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## Risks and safety for children on the internet: the FR report

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THE LONDON SCHOOL  
OF ECONOMICS AND  
POLITICAL SCIENCE ■

# Risks and safety for children on the internet: the FR report

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

January 2012



Catherine Blaya and Seraphin Alava

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This report presents the Findings for France for the *EU Kids Online* project (see [www.eukidsonline.net](http://www.eukidsonline.net)). Specifically, it includes selected findings, calculated and interpreted for the UK 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.

Note: This report refers to findings for all 25 countries in the European survey.

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

- 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.
- O'Neill, B., and McLaughlin, S. (2011). *Recommendations on Safety Initiatives*. LSE, London: EU Kids Online.
- Tsaliki, L., and Haddon, L. (Eds.), (2010) EU Kids Online, special issue. *International Journal of Media and Cultural Politics*, 6(1).
- 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 (2<sup>nd</sup> edition)*. LSE, London: EU Kids Online. <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/24368/>
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**EU Kids Online II: Enhancing Knowledge Regarding European Children's Use, Risk and Safety Online**

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Adopting an approach which is child-centred, comparative, critical and contextual, EU Kids Online II has designed and conducted a major quantitative survey of 9-16 year olds experiences of online risk in 25 European countries. The findings will be systematically compared to the perceptions and practices of their parents, and they will be disseminated through a series of reports and presentations during 2010-12.

For more information, and to receive project updates, visit [www.eukidsonline.net](http://www.eukidsonline.net)

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# 1. KEY FINDINGS

## 1.1 Context

This report presents initial findings from a French survey of children and their parents designed to provide a unique insight into the balance of opportunities and risks experienced by children in France on the internet. A random stratified sample of 1000 9-16 year olds who use the internet, and one of their parents/carers, was interviewed during May/June 2010.

The France survey forms part of a larger 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, French findings are compared with those from other countries, as 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. See [www.eukidsonline.net](http://www.eukidsonline.net).

## 1.2 Usage

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

- In France, compared to the European average, more children go online in the living room or a public place at home (79% vs. 62%). The second most common location is at school or college (52%) but at a lesser extent than the European average since at the European level, school is the most common place where children connect (63%).
- Four children out of ten (41%) go online in their bedroom or other private room but they are also numerous to say that they go on the internet at a friend's home (49%) which makes their activity more difficult to supervise. As for Europe as a whole, girls and boys have similar levels of access to the internet in their own bedroom with a slightly higher percentage of boys who report to do so (42% vs. 39%).

- 13% of children go online via a handheld device and 21% with a mobile phone which is less than the European average. Children in France go on the internet from a similar range of devices than is the average for Europe.
- 9-16 year olds children were nine years old on average when they first used the internet and do not differ from the European average. Six in ten children go on the internet daily or almost daily (58%), 36% use it once or twice a week, 7% once or twice a month. In terms of frequency of use, higher figures are seen in many other countries France ranking in 7<sup>th</sup> from the bottom line. Girls go on the internet more frequently than boys (60% vs. 55%) and daily use is far more common among the older children (87%).
- The average time spent online by 9-16 year olds is just two hours per day (118 minutes), higher than the European average (88 minutes) with longer time spent by lower SES children (135 minutes per day vs. 110 for high SES that is to say about three hours more per week).

**But some children still lack key digital and safety skills, especially younger children.**

- Children in France show higher skills in protecting themselves with 75% of children who say they know how to block messages from someone they do not want to hear from compared with 64% in Europe.
- Bookmarking websites, finding information on how to use the internet safely and blocking messages are all skills that most children in France claim to have.
- Still, among the younger children there are some significant gaps in their safety skills which policy initiatives should address. Around one third of 11-12 year olds cannot bookmark a site, and even more cannot block messages from people they don't want to hear from.
- **In France, only 20% of the children say that they know more about the internet than their parents, 80% think it is not true. The level of trust in the parents' internet skills is much higher than the European average (36%).**
- As anywhere, internet literacy increases with age but girls are more confident than boys with 19% of

them they know more than their parents compared with 13% of boys. This difference is smaller in the European survey.

- As in Europe, communicating is generally popular and in France the use of webcams is more common than the European average (48% vs. 31%). Children are also more creative than in many other countries. They are more numerous to write a blog (23% vs. 11%), to use file sharing sites (26% vs. 11%), to have put or posted materials online (41% vs. 39%) and to have created a pet or avatar (26% vs. 18%) and they spent more time in virtual worlds (27% vs. 16%).
- One of the main concerns throughout Europe about the use of internet is the existence of an excessive use that would jeopardize school work and face to face socialisation, some talking about internet "addiction". In France, children report little experience of excessive use.

### 1.3 Risk taking

- In France, children report substantially more SNS contacts than in most of the other European countries. Surprisingly, quite a few children under the age of 13 say they have a network profile with 13% of primary school children and 37% of lower secondary school 11-12 year olds who are on social networks. Although these percentages are lower than the European average, this is problematic since it is illegal and represents some risks of cyberbullying.
- Children in France are fewer to preserve a total privacy of their social network (34% vs. 43% European average).
- Looking for new friends is the most common activity quoted by children and one third of the children say they have added strangers as friends (43%). 12% of the participants have sent a photograph or video of themselves to someone that they had never met before.

### 1.4 Subjective harm

Before asking children about specific online risk experiences, we asked them about experiences online that had bothered them in some way, explaining that **by 'bothered' we meant, "made you feel uncomfortable, upset, or feel that you shouldn't have seen it."**

- Children are 6 times more likely to say that the internet bothers other children (48%) than they are to say something has bothered them personally in the past year. In France fewer children report

having been bothered by something (8%) compared with the European average (12%),

- Younger children are less likely to have felt bothered by something online. This might be due to the fact that when younger they mostly go online with their parents as explained in the section dedicated to parental mediation.
- Parents report slightly greater concerns than children with 10% parents who say their child has been bothered vs. 8% children.
- Even though 8% of 9-10 year olds say they've been bothered by something online, their parents are less likely to recognise this: only 6% say that something has bothered my child online.
- Girls are somewhat more numerous than boys to say something on the internet has bothered children their age and that they were bothered (56%; 10% vs. 47% and 7%).
- The socio-economical background of the children impacts on their experience of the internet since high SES children twice as numerous to say that something has bothered them (10%) as low SES children (5%).

### 1.5 Specific risks

The *EU Kids Online* survey explored children's experiences of a range of possible risks online. The nature of these experiences, which children are most affected, and how children respond are questions to be pursued in a future report.

#### Sexual images

- In France, one quarter (29%) of 9-16 year olds say that they have seen sexual images online in the past 12 months. This is higher than the European average (14%).
- 40% of France 13-14 year olds and 43% of 11-16 year olds say they have seen online sexual images. Older children are more numerous to have seen this type of images and they are 28% of the 13-14 year olds and 24% of the 15-16 year olds who have seen images or video of someone having sex.
- Among the children who say they have seen or been sent sexual messages online, only half of the parents are aware of this. One parent out of three say they have not experienced this. One parent out of ten do not know. However, parents in France are much more aware than the European average with 21% of parents who are aware of the exposure of their children to sexual messages, 52% who say it



has not happened and one third who do not know (30%).

- Overall, most children have not experienced sexual images online and, even of those who have, most say they were not bothered or upset by the experience. However, one third say they were bothered and these children need attention.

### Bullying

- In relation to bullying, 26% of children (and 19% across Europe) say they have been bullied online or offline, but just 5% say this occurred on the internet.
- Most common victimization is nasty or hurtful messages sent to the child (3%), followed by messages being posted or passed on (2%) and other nasty things online (1%). Only 1% have been socially excluded or have been threatened online.
- 17% of children say they have bullied others in the past 12 months.

### Sexual messages

- The most common type of sexual messages received by the 11-16 year old internet users is a message on the internet (19%). 3% have seen a sexual message posted online. 5% reported they have seen other people perform sexual acts while 1% have been asked for a photo or video showing their private parts or been asked to talk about sexual acts with someone online.

### Meeting online contacts offline

- 32% of children in France have had contact online with someone they have not met face to face. A similar finding to the European average of 30%.
- 12% have gone to an offline meeting with someone first met online. This is higher than the European average (which is 9% across all countries).**
- Older teenagers (13-16 year olds) are much more likely than younger children to have online contact with someone they have not met face to face. They are also more likely to have gone on to meet them in person.

### Other online risks

- That is in France that children are the fewest to report having come across one or more of potentially harmful user-generated content on the internet.
- Most common are hate messages (6%), followed by anorexia/bulimia sites (mainly for girls aged 14-16 who are 8% while boys of the same age are 2%), sites talking about drug experiences (3%). and contents relating to self-harm or suicide (both 2%).

These percentages are slightly inferior to the European average.

- The main misuse of personal data experienced by children in France is when someone has used their password or pretended to be them (6%). Some have had personal information used in a way they did not like (3%). These percentages are slightly inferior to the European average.

## 1.6 Parental mediation

- Most parents talk to their children about what they do on the internet (73%), making this, as in Europe generally, the most popular way to actively mediate children's internet use.
- Parents engage in slightly more active mediation for the younger girls than younger boys for every strategy apart from doing shared activities together for which parents are more active for boys. Teenage boys receive more encouragement to learn on the internet, and for the other activities, parents mediate teenage girls internet experience less, contrarily to what could be expected and not reflecting parental mediation at the European level where teenage girls benefit from more parental supervision than teenage boys.
- Parents do considerably more active mediation of younger children's use of the internet – including talking to them, staying nearby, encouraging them or sharing internet use. But 8% of the parents never engage in any form of mediation.
- High SES parents are more active mediators of online activities according to both parents and children.
- Helping when something bothers the child on the internet (79%), explaining why websites are good or bad (70%), suggesting how to use the internet safely (58%). and talking about what to do in case of a problem on the internet (54%) are all common strategies of parental safety mediation. France is average in the European ranking.
- Parents in France are part of the ones who impose more restrictions on their children's use of the internet.** 91% of children in France say that they are either not allowed to do some of a list of online activities (disclose personal information, upload, download, etc.) or that restrictions apply, and younger children face more restrictions.
- Most rules imposed by parents are in relation to watching video clips online with 85% of children in France who say that they are either not allowed

doing this or that restrictions apply. Next most regulated activity is using instant messaging (78%) followed by a restricted use of social networking sites.

- Surprisingly, few children report that parents restrict them in giving out personal information (one child out of five) to others on the internet.
- Control is stricter for boys over the websites they visit or the content of their mails when younger. For the other items, parents control girls more.
- Both children and parents consider parental mediation helpful to some degree. Over half of children say it helps a lot or a little, close to the European average.
- However, four children in ten think that parental mediation limits their activities on line. 34% say they ignore their parents mediation efforts a little and 12% ignore it a lot.
- The great majority of parents are confident about their mediation role as being positive (90%) as three quarters are confident in their child's ability to cope with bothering things online.
- 20% parents think it likely that their child will experience something that bothers them online in the next six months.
- Three quarters of the children think that their parents' level of mediation should stay the same. Only 6% of children would like their parents to take more of an interest in their internet use which is much fewer than the European average (15%).

## 1.7 Other forms of mediation

**In addition to parents, other sources, including teachers and friends, may support children's internet use and safety.**

- 80% of children say their teachers have been involved in at least one of the forms of active mediation asked about. However, only 47% say that their teachers provide guidance on safety on the internet. This is substantially lower than the European average of 58%.
- However, teachers in France seem to be more prone to provide help when something bothers children on the internet with 43% of the young people who say they were given some support compared with 24% in Europe.

- Children in France show lower percentages of support than the European average (63% vs. 73%).
- Fewer say that friends help when they are bothered by something (14%).
- There are gender differences and younger boys report more peer mediation than younger girls while older girls say more that they received peer support in explaining why some websites are good or bad (43% vs. 34%) or when something is difficult to do or find. They are also more inclined than older boys to say that friends helped when something bothered them (35% vs. 25%).
- Internet safety advice is provided first by parents (58%), then teachers (42%) and then peers (26%) as for the other European countries.
- The influence of socio-economical backgrounds varies from the European average. In France, it is the lower SES children who report the lowest safe internet mediation from part of adults and peers when in Europe, the lower SES children report more help from adults than the other children and lower mediation from peers.

## 1.8 Conclusions

Children in France spend longer time on the internet than the European average. They are more creative and have more SNS contacts than their European counterparts. They also take more risks since they are fewer to preserve a total privacy on their SNS profiles and although they show the same percentages for making friends with total strangers online as the other European children, they are more numerous to say that they meet these strangers face to face (12% vs. 9%). Bullying is more frequent among the children in France and they are also more exposed to sexual contents (mainly sexual messages on the internet).

As for Europe in general, most parents talk to their children about what they do on the internet (73%). However, parents in France are part of the ones who impose more restrictions. These restrictions are mainly related to watching videos, IM and SNS. These results match the findings of some other survey on the young people's digital uses in France (TNS Sofres, 2010) according to which these activities are considered as time consuming and that most conflicts with parents are on the time spent on the internet and social networks instead of doing one's school work.

**Future efforts should focus especially on younger children as they gain internet access, and on the diversification of platforms** (access in bedrooms, via mobile phones and handheld devices) although the

results for France show that the main place from where children access to the internet is a public place at home. In planning for risk *management*, it must be borne in mind that risk *reduction* is not always an optimal strategy – children encounter a fair number of risks that, at least as they see it, are not problematic, upsetting or harmful. As the French findings show, the children seem to take more risk but are less bothered by potentially harmful user generated contents.

Schools have much effort to provide in France since the children mostly use the internet at home. Research shows that the access to the internet in French schools is very strictly controlled and that it has a rather negative effect on the children's willingness to use it. However school should be able to play a very important role in terms of education for a positive use of the internet and in terms of safety and prevention. The findings show that if teachers are involved in supporting the children who are bothered by something they are less incline to provide safety guidance. This prevention role is also very important at the parents' level. As we have seen parents are more restrictive in France which does not prevent the children from taking severe risks such as meeting face to face strangers they have made friends with online.

# 2 INTRODUCTION

## 2.1 Overview

**The rapidity with which children and young people are gaining access to online, convergent, mobile and networked media is unprecedented in the history of technological innovation.** Parents, teachers and children are acquiring, learning how to use, and finding a purpose for the internet within their daily lives. Stakeholders – governments, schools, industry, child welfare organisations and families – seek to maximise online opportunities while minimising the risk of harm associated with internet use.

**This report presents the initial findings from a survey in France of 9-16 year olds to provide a unique insight into the balance of opportunities and risks experienced by children on the internet.** It compares findings by age, gender and socioeconomic status; it compares the accounts of children and their parents; and it compares France children's experiences in relation to those across Europe.

**The French 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 French survey, a random stratified sample of 1,000 9-16 year olds who use the internet, together with one of their parents/carers, was interviewed during May/June 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. The sample was selected by random walk and personal interviews were completed by telephone.

Where the French findings are compared with those from other countries, these are taken from the pan-European report: 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, available at [www.eukidsonline.net](http://www.eukidsonline.net).

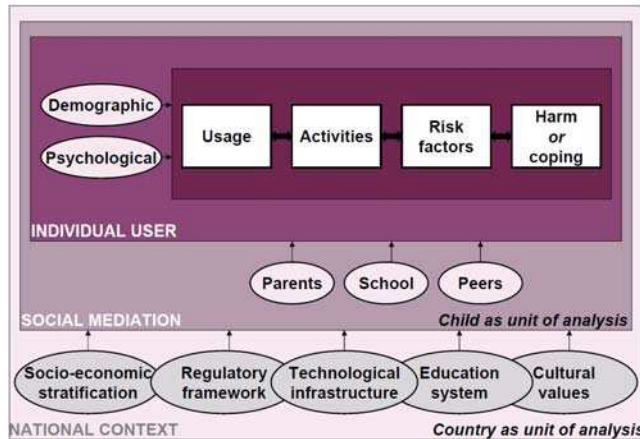
## 2.2 Theoretical framework

The research and policy agenda remains contested regarding online opportunities (focused on access to education, communication, information and participation) and risks of harm posed to children by internet use. To clarify our approach, the project's theoretical framework, including a critical analysis of the relation between use, risk and potential harm to children associated with the internet, is presented in the pan-European report.

In brief, this elaborates a hypothesised sequence of factors relating to internet use 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 – it is a probabilistic relation and, 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 examine 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).

In subsequent reports, analysis will encompass the role of (2) psychological factors such as emotional problems, self-efficacy, risk-taking, (3) the social factors that mediate children's online and offline experiences, especially the activities of parents, teachers and friends, and (4) 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. Our approach to mapping the online risk experiences of European children centres on several key responses to the methodological challenges faced. The survey was conducted as a face to face interview in the children's own 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 to 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](http://www.eukidsonline.net).

Note that findings presented for France 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 France who use the internet at least rarely.

# 3 USAGE

**What do 9-16 year olds children in France say about how they use the internet?** The face to face interview with children included a range of questions about 'using the internet'. The interviewer reminded children that, 'using the internet' includes any and all devices by which, and any and all places where, the child goes online.

## 3.1 Where/how children go online

**With the spread of mobile and personalised devices, the ways in which children go online are diversifying.** In their bedroom, or when 'out and about', children may escape supervision entirely, using the internet privately. Further, while schools are generally highly supervised locations, cybercafés are popular in some countries, allowing children relatively unsupervised use.

**Table 1: Where children use the internet**

% children who say they use the internet at the following locations	
At school or college	52
Living room (or other public room) at home	79
At a friend's home	49
Own bedroom (or other private room) at home	41
At a relative's home	43
When 'out and about'	11
In a public library or other public place	7
In an internet café	3
Average number of locations	2.8

QC301a-h: Looking at this card, please tell me where you use the internet these days.<sup>1</sup> (*Multiple responses allowed*)

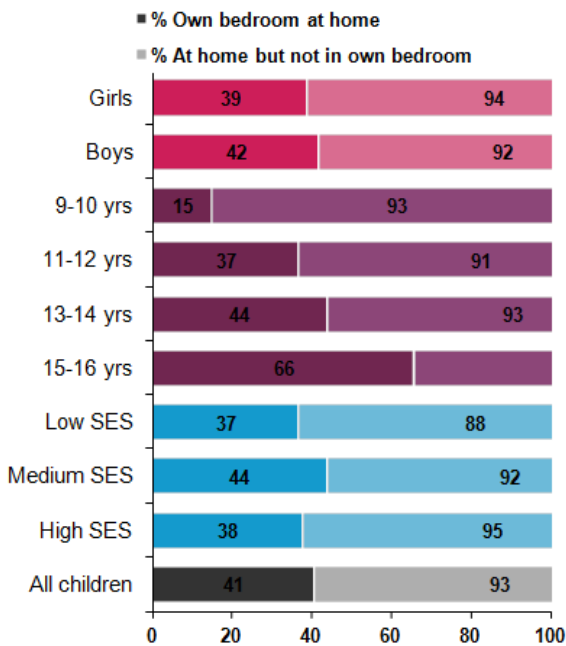
Base: All children who use the internet.

