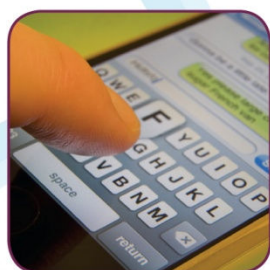


Risks and safety for Australian children on the internet

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



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With grateful acknowledgements to
www.eukidsonline.net

This report presents the AU findings for research in Australia which parallels the *EU Kids Online* project (see www.eukidsonline.net). Specifically, it includes selected findings, calculated and interpreted for Australia only, but with some comparisons made with 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, and comparisons with some country reports of the 25 nations participating in EU Kids Online II.

The Australian research was funded by the ARC Centre of Excellence for Creative Industries and Innovation in 2010 and involved 400 children and their families, a smaller sample than the 1,000 families per country in the other 25 nations. The fieldwork used the EU Kids Online surveys and protocols, but was conducted about 6 months later than in Europe.

In line with the 'Country report template', the structure of this report and some of the background text is consistent with other country reports. The only original contribution made here is the data and analysis relating to Australia.

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

- *Final recommendations for policy, methodology and research* (O'Neill, B., Livingstone, S. and McLaughlin, S., 2011)
- *Disadvantaged children and online risk* (Livingstone, S., Görzig, A., and Ólafsson, K., 2011)
- *EU Kids Online Final Report* (Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A., and Ólafsson, K., 2011)
- *Risks and safety on the internet: The perspective of European children. Full findings* (Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A., and Ólafsson, K., 2011)
- *Risky communication online* (Livingstone, S., and Ólafsson, K., 2011)
- *Digital literacy and safety skills* (Sonck, N., Livingstone, S., Kuiper, E., and de Haan, J., 2011)
- *Social networking, age and privacy* (Livingstone, S., Ólafsson, K., and Staksrud, E., 2011)
- *Patterns of risk and safety online. In-depth analyses from the EU Kids Online survey of 9-16 year olds and their parents in 25 countries* (Hasebrink, U., Görzig, A., Haddon, L., Kalmus, V. and Livingstone, S., 2011)
- *Cross-national comparison of risks and safety on the internet: Initial analysis from the EU Kids Online survey of European children* (Lobe, B., Livingstone, S., Ólafsson, K. and Vodeb, H., 2011)
- *Who bullies and who is bullied online? A study of 9-16 year old internet users in 25 European countries* (Görzig, A., 2011)
- *Risks and safety on the internet: The Ireland report* (O'Neill, B., Grehan, S. and Ólafsson, K., 2011)
- *Risks and safety on the internet: The UK report* (Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A. and Ólafsson, K., 2011)
- *Comparing children's online opportunities and risks across Europe: Cross-national comparisons for EU Kids Online* (2nd edn) (Hasebrink, U., Livingstone, S., Haddon, L. and Ólafsson, K., 2009)
- *What do we know about children's use of online technologies? A report on data availability and research gaps in Europe* (2nd edn) (Staksrud, E., Livingstone, S., Haddon, L. and Ólafsson, K., 2009)
- *Best practice research guide: How to research children and online technologies in comparative perspective* (Lobe, B., Livingstone, S., Ólafsson, K. and Simões, J.A., 2008)

EU Kids Online II: Enhancing Knowledge Regarding European Children's Use, Risk and Safety Online

This project has been funded by the EC Safer Internet Programme, http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/sip/ from 2009-2011 (contract SIP-KEP-321803). Its aim is 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 among national and international stakeholders of a safer online environment for children.

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

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1. KEY FINDINGS

1.1 Context

This report presents initial findings from an Australian survey of children and their parents designed to provide a unique insight into the balance of opportunities and risks experienced by these children as a result of their internet use. A random stratified sample of 400 9-16 year olds who use the internet, and one of their parents/carers, was interviewed between November 2010 and February 2011.

The 'AU' survey was conducted in parallel with a 25 nation survey carried out by *EU Kids Online* (see Annex 1) 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. Ipsos MORI and its international affiliates conducted the research in all 26 countries.

In what follows, AU findings are compared with those from 25 other countries, all of which are European nations, although not all of which are members of the European Union. The results of this overarching European-level research in 25 nations, with 25,142 families each represented by a child aged 9-16, and the parent who knows most about the child's internet use, are 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.

Where reference is made in this report to *EU Kids Online*, or to 'in Europe', this entails reference to the findings based on the 25,142 children involved in the *EU Kids Online* research, not to European children as a whole, nor to the children of the European Union. The 25 nations involved in the EU Kids Online research are Austria (AT), Belgium (BE), Bulgaria (BG), Cyprus (CY), Czech Republic (CZ), Denmark (DK), Estonia (EE), Finland (FI), France (FR), Germany (DE), Greece (EL), Hungary (HU), Italy (IT), Ireland (IE), Lithuania (LT), Netherlands (NL), Norway (NO), Poland (PO), Portugal (PT), Romania (RO), Slovenia (SI), Spain (ES), Sweden (SE), Turkey (TU), and the United Kingdom (UK).

