

EU Kids Online – patterns of risk and safety online

Aims

The EU Kids Online Project aims to enhance knowledge of European children's and parents' experiences and practices regarding use of the internet and new online technologies, informing the promotion of a safer online environment for children.

Key Findings

Use patterns

- Roughly half of children now access the internet from their own bedrooms (49%) or from a friend's home (53%). Private use in the child's bedroom is strongly differentiated by age – for younger children, use is generally in a public room; for teenagers it occurs more often in private.
- The differences in access/use by socioeconomic status (SES) are notable – both the overall difference in access at home (only 72% of children from low SES homes use the internet at home compared with 96% of those from high SES homes) and the difference in access from own bedroom (41% versus 54%).
- Privatised access and experience with the internet shape its embeddedness in daily routines (frequency and duration of online use). Parental online behaviour, in turn, now plays a part in shaping the context of use, thus indirectly mediating frequency of use and time spent online.

Clusters

- Based on the amount of use, the range of online activities, the performance of specific activities, the number of risky online activities and the number of personal profiles on social networking platforms, six comprehensive patterns of young people's online use have been identified:
 - Cluster 1, 'Low use/learning oriented': members of this cluster are characterised by a small amount of online use and a small range of activities. Risky activities are very unlikely; only a few have their own profile on a social networking site. With the exception of schoolwork, most of the activities do not happen very often. Next to schoolwork and watching video clips, reading or watching the news is the second activity. The average age in this cluster is 11.4 years.
 - Cluster 2, 'Low use/social networking site oriented': relevant differences to Cluster 1 are the very low values for schoolwork and for reading/watching the news, and the higher likelihood of visiting social networking site profiles. The average age in this cluster is 11.5 years.
 - Cluster 3, 'Moderate use': compared to the first two clusters, these users spend more time on the internet and have a considerably bigger range of activities. On the other hand, compared to the other clusters, the figures are lower, without specific activities being particularly frequent.
 - Cluster 4, 'Diverse and risky opportunities': in addition to spending almost two hours a day on the internet, this group has the biggest range of activities and also the biggest number of risky online

activities. They are most likely to read/watch news, to download music or films, to send or receive emails, to play games with others and to use a webcam. Less popular, more creative activities are by far the most frequent in this group: creating avatars, using file-sharing sites, spending time in virtual worlds and writing blogs or diaries. The average age in this cluster is 13.4 years.

- Cluster 5, 'High use/entertainment oriented': this pattern is characterised by the longest duration of daily online use (201 minutes), while the range of activities is lower than for Cluster 4, although still above the overall average. Playing games on your own or against the computer and watching video clips are the two specific activities with the highest values among all clusters. Comparatively low are the figures for schoolwork, reading/watching the news and all activities related to producing content. The average age in this cluster is 14.0 years; boys are clearly overrepresented.
- Cluster 6, 'Focused social web use': young people belonging to this cluster are slightly above average regarding the amount of use and the range of activities. The most obvious characteristic is the almost complete absence of gaming activities. On the other hand, they are most likely to visit social networking profiles. The average age in this cluster is 14.2 years; girls are clearly overrepresented.

Policy Context

Policies for the promotion of a safer internet are based on an understanding of risks and risk-taking behaviour. An understanding of broad trends in patterns of risky use of the internet and new online technologies is essential for the development of evidence-based policies for the promotion of safer internet use.

Methodology

In this large-scale quantitative study, a survey was administered face-to-face at home to a random stratified sample of 25,142 children aged 9-16 who use the internet, plus one of their parents, during Spring/Summer 2010 in 25 European countries. The survey measured various indicators relating to frequency/amount of use and range of activities. Nineteen indicators were subject to a factor analysis which identified the significant variables for explaining patterns in the data. These variables were then subject to a cluster analysis.

Background

The UK 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.

Source: www.eukidsonline.net

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