- As shown in Table 1, in France only half of the children who use the internet go online at school or college (52%) while they are a majority to say that they use it in a public room at home (79%). Additionally, nearly half use it at a friend's house (49%) and 41% use it in their bedroom. When comparing with the European survey results, the participants to the survey in France show a lower use of the internet in educational settings (52% vs. 63%) as well as a greater tendency to use it in a public room at home (79% vs. 62%). Internet cafés also seem to be less popular among the children in France since 3% of the respondents stated they use the internet from such a place while they are 12% as an average in Europe. However there exist some discrepancies between the European countries, which might be explained by a lack of computers at home. The low percentage of the use of the internet at school does reflect the reluctance that educationalists in France show towards the internet within the school environment and the high control practices that tend to be implemented over the use of the Internet in the school libraries (Fluckiger, 2008)<sup>2</sup>.
- Participants to the survey also show lower percentages as far as the use in a private room (41% vs. 49%) or in a public library/other public places (7% vs. 12%) are concerned. Reading these results we can conclude that fewer children in France use outside public places compared to the other European countries while the use of the internet is much more common in a home public place. The five most commonly used places being the living room or similar place, educational setting, friend's home, a relative's home and own bedroom while in Europe the children's own bedroom holds the third position.

<sup>1</sup> For all tables and figures, the exact question number on the questionnaire is reported. Where younger and older children's questionnaires use different numbers, the one for the older children is reported. Full questionnaires may be found at [www.eukidsonline.net](http://www.eukidsonline.net).

<sup>2</sup> FLUCKIGER C. (2008), "L'école à l'épreuve de la culture numérique des élèves", Revue Française de Pédagogie, n°163, p. 51-63.

Figure 2: Children’s use of internet at home



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- Figure 2 shows that, as in Europe generally, private use in the child’s bedroom is strongly differentiated by age. For younger children use is generally in a public room, while teenagers have more often private access.
- There are no clear differences by gender and while in Europe as a whole the tendency is for children of higher SES to have more private access, in France the difference is not that obvious with comparable percentages between the three SES and a higher percentage of children from medium SES who use the internet from a private room.
- France shows one of the lowest uses of the internet from a home private room among the European participating countries together with Belgian (33%); Hungary and IE (37%).

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Mobile phone	21
Television set	23
Own laptop	21
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Other handheld portable device/smartphone	13
Own PC	25
<b>Average number of devices of use</b>	<b>2.3</b>

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

Base: All children who use the internet.

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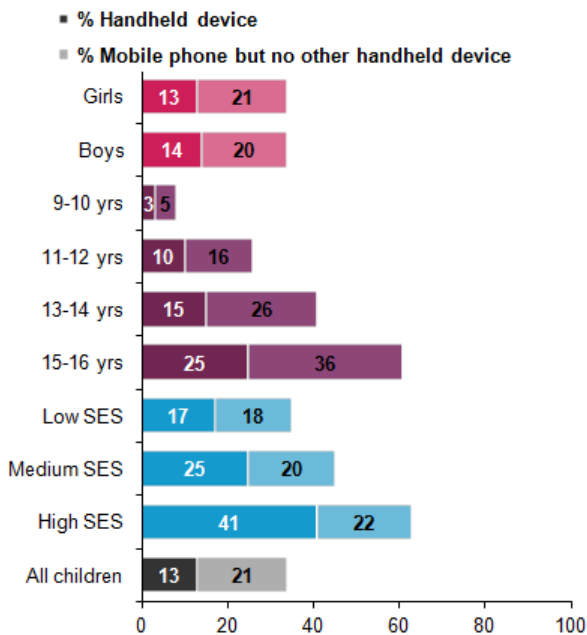


such as Smartphones is increasing, shared PCs are the most reported devices.

- Compared with the European average, children in France are less likely to access the internet on mobile phones (21% mobile phones vs. 26%) but show a similar use of games consoles and other handheld portable devices with respectively 26% vs. 26% and 13% vs. 12%.
- The average number of devices is similar in France as in Europe (2.3 vs. 2.5).

It seems that children in France use the internet from a similar range of devices than is the average for Europe with a lower use of mobile phones although mobile phones remain more often used than other handheld devices.

**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?<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> In Figure 2, the percentage for 'mobile phone' may overlap with handheld device as multiple responses were allowed. In What do **9-16 year olds children in France say about how they use the internet?** The face to face interview with children included a range of questions about 'using the internet'. The interviewer reminded children that, 'using the internet' includes any and all devices by which, and any and all places where, the child goes online.

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**With the spread of mobile and personalised devices, the ways in which children go online are diversifying.** In their bedroom, or when 'out and about', children may escape supervision entirely, using the internet privately. Further, while schools are generally highly supervised locations, cybercafés are popular in some countries, allowing children relatively unsupervised use.

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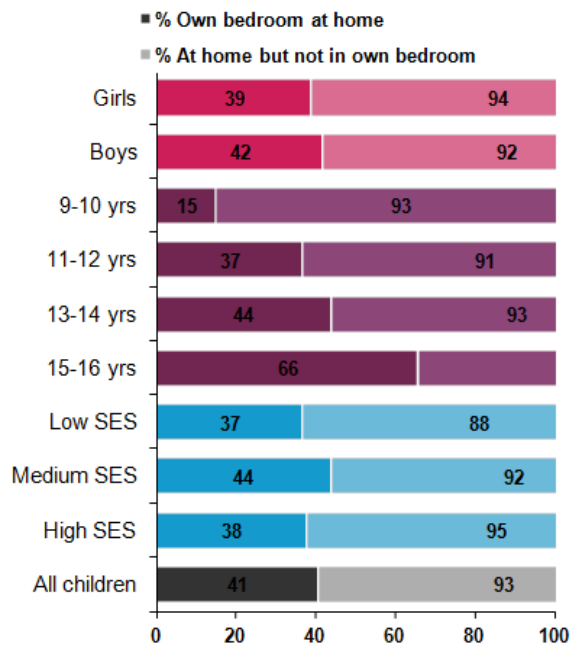
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Figure 3, these are recalculated as mutually exclusive.

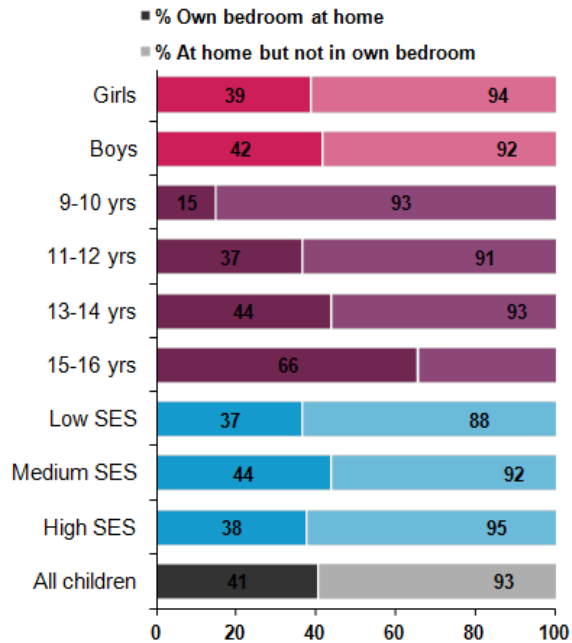
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- The average number of devices is similar in France as in Europe (2.3 vs. 2.5).

It seems that children in France use the internet from a similar range of devices than is the average for Europe with a lower use of mobile phones although mobile phones remain more often used than other handheld devices.

- Figure 3 shows there is no gender differences in handheld access in France (34% boys and 34% girls), compared with 13% and 11% respectively across Europe).
- The pattern of age differences as regards using handheld devices is the same as in Europe generally: more use the older the child.
- The SES differences in going online via a handheld device are much more marked in France than across Europe with a much higher use in high SES than for the other social categories (41% vs. 25% and 17%). These differences in use of handled device according to the socio economical background of the respondents are much higher than in average Europe where the pattern is similar but with 17% high SES using handled device compared to 41% in France.
- As a whole though, percentages concerning the overall sample are not higher in France than in the European average with respectively 13% children reporting using handled device and 21% using mobile phones vs. 12% and 22% in Europe.

Beyond matters of access, there are several dimensions of internet usage that are explored below: age of first internet use, frequency of internet use, and time spent online.

- The European children's average age of first use among 9-16 years old is nine years old. Internet use varies by age group, with the youngest group saying they were seven, on average, when they first went online while the 15-16 year olds say they were eleven on first use.
- In France, children average nine years old when they first use the internet, putting them among the average across Europe.**

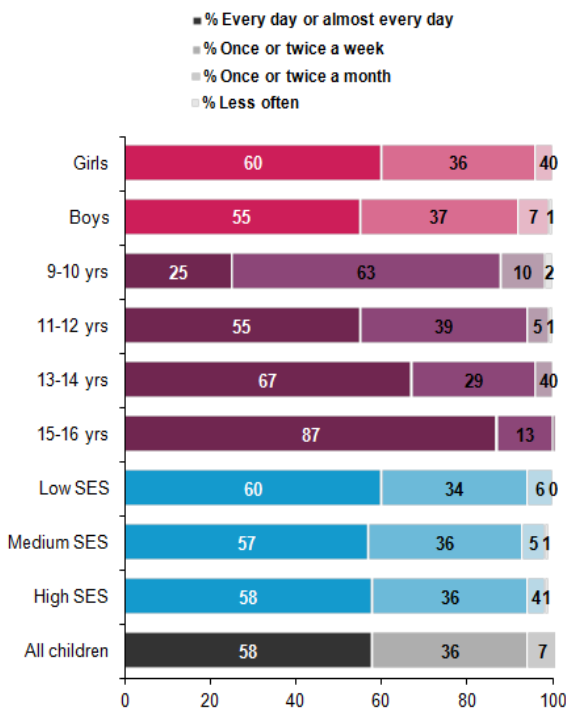
In terms of frequency of internet use, across Europe the findings suggest a division of children into two groups: those who use the internet daily or almost daily (60%) and those who use it once or twice a week (33%). Combined,

this is 93% of all children who go online at all; 5% go online once or twice a month, 2% less often.

In France children who use the internet go online slightly less than the average in Europe (Figure 4):

- **58% go online daily or almost daily (vs. 60% in Europe), 36% use it once or twice a week, and 7% go online less often.**
- Daily use is far more common among teenagers than younger children, and a little more common among girls than boys which differs from the European average results that show that males tend to use the internet daily more than females (respectively 60% and 55% vs. 58% and 61%). SES differences are small although results show that 60% low SES children go online daily compared with 58% Medium SES and 57% High SES.

Figure 4: How often children use the internet



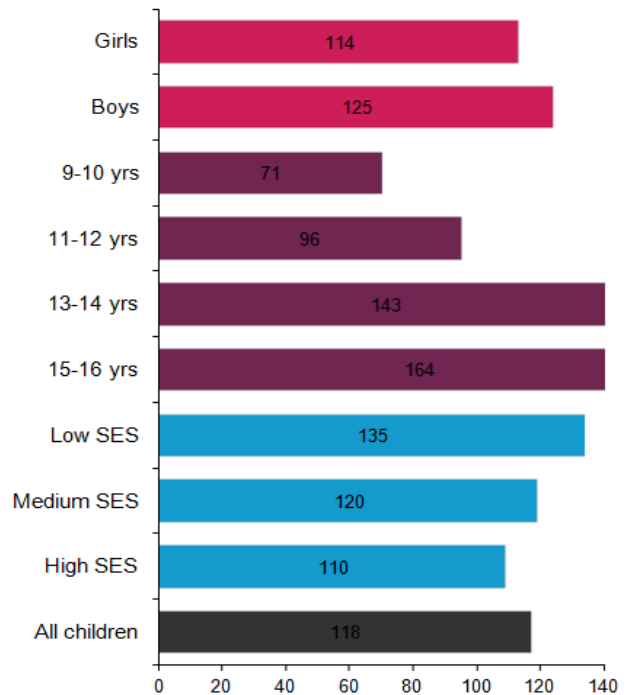
QC303: How often do you use the internet?

Base: All children who use the internet.

How long do children in France spend online each day (Figure 5)? Time spent online was calculated using a method widely used to measure television viewing. It asks children for separate estimates for an average school day and an average non-school day. These are combined to

estimate average internet use each day, noting that *time spent online is difficult to measure because children multitask, going online while doing other activities while not turning off the internet.*

Figure 5: 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.

Results show some differences with the other European participating countries with a longer time spent online. The average time spent online by France 9-16 year olds is about two hours per day (118 minutes). This is higher than the European average (88 minutes). Results also show some greater differences between SES than it does in Europe.

- Males tend to be online 10 minutes more per day than females. As for SES, the trend perceived for the frequency of use of the internet of a higher use in lower SES is confirmed here with a 25 points difference between the lower SES and the higher (135 compared with 110).
- The largest difference in time spent online is by age. The 15-16 year olds spend nearly three hours per day, online on average (164 minutes), over



twice that of the youngest group (9-10 year olds spend 71 minutes per day online, on average).

### 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 the skills which children were asked about in the survey.

- On average, the young people in France show lower skills than the young people in Europe with 3.7 compared to 4. **However they seem more skilled to protect themselves with 75% of the respondents stating that they know how to block messages from someone they do not want to hear from compared with 64% average in Europe.**
  - **Bookmarking websites (67%), changing privacy settings on a social networking profile (62%), Block unwanted adverts or junk mail/spam (61%), delete the record of which sites you have visited (61%) are skills that most young people in France claim to have. As a whole, the respondents show higher skills to protect themselves from the dangers of the Internet than the average European results show. As a whole in Europe, the young people show greater skills in how to find information on the internet safely and to change filter preferences. In France, only one child out of four (24%) stated he/she was able to do so (28% in Europe).**
  - The older, the more digitally literate and the better prepared to avoid or cope with risks online.
  - Surprisingly enough, the younger children (11-12 years old) show identical percentages as for the older ones to state they are able to bookmark a website.
- The younger girls are more skilled than the younger boys for blocking messages from someone they do not want to hear from and change privacy settings on a social networking profile while for the other activities boys show higher levels of competencies. Still, among the younger children there are some significant gaps in their safety skills which policy should consider addressing. Around one third of all respondents cannot bookmark a site, and one child out of four cannot block messages from people they don’t wish to hear from at the age of 11-12 years old and a little more than one out of ten for the 13-16 age range. They are very few to be skilled enough to change filter preferences. However, as a whole, the French sample shows higher critical and safety skills on the internet than the average European sample for all the items but for blocking unwanted messages. This might be due to the information campaign and educational activities related to ITCs that are taught within education as part of the curriculum. However that does not mean that victimization is lower since some existing research shows that the percentages of the young people who perceive themselves as a victim through the use of ICTs is similar as in other European and overseas countries (Blaya, 2011).

Since in past research, boys have often claimed to have more digital skills than girls, it is noteworthy that girls claim a higher level of skills to that claimed by boys at 13-16 years old. This suggests a gain in either confidence or skills among girls in France, possibly stimulated by the rapid growth in use of online communication and networking.

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

% who say they can...	11-12 year old		13-16 year old		All
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	

Bookmark a website	69	64	69	64	67
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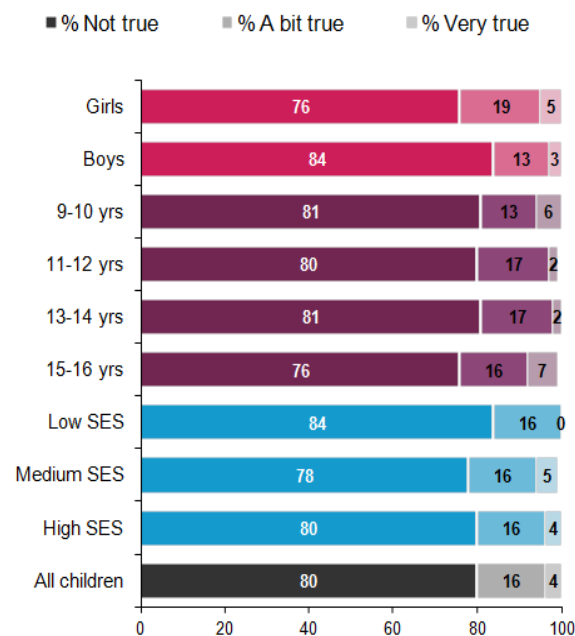
Find information on how to use the internet safely	61	58	70	70	60
Block messages from someone you don't want to hear from	73	76	87	87	75
Block unwanted adverts or junk mail/spam	62	59	62	59	61
Change privacy settings on a social networking profile	59	65	76	77	62
Compare different websites to decide if information is true	59	57	71	65	58
Delete the record of which sites you have visited	63	59	76	72	61
Change filter preferences	30	18	43	25	24
Average number of skills	2.6	2.4	3.2	4.2	3.7

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.

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 6).

Figure 6: "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.

- The children in France who say that they know more about their parents about the internet are much fewer than in the average European sample since they are one out of three to state so at the European level. In France, only four children out of one hundred (4%) of 9-16 year olds say that the statement, "I know more about the internet than my parents," is 'very true'. Just about 16% say it is 'a bit true' and the majority (80%) say it is 'not true' of them (they are 36% at the European level).
- Internet literacy increases with age, they are more numerous to think they know more than their parents among the 13-16 age range and females are more confident than males with 19% who say they know more than their parents compared with 13% males. This last result does not meet the European average where the difference related to gender is smaller (34% vs. 32%)
- Children from lower SES show higher percentages of thinking that they know less than their parents. This is not reflecting the same pattern as for European children from lower SES who are more numerous to think they are more skilled than their parents in using the internet. However, as stated to start with, on an average basis, children in France



feel much less confident than their European counterparts in using the internet.



### 3.3 Excessive use of the internet

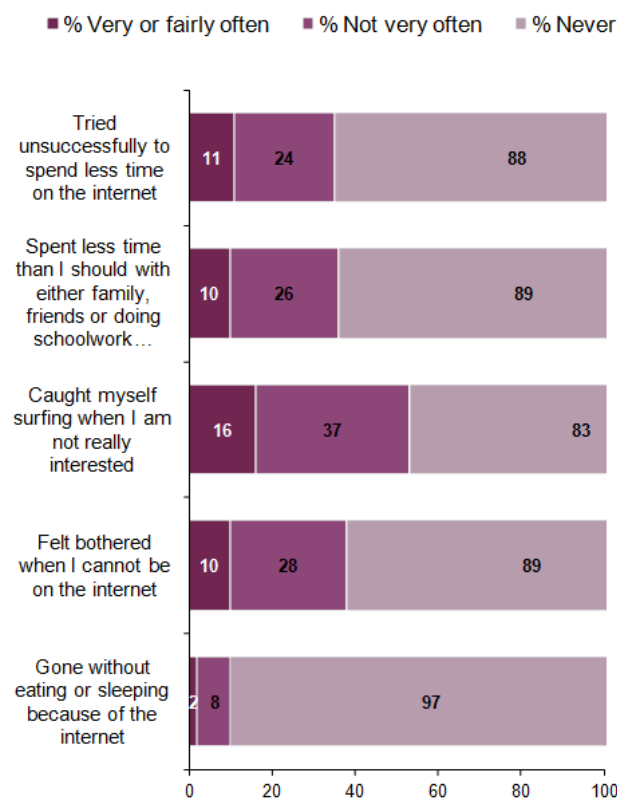
The arrival of each new medium has been accompanied by public anxiety over its potential dominance of children’s time and attention – past examples include television and the home computer. Concern over ‘internet addiction’ is growing, with efforts among researchers to measure it and efforts among clinicians to decide whether the internet is addictive in the same sense as alcohol or drugs.

