

Net Children Go Mobile: Risks and Opportunities.

Aims

As children increasingly go online from a variety of mobile devices – especially smartphones and tablet computers – new questions arise regarding the opportunities and risk of the internet for younger users. Moreover, whether internet access from mobile media poses more, less or newer risks to children has been a key issue under the framework of the Safer Internet / Better Internet for Kids Programme. This report aims to identify: which children go online by means of mobile media; what changes occur in their online activities; what opportunities and risks they encounter; what harmful experiences they are most bothered by; and how parents, teachers and peers mediate their online everyday experiences. It presents the findings of a survey that involved 3,500 children aged 9-16 who are internet users in seven European countries (Belgium, Denmark, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Romania and the UK).

Key Findings

- Smartphones are becoming an integral part of the media ecologies that children inhabit: among all the devices asked about, smartphones are the devices that children are more likely to own (46%) and use to go online at least daily in all the contexts we examined. However, huge age and cross-national variations persist, with daily use of smartphone ranging from 13% of 9-to-10-years olds to 60% of teenagers aged 15-16, and from 72% in Denmark to 21% in Romania.
- Despite being the devices most likely to be used on the move, however, smartphones are mainly used at home, more often in the privacy of the child's own bedroom. Mobile internet users are much more likely to use the internet at home every day (95%) than children who don't use smartphones or tablets to go online (62%).
- Social networking, entertainment on media sharing platforms and sharing content with others are on the rise. Two out of three children have at least one profile on a SNS, and one in three have a profile on a media sharing platform such as YouTube or Instagram; the age trend is marked in both social media items. Indeed, at least in Ireland, Italy and the UK, under-age use of SNS is dropping.
- Smartphone users do more of all the activities asked about and are more skilled. On average, children claim half (5.9) of the 12 internet skills we asked about: while smartphone users claim 8 skills on average, and tablet users slightly less (6.8), children who use neither smartphones nor tablets to go online claim just 4 skills. The average number of skills is strongly structured by age, ranging from two skills claimed by 9- to 10-year-olds to over eight skills among 15- to 16-year-olds.
- Online risky experiences do not necessarily result in harm, as reported by children. Overall, 46% of children aged 9-16 have experienced at least one risky situation on the internet; 17% of children said they had seen or experienced something on the internet that had bothered them.
- The most common risks among children aged 9-16 years old are: seeing sexual images on- or offline (28%); seeing potentially negative user generated content (25%); and being bullied on or offline (23%). The number of children who reported any form of cyberbullying on the internet or through mobile phones is, however, 12%.

- Bullying is also the most harmful risky experience: two out of three children who have been bullied on- or offline claim they have been 'very' or 'a bit' upset.
- All risks - except bullying others - increase with age, and among smartphone and tablet users. This supports the so-called 'more opportunities, more risks' hypothesis: older users and smartphone and tablet users benefit from more online opportunities, but are also exposed to more risks. However, the proportion of those who are harmed out of those who experienced any risk is not increasing.
- While the majority of children say they would talk with at least one person about online experiences which bothered them – and especially with mothers, fathers and friends – one in three children would not seek social support from parents, peers, teachers or other adults they trust or whose job is to help children.
- Younger children receive more mediation by parents than teenagers, while 13-16 year-olds receive more mediation by peers. Smartphone and tablet users are less likely to be restricted in their online activities, but more likely to receive mediation of internet safety by parents and friends.

Methodology

Drawing on the expertise and methodology developed by the EU Kids Online network, the Net Children Go Mobile conducted an in-home survey among 3,500 9-16 year-old internet users in Belgium, Denmark, Ireland, Italy, Romania, Portugal, and the UK, using a stratified random sample and self-completion methods in the case of sensitive questions.

Background

The Net Children Go Mobile is co-funded by the Safer Internet Programme to investigate through quantitative and qualitative methods how the changing conditions of internet access and use - namely, mobile internet and mobile convergent media - bring greater, lesser or newer risks to children's online safety.

Source The Net Children Go Mobile network

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Full report This is available at <http://www.netchildrengomobile.eu/reports>

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RH#70 has been produced by Net Children Go Mobile for the UKCCIS Evidence Group