It should be noted that this report adopts a template used by the two other English language country-level reports, the United Kingdom and Ireland. It uses the same structure, graph placement and introductory statements to

set the scene of the research and to allow easy navigability of the report for people familiar with other outputs of the *EU Kids Online* team. Although the structure of the Conclusions section differs somewhat from usual *EU Kids Online* reports, in including tables which compare Australian data with the data from the 25 other countries, the original contribution made by this report is limited to the presentation of the actual Australian data, and its analysis within the context of the report structure. The authorship of the main body of the report is the authorship for the first country-level report to be produced, which served as the basis for other country-level reports: Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A., and Ólafsson, K. (2011). *Risks and safety for children on the internet: The UK Report*. LSE, London: EU Kids Online.

1.2 Usage

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

- Compared to the 25 country average, more AU children go online at school (96% vs. 63%), at home (96% vs. 87%) and when 'out and about' (31% vs. 9%).
- 46% of AU kids go online in their bedroom or other private room and over two thirds (70%) at a friend's house. More girls (56%) than boys (38%) can access the internet from their bedroom, while in Europe these numbers are equivalent.
- Three in five AU children go online via a mobile device - 46% report handheld access to the internet (e.g. iPod Touch, iPhone or Blackberry) and an additional 14% access the internet via their mobile phone. The 25 country data is lower for handheld devices, 12%, and consequently a little higher for mobiles, 22%.

More access results in more use, and the internet is now taken for granted in many children's daily lives.

- AU children (9-16) were, on average, a little under eight years old when they first used the internet, putting them amongst the youngest first-time-users in the 26 nation study.
- 76% of AU kids go online daily or almost daily, 22% use the internet once or twice a week, leaving just 2% who go online less often. In terms of frequency of use, higher figures are seen in Sweden, Bulgaria, Estonia, Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands and Finland. Australia is eighth.

- The average time spent online by AU 9-16 year olds is just over an hour and a half per day (99 minutes), higher than the 25 nation average (88 minutes).

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

- Most Australian children report being able to bookmark websites, find information on how to use the internet safely and block messages, but only just over a third (37%) say they can change filter preferences.
- Among younger Australian children there are some significant gaps in their safety skills which policy initiatives should address. Around one third of 11-12 year olds cannot block messages from people they don't wish to hear from.
- One in four (26%) of Australian 9-16 year olds say the statement "I know more about the internet than my parents" is 'very true' of them, four in ten (40%) say it is 'a bit true' and one third (34%, though 62% of 9-10 year olds) say it is 'not true' of them.

Arguably, some children use the internet too much.

- Australian children's experience of spending 'too much time' on the internet is more common than the 25 country average. 55% say they have spent less time with family and friends than they should have because of time they spent on the internet, and almost half (49%) have tried unsuccessfully to spend less time on the internet.

1.3 Activities

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

- Top activities are using the internet for schoolwork (86%), watching video clips (85%) playing games (78%), emailing (67%) and social networking (63%).
- Creating content is less common than receiving it. Even so, while 85% have watched video clips online, almost half the cohort (45%) actively contribute their own media and distribute it to friends and family. Fewer AU children have spent time in a virtual world (16%), or blogged (9%), but their participation is a little higher than in most countries involved in the research.

Social networking sites (SNS) are very popular.

- Two thirds (65%) of Australian children who use the internet have their own SNS profile, a little more than the 25 nation average of 59%.
- Only 29% of AU 9-10 year olds, but 59% of 11-12 year olds, have a SNS profile, suggesting that it is the start of secondary school, rather than the minimum age set by popular SNS providers, that triggers social networking activity.

- AU children report substantially more SNS contacts than most EU kids, with 16% saying they have over 300, equal second with the UK to Greek children's 20%. 63% of AU children have over 50 contacts, the highest percentage in all 26 nations studied.

Some of children's online communication practices could involve risk.

- Most AU SNS users have their profile set to private or partially private. Only 9% of Australian children make it public, much lower than the 26% across Europe.
- 29% of Australian 11-16 year olds (more boys than girls, more teens than younger children) say they are in communication with people they first met online, unconnected with their offline social networks.
- In the past year fewer than one in four (24%) AU 9-16 year old internet users have looked for new friends on the internet, 21% have added contacts they don't know face to face, and 10% have sent an image of themselves to someone not met face to face. Such figures are less than the 25 country average.
- One reason for using the internet to look for new friends might be that just under half (46%) of AU 11-16 year old internet users say they find it easier to be themselves online. Also, 47% talk about different things online than offline, and more than one in five (22%) talk about more private things online than when present with other people face to face.

