EU Kids Online – disadvantaged children and online risk

Aims

This strand of the EU Kids Online II research aimed to explore the experiences of online risk among disadvantaged groups of children.

Key Findings

A number of factors are analysed as possible sources of disadvantage, including (i) belonging to a discriminated against group, (ii) having a mental/physical/other disability, (iii) language used at home is a minority language, (iv) parental education does not exceed lower secondary level, and (v) parent does not use the internet or is not a confident internet user. See the full publication for a detailed explanation of the concept of 'disadvantage'.

Educational/economic disadvantage

- *27% of children have parents with lower secondary education or less.* These children report fewer online risks than average, but are more upset by risk, less skilled and less helped by parents to cope with risk.
- *25% of children have parents who do not use the internet.* They report fewer online risks but are more upset and have few skills to cope. Their parents lack confidence, lack support from friends and family, and wish the school would guide them.
- *7% of children use the internet less than once per week.* Again reporting fewer risks but more upsetting experiences than the average, these children's digital skills are lowest of all, and though their parents do not think their children well prepared to cope with the internet, they do not plan to do more than others.

Psychological disadvantage

- *41% of children have parents who say they are very worried about their safety online.* These children have not encountered or been upset by more risks than average. Nonetheless, their parents lack confidence, think they should do more. Children and parents have and want more safety information.
- *34% of children - the top third in terms of psychological difficulties* report more online risks and more harm. Their parents lack confidence but are likely to have adjusted their approach after something upset their child online.
- *12% of children have experienced something upsetting on the internet.* These children report many more risk and upsetting experiences. Their skills are above average, suggesting a readiness to learn. Their parents too have changed their approach after an upsetting experience, and wish for more safety information from all sources.

Social disadvantage

- *6% of children have a mental, physical or other disability.* These children report raised risk levels, and find meeting new online contacts offline more upsetting than average. Their parents are less confident that their child can cope, and they wish to receive more from ISPs and websites.
- *4% of children belong to a discriminated-against group.* These children report more online risk. Their parents lack confidence in themselves and their children in terms of coping, receive less support from friends and family, and wish for safety information from the government.
- *4% of children speak a minority language at home.* These children are more upset by bullying and 'sexting'. Their parents lack confidence in their and their child's ability to cope, they think they should do more to support their child online, and they receive less safety information from all sources than average – they prefer to get this from the child's school, from TV or friends and family.

Policy Context

Policies for the promotion of a safer internet are based on an understanding of risks and risk-taking behaviour. The EU Kids Online Project provides a vast array of quantitative data relating to the online behaviour of children and young people in the UK. 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.

Disadvantaged children may be particularly vulnerable to online risks. It is necessary to research the online experiences of vulnerable children in order to develop appropriate internet safety messages.

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.

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.

RH#27 has been produced by EU Kids Online for the UKCCIS Evidence Group