet by country, these percentages were estimated using data from Eurobarometer and Eurostat.

- Socio-economic status (SES): information relating to the head of household's (designated as the chief income earner) level of education and occupation was collected during the screening process. Responses to level of education and employment were then grouped and cross-referenced with each other to calculate one of three levels of SES: low, middle and high. Note that, as is often the case with European research, a uniform approach was taken to the calculation of SES across all 25 countries; thus SES is not relative to the differences between the socio-demographic make up of each country.

Accuracy of the findings

To judge the accuracy of numbers in studies like the one carried out in the EU Kids Online project it is first necessary to distinguish between two types of error: random error and systematic error (or bias). All numbers presented in this report are to some extent affected by these and are thus essentially estimates of some true (but unknown) values.

Systematic error (or bias) occurs when the estimates provided in the study are systematically higher or lower than the true value. This can for example be the result of sampling procedures or measurements (e.g. question wording). The EU Kids Online survey has been carefully designed to avoid such error. The cognitive testing of the survey instruments is an example of efforts taken to minimise systematic bias.

Random error occurs because not all children in all of the 25 countries were interviewed: the results from the samples of one thousand children in each country will invariably depart slightly from the findings that would have been obtained had it been possible to interview all children. This difference is small and gets smaller the more children there are in the sample. However, the smaller the group being analysed, the greater the random error. Further, very small (or very large) percentages (e.g. when few children have experienced a particular risk) are more accurate than percentages closer to 50%.

Figure 36 shows how the random error behaves for three typical groups. The lowest line approximates how the margin of error varies for estimates based on the whole data set (all children in all countries). The middle line shows how the margin of error varies for estimates based on data from all children in a single country. The top line shows how the margin of error varies for analysis based on small groups (for example, just children that have experienced a certain kind of risk and been bothered).

Figure 36: Estimated margin of error for analysis based on groups of different size in the EU Kids Online study
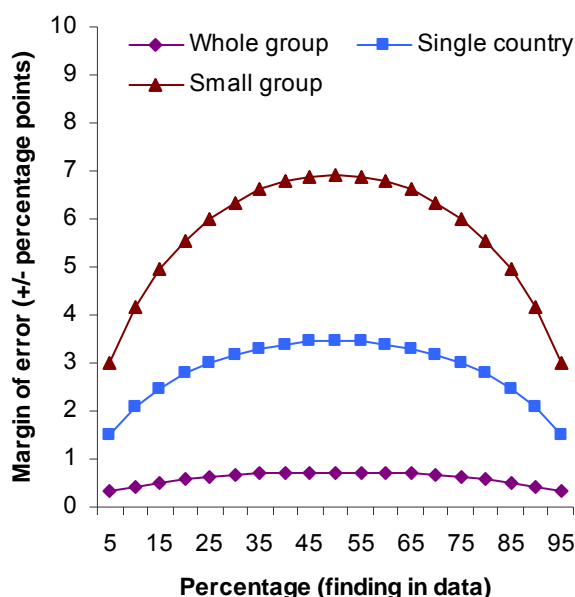
To give an example of how this works it is possible to look at the number of children who have seen sexual images on any websites which is estimated at 14% in the report. This estimate is based on answers from over 23 thousand respondents and thus has a very small margin of error (only around ± 0.4 percentage points). In Turkey approximately the same number of children

(13%) say that they have seen sexual images on any websites but as this estimate is based on answers from about one thousand respondents in Turkey the margin of error becomes larger (around ± 2.4 percentage points). The margin of error is then lower for Germany (5% ± 1.6 percentage points) but higher for Estonia (30% ± 3.4 percentage points) where the same number of respondents has participated in the survey in each country but where the lower percentage (5%) has a lower margin of error than the higher percentage (30%).

When working with the overall findings from all children in all countries or for all children within each country the random error is in most cases very small. For some parts of the dataset, the groups being examined are small and thus due care has been taken not to exceed the analytical possibilities of the data. Readers of the report should take care not to over generalise from findings based on small subsets of the data.

Confidence intervals for the percentages in this report are reported as follows. For most numbers, the confidence interval is below +/-5%. Where the confidence interval is between 5-10%, this is marked, meaning that there is a 95% certainty that the interval of +/- 5-10% around the marked number contains the true percentage in the population. For a few numbers, the confidence interval exceeds 10% and these are also marked, meaning that there is a 95% certainty that the interval of +/- 10+% around this number contains the true percentage in the population). Such percentages are included as an indicative approximation of the population value not ensuring accuracy.

Research materials

Materials and resources associated with the research process summarised above are available at www.eukidsonline.net.

- Technical report on the fieldwork process
- Original questionnaires (for children, for parents)
- Letters to parents and safety leaflets for children
- Research ethics procedures
- Cross tabulations of core findings

These are freely available to interested researchers and research users, provided the following credit is included:

This [article/chapter/report/presentation/project] draws on the work of the 'EU Kids Online' network funded by the EC (DG Information Society) Safer Internet plus Programme (project code SIP-KEP-321803); see www.eukidsonline.net.

If outputs result, we request that an email is sent to inform us of this use, to Eukidsonline@lse.ac.uk. The dataset will be made public in late 2011.

ENDNOTES

[1] Eurobarometer (2008). Towards a Safer Use of the Internet for Children in the EU: A Parents' Perspective. Luxembourg, European Commission Safer Internet Programme.

[2] For all tables and figures, the exact question number on the questionnaire is reported. Where younger and older children's questionnaires use different numbers, that for the older children is reported (questionnaires may be found at www.eukidsonline.net).

[3] To be sure that children understood these questions, most options included national examples. For instance, in the UK questionnaire, option 15 was phrased: "Used file sharing sites (peer-to-peer) (e.g. Limewire, Kazaa)."

[4] As noted at the outset, children were asked about "the sorts of things on the internet that you feel might bother people about your age". They were then given an opportunity to enter it into the computer.

[5] For 9-10 year olds, the texts introducing each section were shorter than for 11-16 year olds and just for the younger children, the interviewer ensured the child understood the topic before the child completed those questions privately.

[6] Lenhart, A. (2009) Teens and Sexting: How and why minor teens are sending sexually suggestive nude or nearly nude images via text messaging. Washington, D.C.: Pew Internet & American Life Project. Also see Sacco et al. (2010) op cit.

[7] Note that, to be consistent with the following items on active mediation of internet safety, these two summary questions were asked in the form, *have your teachers ever …* They are, therefore, not exactly equivalent to the earlier questions to parents, which took the form, *do your parents…*

[8] Livingstone, S. (2009). *Children and the Internet: Great Expectations, Challenging Realities*. Cambridge: Polity. Nathanson, A. I. (2001). Parents versus peers: Exploring the significance of peer mediation of antisocial television. *Communication Research, 28*(3), 251-274.

[9] As noted above, Finnish participation was funded by Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture and of Transport and Communications.