Although the jury is still out on the question of internet ‘addiction’, consensus is growing that ‘excessive’ use of the internet is worth investigating. Drawing on prior measurement of computer or games ‘addiction’, questions about excessive use were asked of the 11-16 year olds. Our focus is not simply on overall amount of use but on the conflict this may introduce with family or schoolwork, together with the experience of not being able to reduce or stop internet use.

In France, children report little experience of excessive use, in France, The most common experience reported is surfing when not really interested followed by trying unsuccessfully to spend less time on the internet for one third of the children (35%) which is lower than the European average (42%).

Four children out of ten (36%) say that it happened they spent less time with family, friends or doing schoolwork (36%). One child out of four felt bothered if not being able to be on the internet (38%). As in Europe, it is less common to go without sleeping or eating because of internet. French children are fewer than most European countries to report such a behaviour with one child out of ten who stated he/she had done so compared with 17% in European sample.

Figure 7: 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.

We then calculated the percentage of children who answer ‘fairly’ or ‘very often’ to one or more of these five experiences. This revealed that France is in the higher part among European countries in terms of excessive internet use, although not the highest: 50% of Estonian children, 49% of Portuguese, 44% of Bulgarian children and 43% of UK respondents answer “fairly” or “very often” to one or more of these five experiences compared with a European average of 23%. The French findings reveal that 20% of children who report some excessive use.



# 4 ACTIVITIES

## 4.1 Range of online activities

**In France, what do 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 subsequent investigation of online risks.

Table 4 shows what children do online. Note that, to be sure children understood these questions, most options included national examples.

- **Reading or watching the news on the internet is the most reported activity on the internet with an increase by age (88%). This is followed by watching video clips (81%) and doing schoolwork. These results differ from the European average since children report as a top activity (85%).**
- Playing games is not as popular as in some other European countries with only four children out of ten who say they play games on their own or against the computer and one third (33) say they play with other people online. Games are mainly a boys' activity with an increase by age, the 13-16 reporting a greater involvement than girls (66% vs. 30% on their own and 46% vs. 7% online). Girls report some very little interest for games on line as shown in table 4.
- Other forms of engaging with user-generated content, such as visiting a social networking site profile are less common in France (54% vs. 62% in Europe).
- **As in Europe, communicating (e.g. instant messaging, 57%) is generally popular. Sending/receiving email is a less common activity in France (40% vs. 61%) as well as visiting chatrooms is much less common at 17% (23% European average). In France the use of webcam is more common than in Europe as a whole. One child out of two has used a webcam (48% vs. 31%), no doubt as part of online communication. This finding is much higher than the European average**
- **Creating content is generally less common than receiving content; children in France do this more than in many other countries. More children have put or posted materials (41% vs.**

39%), written a blog or online diary (23% vs. 11%), used file sharing sites (26% vs. 18%), created a character, pet or avatar (21% vs. 18% in Europe) and more have spent time in a virtual world (27% vs. 16%).

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

% who have...	9-12 year old		13-16 year old		All
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
Read/watched the news on the internet	85	85	94	90	88
Used the internet for school work	75	74	83	90	80
Watched video clips	69	77	87	90	81
Played internet games on your own or against the computer	42	25	66	30	40
Used a webcam	40	46	50	58	48
Used instant messaging	38	32	65	61	57
Played games with other people on the internet	31	19	46	7	33
Created a character, pet or avatar	26	18	30	13	21
Sent/received email	25	23	42	77	40
Visited a social networking profile	25	23	69	79	54
Spent time in a virtual world	17	18	39	14	27
Put (or posted) photos, videos or music to share with others	17	25	58	66	41
Downloaded music or films	16	20	62	57	38
Put (or posted) a message on a website	14	22	49	39	31
Used file sharing sites	13	11	43	38	26
Visited a chat room	11	9	23	19	17
Written a blog or online diary	6	14	31	43	23
Average number of activities	1,5	1,2	2,8	2,6	2,3

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? (*Multiple responses allowed*)

Base: All children who use the internet.

Table 4 also reveals some noteworthy age and gender differences.

- Some activities span the age range (watching video clips, using it for school work, using a webcam, spending time on a virtual world). Other activities increase substantially in the teenage years (using IM, sending or receiving mails, visiting a social networking profile, putting or posting photos, videos or music to share with the others, downloading music, using file sharing sites, writing a blog or visiting a chat room. Understandingly enough, the older the more autonomous and creative are the children and the more social activities they have on the internet..
- Both across Europe and in France, gender differences are generally small (except that boys play games much more (46% vs. 7%) which also means that they are more numerous in creating an avatar and spending time in a virtual world which are activities related to games and as we have seen boys are more involved in playing games online. Girls seem to be more prone to use the internet for social relationships such as sending and receiving mails (42% vs. 77%), writing a blog or online diary or visiting social network profiles, posting photos for instance. These last results meet previous research on gender differences when using the internet (rajouter ref.)
- Age differences do not influence gender differences much but for activities related to game playing.

## 4.2 Quality of online content

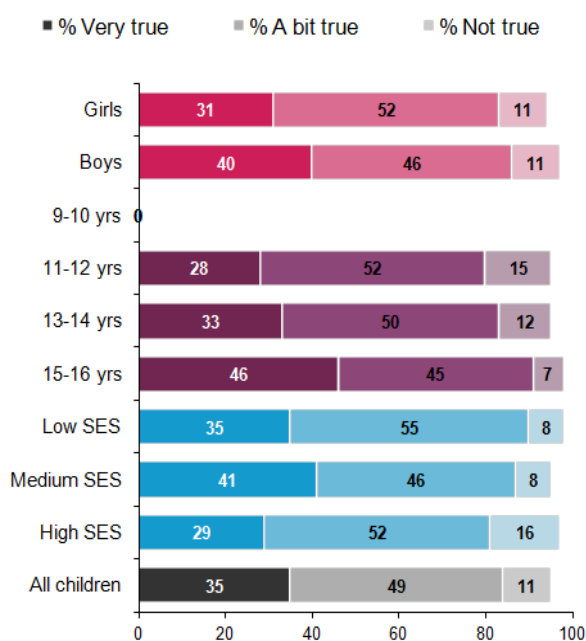
Children do not enjoy equivalent opportunities across Europe. In some countries there are more online resources, often as a result of differential investment and/or because national markets vary in size and wealth. **Although an objective assessment of online opportunities is difficult, the EU Kids Online survey asked children for their own assessment** (Figure 8).

- The children in France show similar satisfaction patterns as for the European average when gathering the children who show high satisfaction and moderate satisfaction, with a greater satisfaction when older which also might be relate due to the fact that they are more skilled to search

for the information or activity they need than the younger children. However, France is among the countries where children are less enthusiastic after TR (?), Sweden and Norway.

- As a whole, 35% of the children say it is 'very true' and 49% say it is 'a bit true' that there are lots of good things for them to do online; one child out of ten (11%) say the statement is 'not true'. Their opinion on the quality of the contents on the internet is very similar to their European counterparts.

Figure 8: "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.

- Turning to the socio-demographic variables, girls are less enthusiastic about online contents (31% vs. 40% answering 'very true') but they are as numerous as boys to disagree about the lack of interesting things on the internet (11% vs. 11%). In the European sample boys are more positive.
- Teenagers aged 15-16 years are especially positive as in Europe. In France contrary to the European average, satisfaction is also related to SES with a greater percentage of unsatisfied children for the



higher SES children (16% vs. 8% for the lower and medium SES).

### 4.3 Children's use of social networking sites (SNS)

Although not quite the most popular activity, social networking is arguably the fastest growing online activity among youth. 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 integrate online opportunities and risks more seamlessly than previously.

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 problematic communications.

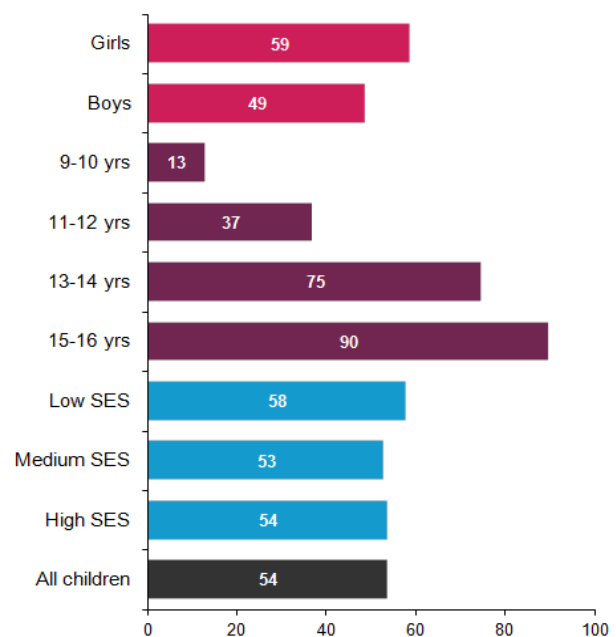
As shown in

Figure 9:

- **54% of children who use the internet in France have their own SNS profile, this being a little lower than the European average of 59%.**
- **The older the children, the more likely they are to have profiles, applying to most 15-16 year olds (90% have a profile).**
- **Since many social networking sites have a minimum age of 13, the findings for 9-10 year olds and especially 11-12 year olds seem high with respectively 13% of primary school children and 37% of 11-12 years old saying that they have a social network profile, suggesting that some tell a false age when setting up a profile. However these percentages are lower than the European average that shows that respectively 26% of the 9-10 and 49% of the 11-12 years old have a profile. As a whole children in France are less numerous than other children in Europe to have a social network profile (54% vs. 59%) with some countries showing some much higher percentages (the Netherlands, Lithuania, Denmark, SI, CY, CZ, EE, Poland have over 70% children saying they have a social network profile).**

- The rise at 11-12 years old also suggests, in a France context, that the start of secondary school brings with it the peer expectation of social networking.
- Contrarily to other countries such as the UK, girls are more numerous to have profiles (59% vs. 49%).
- Children from the lowest SES homes are more likely to have a profile (58% vs. 53% and 54% for the higher SES).

Figure 9: 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.

What do we know about how children use social networking, once they have a profile? The survey asked several questions to those with profiles.

- Despite popular media stories of children with hundreds of contacts, few European children report having more than 300 contacts on their social networking profile (9%), though one in five (20%) has between 100 and 300; half have up to 50 contacts and 19% have fewer than 10.
- **Children in France report substantially more SNS contacts than in most of Europe, coming fifth only to Hungarian, Belgian, UK and Polish children. Among SNS users, 11% report more than 300 contacts, 23% have between 100 and**



**300, 20% have between 51 and 100 and 30% have 11-50 contacts. Only 16% have fewer than ten contacts.**

Privacy is a very much debated issue among the adults who tend to think that the young people have lost any sense of privacy. This belief is mainly explained by the fear the adults have that children might include anyone in their contact list and take risks to meet sexual predators online for instance. Do such wide circles of contacts imply that children have no sense of privacy, that they might include anyone in their contact list?

- 
- 
- **Figure 10 shows that SNS users in France are less likely to have their profile set to public (rather than private or partially private): 21% in France compared with 26% across Europe. Nevertheless they are quite a few (44%) to say their profile is partially private which is much higher than the European average (28%) and fewer to preserve a total privacy since the children in France are 34% to use private networks compared with 43% European average.**
- Children in France are less likely to post their address or phone number (8%, compared with 14% in Europe).
- Children in France are slightly more numerous to show an incorrect age (18% compared with the Europe average of 16%).

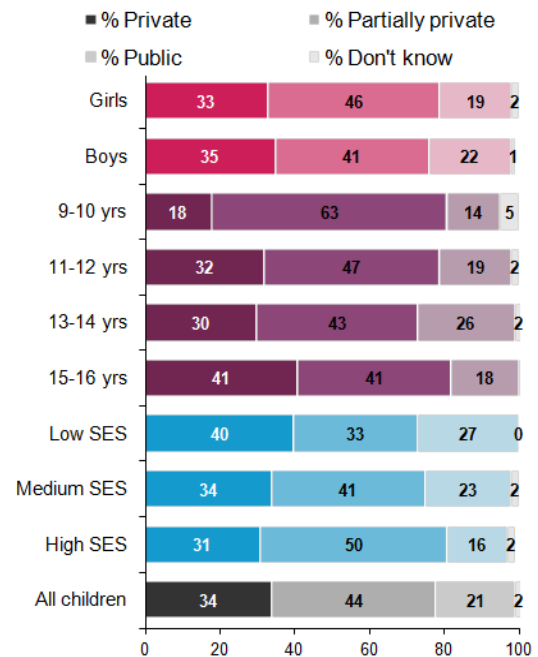
A breakdown of the use of privacy settings by socio-demographic factors is shown in

Figure 10:

- **Gender differences are small concerning private profiles with a slightly higher percentage of boys who say their profile is private (35% vs. 33%).**
- The younger children in France are less likely to have public settings (14%, compared to 28% in Europe). Children aged 13-14 are more likely to have public profiles (26%) than the other children which corresponds to a developmental stage when being popular and social status among the peer group overtakes the associated risks related to opening access to anyone.
- In France children from high SES homes are less likely to set their profiles to public (16% vs. 23%

medium SES and 27% low SES). This percentage is also slightly below the European average (19%).

**Figure 10: Children's use of privacy settings on their social networking profile**

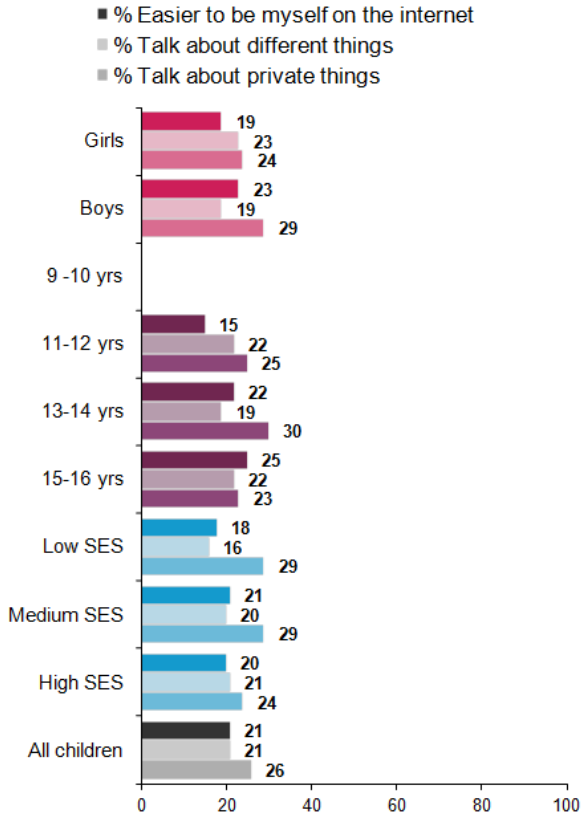


QC317: Is your profile set to ...? Public, so that everyone can see; partially private, so that friends of friends or your networks can see; private so that only your friends can see; don't know.

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

Drawing the line between activities which facilitate beneficial outcomes and those which increase risk of harm is not straightforward. A particular challenge for policy makers is that children's agency, although generally to be celebrated, may lead them to adopt risky or even deliberately risk-taking behaviours. Focusing on communication online, we explored this by inviting children to compare their approach to communication online and offline (see Figure 11).

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



QC103: How true are these of you? Percentage who said 'A bit true' or 'Very true'

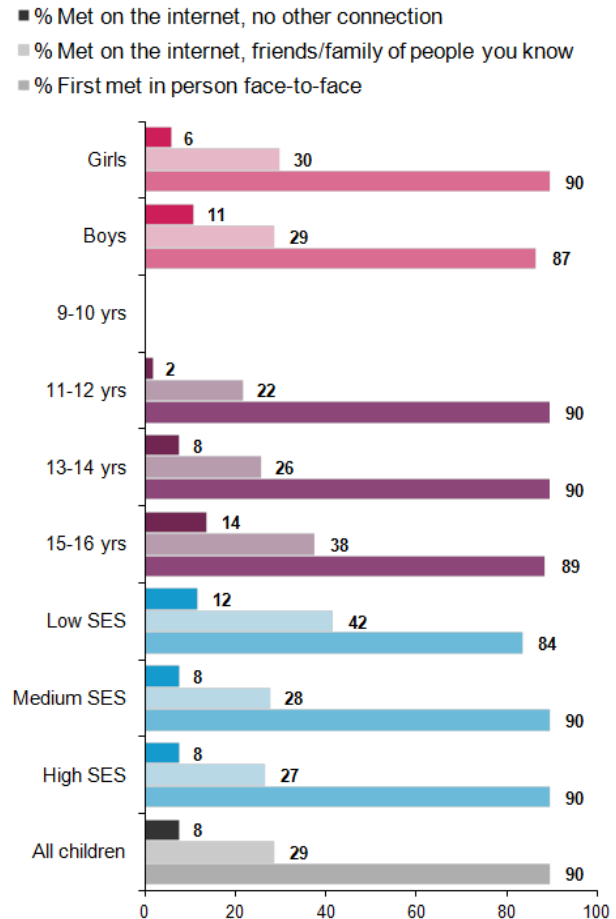
Base: All children aged 11-16 who use the internet.

- In France, one child out of 5 says that it is easier to be oneself on the internet, 21% talk about different things and 26% talk about even more private things.
- This is especially the case for 13-14 year olds, who appear to find the internet a particularly good place to be themselves, perhaps to experiment with identity.
- Boys are more likely to find the internet a good place to be themselves (23% vs. 19%).
- For SES differences are light. High SES children report less than others to find it easier to talk about private things on the internet than with people face to face (24% vs. 29%).

Insofar as 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 12).

**Figure 12: Nature of children’s online contacts (11+)**



QC310: 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.

This question pursued the common assumption that it is 'strangers' who threaten children's safety through online contact although, as previous research suggests, people from within a child's social circle can also pose a threat. Findings showed that:



- In France, as in the rest of Europe, most children who communicate online are in touch with people who they already know face-to-face (90%). Thus online communication relies on and complements the communication that occurs in everyday social networks.
- One child out of three (29%), that is to say less than the European average (39%), is in touch with people that they first met on the internet but who have a connection with friends or family offline. These people form part of the child's wider circle offline although the child has not met them face-to-face.
- A minority of 11-16 year olds (8%) say they communicate online with people whom they met online only. It is these contacts, arguably, that we need to understand better in the context of risk and safety issues. However, the number who experiences this is considerably smaller than the European average of 25% and this type of communication is mainly linked with virtual worlds and games online which explains that boys report more being in touch with strangers since they are also more numerous to play games online as we saw table 4 of this report.
- Over four fifths in each age group communicate online with their existing offline social circle. But like their European counterparts, as children grow older they widen their circle by also communicating with people online who are connected to their offline circle but whom, nonetheless, they first met on the internet: 22% of 11-12 year olds, 26% of 13-14 year olds and 38% of 15-16 year olds. Being online with strangers is influenced by age with 14% of 15-16 year olds saying they have such contacts compared with 2% among the 11-12 year olds. However these figures are much lower than the European average. In Europe, the findings are 19% and 33% for the same age ranges).
- The lower the SES of the household, the more children have contacts with strangers (12% vs. 8% for the other SES children) and the wider their circle by communicating with people they do not know personally but through family or acquaintances.