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."**

- 30% of Australian children say they have been bothered or upset by something online in the past year: two and a half times the European average (12%) and more than any other of the 25 countries. The next four countries were Denmark (28%), Estonia (25%), Norway and Sweden (both 23%). 79% of AU children say that there are things on the internet could bother other children. The European average for this is 55%, but Denmark (94%), Spain (92%), Norway (89%) and Sweden (88%) all rate more on this scale than Australia.
- By implication, one in five 9-16 year olds (21%) do not see the internet as problematic for children of their age. Younger AU children are least likely to be concerned that what's on the internet might bother other children, but equally likely to have felt bothered themselves.
- Parents seem a little less likely to see the internet as problematic for boys than for girls.

- While 30% of AU 9-10 year olds say they've been bothered by something online, their parents are less likely to recognise this. 16% of these children's parents say 'something has bothered my child online'.
- Among the next age group, 11-12 year olds, 30% also report that they have encountered something that bothered or upset them. 23% of their parents recognise this. The fact that the problematic exposure is established among 9-10 year olds indicates that the factors concerned pre-date the challenges of moving to high school.
- The most common form of bullying is nasty or hurtful messages sent to the child (7%), followed by messages being posted or passed on (4%) and other nasty things online (3%). 3% say they have been threatened online.
- 17% of Australian children say they have bullied others, though only 5% say they have bullied others online in the past 12 months.

Sexual messages ('sexting')

- 15% of AU 11-16 year old internet users have received sexual messages ('sexts'). This is an average result across the study, and most recipients are 15-16 years old. 4% of Australian children have sent sexts online, and the average EU figure is 3%. Sexts are more commonly associated with mobile phones than with internet use and are currently the subject of intensive research.¹ Some older teenagers seem to use sexts to help build trusting intimate relationships. While sexts should not automatically be seen as damaging to self or other, sending sexually suggestive texts or images poses a risk that this material can be passed on without consent, and that unwanted material may be sent and received.
- 9% of AU 11-16 year olds have been sent a sexual message, 6% have been asked to talk about sexual acts with someone online, and 5% have seen others perform sexual acts in a message. 3% have been asked for a photo or video of their 'private parts'.

Meeting online contacts offline

- 34% of Australian children have had contact online with someone they have not met face to face (the 25 nation average is 30%).
- 5% of AU kids have gone to an offline meeting with someone they first met online. This is about half 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 – though such instances are rare.

Other online risks

- 34% of AU 11-16 year olds have seen one or more type of potentially harmful user-generated content, ranking at 6 of 26 countries for this risk. 52% of 15-16 year old Australian girls report seeing such content. 'Harmful content' in this study takes into account the broad age range of the children and a diverse range of reasons for accessing material. For example, some older teenagers in the sample might have accessed drug-use sites to gain information about harm minimisation or to understand drug taking from a public health perspective. Others may access sexually explicit material to guide them in sexual ethics, identity, relationships and health.

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 groups of children are most affected, and how children respond, are questions to be pursued in the future.

Sexual images

- More than two in five (44%) Australian 9-16 year olds say they have encountered sexual images in the past 12 months, whether online or offline. This is close to double the average of the other 25 countries, 23%. It is important to note that a wide range of images is included as 'sexual', reflecting the 9-16 year old interviewees. This finding does suggest that parents and teachers need to continue working to ensure children are not troubled by viewing unwanted or age inappropriate material.
- 28% of AU 11-16 year olds have seen sexual images online. 24% say they have seen online sexual images including nudity, 17% have seen someone's genitals online, 16% (more teenagers than young children) have seen images of someone having sex, and 6% say they have seen violent sexual images. Once more, it is important to bear in mind the large age range of the children in interpreting this finding.
- Regarding Australian children who have seen online sexual images, 49% of parents say their child has not seen this, while 38% recognise that they have and 14% say they don't know.
- As in other countries, 9-10 year olds are less likely to see sexual images online but are more likely to be bothered or upset by the experience if they do.
- Overall, most children have not experienced sexual images online and, of those who have, most say they were not bothered or upset by the experience.

Bullying

- In relation to online bullying, 29% of AU children (19% across Europe) say they have been bullied, and 13% say this occurred on the internet. This is more than double the average for the 25 European nations (6%).

- Most common are hate messages (26%), followed by ways of hurting yourself (14%) and sites talking about drug experiences (12%). 'Ways to be very thin' are reported by 9%, while 4% have visited a suicide site.
- 17% of Australian children aged 11-16 report misuse of personal data, the second highest in 26 countries (after Estonia, 18%). The main reported misuse was when someone else used a child's password or pretended to be them (13%). Some had had personal information used in a way they did not like (9%).
- 35% of AU parents block or filter websites, and 36% track the websites their children visit, according to their children. Australia ranks at 6 out of 26 countries in this respect, higher than most European nations.
- Both children and parents consider parental mediation helpful to some degree. Over two thirds of children (74%) say it helps a lot or a little.
- 86% of Australian parents are confident they can help their child a fair amount, or a lot, if something bothers their child online.

1.6 Parental mediation

While 76% of AU 9-16 year olds go online daily or almost daily, the same is true for 79% of their parents. Younger parents are more likely to go online often: 82% of parents of 9-12 year olds, and 75% of parents of 13-16 year olds, go onto the internet almost daily, or every day.

How do Australian parents manage their children's internet use?

- Most notably, the survey shows that parents and children in three in five AU families agree about parental mediation practices, although this is slightly lower than the EU average (about 70% agreement).
- Two thirds of AU parents talk to their children about what they do on the internet (67%), making this, as in the other 25 countries generally, the most popular way to actively mediate children's internet use.
- AU parents report considerably more active mediation of younger girls' use of the internet, and older boys', including talking to them, staying nearby, encouraging them or sharing internet use. But about one in ten parents (9%) never do any of these things.
- Helping when something is difficult to do or find (79%), suggesting how to use the internet safely (75%), and explaining why websites are good or bad (74%), are common strategies of AU parental safety mediation. Australia is ranked second (95%) of the 26 countries (after the Netherlands, 98%), in terms of children's accounts of their parents' active mediation.
- 91% of AU children say either that they are not allowed to do some of a list of online activities (disclose personal information, upload, download, etc.) or that restrictions apply. 99% of younger Australian children (9-12) report restrictive mediation.
- Monitoring strategies are adopted by almost three in five (59%) AU parents, yet this is the least favoured mediation approach compared with safety guidance (94%), positive support (91%) and making rules about internet use (91%). Monitoring is least popular throughout the 26 nations.

- However, 47% of AU children think that parental mediation limits what they do online, with 14% saying that their activities are limited a lot.
- Three quarters of AU children (75%) pay attention to parental mediation, this being above the 25 nation average (64%). However, 20% say they ignore their parents' mediation 'a little' and 5% say 'a lot'.
- 33% AU parents think it fairly or very likely that their child will experience something that bothers them online in the next six months.
- 18% of AU children (and 30% of 9-10 year olds) would like their parents to take more of an interest in their internet use, while 55% of parents think they should do more in relation to their child's internet use.

1.7 Other forms of mediation

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

- 97% of AU children say their teachers have been involved in at least one of the forms of active mediation asked about. This is substantially higher than the 25 nation average of 73%, and means that Australia leads a ranking of all 26 countries.
- Friends are likely to mediate in a practical way, helping each other to do or find something when there is a difficulty (75%). When Australian children are bothered by something online, 37% say they have turned to a friend for help, but they are more likely to turn to a teacher (70%) or a parent (67%).
- While 32% of AU children say they have received some guidance on safe internet use from their friends, 52% say they have also provided such advice. This is a high percentage, ranking Australia second out of 26 nations. However, most internet safety advice is received from teachers (83%), then parents (75%), then peers (32%): even though children in most European countries choose their parents as the first people to turn to for safety advice.
- Other relatives (57%) are also important in providing advice to AU children on how to use the internet safely.

- Australian parents receive internet safety advice first and foremost from family and friends, and their child's school (both 58%), then the traditional media (42%) government (34%), internet service providers (32%), and websites (30%). In Australia, a higher percentage of parents is willing to acknowledge the sources of their information about internet safety (96%) than is the case in Europe (87%).
- Almost all Australian parents say they want further information on internet safety. Only 1% (2% of parents of children aged 15-16) say they don't want any more safety information.

children are upset by online risks, many benefit from the advice and tools available to them to cope with such upsetting circumstances.

Given that online risk and opportunity go hand-in-hand, and building the future digital workforce is a national priority, policies to reduce harm should not unduly prevent children from developing confidence and competence in their use of the internet. Nearly half of Australian children (47%) say their parents' efforts at mediation have the effect of restricting their online activities. The trade-off is clear, if difficult for parents and policymakers to manage.

1.8 Conclusions

It would seem that in spite of very considerable efforts put into raising awareness and improving safety online for Australian children in recent years, a comparatively high proportion (30%) are bothered by some things they experience online, predominantly related to online bullying and seeing sexual images.

Australian children experience a high degree of access and use, but also a high degree of risk. AU parents are very active in pursuing positive mediation strategies, however, as are Australian teachers and risks should be understood in relation to the age of the children concerned and the reasons they have for accessing or sending risky material.

Future safety 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). The array of possible risks online continues to change, with emerging risks including potentially harmful user-generated content such as anorexia, self-harm or suicide sites. Notable here are the one in two older Australian girls, aged 15-16, reporting that they have accessed such potentially harmful content, with 47% seeing hate messages.