Finally, children were asked about some risky practices related to engaging with online contacts (see Table 5).

- **The main reported activity by children in France is looking for new friends. Let's remind here that one of the main objectives of the young people at this age is to widen up their social network to build up status and in an identity**

construct process. One child out of 4 says looking for new friends more than once a month.

- In France, one third of the children say they have added strangers as friends and 16% did that more than once a month. We can conclude from this percentage that some children do have some very risky activities on the internet although this is not particular to France since the European average is exactly the same percentage.
- The vast majority of children aged 9-16 say that in the past year they have not sent a photo or video of themselves (88%) or personal information or pretended to be a different kind of person on the internet (86%).
- All these findings are somewhat similar to the European averages.

**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	57	17	24
Added people to my friends list or address book that I have never met face to face	66	16	16
Sent personal information to someone that I have never met face to face	86	7	5
Sent a photo or video of myself to someone that I have never met face to face	88	7	3
Pretended to be a different kind of person on the internet from what I really am	86	9	4

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

Base: All children who use the internet.

Some of these approaches to communication might be judged to involve children in 'risky' practices. But as our overall framework asserts, the key question is whether or



not undertaking these practices results in more risk-related behaviours or, importantly, more harm - a key question for further analysis.



# 5 RISK AND HARM

## 5.1 Overall experiences of harm

**Before asking children about their specific online experiences associated with risk, we included both closed and open-ended questions in the survey that invited an overall view from the children.**

First, we asked children about experiences that had bothered them in some way, explaining that by *'bothered'* we meant, *"made you feel uncomfortable, upset, or feel that you shouldn't have seen it."* The aim was to focus on the child's self-report of concern or distress, avoiding an adult framing (e.g. danger, risk, bad things). After this introduction, children were asked two closed questions:

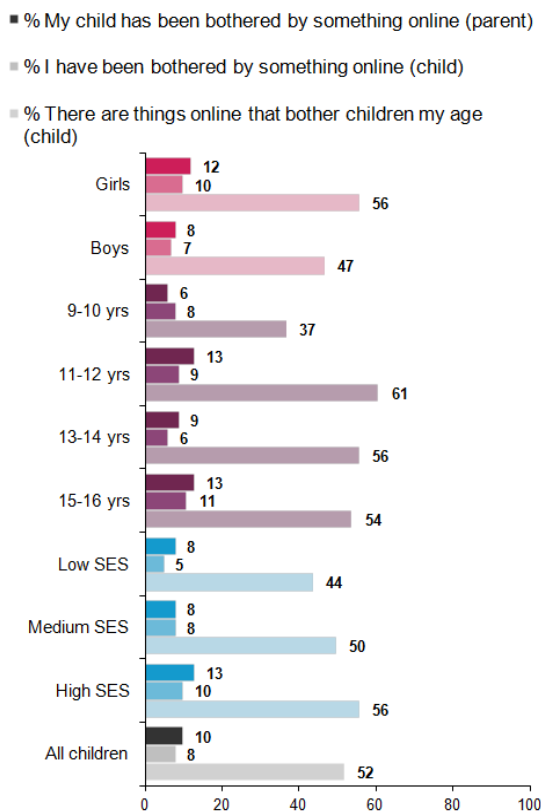
- *Do you think there are things on the internet that people about your age will be bothered by in any way?*
- *In the past 12 months, have you seen or experienced something on the internet that has bothered you in some way?*

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?*

- Clearly, many children don't see the internet as a completely safe environment. In

- Figure 13, above half of 9-16 year old children in France (52%) think that the internet bothers people their own age – a slightly lower percentage than the 55% of European children who say the same.
- **Children in France are 6 times more likely to say that the internet bothers other children (52%) than they are to say something has bothered them personally in the past year (8 %) – this latter finding is lower for France than the European average (12%). The children aged 11-12 are the most numerous to think that the internet is not safe with 61% who say so. This might be due to the fact that the use of the internet and social networks increase at this age when entering lower secondary school.**
- **Younger children are least likely to be concerned with safety problems themselves. This might be due to the fact that they mostly go on the internet with their parents and feel protected themselves with 6% respondents to the survey who say that they have been personally bothered by something online. The children who feel most concerned with risks on line are the 15-16 years old which might be due to the fact that they use it more. Reported victimization rates are slightly higher for this age range since 9% of 11-16 year olds and 11% of 15-16 year olds show say they have been bothered by something compared with 6% for the 13-14 year olds. These percentages are lower than the European average (12%) which meets the findings concerning risk taking among the children in France that is lower than the European average as we have seen in the previous part of this report.**
- Parents report slightly higher worry than their children with 10% parents who say their child has been bothered by something online (vs. 8% children).

**Figure 13: Online experiences that have bothered children, according to child and parent**



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.

- Girls are somewhat more likely than boys to say that something on the internet has bothered children their age and that they were bothered. Parents mirror this gender difference, seeing the internet as more problematic for their daughters than their sons (12% vs. 8%).
- Parents show slightly higher percentages reporting their children were bothered by something on the internet which reflects that adults are concerned about what their children experience online but do not know what happens exactly.
- Differences in reported problems online rise from 9-10 year olds to 15-16 years old from 8% to 11%. Parental perceptions follow the same pattern with a greater concern from part of parents though with 13% parents who reckon their child has been bothered at the age of 11-12 compared with 9% children who say they were bothered. Contrary to other countries such as the UK for instance, starting secondary school and the onset of adolescence do not bring a major change in victimization with a 1% increase in reported victimization but it shows a greater concern from part of parents.
- The socio-economical background of the respondents to the survey impacts on the reported victimization rates with higher percentages among the High SES children since one out of ten children says he/she has been bothered compared to 8% for medium SES children and 5% for lower SES children. These findings show coherence with previous findings on risk taking since high SES children show more risky behaviours than the other ones. These results vary from the European average where the percentages of children who show some concern for their peers are higher but also the feeling of having been bothered which might explain this stronger concern.

## 5.2 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.

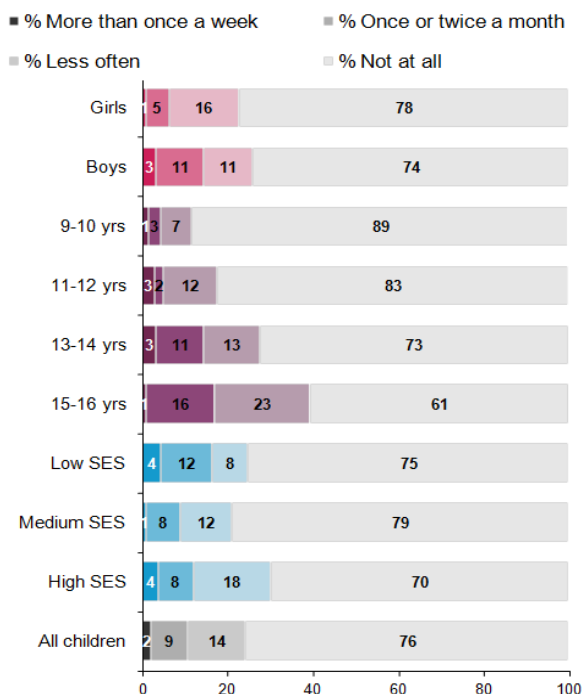


Questions about pornography were introduced thus:

*“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 14: 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 14 shows that:

- **One quarter (25%) of 9-16 year olds in France say that they have seen sexual images in the past 12 months, whether online or offline. This is slightly higher than the European average of 23%.**
- As in Europe, age matters. Older children are more numerous to have seen sexual images. In France this levels off earlier - by age 11-12 with 17% children who report having been exposed to sexual

images compared with 13% for 9-10 year olds rising to 39% of 15-16 year olds which is identical to the UK sample and similar to the European average.

- Gender differences show that girls are fewer to report they have seen sexual images online or offline (22% vs. 25%); for Europe as a whole the numbers are similar. Girls are fewer to have been exposed more than once a week too (1% vs. 3%). In Europe, boys who say they have seen sexual images online or offline more than once a week in the past 12 months are twice as numerous than girls (7% vs. 3%).
- In France, children from higher SES homes say they see sexual images more frequently. The situation is similar to the European average.

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

%	9-12 years		13-16 years		All
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
On television, film or video/DVD	5	3	11	8	16
On any websites	4	4	13	12	19
In a magazine or book	3	2	6	4	8
By text (SMS), images (MMS), or otherwise on my mobile phone	1	1	4	2	4
By Bluetooth	0	0	1	0	1
Has seen at all, online or offline	19	19	44	36	29

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.

Table 6 examines where children have seen sexual images, to put online sources into context.

- **Websites are the most common source of sexual images for children in France (19%) and mainly for the older children. There is no gender difference for websites. Then it is on TV that children see more sexual images since 16% respondents who say that they have seen sexual images on this media. The most exposed to sexual images on TV are boys aged 13-16 compared with younger boys (11% vs. 5%) and with girls of the same age (11% vs. 8%). These percentages follow the European average pattern.**
- Children in France are more likely to have seen sexual images online than the European average (29% vs. 23%) they are similar to the findings of far Estonia (29%), Finland (29%), the Czech Republic (28%), and Denmark (28%). The highest percentages was found in Norway (34%),
- Older boys are the only ones to report they have seen sexual images on mobile phone (1%) whereas girls do not report it at all.

**Table 7: What kind of sexual images the child has seen online in past 12 months, by age (age 11+)**

%	Age				All
	9-10	11-12	13-14	15-16	
Images or video of someone naked	N.a	11	26	34	12
Images or video of someone's 'private parts'	N.a	7	19	23	9
'Images or video of someone having sex	N.a	6	28	24	11
Images or video or movies that show sex in a violent way	N.a	2	7	5	3
Something else	N.a	1	1	0	0
<b>Seen sexual images online</b>	<b>N.a</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>29</b>

QC131: Have you seen these kinds of things on any websites in the past 12 months? QC133: Which, if any, of these things have you seen on a website in the last 12 months? (Multiple responses allowed)

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

- Nearly one third of the 11-16 year olds say they have seen online sexual images including nudity and images of someone having sex (39%). These percentages increase dramatically at the age of 13-14 years old jumping up to 28% of the respondents who say they have seen images or videos of someone having sex; 19% have seen someone's genitals online and 7% say they have seen violent sexual images.
- The overall pattern shows much higher percentages of children who have seen sexual images online in the past 12 months than the European average (29% vs. 14%).
- Previous research raised questions about what parents really know about their children's experiences online, such knowledge surely being a prerequisite for supporting or guiding their children. Exploiting the unique features of the *EU Kids Online* survey in which answers can be analysed for each child/parent pair, we now ask how far parents are aware of children's experiences online.

**Table 8: 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	50	35
No	30	62
Don't know	20	3
	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.

- Across Europe, among just those children who have seen sexual images online, half of their parents say it has happened but one in three (30%) are not aware this has occurred. One in five (20%) of the parents say that they don't know.
- Among those children who say they have not seen or received sexual messages, 35% think they have and 62% thin their child has not experienced such an event which shows parents are rather preoccupied and overestimate this type of risk



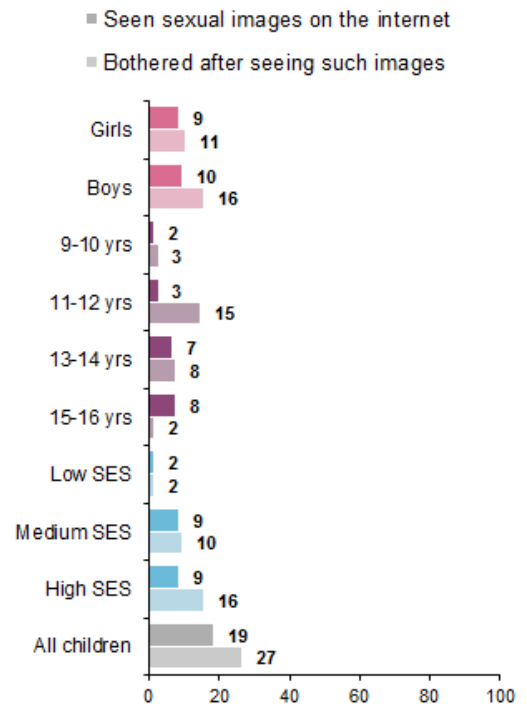
When does risk translate into harm? As noted at the outset, the notion of risk refers to a probability not a necessity of harm. Unless one makes the strong case that any exposure to sexual images is inevitably harmful in some degree, it must be recognised that some children may, for instance, be exposed to pornographic content with no adverse effects. Others, however, may be harmed – whether upset at the time of the exposure, or worried later, or even influenced in their attitudes or behaviour years subsequently.

So as not to presume that all risks result in harm, we asked further questions to those children who said they had seen sexual images online, 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, 32% of those who have seen sexual images online were bothered by what they had seen. But this comprises only 4% of all children.
- By comparison, slightly fewer – 27% - of children in France who saw such images say they were bothered by what they saw.
- France shows rather high percentages of children who report having been exposed to online sexual images. However, the difference does not show that much as far as being bothered by what they have seen is concerned.

Error! Not a valid bookmark self-reference. **shows who has seen sexual images on the internet and been bothered by this.**



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.

There is no gender difference as for seeing sexual images online. This finding is different when comparing with the European average since boys are more numerous (16%) than girls (12%) to report seeing sexual images. Boys seem to be more bothered than girls when exposed to sexual contents as for the UK sample (16% boys report being upset vs. 11% girls) which is different from the overall European finding – across all countries, boys have seen more sexual images online but girls are more upset by such experiences.

- Seeing sexual images online is more common among teenagers than younger children, and there

are also more teenagers – those aged 11-12 years old report being bothered more.

- **As in other countries, 9-10 year olds are less likely to see sexual images online.**
- Low SES children are more numerous to have seen sexual images online while medium and high SES children report less exposure to sexual contents but greater concern.
- In the full European report, further questions explore 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.

The key point, therefore, is that rather high percentages of children have experienced seeing sexual images online in France (nearly one out of two children – 47%) and, among those who have, slightly less than one child out of three say they were not bothered or upset by the experience.

### 5.3 Bullying online

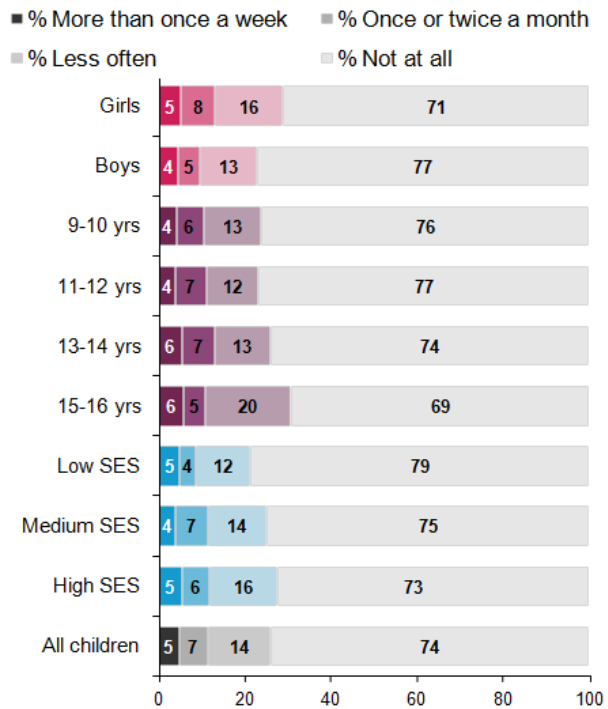
**Being bullied is one of several conduct risks that may harm children when they use the internet.** In some sense, bullying builds on children’s availability through and/or conduct in peer-to-peer exchanges and it may or may not be associated with offline bullying.

The term ‘bullying’ has a distinct and familiar meaning in France where it is not used at all. The nearest term is “harassment”. This makes the term difficult to translate and jeopardizes cross-national comparisons. 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.”*

Children were then asked whether *someone has acted in this kind of hurtful or nasty way to you in the past 12 months.*

**Figure 15: 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.

- **One in four children in France claims to have been bullied in the past year, according to the definition provided, with 5% bullied weekly** (Figure 15) which meets the European average percentages for severe bullying. Three quarters of the children responded they were never bullied during the past 12 months of the survey.
- The overall level of bullying in France is higher than across Europe (26% vs. 19%), though the European range is from 43% in Estonia for having been bullied overall (online or offline) to just 9% in Portugal. This might be due to the fact that bullying is a type of aggression that has been seriously taken into account since only recently in France.
- Slightly more boys than girls claim to have been bullied (23% vs. 19%).
- 9-10 year olds say they have been bullied least, the most bullied being 15-16 year olds. These findings contradict other surveys that conclude that bullying



decreases with age (Smith et al., 2004)<sup>4</sup>. Children from higher SES homes in France claim to have been bullied most (27%), with those from low SES homes the least (21%).

The European comparisons suggest that, broadly, bullying online is more common in countries where bullying in general is more common, rather than, for instance, in countries where the internet is more established. This suggests online bullying to be a new form of a long-established problem in childhood rather than, simply, the consequence of a new technology.

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%	9-12 years		13-16 years		All
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
In person face to face	9	9	10	10	19
On the internet	1	3	1	4	5
By mobile phone calls, texts or image/video texts	1	0	2	6	5
Has been bullied at all, online or offline	2	3	2	6	6

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.

- In France, face to face bullying is more common than online bullying (19% vs. 5%) or than by mobile phone (5%).
- Gender differences are smaller for face to face bullying than on the internet. Boys report three times less internet bullying for the 9-12 age range (1% vs. 3%) and four times less (1% vs. 4%) for the 13-16 age range.

- As a whole, 6% of the participants to the survey report they have been victims of online and offline bullying. These percentages are much lower than the European average (19%) which might be explained by a lack of information about what is or what is not bullying in France, this issue having become part of the adults' preoccupations very recently. However, the percentages for online bullying are very similar to the European ones (5% vs. 6%) and the use of mobile phones seems to be higher for the children in France (5% vs. 3%).

**Table 9: What happened when child was bullied online in past 12 months (age 11+)**

%	Age				All
	9-10	11-12	13-14	15-16	
Nasty or hurtful messages were sent to me	n.a.	5	5	12	3
Nasty or hurtful messages about me were passed around or posted where others could see	n.a.	2	4	9	2
Other nasty or hurtful things on the internet	n.a.	1	3	3	1
I was threatened on the internet	n.a.	1	1	1	1
I was left out or excluded from a group or activity on the internet	n.a.	1	1	3	1
Something else	n.a.	1	2	1	1
At all on the internet	n.a.	5	6	9	6

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.

<sup>4</sup> Smith P.K., et al., 2004. *Bullying in Schools – How successful can interventions be?*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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examines how children are bullied online.

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examines how children are bullied online

**Most common is nasty messages sent to the child (4%), followed by messages being posted or passed on (2%). The other types of victimizations were reported by 1% of the respondents.**

- 13-16 year olds are most likely to encounter the various forms of online bullying and show higher percentages than the European average for the same age range (18% and 26% compared with 6% and 8%)

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 10).

**Table 10: 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	22	14
No	60	79
Don't know	18	7

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?