When looking to policy recommendations arising from these findings, it is important to acknowledge that high internet skills, and high internet use, are associated with increased risk². Children with less access to the internet are also less likely to experience online risks, but reducing exposure to risk may not always be the best answer if the aim is to promote children's safe, confident and creative internet use. The *EU Kids Online* research indicates that "children encounter a fair number of risks that, at least as they see it, are not problematic, upsetting or harmful [...] children learn to cope by encountering some degree of risk and, it seems, many do cope successfully."³ While it remains important to address children's exposure to risk, especially for younger children, the critical issue is where children experience distress or harm as a result. The 25 nation *EU Kids Online* study (which provided the blueprint for the Australian study) reveals that while a minority of

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Overview

Over the past fifteen years, children and teenagers have increasingly gained access to the internet and to other forms of convergent and digital media. Domestic access, in particular, has progressed from a dial-up connection, through broadband to wireless technologies. Internet access has become pervasive with young people accessing and contributing data to websites and online services using smart phones and other handheld media. Policy makers, educators, industry, welfare organisations, parents and children all have a stake in the debates around access, opportunity and harm. The challenge is to maximise the benefits flowing from internet access while minimising harm.

This report presents the initial findings from an Australian survey of 9-16 year olds (see Annex 2) and provides a unique insight into the balance of opportunities and risks experienced by Australian 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 Australian children's experiences in relation to those across 25 European nations.

The Australian survey was conducted in parallel with, but 6 months later than, a 25 country survey carried out by the *EU Kids Online* network and funded by the EC's Safer Internet Programme. The *EU Kids Online* project aims to enhance knowledge of 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. The countries of the *EU Kids Online* network 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. Australia was invited to participate as part of a commitment to internationalise the findings.

For the Australian survey, a random stratified sample of 400 9-16 year olds who use the internet, together with one of their parents/carers, was interviewed during Nov/Feb 2010-11. This contrasts with survey dates of Spring/Summer 2010 in Europe. The survey questionnaire was designed by the *EU Kids Online*

network, coordinated by the London School of Economics and Political Science. Fieldwork in Europe was conducted by Ipsos MORI, and in Australia by their local affiliate company, Ipsos/I-view social research.

Where the Australian findings are compared with those from other countries, the international findings 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, or from individual country reports, all available at www.eukidsonline.net.

2.2 Theoretical framework

The research and policy agenda regarding online opportunities remains contested, focused on access to education, communication, information and participation, alongside risks of harm posed to children by internet use. The pan-European report clarifies the approach taken by the *EU Kids Online* network in terms of the project's theoretical framework, including a critical analysis of the relation between use, risk and potential harm to children associated with the internet.

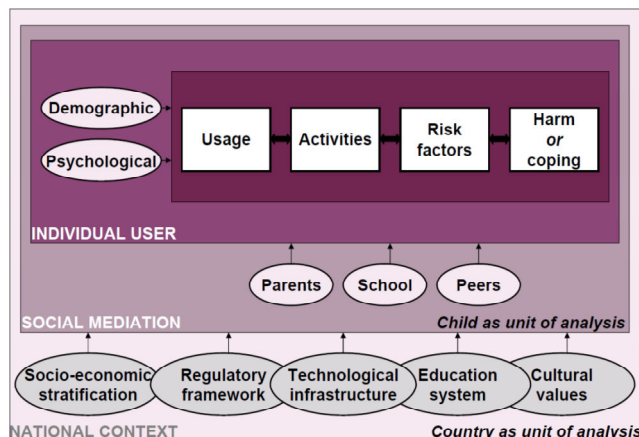
The *EU Kids Online* research suggests that a range of factors relating to internet use may contribute to the possibility of children experiencing harm. The first prerequisite is access to the internet: the amount of time spent online, the technology used and the location. Use leads to opportunities around skills development and to the experience of risks. Experience of risk can lead to the development of coping strategies and resilience, but it can also lead to harm. Online risks are sometimes directly related to offline risks.

Six sets of risks were investigated. These are: seeing sexual images/ encountering pornography; being bullied and engaging in bullying; 'sexting' (which is constructed as sending and receiving sexual messages); meeting strangers offline where first contact was via the internet; engaging with negative user-generated content; and the misuse of personal data.

The research did not assume that exposure to risk means exposure to harm. Children and young people respond to risk and cope with challenging experiences in different ways. The study investigated whether children were upset by their online activities, how upset they were, and how

long they were upset for. For most children, there is a low probability that a risky online activity will lead to harm.

Figure 1: Relating online use, activities and risk factors to harm to children⁴



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, and 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 2012-14, analysis will encompass the role of (1) psychological factors such as emotional problems, self-efficacy, risk-taking, (2) the social factors that mediate children’s online and offline experiences, especially the activities of parents, teachers and friends, and (3) 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. The EU Kids Online network’s approach to mapping risky experiences of children centred 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 the requirement for the child to verbalise their response, and to alleviate the risk of them being heard by parents, family members or the interviewer.** The Australian research used an interviewer supported computer-assisted self-completion segment for questions on risk and harm.

The methodology 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. In Australia, the Human Research Ethics Committee at Edith Cowan University, and Ms Kim Gifkins, ECU’s Research Ethics Officer, monitors ethical compliance. At the end of the interview, children and their 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 the 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 risks, and online and offline dimensions.
- Matched comparison questions to the parent who knows most about 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 years (are often excluded from surveys).

Full details of the project methodology, materials, technical fieldwork report and research ethics are available at www.eukidsonline.net.

Throughout this report, ‘children’ refers to 9-16 year olds in Australia who use the internet at least rarely.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics estimates that in 2009, rates of internet use were similar for boys and girls (80% and 79% respectively). The proportion of children using the internet increased with age; 60% of 5-8 year olds used the internet, increasing to 96% of 12-14 year olds.⁵

3. USAGE

What do 9-16 year old children in Australia 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 Australian children use the internet

% children who say they use the internet at the following locations	
At school or college	96
Living room (or other public room) at home	87
At a friend's home	70
At a relative's home	62
Own bedroom (or other private room) at home	45
When 'out and about'	31
In a public library or other public place	26
In an internet café	6
Average number of locations	4.2

QC301a-h: Looking at this card, please tell me where you use the internet these days.⁶ (Multiple responses allowed)

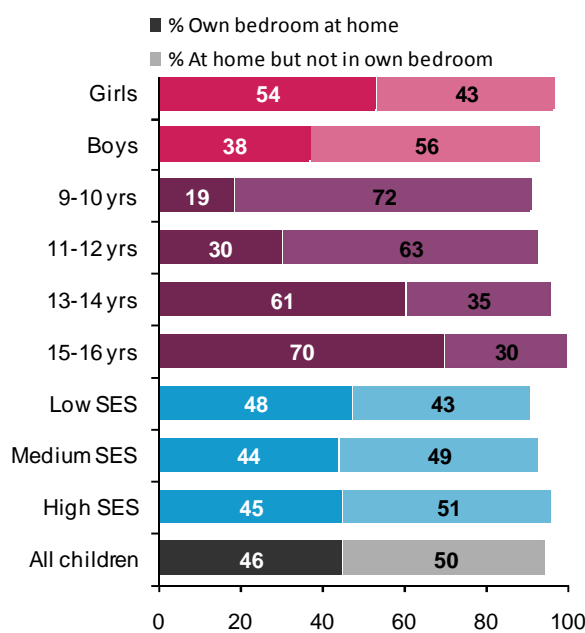
Base: All children who use the internet.

- As shown in Table 1, nearly all AU children who use the internet go online both at school or college (96%) and at home in a public room (87%). Additionally, 70% use it at a friend's house, 45% in their bedroom, and 31% have mobile access.
- Since Australian children on average can access the internet in about four different places, they clearly

enjoy considerable flexibility as regards when and how they go online.

- Compared to the European average, more Australian children go online at school (96% vs. 63%), in a public space in the home (87% vs. 62%) and when 'out and about' (31% vs. 9%), reflecting widespread adoption of mobile phones and handheld devices. Access in libraries is also higher in Australia (26% vs. 12%).
- Australian children have about the same amount of access from the privacy of a bedroom (45% vs. 49%) as in Europe generally. Fewer Australian children use internet cafés (6% in the Australian vs. 12% in Europe).

Figure 2: Children's use of internet at home



QC301a, b: Looking at this card, please tell me where you use the internet these days.

Base: All children who use the internet.

- Figure 2 shows that, as in Europe, private use in the child's bedroom is strongly differentiated by age. For younger children use is generally in a public room, while teenagers often have private access.
- Unlike Europe, there are clear differences by gender with girls more likely to have bedroom access. Further, in Europe as a whole, the tendency is for children of higher SES to have more private access but this is not the case in Australia.

Table 2: Devices by which children go online

% children who use the internet	
Shared PC	76
Games console	51
Other handheld portable device/smartphone	45
Television set	43
Mobile phone	40
Shared laptop	38
Own laptop	31
Own PC	26
Average number of devices of use	3.5

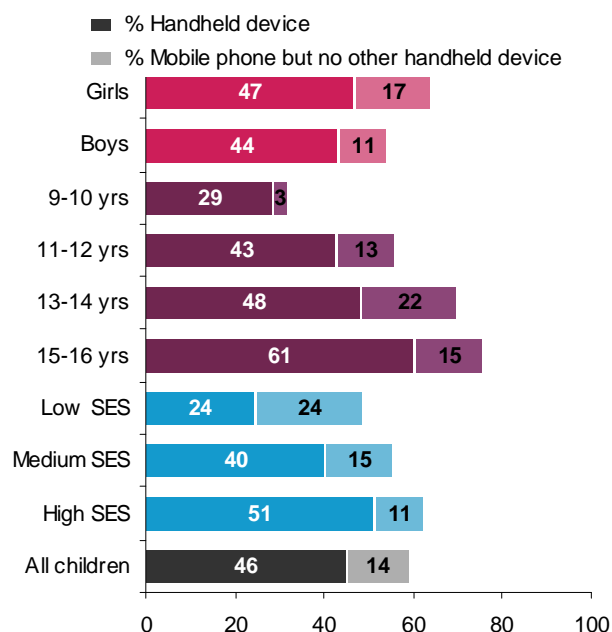
QC300a-h: Which of these devices do you use for the internet these days? (Multiple responses allowed)

Base: All children who use the internet.