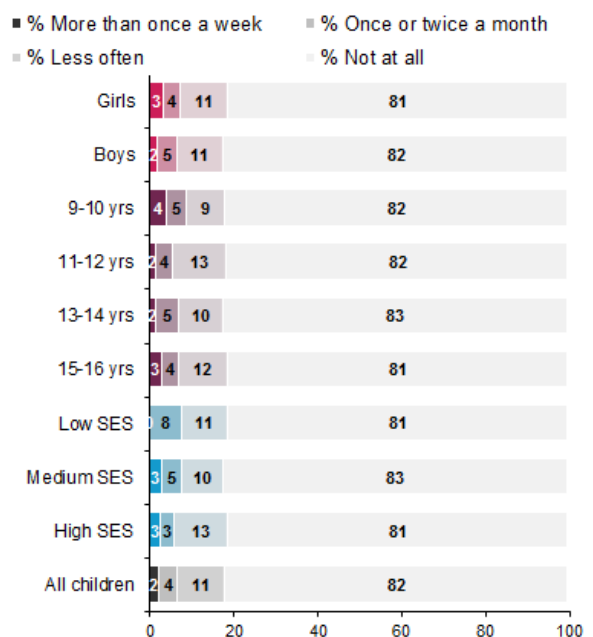
Note: sample sizes in this table are small (and confidence intervals high) so these findings to be treated as indicative only.

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

- Among children who say they were sent nasty or hurtful messages on the internet, 22% of their parents say that their child has been bullied online and 60% say that they have not and in further 18% they say they do not know (Table 11).
- By comparison in those cases in which the child says they have not been bullied online, only 14% of the parents think they were 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 asked if they themselves had acted in a hurtful or nasty way to others in the past year.

**Figure 16: 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.

- Figure 16 shows that, in France 17% of children say they have bullied others, that is to say less than who have been bullied (26%). This might be explained by the fact that all bullies are not children or that bullying can be a group process, that is to say an aggression from part of several children towards one victim.
- Bullying others is very slightly more common among the 15-16 year olds (being bullied is much more common).
- Children from medium SES homes are less likely to bully others.
- 2% bully others more than once a week.

A central question in the *EU Kids Online* project is to explore whether and when certain factors increase the likelihood of harm to the child.

In the full European report, children's experiences of online bullying are followed up to explore 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.

The key point, therefore, is that **most children have not experienced bullying, online or offline. Face to face bullying is more common than online bullying/**

*EU Kids Online* researchers will next examine what can be said at a country as well as a pan-European level.

## 5.4 Sending and receiving sexual messages online

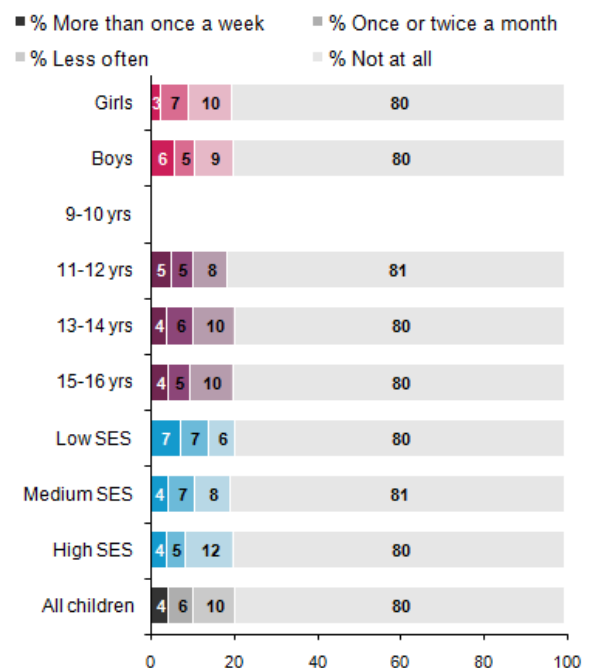
There is some evidence, and much speculation, that the internet facilitates the exchange of sexual messages among peers. Originating with the spread of mobile phone messaging more than online communication, and thus popularly labelled 'sexting' (an amalgam of 'sex' and 'texting'), such practices have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

sending and receiving sexual messages were not asked of 9-10 year olds.

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 17: Child has seen or received sexual messages online in past 12 months (age 11+)



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.

- In France, one child out five (20%) report they have seen or received sexual messages online, and 4% of them that they received such contents more than once a week (Figure 17). This compares with 15% receiving them across Europe, 3% more often than weekly.
- As for the European average, in France, there is no gender difference as far as percentages are concerned with 87% of the respondents who have

not been exposed to sexual contents. Nevertheless boys twice as many as girls to receive sexual messages several times a week.

- 11-12 year olds are less likely to receive sexual messages online than the older age groups, while there is little difference by social class but for the fact that the lower SES children are more exposed to regular messages with 7% children who say they have received sexual messages several times a week compared with 4% for the other SES.

Table 11 shows the type of sexual messages received by children on the internet.

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

%	Age				All
	9-10	11-12	13-14	15-16	
I have been sent a sexual message on the internet	N.a	3	8	9	19
I have seen a sexual message posted where other people could see it on the internet	N.a	1	1	3	3
I have seen other people perform sexual acts	N.a	0	1	1	5
I have been asked on the internet for a photo or video showing my private parts I	N.a	1	1	2	1
have been asked to talk about sexual acts with someone on the internet	N.a	1	2	3	1
Has seen or received at all	N.a	4	8	5	19

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 type of sexual messages received by the 11-16 year old internet users is a message on the internet (19%). 3% have seen**

**a sexual message posted online. 5% reported they have seen other people perform sexual acts while 1% have been asked for a photo or video showing their private parts or been asked to talk about sexual acts with someone online.**

- Being sent a sexual message increases by age as well as the other types of sexual experiences online and, to a lesser extent, to have seen one posted. The same pattern applies for Europe.

Are parents aware of children's experiences regarding online sexual messages? (Table 12)

**Table 12: 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	29	14
No	44	72
Don't know	27	14
	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?

Note: sample sizes in this table are small (and confidence intervals high) so these findings to be treated as indicative only.

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

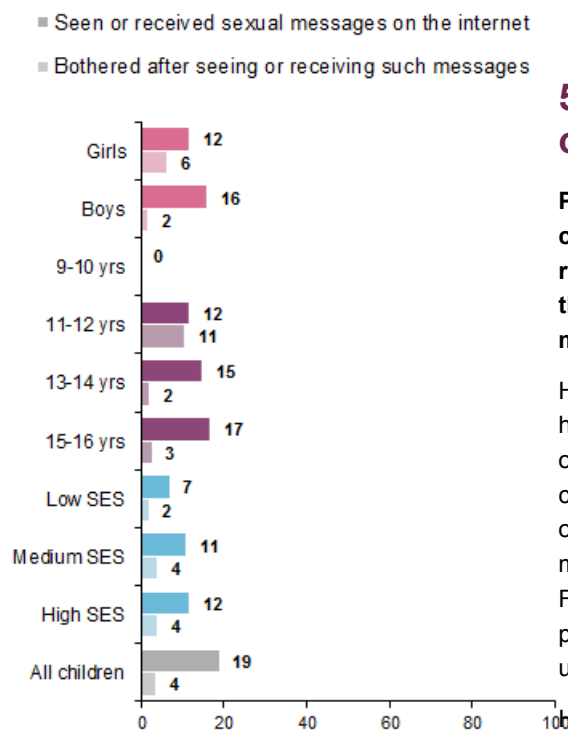
- Among children who have seen or been sent sexual images on the internet, 29% of their parents know that they were exposed to such contents while 44% they that their child has not received or seen any sexual images on the internet. One parent out of three says that they do not know if this has happened or not.
- Among children who say they have not received or seen sexual images on the internet, three quarters of the parents give the same answer while 14% say they have. These results highlight that parents are concerned with that potential risk and overestimate such problems.



As noted in the discussion of seeing pornography, unless one makes the strong case that any exposure to sexual messages is inevitably harmful in some degree, it must be recognised that some children may receive sexual messages with no negative effects. Others, however, may be upset.

- Across Europe, although 15% of children have seen or received a sexual message online, only 4% of children aged 11-16 have both received and been bothered by this experience. However, looked at differently, one quarter (25%) of the 15% who have received sexual messages were bothered by this.
- In France, by contrast, 11% have seen or received such messages, but slightly less - just 2% - have been bothered by it. To put it another way, 19% of UK children who have received sexual messages online have been bothered or upset by the experience.

**Figure 18 : Child has seen or received sexual messages in past 12 months and was bothered (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.

- As for the European average, Figure 18 shows that girls are much more likely to have been bothered by receiving sexual messages than boys (6% vs. 2%).
- One out of ten of the younger children say they were bothered (11%). The younger children, 11-12 year olds, are more likely to be bothered by these messages (as across Europe generally) compared with 2% of 13-14 year olds and 3% of 15-16 years old.
- Older children report more that they have seen or received sexual messages than the younger ones.
- Children from lower SES receive or see less sexual messages on the internet than the other children and are less to report they were bothered (2% vs. 4%). These results are similar to the European average where the lower SES children are more likely to be bothered.

## 5.5 Meeting online contacts offline

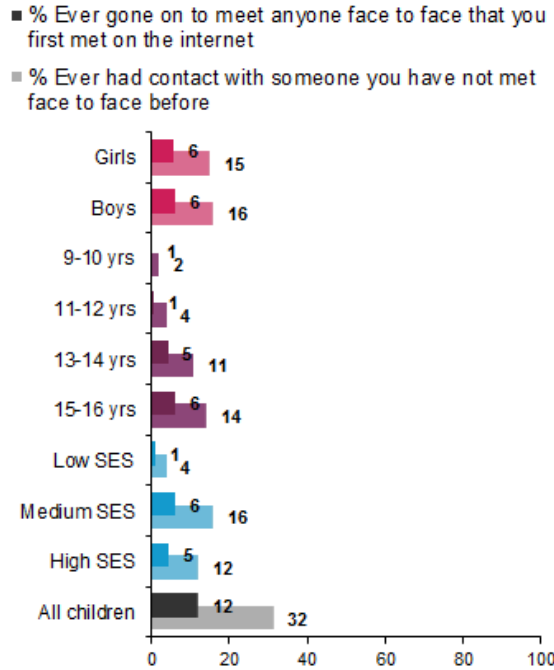
**Possibly the greatest public and policy concern for children's safety on the internet has focused on the risk that a child will meet someone new online who then abuses them in a subsequent face to face meeting.**

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 France make new contacts on the internet? Do these lead to face to face meetings offline? See Figure 19.

- **32% of children in France have had contact online with someone they have not met face to face (a similar finding to the European average of 30%).**
- **12% have gone to an offline meeting with someone first met online.** Indeed, as the pan-European report shows, children are most likely to have gone to an offline meeting with a contact first made online in some of the Baltic countries (25% in Estonia and 23% in Lithuania). Such offline meetings are least common in the UK and Portugal (each 5%), Italy and Ireland (each 4%). and then Turkey (3%). France ranks in the higher part of the European countries as shown in the pan European report.
- **Older teenagers (13-16 year olds) are much more likely than younger children to have online contact with someone they have not met face to face as to go to an offline meeting with someone not met face to face.**
- There is no gender difference when it comes to making contact with new people online or meeting them face to face without not knowing them but on the internet. This fits the wider European average.
- Children from medium SES homes in France are more likely to have made contact with strangers online and to have met them face to face.
- The older the children, the more likely they are to have made contact with strangers online (2% of 9-10 year olds vs. 14% of 15-16 year olds).

**Figure 19: Child has communicated online or gone to an offline meeting with someone not met face to face**



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.

Are parents aware of such offline meetings? (Table 13)

**Table 13: Parents' accounts of whether child has met online contacts offline**

Met someone face to face that first met on the internet?	Child's answer	
	Yes	No
% Parent answer:		
Yes	14	13
No	86	84
Don't know	0	3
	100	100

QP235: [Has your child] gone to a meeting with someone face to face that he/she first met on the internet? QC148: Have you ever gone on to meet anyone face to face that you first met on the internet in this way?

Note: sample sizes in this table are small (and confidence intervals high) so these findings to be treated as indicative only.

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



- Among children who have met someone face-to-face who they first met on the internet, 14% of their parents know that they went to such a meeting while most of the parents (86%) say that their child has not been to such a meeting. Surprisingly no parent said he/she did not know.
- Among children who say they have not gone to a meeting with an online contact, most parents (84%) give the same answer but over one out of ten say that they have (13%). A small percentage of parents (3%) say that they do not know.

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.

As before, we prefaced questions about subjective harm with the following:

*Face to face meetings with people that you first met on the internet may be fine or not fine. In the LAST 12 MONTHS have you gone to a meeting with someone you met in this way that bothered you? For example, made you feel uncomfortable, upset, or feel that you shouldn't have been there?*

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.

## 5.6 Potentially harmful user-generated content

There are 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 14, 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...*

**Table 14: Child has seen potentially harmful user-generated content in past 12 months (age 11+)**

%	Age				All
	11-13 years		14-16 years		
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
Hate messages that attack certain groups or individuals	4	0	6	7	6
Ways to be very thin (such as being anorexic or bulimic)	1	2	2	8	4
Talk about or share their experiences of taking drugs	1	1	4	3	3
Ways of physically harming or hurting themselves	0	0	2	4	2
Ways of committing suicide	0	1	2	4	2
Has seen such material at all on any websites	2	2	4	6	10

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

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

Table 15 shows that:

- One child out of ten in France (11-16 year olds) has seen one or more type of potentially harmful user-generated content (10%). The overall percentage is half the percentage across Europe, where the average is 21%.
- Most common are hate messages (6%), followed by anorexia/bulimia sites (4%) and sites talking about drug experiences (3%). Few have visited ways of physically harming or hurting themselves sites or have visited a suicide site (both 2%). Although percentages are lower than the European average, they show a similar pattern as far as the most visited/less visited sites are concerned.

- Older girls are far more likely to have visited anorexic/bulimic sites than older boys (8% vs. 2%), and younger girls have visited these more than have younger boys (2% vs. 1%). This reflects the wider European pattern. Younger children do not report visiting self-harm sites.

**personal information used in a way they did not like (3%), similar findings to the European average (4%).**

- Older girls have had these problems more than boys as shown table 16.

## 5.7 Misuse of personal data

The misuse of personal data was classified as a contact risk by the EU kids online research team. Questions on personal data misuse were only asked of children aged 11 years and older because younger children found it difficult to understand generic terms such as “personal information” without further explanation.

Questions on personal data misuse were asked of children aged 11-16:

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

**Table 15: Child has experienced misuse of personal data in past 12 months (age 11+)**

%	Age				All
	11-13 years		14-16 years		
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
Somebody used my password to access my information or to pretend to be me	1	1	1	2	6
Somebody used my personal information in a way I didn't like	1	1	0	1	3
I lost money by being cheated on the internet	0	0	1	1	1
Has experienced personal data misuse of any kind	1	1	2	3	9

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.

- The main misuse of personal data experienced by children in France is when someone has used their password or pretended to be them (6%). This percentage is slightly lower than the European average (7%). Some have had**



# 6 MEDIATION

A distinctive feature of the *EU Kids Online* survey is that it asked children about all the types of mediation practised by parents and also by teachers and peers. Drawing on previous research, a series of questions were devised for both children and one of their parents, distinguishing 'active mediation' of internet use in general and active mediation of internet safety in particular. Together these reveal the main sources of support available to children. In terms of policy, this may pinpoint children's need for further support, differentiated by demographic factors and by country.

Both forms of active mediation may also be practised by teachers in school and, further, children may support each other through discussing and sharing internet use; though informal, this constitutes a potentially valuable form of peer mediation.<sup>5</sup> In sum, **this section analyses eight sources of social support and mediation available to children:**

- Active mediation of the child's internet use - the parent is present, staying nearby, encouraging or sharing or discussing the child's online activities.
- Active mediation of the child's internet safety – before, during or after the child's online activities, the parent guides the child in using the internet safely, maybe helping or discussing what to do in case of difficulty.
- Restrictive mediation – the parent sets rules that restrict the child's use (of particular applications, activities, or of giving out personal information).
- Monitoring – the parent checks available records of the child's internet use afterwards.
- Technical mediation of the child's internet use – the parent uses software or parental controls to filter, restrict or monitor the child's use.
- Teachers' mediation – these questions included a mix of active mediation of the child's internet use and internet safety, plus a question on restrictive mediation.

- Peer mediation of the child's internet safety – it was assumed that children talk about their online activities in general, so here the focus was on peer mediation of safety practices in particular. These questions were asked bi-directionally – do the child's friends help them, and also do they help their friends.
- Other sources of safety awareness – both parents and children may benefit from a range of sources of guidance - from the media or from experts in their community. We also asked about the use of such sources.

## 6.1 Parents

The *EU Kids Online* project interviewed both the child and one of his or her parents. This section compares answers to matched questions asked of both child and the parent most involved in the child's internet use.

Previous research has revealed a considerable generation gap, with parents reporting more mediating activities than are recognised by their children. This gap has been interpreted as a sign of the barriers to parents' taking responsibility for their children's internet safety – whether because parents and teenagers find it difficult to talk to each other, or because parents feel ill-equipped to understand the internet, or because children guard their privacy online and so evade parental oversight.

**As will be shown below, this gap appears to have reduced in recent years. So, how do parents in France mediate their children's internet use?**

In what follows, *questions about active mediation of use and safety practices are asked of all children, and all parents of these children. Questions regarding parental restriction, monitoring and use of technical tools are asked only for children who use the internet at home.*

<sup>5</sup> In practical terms, it was not possible also to ask teachers or friends matched questions; nor was it appropriate to ask children about restrictive, monitoring or technical forms of mediation for teachers or friends.



**Table 16: 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		All
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
Talk to you about what you do on the internet	79	80	68	65	73
Stay nearby when you use the internet	74	78	42	41	58
Encourage you to explore and learn things on the internet on your own	61	59	52	47	54
Sit with you while you use the internet	62	67	33	30	48
Do shared activities together with you on the internet	60	56	34	28	44
One or more of these	92	90	84	84	82

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

Base: All children who use the internet.

- **In France, most parents talk to their children about what they do on the internet (73%), making this, as in Europe generally (70%), the most popular way to actively mediate children’s internet use.**
- Second most popular is staying nearby (58%), and third is encouraging the child to explore and learn things on the internet (54%). Practically one parent out of two sits with their child when he/she uses the internet and 44% share activities with their children.
- **Overall, it seems that there is a fair amount of general positive mediation taking place.**
- As for the European sample, gender differences are often small. **Parents engage in slightly more active mediation for the younger girls than younger boys for every strategy apart from doing shared activities together for which parents are more active for boys. Teenage boys receive more encouragement to learn on the internet, and for the other activities, parents**

mediate teenage girls internet experience less, contrarily to what could be expected and not reflecting parental mediation at the European level where teenage girls benefit from more parental supervision than teenage boys.

- For most strategies, as in Europe generally, parents carry out considerably more active mediation of younger children’s use of the internet.
- **Notably, 8% parents never engage in any of these forms of mediation, according to their children.**

Previous research suggests that parents claim they mediate their child’s internet use more than the child themselves recognises.

Table 17 compares the accounts of parents and children, examining the relation between the child’s answers (yes or no) and those of their parent.