- As shown in Table 2, Australian children’s use of the internet via private platforms (own laptop, mobile phone) is substantial. Private use is, it may be suggested, catching up with use via shared platforms (shared computer or laptop, television set).
- Compared with the European average, Australian children are more likely to access the internet using a range of platforms, including: own laptop (31% vs. 24% in Europe); via the television (43% vs. 32%), and via a games console (51% vs. 26%).**
- Australian children are also more likely than children in Europe to go online via their mobiles phone (40% vs. 31%) or other handheld device (45% vs. 12%).**
- The average number of devices used is slightly higher in Australia than Europe (3.5 vs. 2.5).

It seems that Australian children use the internet from a wider range of devices than is the average for Europe. These devices are distinctive also in offering private, personalised internet access.

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? ⁷

Base: All children who use the internet.

- Figure 3 shows gender difference in handheld access unusually favouring girls. There is significantly greater use in Australia than in Europe (64% girls and 55% boys in Australia, compared with 11% and 13% respectively across European countries).
- The pattern of age differences is the same as in Europe generally, with greater use by older children.
- The SES differences in going online via a handheld device are similar in Australia to those across Europe, but access is far more pervasive in Australia, with 60% of Australian children using a mobile/handheld device compared with 34% of European children.

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.

- Children across Europe are going online ever younger, with the average age of first use among 9-16 years old being nine years old. This varies by age group, with the youngest group saying they were seven, on average, when they first went online while 15-16 year olds say they were eleven on first use.

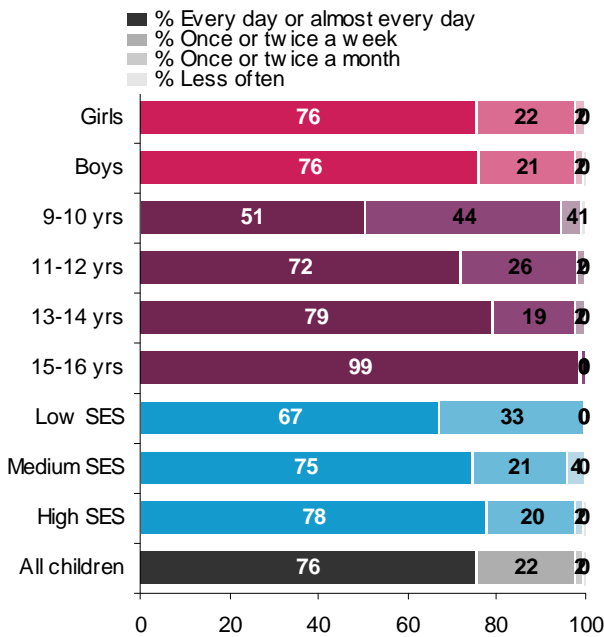
- **In Australia, children are on average a little under eight years old when they first use the internet, putting Australia amongst the 'youngest first use' countries in Europe, where children start to use the internet at a relatively early age.**

As Livingstone et al found for Europe⁸, in terms of the frequency of internet use, 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 regularly; 5% go online once or twice a month, 2% less often.

By contrast, in Australia, children who use the internet go online more often than in Europe (Figure 4):

- **76% go online daily or almost daily, 22% use it once or twice a week, leaving just 2% who go online less often than weekly.**
- Daily use is far more common among teenagers than younger children, with 99% of Australian 15-16 year olds saying they use the internet every day. There are no gender differences, but some small SES difference.

Figure 4: How often children use the internet

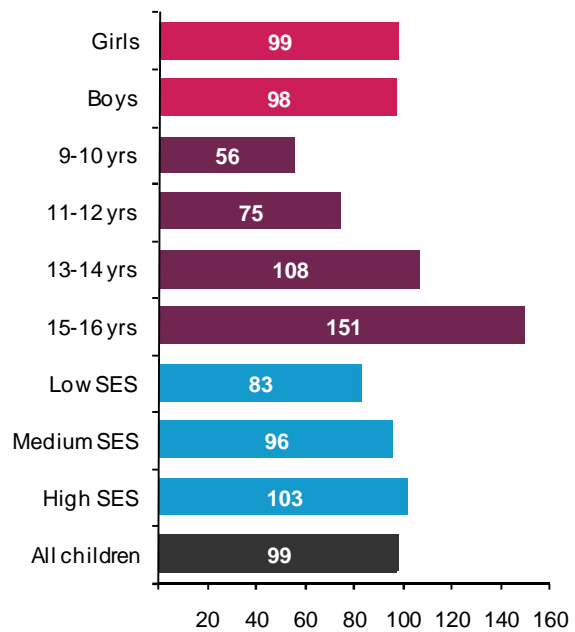


QC303: How often do you use the internet?