**Table 17: Parent’s active mediation of the child’s internet use, according to child and parent**

% who say that their parents sometimes...	Child no parent no	Child yes parent no	Child no parent yes	Child yes parent yes
	Talk to you about what you do on the internet	10	9	21
Stay nearby when you use the internet	35	12	17	43
Encourage you to explore and learn things on the internet on your own	33	12	24	39
Sit with you while you use the internet	50	11	18	33
Do shared activities together with you on the internet	54	11	20	29

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]...

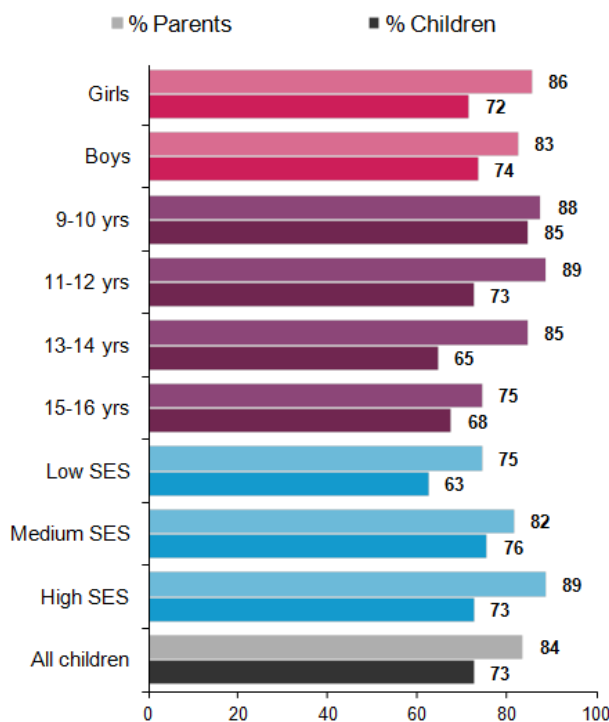
Base: All children who use the internet and one of their parents.



- The most common mediation activities implemented by parents are talking with their child about what they do on the internet and stay nearby when they use the internet.
- It seems that there is a good amount of mediation going on. However quite a few parents report some active mediation their child does not acknowledge as shown table 18 or figure 21. This might be due to some social desirability effect on the part of the parents who are eager to appear looking after their children properly.

To show demographic differences, Figure 20 is based on the row, 'One of more of these' responses in Table 16 – i.e. it combines the various forms of active mediation.

**Figure 20: 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.

- Overall, 73% parents perform some active mediation over their children’s activities on the internet. Figure 21 shows that parents tend to report more mediation from their part than the children. In

France as in the European sample, active mediation by parents is highest for young children and reduces as children grow older: 85% of parents do one or more of the activities shown in Table 16 in relation to their 9-10 year olds (children’s perception), dropping to 68% for 15-16 year olds. These percentages are lower than for the European average where 92% of parents do one or more activities with their 9-10 year olds and 81% for their 15-16 year olds.

- However, even for the oldest group, most parents pursue some forms of active mediation with their teenagers.
- **There are few gender differences from part of both parents and children’s perceptions as for the European sample.**
- **High SES parents are more active as far as mediating online activities is concerned with a fourteen point difference between low SES parents and High SES households as reported by parents and a ten point difference reported by children.**

Turning to active mediation of the child’s internet safety in particular, the survey asked a series of questions about the role parents play (Table 18).

**Table 18: 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		All
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
Explained why some websites are good or bad	75	76	62	67	70
Helped you when something is difficult to do or find on the internet	25	25	20	25	24
Suggested ways to use the internet safely	62	67	53	51	58
Suggested ways to behave towards other people online	51	59	51	51	53
Talked to you about what to do if something on the internet bothered	54	63	43	58	54

you

Helped you in the past when something has bothered you on the internet	82	91	61	56	79
One or more of these	98	98	91	92	95

QC329 Does your parent / do either of your parents sometimes... (Multiple responses allowed)

Base: All children who use the internet.

- **Helping when something has bothered you on the internet (79%), explaining why websites are good or bad (70%), suggesting how to use the internet safely (58%) or about what to do when bothered on the internet (54%) are all common strategies of parental safety mediation in France.** Parents also try to provide some advice on how their own children should behave towards other people online, and show some commitment in teaching a positive and ethical use of the internet.
- **However there are fewer children who say their parents help out when something is difficult to do or find on the internet (24%) which is much less than the European average where parents are 66% to help in this situation according to the children and only one parent out of two provides advice on how to behave towards other people online or how to react when bothered by something on the internet. These last findings are lower than the European average. On the contrary, parents in France are much more numerous to provide help when something bothers their child(ren) with 79% vs. 36% for the European sample.**

- Table 19 shows the existence of gender differences, mostly small but for how to behave towards other (8% more), talking about what to do when bothered (63% vs. 54 aged 9-12 and 58% vs. 43 aged 13-16) or being helped when bothered on the internet (82% vs. 91% for 9-12 yr olds/61% vs. 56% when older). There is no gender difference about receiving advice when having difficulties to do or find something on the internet for the younger respondents whereas differences grow with age since one boy out of five says he receives help in this case compared with one girl out of four.

- Younger children receive more guidance in critical tasks – evaluating websites and managing internet use effectively.

Children’s and parents’ answers are compared in Table 19.

**Table 19: Parent’s active mediation of the child’s internet safety, according to child and parent**

% who say that their parents sometimes...	Child no parent no	Child yes parent no	Child no parent yes	Child yes parent yes
	Explained why some websites are good or bad	18	11	19
Helped you when something is difficult to do or find on the internet	25	13	11	64
Suggested ways to use the internet safely	19	12	19	63
Suggested ways to behave towards other people online	26	12	21	54
Talked to you about what to do if something on the internet bothered you	45	16	19	33
Helped you in the past when something has bothered you on the internet	27	14	21	51

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.

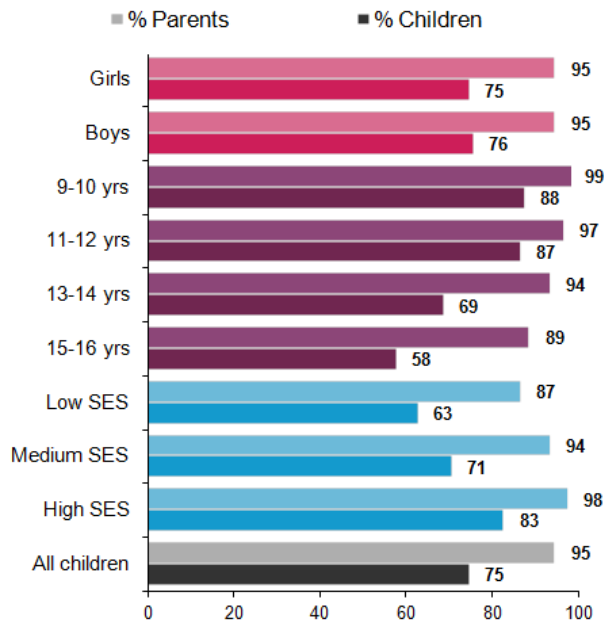
- **Parents and children generally agree with each other whether or not safety mediation occurs the biggest difference being about the children being told what to do if something on the internet bothers them. The French results differ from the European average on the help parents in France provide when something bothers their child or for suggesting ways to use the internet safely for instance, which reflects a high concern about safety on the internet.**



Parents and children disagree on the amount of mediation provided with parents more likely to over-claim compared with their children.

Figure 21 shows the demographic differences in parental mediation of the child’s internet safety.

**Figure 21: 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 no gender differences in parental safety mediation.
- Parents mediate more for 9-10 years old – and less for older children at least in the children’s perception (99% say they mediate vs. 89% for 15-16 year olds), parents tending to over claim their mediation role since for the older children they are only 58% children who say their parents are involved in active mediation.
- The higher the SES of the household, the more parents engage in this type of mediation. This is confirmed by the children’s reporting which show the same pattern.

**Looking across Europe, although there is a wide range in parental practices, with Norway the highest (97% of parents mediate children’s internet safety, according to their children) and Turkey, again and**

**distinctively, the lowest (70%). At 90%, France is average in the ranking of countries in terms of actively mediating their children’s safety.**

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 and to protect them from taking risks. 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		All
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
Give out personal information to others on the internet	9	11	42	28	22
Download music or films on the internet	32	37	74	71	53
Upload photos, videos or music to share with others	25	36	77	74	52
Have your own social networking profile	24	36	87	84	57
Watch video clips on the internet	74	80	95	92	85
Use instant messaging	55	72	94	93	78
<b>One or more of these</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>92</b>

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.

- Table 20 shows that from the children’s perception, **parents impose most rules in relation to watching video clips online: 85% of children in France say that they are either not allowed doing this or that restrictions apply (i.e. they can only do it with specific permission or under supervision from the parent).**
- Next most regulated activity is using instant messaging (78%) though possibly this reflects rules in case they would communicate with strangers or spend too much time chatting with friends instead of doing their homework.
- Roughly six in ten children (57%) are restricted in their use of social networking sites, over half (52%) experience rules relating to uploading photos, videos or music to share with others, and surprisingly only one child out of five reports being restricted in giving out personal information to others on the internet.
- Gender differences show stronger mediation for girls than boys when younger with a reversal when older. Rules are relatively big for disclosing personal information, boys feeling more controlled when older than girls (42% vs. 28%)
- Across all areas of internet use, older children face more parental restrictions. This might be due to the fact that younger children usually go on the internet with a parent sitting next to them and that older children are more digitally skilled and autonomous on the internet, which worries parents.**

**Table 21: Parents’ restrictive mediation of the child’s internet use, according to child and parent**

% who say that rules apply about ...	Child no parent no	Child yes parent no	Child no parent yes	Child yes parent yes
Give out personal information to others on the internet	15	3	9	81
Download music or films on the internet	36	8	7	58
Upload photos, videos or music to share with others	34	8	10	59
Have your own social networking profile	55	5	6	44

Watch video clips on the internet	52	8	10	41
Use instant messaging	55	7	8	41

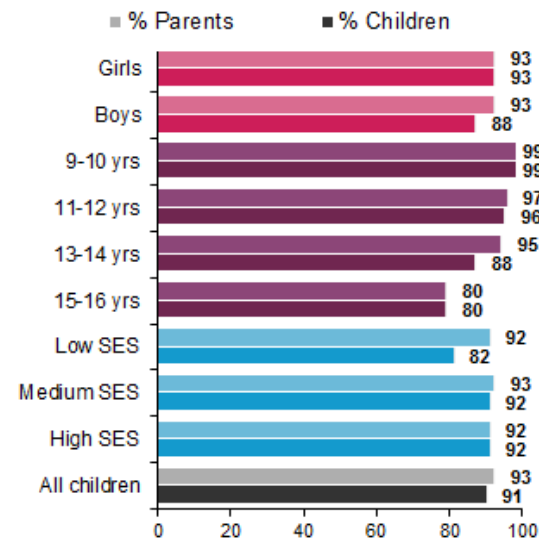
QC328 and QP221: For each of these things, please tell me if your parents CURRENTLY let you [your child is allowed to] do them whenever you want, or let you do them but only with your parent’s permission or supervision, or NEVER let you do them.

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

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

- Compared with the two types of active mediation discussed early, Table 21 shows that there is some strong agreement between parents and children about whether rules exist regarding rules related to having your own social networking profile (99%), giving out personal information (96%) or downloading music (94%) for instance.

**Figure 22: 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.



- Restrictive mediation declines by age since 99% of parents say they actively mediate their child's internet use at the age of 9-10 and 80% for 15-16 year olds. Children's perceptions and parents' perceptions do not vary much as shown in figure 23 but for the 13-14 year olds for which the gap between parental opinion and children's opinion is wider.
- Still, the majority of teenagers are expected to follow rules when using the internet. Girls feel slightly more supervised than boys (93% vs. 88%) but parents think they restrict internet activities the same way whatever the gender. There is very little difference by SES with a lower feeling of parental control from part of low SES children.
- Looking across European countries, the range of restrictions ranges, according to the child, from 92% in Germany where one or more of the restrictions applies to the child down to only 54% in Lithuania – indicating country differences in restrictive mediation are substantial.
- France is ranking fourth in the countries where parents are most active (91% according to the child, and 93% according to the parent compared with respectively 85% and 90%). **Thus parents in France are part of the ones who impose more restrictions on their children's internet use.**

The internet is distinctive insofar as it keeps a record of previous activity, making it possible for parents to monitor or check on their children during or, more often, after use of the internet (

Table 22). While restrictive mediation can be difficult insofar as it causes arguments at home, monitoring is difficult insofar as it undermines the trust between parent and child.

**Table 22: Parent's monitoring of the child's internet use, according to child**

% who say parents check...	9-12 years		13-16 years		All
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
Which websites you visited	54	41	29	27	37
Your profile on a social network or online community	31	41	21	28	27
Which friends or contacts you add to social networking profile	34	36	18	18	24

The messages in your email or instant messaging account	36	27	9	13	18
One or more of these	63	53	40	42	49

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

Base: All children who use the internet at home.

- In France, monitoring strategies are adopted by half of parents (49%). These findings meet the European average results (50%).**
- Checking which websites children visit is the most common form of monitoring (37%), perhaps reflecting the relative ease of doing this.
- Next most regulated is social networking with one third of the parents who check on the social network profiles (27%). They are also quite numerous to check which friends are added to those profiles (24%) although this last activity is lower than for the European average (36%). **What is less common is checking the content of children's messages (18%).**
- There are gender differences that show that control is stronger for boys for the websites they visit (54% and 29% boys vs. 41% and 27% girls) or the content of their mails when younger (36% boys vs. 27% girls). **For the other items control is stricter for girls. As a whole, when getting older, children are less under parental vigilance.**

**Table 23: Parent's monitoring of the child's internet use, according to child and parent (M14)**

% who say parents check...	Child no parent no	Child yes parent no	Child no parent yes	Child yes parent yes

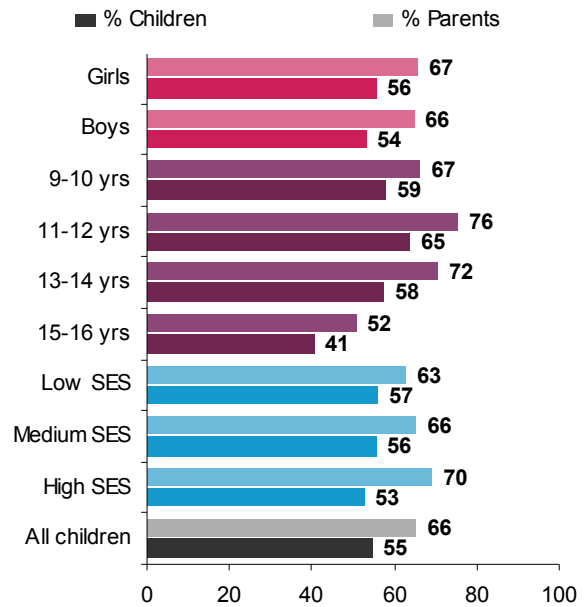
Which websites you visited	35	12	16	47
Your profile on a social network or online community	42	13	14	41
Which friends or contacts you add to social networking profile	44	13	17	36
The messages in your email or instant messaging account	56	10	17	27

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.

- From Table 23, it can be seen that **parents and children are mostly in agreement about whether parents monitor what the child does on the internet**. This applies both to things that parents are more likely to do (such as checking on which websites the children visit) and things that parents are unlikely to do (such as checking the messages in the children’s email or instant messaging account).
- For the average 16% of parents who say they monitor websites, social networking and profiles when their child says they do not, it may be that children simply do not know what monitoring parents undertake.
- As with other mediation activities parents are more likely than their children to claim that they do certain things themselves rather than their children saying that their parents do something that the parents themselves claim that they do not do (about one tenth of the cases)..

**Figure 23: Parent’s monitoring of the child’s internet use, according to child and parent (M15)**



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 23 reveals a decline in monitoring as children grow older: 67% of the parents of 9-10 year olds use one or more forms of monitoring compared with 52% for their 15-16 year olds.
- Children and parents from higher SES homes report less monitoring than children from low and medium SES homes.
- Gender differences do not show in monitoring.

**Country differences, as detailed in the pan-European report, are substantial, ranging from 61% of parents monitoring children’s activities in on or more ways in Poland, according to the child, down to only to 26% doing this in Lithuania. At 55% (parental perception) and 66% (children’s perception), France is in the top ten in the European ranking.**

For the internet in particular, ‘parental tools’ have been developed as technical solutions to the challenge of parental mediation. Thus, last, parents and children were asked if the parents use any technical means to monitor what the child does online (Table 24).



**Table 24: Parents' technical mediation of the child's internet use, according to child**

% who say parents check...	9-12 years		13-16 years		All
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
Software to prevent spam/junk mail or viruses	64	64	76	73	70
Parental controls or other means of blocking or filtering some types of website	44	38	29	32	33
Parental controls or other means of keeping track of the websites you visit	38	34	22	21	26
A service or contract that limits the time you spend on the internet	6	8	9	5	7
One or more of these	78	50	79	79	77

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

Base: All children who use the internet at home.

- **The major form of technical intervention, occurring in more than three quarters of households (70%) does not relate to safety concerns but rather to security, being used to control spam and viruses** (Table 24). This is the same pattern as in Europe generally.
- **Nearly one third of parents (33%) block or filter websites and one in four parents (26%) tracks the websites visited by the children, mainly for younger boys who are more numerous to report such a parental activity (38%). These percentages meet the European average (28% and 24% respectively) for the overall sample.**
- Younger children face more technical restrictions, apart from the use of software to prevent spam, junk mail and viruses.

**Table 25: Parents' technical mediation of the child's internet use, according to child and parent**

% who say parents check...	Child no parent no	Child yes parent no	Child no parent yes	Child yes parent yes
Software to prevent spam/junk mail or viruses	16	6	13	74
Parental controls or other means of blocking or filtering some types of website	43	10	13	40
Parental controls or other means of keeping track of the websites you visit	47	11	13	37
A service or contract that limits the time you spend on the internet	75	12	8	14

QC330 and QP223: Does your parent/either of your parents sometimes check any of the following things?

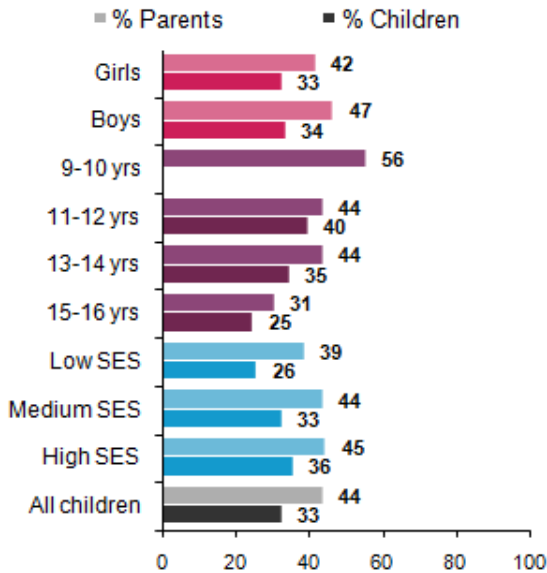
Base: All children who use the internet at home and one of their parents.

- **It seems children and parents largely agree over whether parents use technical tools to mediate their children's internet use** (Table 25).

Below we present the demographic findings just for parental use of filtering technology (the second row in the above tables) (see Figure 24).



**Figure 24: 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.

Base: All children who use the internet at home and one of their parents. Note: this question was not asked of 9-10 year olds.

- **Parents claim to use controls to filter or block sites their child can visit just slightly more than do their children (44% vs. 33%).** Boys claim to have their internet use blocked or filtered more than girls (47% vs. 42%).
- Filtering tools are used less the older the child – and they are used by a third of parents of 15-16 year olds (Figure 24).
- **Looking across the European countries, parents in France rank third for use of filtering technology after UK and IE. The European average is 28% according to children, and 33% according to parents, ranging from 33% children in France according to children and 44% according to parents.**

## 6.2 Judging parental mediation

**Does parental mediation work?** It is possible, though difficult, to determine whether parental mediation works in the sense of reducing children’s exposure to online risk or experiences of harm. More straightforwardly, though less objectively, one can also ask parents and children for their judgements.

Within the scope of the *EU Kids Online* survey, children’s and parents’ reflections on the role played by parents was asked about more directly, hoping to throw some light on what seems to work and, if they the mediations does not, why not. In future analysis, *EU Kids Online* will pursue the statistical relations between parental knowledge of the internet, parental mediation and children’s experiences of risk and, especially, of harm.

Thus the survey asked children and parents whether parental mediation activities are generally helpful or not (Table 26).

**Table 26: Whether parental mediation is helpful, according to child and parent**

% who say that what parents do helps to make the child’s internet experience better		Yes		No
		A lot	A little	
9-12 years	Child says	17	35	36
	Parent says	34	46	13
13-16 years	Child says	7	27	55
	Parent says	20	44	25
All children	Child says	18	31	45
	Parent says	27	45	18

QC332: Do the things that your parent does/parents do relating to how you use the internet help to make your internet experience better, or not really? QP225: Do the things that you (and your partner/other carer) do relating to how your child uses the internet help to make his/her internet experience better, or not really?

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

- **Both children and parents consider parental mediation helpful to some degree. Over half of children say it helps a lot or a little. This is the same as the European average.**
- 9-12 year olds are more positive, perhaps reflecting their relative lack of skills and also the fact that parents tend to sit next to them when being on the



internet. For them, parental mediation may indeed be more helpful.

- Parents in general are inclined to think that their mediation is more helpful than their children think and particularly for the younger children as for previous results.

Overall, 18% of children find parental mediation very helpful, a third find it a little helpful (31%), and 45% find it not helpful (33%). The *EU Kids Online* survey pursued several possible explanations about these findings, including (i) whether children consider that their parents really know enough about the child's internet use, (ii) whether parental mediation is seen as more restrictive of online opportunities than beneficial, or (iii) whether parental mediation is just something that children ignore.

**Table 27: How much parents know about their child's internet use, according to child**

% who say that their parent(s) know(s)...	9-12 years		13-16 years		All
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
A lot	49	49	18	23	35
Quite a bit	35	36	40	36	37
Just a little	13	11	33	31	22
Nothing	3	2	7	7	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 27 shows that **only 4% of the children think their parents know nothing about their internet use. This is a slightly lower percentage than in Europe generally.**
- Younger children are more likely to think their parents know more with half of the 9-12 year olds who think their parents know a lot about their activities on the internet, in line with the finding that parents mediate their experiences more than they do older children.
- Older girls are a more inclined than older boys to think that their parents know a lot (23% vs. 18%). These findings are very similar to the European average (24% vs.19%).

The balance between well-judged parental intervention in the child's internet use and trusting the child to deal with

online experiences by themselves is difficult for any parent.

Not all parents may 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 themselves better able to cope with their own online experiences.

**Table 28: Parents' ability to help their child and child's ability to cope, according to parent**

% of parents...	Extent			
	Not at all	Not very much	A fair amount	A lot

*To what extent, if at all, do you feel you are able to help your child to deal with anything on the internet that bothers them?*

Parents of children aged 9 to 12 years	1	2	25	70
Parents of children aged 13 to 16 years	3	6	29	58
Parents of all children	2	4	26	64

*To what extent, if at all, do you feel your child is able to deal with anything on the internet that bothers them?*

Parents of children aged 9 to 12 years	8	14	40	28
Parents of children aged 13 to 16 years	1	6	39	50
Parents of all children	4	10	39	38

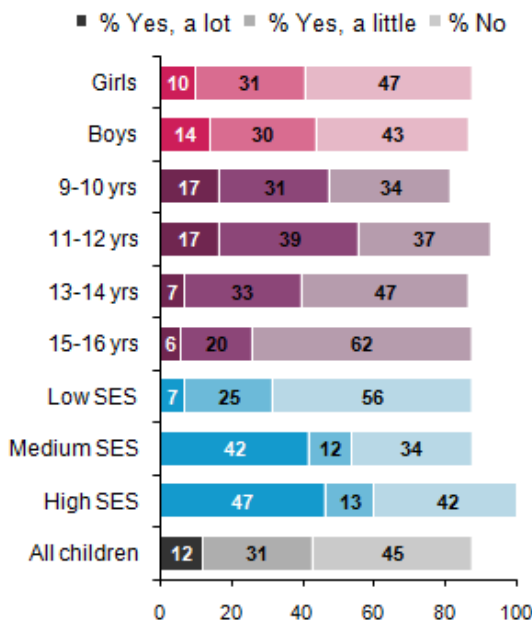
QP233: To what extent, if at all, do you feel you are able to help your child to deal with anything on the internet that bothers them?  
QP234: To what extent, if at all, do you think your child is able to deal with things on the internet that bothers them?

Base: Parents whose child uses the internet.

- Table 28 shows that **the great majority of parents (90%) are confident about their role, feeling that they can help their child a lot or a fair amount if the latter encounter something that bothers them online.**
- The parents of younger children are somewhat more inclined to say they can help a lot (95%) compared with the parents of older children.
- Parents are also confident in their child's ability to cope with things online that may bother them, with three quarters (77%) indicating that they have a lot or a fair amount of confidence in their child – this is more the case for parents of older children.

Another source of doubt regarding the value of parental mediation is the possibility 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 25).

**Figure 25: 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.

- Figure 25 shows that **about four in ten children (43%) think that parental mediation limits what they do online, 12% saying it limits their activities a lot.**
- As might be expected given greater parental mediation, the younger children are more likely to say it limits them (9-12 year olds). When entering secondary school, more children say that their parents limit them a little (39%). This might be due with the increasing participation to video games and time limiting as well as parents not wishing them to open up a Facebook account. As they become more autonomous, the feeling of limitation decreases. This might be due to a lower parental

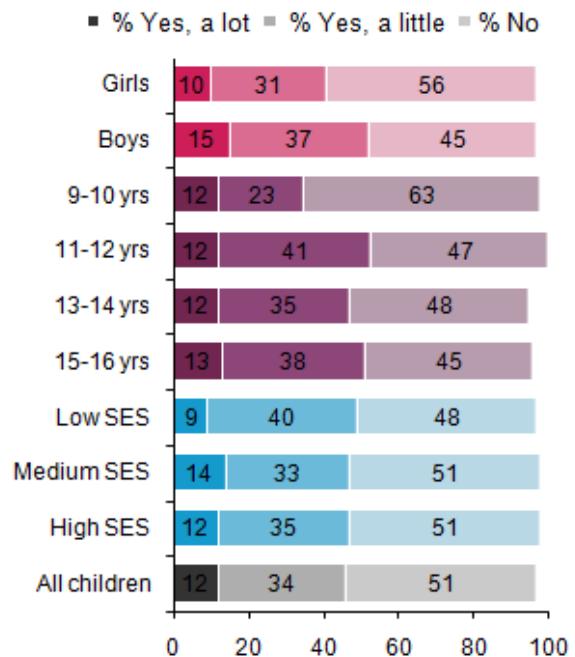
supervision or to higher digital skills that enable the older ones to go round parental limits.

- Boys are slightly more inclined to think that mediation limits them a lot or a little compared to girls (44% vs. 41%).

Children in France feel rather more restricted by parental mediation just after Turkey, Ireland and Bulgaria than in others (e.g. Hungary, and the Netherlands).

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

**Figure 26: 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 26 shows that **for many children, parental mediation is seen to have some effect. Half of the children in France do not ignore what parents tell them when they use the internet. This percentage is 14 points lower than European average (64%). Over one third (34%) say they ignore their parents mediation efforts a little and 12% of children say they ignore their parents mediation a lot.**

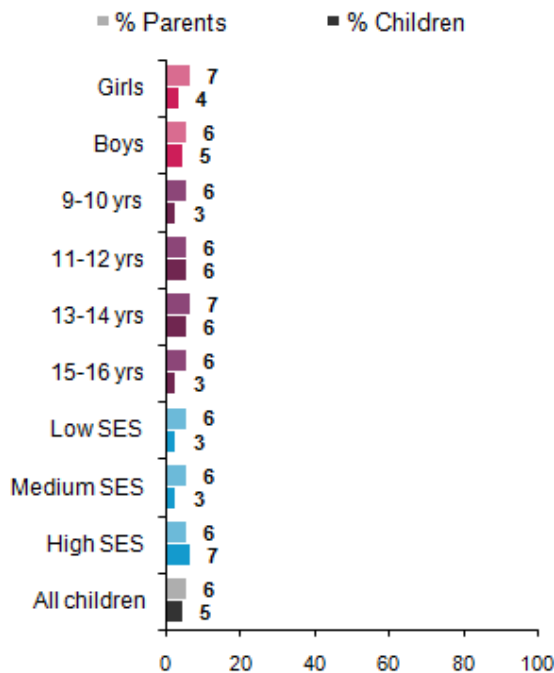


- The 13-16 year olds are most likely to say they ignore what their parents do or say about their internet use, 12% saying they ignore it a lot.
- Girls are less likely to claim they ignore their parents mediation, which is similar to the European pattern although they are more numerous to ignore it than their European counterparts.

Whether effective or not, there is clearly a considerable amount of parental mediation of different kinds being practised in families in France. This strong mediation activity might be due to problems that happened in the past or might be part of a prevention strategy from part of parents.

The *EU Kids Online* survey asked both children and parents about this possibility.

**Figure 27: Whether parents do anything differently because the child has been bothered by something on the internet, according to child and parent**



QC335: Does your parent / Do your parents do anything new or different these days because you have been bothered by something on the internet in the past, or not really? QP227: Do you (or your partner/other carer) do anything different these days because your child has been bothered by something on the internet in the past or not really?

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

- Figure 27 shows that in France, **only 6% of parents claim that they mediate differently because of something that had bothered the child in the past compared with 15% European average. 5% of children give this as an explanation of their parent's current mediation, parents and children agreeing that mediation happens on a prevention basis.**
- Results are rather steady whatever the age, gender of the respondents to the survey or SES. We note a slightly lower percentage of the older ones who say their parents mediate differently because of previous problems.
- Children of High SES are more numerous to link their parents' mediation to something that has bothered them in the past.
- If we look at Europe variation, 18% of children claim that their parents mediate differently because of something that upset them in Estonia, compared with just 3% in Hungary. Claims by parents reveal even greater national variation, from 29% in Turkey to 5% in Greece. France is in the lower part of this range on both counts, close to the European average of 6% claimed by children but much lower than the average claimed by parents (15% vs. 6%).

It may not be past problems but rather the anticipation of future problems that stimulates parents to mediate their children's internet use. Table 29 shows parental anticipation of future problems that lie ahead for their children.

**Table 29: Whether parent thinks child will experience problems on the internet in the next six months**

% of parents who say...	9-12 years		13-16 years		All
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
Not at all likely	24	22	20	18	20
Not very likely	43	44	40	39	41
Fairly likely	15	17	18	22	18
Very likely	1	3	5	2	2

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.

- Table 29 suggests **many parents are confident (61%) that it is not very or at all likely that their child will encounter anything that bothers them in the next six months.**
- **However, one parent out of 5 (20%) think it fairly or very likely that their child will experience something that bothers them online in the next six months.**
- There are little variations according to age or gender.
- These findings are all close to the European averages although the percentage of parents who think their child will experience problems on the internet in the next six month is lower.

Last, the survey 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 30: Whether the child would like their parent(s) to take more interest in what they do online**

% who say ...	9-12 years		13-16 years		All
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
A lot more	2	2	0	2	1
A little more	7	7	1	3	5
Stay the same	69	77	80	78	76
A little less	13	10	11	9	11
A lot less	3	3	5	5	4

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.

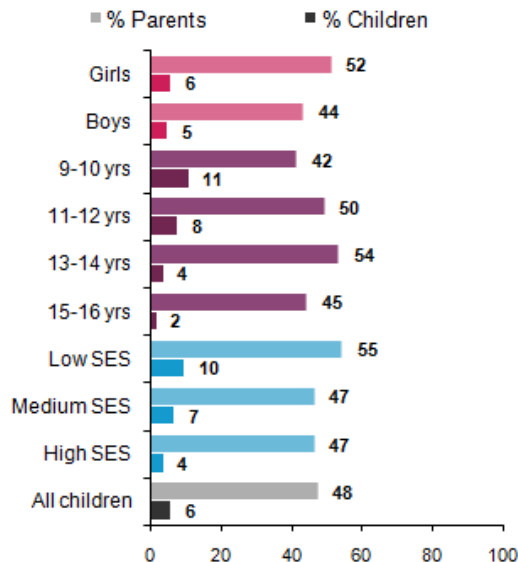
- Table 30 shows that **for most children (76%), and slightly more for teenagers, parents have got it about right, according to their children - since these children think the level of parental interest in their online activities should stay the same.**
- **6% would like their parents to do a little or a lot more, however. On the other hand, some 15% would like their parents to do rather less.**
- **These findings are different from the European average for which 15% children would like their**

**parents to a little or a lot more and 12% would like their parents to do less.**

Figure 28 examines more closely those children who would like their parents to take a bit or a lot more interest in their internet use. We also compare these with the proportions of parents who say that they should do a bit or a lot more.

- **6% of children would like their parents to take more of an interest in their internet use, while 48% of parents think that they should do more in relation to their child’s internet use.**
- **9-10 year olds most want their parents to show more interest in their internet use (9%).**
- Gender differences show that girls are more numerous to wish their parents to take more of an interest in their internet use than boys (52% vs. 44%). The lower the SES level, the more the parents think they ought to do more. This converges with the European pattern.

**Figure 28: Children who would like their parent(s) to take more interest in what they do online, and parents who think they should do more**



QC326: Overall, would you like your parent(s) to take more or less interest in what you do on the internet, or to stay about the same? And is that a lot/little more/less? QP226: Speaking of things you do in relation to your child's internet use, do you think you should do more, or not really?



Note: graph shows children who say yes, a bit or a lot more, and parents who say yes, a bit or a lot more.

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

- Country differences in children's desire for more parental input are noteworthy, with children in Eastern and Southern Europe greatly wishing that their parents would show more interest in what they do online – especially Romania, Portugal, Turkey, Cyprus, Spain and Bulgaria. By contrast, children in France, Denmark, and the Netherlands wish for little or no further input from their parents. UK children are towards the middle of this ranking.

### 6.3 Teachers

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

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?').<sup>6</sup> Then we asked about mediation of internet safety, using items also asked to parents (Table 31).

**Table 31: Teachers' mediation of child's internet use, according to child**

% who say teachers at their school have ever...	9-12 years		13-16 years		All
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
Suggested ways to use the internet safely	43	45	48	52	47
Explained why some websites are good or bad	42	46	50	46	46
Helped you when something is	13	9	5	8	8

<sup>6</sup> 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 ...*

difficult to do or find on the internet

Suggested ways to behave towards other people online	30	27	31	35	31
Talked to you about what to do if something on the internet bothered you	36	37	45	49	42
Helped you in the past when something has bothered you on the internet	45	43	40	44	43
One or more forms of active mediation	82	89	92	82	83
Made rules about what you can do on the internet at school	51	54	62	62	57
Talked to you about what you do on the internet	26	28	23	26	25
One or more of all of the above	77	82	85	88	82

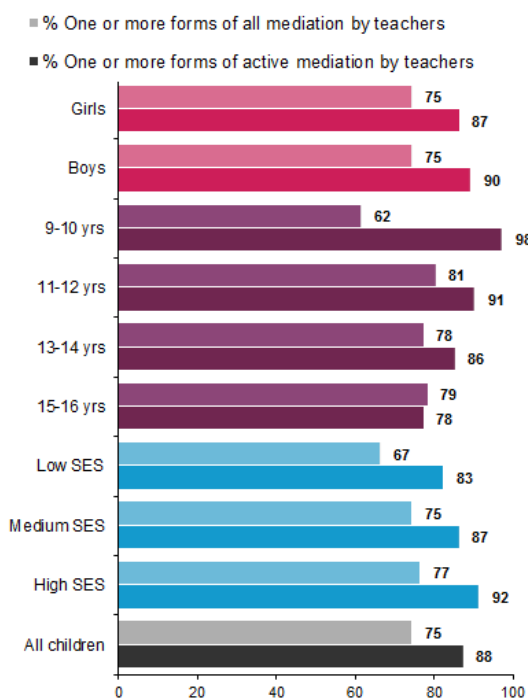
QC338: Have any teachers at your school ever done any of these things? (*Multiple responses allowed*)

Base: All children who use the internet.

- Most of the children (over 80%) think their teachers their teachers provide one or more active mediation activity for the use of the internet. 57% think their teachers have made rules about what they can do on the internet in school. By comparison, only 62% of children across Europe said their teachers made such rules. They are 47% to say that their teachers provide suggestions on how to use the internet safely. This percentage is rather low compared to the perceptions of the European average that amounts to 58%.
- Teachers in France seem to be more prone to provide help when something bothers their students on the internet with 43% of the respondents who say they were provided with such support compared with 24% in Europe**

- Older children report more mediation by teachers, younger children report more help when having difficulties to find something on the internet and equal levels of help when something bothers them. This might also be explained by a lesser use of the internet in primary school than in secondary school.
  - There are some slight gender differences, but this depends on age and the particular form of mediation. Older boys are more likely than older girls to say that teachers explain why some websites are good and bad (50% vs.46%), while girls are provided with more advice on how to use the internet safely (48% vs. 52%) or how to behave towards other people online (31% vs. 35%).
- 2
- Figure 29 reveals few differences by gender, age or SES in children’s experience of mediation of the internet by teachers.

Figure 29: 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.

There is little gender difference in the perceived mediation from teachers. Children from higher SES homes show a greater perception of overall mediation by teachers and mainly for active mediation. Active mediation is also more greatly perceived by the younger respondents. Overall results show that the French children have a stronger perception of active mediation from part of their teachers than their European counterparts (88% vs. 73%). On the contrary, they show similar percentages as the European average for all forms of mediation by teachers.

## 6.4 Peers

Some of the same questions regarding forms of mediation can also be asked of children’s friends. Little is known about whether or how children really support each other in terms of internet safety, although previous research has often shown that children would rather turn to their friends than to an adult when something online bothers or worries them.

Five of the questions on active mediation of internet safety were also asked of friends (see Table 32).

Table 32: Peer mediation of child’s internet use, according to child

% who say friends at their school have ever...	9-12 years		13-16 years		All
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
Helped you when something is difficult to do or find on the internet	44	52	57	63	54
Explained why some websites are good or bad	27	34	26	32	29
Suggested ways to use the internet safely	22	27	29	27	26
Suggested ways to behave towards other people online	17	24	24	29	23
Helped you in the past when something has bothered you on the internet	13	14	12	19	14
One or more of all of the above	55	60	67	72	63

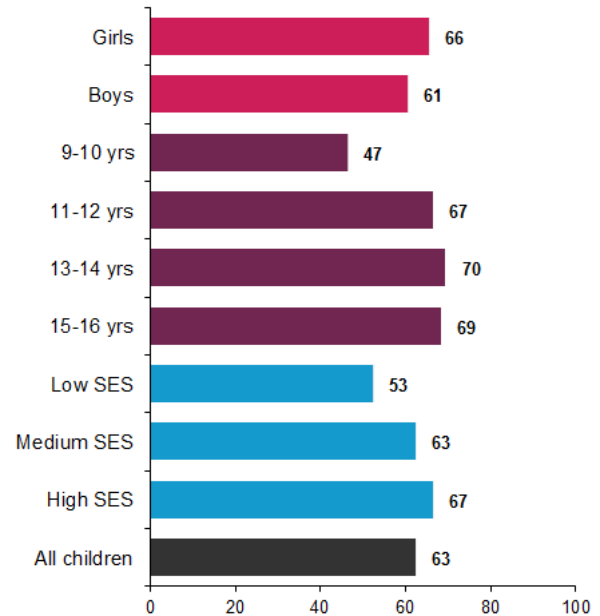
QC336: Have your friends ever done any of these things? (Multiple responses allowed)



Base: All children who use the internet.

- **Over two thirds (63%) of children say their peers have helped or supported their internet use in at least one of the five ways asked about** (Table 32). Nevertheless, this percentage is ten points below the European average with three quarters of the children who say their peers have helped or supported them (73%).
- As for teachers, this suggests that children do consider other children supportive in general, more so in the case of older children.
- **Peers tend to help each others to do or find something when there is a difficulty (54%). They are much fewer to say that friends help when they are bothered by something (14%),**
- Also compared with help from teachers, it seems that friends are less likely to give safety or ethical advice.
- Older girls claim their friends help them more than do younger children or boys the same age (19% vs. 12%).
- **Younger boys report more peer mediation than do younger girls (66% vs. 62%), while older girls report more peer mediation than do older boys (76% vs. 70%).**
- Specifically, older girls claim more than older boys that friends help in explaining why some websites are good or bad (43% vs. 34%), and help them when something is difficult to do or find (67% vs. 59%). They are also more inclined than older boys to say that friends helped when something bothered them (35% vs. 25%).

**Figure 30: 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.

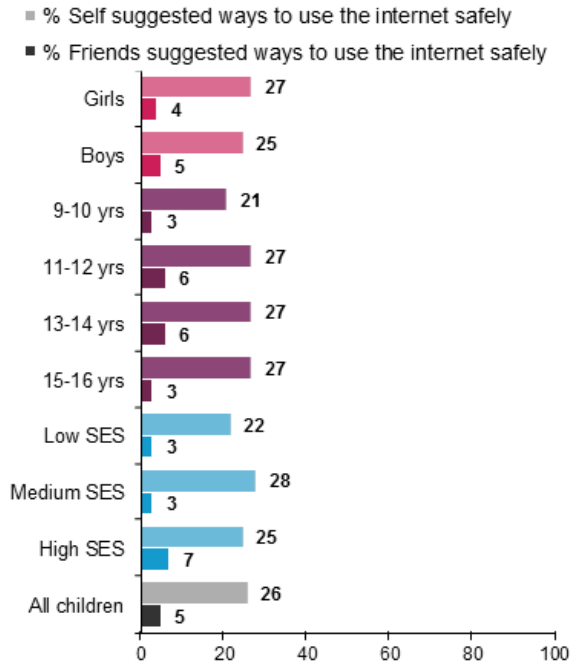
- Figure 30 indicates that looking across age groups and types of mediation, peer support is slightly greater for girls than for boys (66%. vs. 61%).
- There is very little variation with age.
- Higher SES children seem to be more involved in helping and supporting their friends than the ones from low and medium SES with a fourteen points difference between low SES and high SES children (53% vs. 67%).

The overall European average is 73% of children say their friends help in term of one or more of the types of mediation asked about. France scores the lowest percentage compared to the other countries (ranging from 86% in Finland and Estonia to 63% in France). **Thus it seems that children in France can rely less on peer support than in the other participating countries.**

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



**Figure 31: 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.

- While 28% of children say they have received some guidance on safe internet use from their friends, 26% say that they have also provided such advice to their friends (Figure 31).
- Boys report some more help from part of their friends than they provide (28% vs.25%).
- Secondary school children help more than primary school children but they say they receive more mediation from friends than they give for internet safety.
- Medium SES children report more help from friends and they also give more guidance on safe internet.
- Considerable national differences are evident in the degree of peer support. More than half report guiding their friends in Cyprus, nearly half report guiding their friends in Estonia, Austria and Finland, while France, Belgium, Denmark and the Netherlands show the lowest involvement in supporting peers and are under the European average (35%). The difference is greater for children reporting having received advice on using the internet safely from their friends – 28% in France compared with 44% across Europe.

## 6.5 Parent, teacher and peer mediation compared

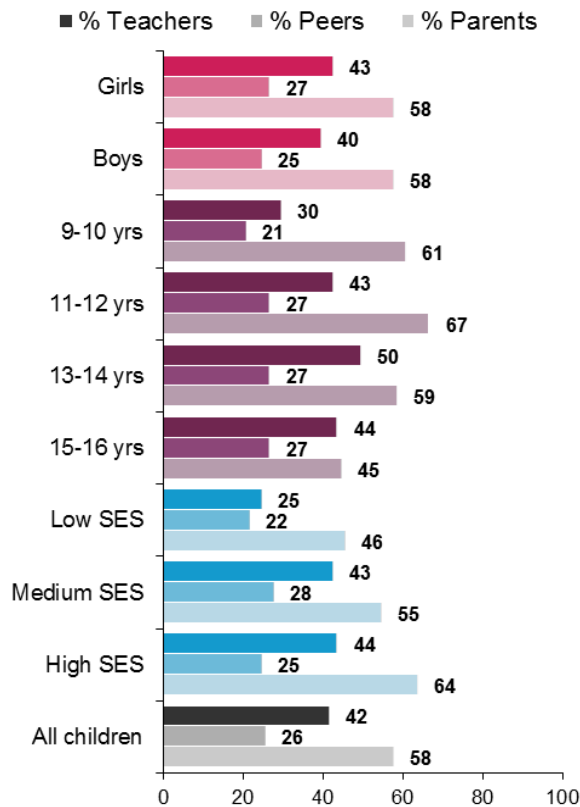
In designing the questionnaire, for reasons of both interview length and question repetition (which is useful for making comparisons but boring for the child respondent), not all questions were asked of all forms of mediation. **One question was repeated across all the contexts discussed above: have your parents/teachers/friends 'suggested ways to use the internet safely?'**

Figure 32 compares children's receipt of internet safety advice from parents, teachers and peers.

- It seems that internet safety advice is received first from parents (58%), then teachers (42%), then peers (26%), as for the European population in general.
- There is little difference between boys and girls
- Difference between teachers and parents decreases for the 13-16 year olds, with much lower parental influence for 15-16 year olds than for the younger ones.
- Parents remain more influential whatever the socio-economical background of the children. It is the lower SES children who report the lowest safe internet mediation from part of adults and peers when in Europe, the lower SES children report more help from adults than the other children and lower mediation from peers.
- As a whole, France ranks in the lowest levels of support compared with the other European countries.



**Figure 32: 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.

## 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 other sources is shown in Table 33.

Note that the response options below do not include parents, teachers or friends, as these are reported above.

**Table 33: Children's sources of advice on internet safety (other than parents, teachers or friends)**

%	9-12 years		13-16 years		All
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
Other relative	45	47	43	48	46
Television, radio, newspapers or magazines	10	13	25	26	18
Someone whose job is to give advice over the internet	8	5	10	17	10
Websites	6	2	19	8	8
Internet service provider	2	1	9	7	4
Youth or church or social worker	3	0	3	9	3
Librarian	9	6	16	13	11
I haven't received advice from any of these	35	38	29	26	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 (46%) are also important in providing advice to children on how to use the internet safely.
- Information received via the traditional media (18%) is more frequent than the other media.
- One out of ten children in France (10%) receive advice from "someone whose job is to give advice over the internet, 8% receive advice from websites and 4% from internet service providers, twice less than the European average (9%).
- Rather fewer get advice from youth workers (or similar (3%).
- Older children get more advice from traditional media, online advisors, youth/church/social workers, websites and internet service providers.
- Older girls in France receive more advice than boys from other relatives (48% vs. 43%) and internet professionals but less from librarians, websites.
- Most significant in Table 33 is that 3 in ten children (32%) report that they have not received safety guidance from any of these sources.

- These percentages are a little lower than in Europe overall, where 34% of children report receiving no safety guidance from these sources.

Similar questions were also asked of parents, although a somewhat different list of advice sources was provided. 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 (Table 34 and Table 35).

**Table 34: Parents' actual sources of information on internet safety, by age of child**

%	Age of child				All
	9-10	11-12	13-14	15-16	
Family and friends	50	57	57	53	54
Internet service providers	32	34	28	26	30
Your child's school	9	16	10	11	12
Websites with safety information	23	20	25	20	22
Television, radio, newspapers or magazines	35	47	45	41	42
Manufacturers and retailers selling the products	11	10	7	10	10
Government, local authorities	6	13	11	6	9
Other sources	4	3	2	5	4
From my child	5	8	9	13	9
Children's welfare organisations/charities	5	4	7	4	5
None, I don't get any information about this	12	8	9	18	11

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 34 indicates that **parents in France receive internet safety advice first and foremost from family and friends (54%), then traditional media**

**(42%), internet service providers (30%), websites with safety information (22%), the child's school (12%), websites (22%) manufacturers, retailers selling the product (10%) and government, local authorities and their children at the same level (9%).**

- Those with younger children (9-10 years) are the ones who report less getting advice from their child's school or traditional media.
- Interestingly, 9% say they have received safety information from their own child.
- About one in ten parents (11%) reports getting no advice from any of these sources.
- When asked where they would like to get more advice from (Table 35), the child's school is the most popular choice for parents at 42% from which they obviously expect much more than what they get since only one parent out of ten says getting advice from school as shown in the previous table. Then, there is a greater expectation from traditional media (35%) and government, local authorities (25%).
- **Only 3% of the children say that they don't want more information on internet safety.**

**Table 35: Parents' desired sources of information on internet safety, by age of child**

%	Age of child				All
	9-10	11-12	13-14	15-16	
Your child's school	40	48	49	28	42
Family and friends	18	20	20	16	19
Government, local authorities	24	26	24	23	25
Children's welfare organisations/charities	17	22	21	17	19
Internet service providers	34	35	31	25	31
Television, radio, newspapers or magazines	34	33	40	33	35
Manufacturers and retailers selling the products	17	21	19	18	19
Websites with safety information	22	29	24	24	25



From my child      4      6      9      7      7

Other sources      2      6      4      3      4

None, I don't want more information about this	3	1	3	4	3
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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

For many children in France, the use of the internet is now part of their daily life. Compared with other European countries, children in France are more likely to have domestic access and are more likely to go on the internet from a public place at home (living room or others) while cybercafés are less popular.

Children need support and supervision. Over 80% of the children who participated to this survey stated that they do not know more about the internet than their parents. This finding can reveal a high degree of trust towards the parents or a need for more skills. However the children in France show higher percentages of creative activities than the European average.

Prevention should be one of the priorities for both schools and parents. Teachers are few to provide safety guidance and parents are part of the most restrictive in Europe. That does not prevent children from being bullied or from taking important risks such as making friends with strangers online and meeting them face to face as we can see in table 37. Lower SES children seem to be less skilled, less supervised and to be taking greater risks as a whole. That might be due to a lack of skills from part of the parents. Thus schools have an important part to play to try and bridge the knowledge gap due to socio-economical circumstances. Specific teaching about how to use the internet ethically and in a reasoned way would probably improve the children's safety skills and their positive behaviour when online (Greenhow et al., 2009)<sup>7</sup>. The use of the internet starts from primary school, the first use being at the age of 9 in France. There is plenty of scope for parents, teachers and others to guide younger children in using the internet. Internet safety campaigns and initiatives should also be tailored for younger age groups, especially at primary schools, while also sustaining existing efforts for older children and strengthening it for lower SES homes children.

In France, the higher levels of creative skills reported by children together with a lower exposure to potentially harmful user-generated contents and a greater capacity to block undesired messages suggest that the efforts that

have been provided by schools into the training to ICTs skills during the last ten years in France have reached their target. Nevertheless more effort should be dedicated to safety issues and prevention rather than over controlling or even banning access to the internet within the school settings as it still happens too often. Computers remain underused by the French education system. A survey by Mediapro (2006)<sup>8</sup> showed that 65% of the children never used the internet at schools. This might have improved since 2006 but it might also explain why in France school comes second as a place where the children go on the internet whereas it is first in most other European countries.

Education towards parents seems also necessary and mainly the ones from lower SES background as we have seen previously since there are still many parents who remain unaware of the negative experience their children experience on the internet.

Findings suggest that children in France as in other countries evade safety messages.

**Overall levels of risk found in the French survey are summarised in Table 36.**

**Table 36: Summary of online risk factors shaping children's probability of experiencing harm**

%	Age				All
	9-10	11-12	13-14	15-16	
Seen sexual images on websites in past 12 months	6	5	8	10	28
Have been sent nasty or hurtful messages on the internet in past 12 months	1	5	10	9	6
Seen or received sexual messages on the internet in past 12 months	n.a	11	19	27	19

<sup>7</sup> Greenhow, C., Robelia, B. and Hughes, J.E. (2009). "Learning, teaching and scholarship in a digital age: Web 2.0 and classroom research what path should we take now?", *Educational Researcher*, Vol. 38, N°4, pp. 246-59.

<sup>8</sup> Bevort, E., Bréda, I. (2006). Appropriation des nouveaux médias par les jeunes : une enquête européenne en éducation aux médias. Mediapro – CLEMI de Paris.



Ever had contact on the internet with someone not met face to face before	2	4	11	14	31
Ever gone on to meet anyone face to face that first met on the internet	2	3	14	20	38
Have come across one or more types of potentially harmful user-generated content in past 12 months	3	8	9	14	8
Have experienced one or more types of misuse of personal data in past 12 months	n.a	2	4	8	4
<b>Encountered one or more of the above</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>50</b>
Acted in a nasty or hurtful way towards others on the internet in the past 12 months	n.a	4	3	4	4
Sent or posted a sexual message of any kind on the internet in the past 12 months	n.a	4	8	5	7
<b>Done either of these</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>

Note: for the exact questions asked of children, see earlier sections of this report (indicated in the text next to this table).

Base: All children who use the internet.

As a whole, children in France take more risks than the European average (50% vs. 41%) and are more prone to behave badly (7% vs. 4%). The most common risk of children's internet use in France is having gone to meet someone face to face although they had first met on the internet only (38%). Second, that is strongly related to the first one, is having had contact on the internet with someone not met face to face before (31%) and this last percentage is similar to the European average.

Risks are increased by age although the children who report more negative behaviors on the internet are the 13-14 years old. The most reported deviant behavior being to send or post sexual messages of any kind on the internet. The fact that risks are increased by age is not surprising since internet use is increased by age too and so are the opportunities to be exposed to some danger.

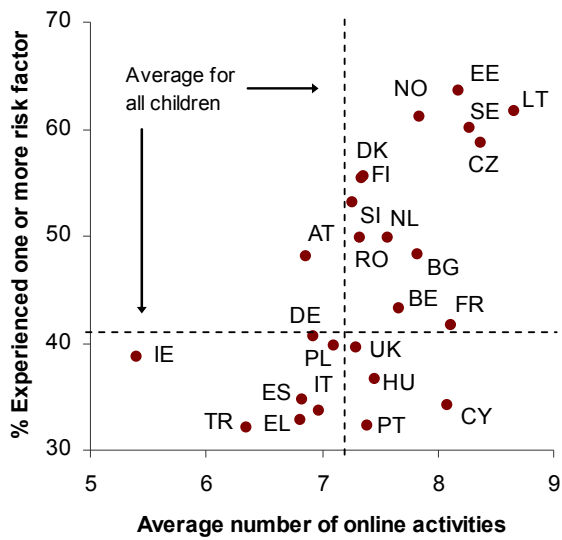
**Children are not all the same.** Throughout this report we have highlighted differences by age, gender and socio-economic status. Some key differences could not be analysed within a single nation study, but it is noteworthy that in the Europe-wide study, those who encounter most risk online (often, teenagers, boys) are not necessarily

those most bothered or upset by the experience (often, younger children, girls). In the next steps of our research, we will examine other indicators of vulnerability to see if these explain which children experience risk and, especially, are upset by this.

**Risks and opportunities both rise with increased internet use.** As noted in previous *EU Kids Online* reports, the findings confirm that opportunities and risks go hand in hand. Figure 33 – a figure taken from the pan-European report - plots countries in terms of the percentage of children who have encountered one or more risks (those shown in Table 36) and, additionally, the average number of online opportunities enjoyed by children in that country as shown in Table 4).

What stands out here is the broad positive association between risks and opportunities, as experienced by children on a country level. The more of one, the more of the other, it appears.

**Figure 33: Children who have encountered one or more online risk factors by average number of online activities, by country**



Reading this graph we can see that France is a high use country but a rather low risk compared to other European countries. For further information on the different participating countries and further analysis, visit the following website: [www.eukidsonline.net](http://www.eukidsonline.net).

# 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.

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 quantitative 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.
- David Finkelhor and Janis Wolak, Crimes against Children Center, University of New Hampshire, USA.
- Will Gardner, CEO of Childnet International, UK.
- Ellen Helsper, Department of Media and Communications, London School of Economics, UK.
- Amanda Lenhart, Senior Researcher, Pew Internet & American Life Project, Washington DC USA
- Eileen Munro, Department of Social Policy, London School of Economics, UK.



- 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, Nobody's Children Foundation, Poland.

# 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.
- 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 in France in May and June 2010. A parent interview was conducted for every child interviewed.

The child interview was conducted face to face, with a paper-based self-completion component for the sensitive questions on online risks as well as the interviewer-administered one.

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 questionnaires. 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](http://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.

## Research materials

Materials and resources associated with the research process summarised above are available at [www.eukidsonline.net](http://www.eukidsonline.net).

- Full Technical Report on the fieldwork process
- Original questionnaires (for children, for parents)
- Letters to parents and safety leaflets for children

- Research ethics procedures

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](http://www.eukidsonline.net).

If outputs result from the use of these resources, we request that an email is sent to inform us of this use, to [Eukidsonline@lse.ac.uk](mailto:Eukidsonline@lse.ac.uk). When the final version of this report is published in November, the cross-tabulations will also be posted on the website. The dataset itself will be made public in late 2011.