Base: All children who use the internet.

How long do Australian children 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 multi-task, 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.

- **The average time spent online by Australian 9-16 year olds is a little over an hour and a half per day (99 minutes), higher than the 25 nation average (88 minutes).**
- Gender differences in time spent online are negligible, although there are SES differences.
- The largest difference in time spent online is by age. The 15-16 year olds spend over two and a half hours per day online on average (151 minutes): this is over 2.5 times that of the youngest group. Australia 9-10 year olds spend 56 minutes per day online, on average.

3.2 Digital literacy and safety skills

Digital literacy and safety skills play a vital role in children's use of the internet, argues *EU Kids Online*, observing that these skills are assumed to result from, and further stimulate, the range and depth of children's online activities. Whereas 'digital literacy' encompasses a wide variety of skills and competencies, digital safety skills comprise a subset of these capabilities. It might be hoped that children who have advanced digital skills will also be safer online, but *EU Kids Online* research has identified the phenomenon of 'high use/high risk'⁹. Even so, "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."¹⁰

Table 3 shows the skills which children were asked about in the survey.

- **Bookmarking websites, finding information on how to use the internet safely and blocking messages are skills that most Australian children have. Fewer (just over a third, 37%) claim to be able to change filter preferences.**
- **On average, Australian children said they have 5.4 of the eight skills asked about, which is somewhat above the European average (of 4.2). Finland is the only European country to record an average of more skills per child than Australian kids.**
- Even so, among younger children there are some gaps in safety skills which could be addressed by policy initiatives. Around one third of 11-12 year olds cannot block messages from people they don't wish to hear from.

Since, in past research, boys have often claimed to have more digital skills than girls, it is noteworthy that the Australian data indicates some gender dimensions to the different skills assessed, related to age. In particular, younger girls are more likely than boys to know how to block messages from people they wish not to hear from, but a higher percentage of older boys than girls claim this skill. Whereas younger boys are more likely than girls to say they can compare websites to decide if information is true, older girls overtake boys in this competency area. These changes may indicate the different fears and interests held by Australian children at different ages.

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

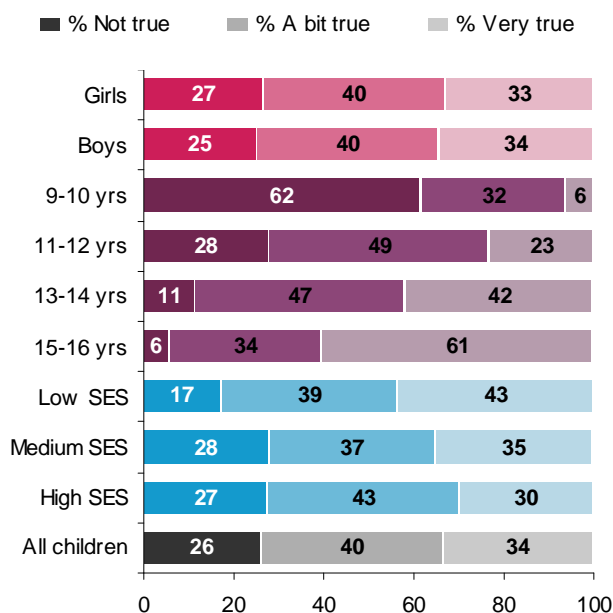
% who say they can...	11-12 year old		13-16 year old		All
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
Bookmark a website	84	80	90	92	88
Block messages from someone you don't want to hear from	63	72	92	81	80
Change privacy settings on a social networking profile	58	62	82	87	76
Find information on how to use the internet safely	67	62	79	83	76
Compare different websites to decide if information is true	67	56	71	77	70
Block unwanted adverts or junk mail/spam	65	47	79	72	69
Delete the record of which sites you have visited	57	39	78	70	65
Change filter preferences	26	13	54	37	37
Average number of skills	4.6	4.2	6.1	5.9	5.4

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 online self-confidence among young people, the *EU Kids Online* survey also asked the children (now including the 9-10 year olds once more) 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.

- On average, one in three AU 9-16 year olds (34%) say that the statement, "I know more about the internet than my parents," is 'very true' of them, four in ten (40%) say it is 'a bit true' and just over a quarter (25%) say it is 'not true' of them.
- There is a smaller gender difference in Australia than in Europe, with about as many boys as girls claiming this is 'very true': 33% AU girls and 34% AU boys, compared with 34% girls and 38% boys in the European research.
- Unsurprisingly, the older the children the more confident they are that they know more than their parents – among 15-16 year olds, 95% say it's 'a bit' or 'very' true that they know more than their parents. (This figure is 87% in Europe.) However, **62% of Australian 9-10 year olds say they do not know more about the internet than their parents, suggesting plenty of scope for parents to guide younger children in using the internet.**
- Children from lower SES homes are more confident that they know more about the internet than their parents, reflecting the same pattern found for European children.

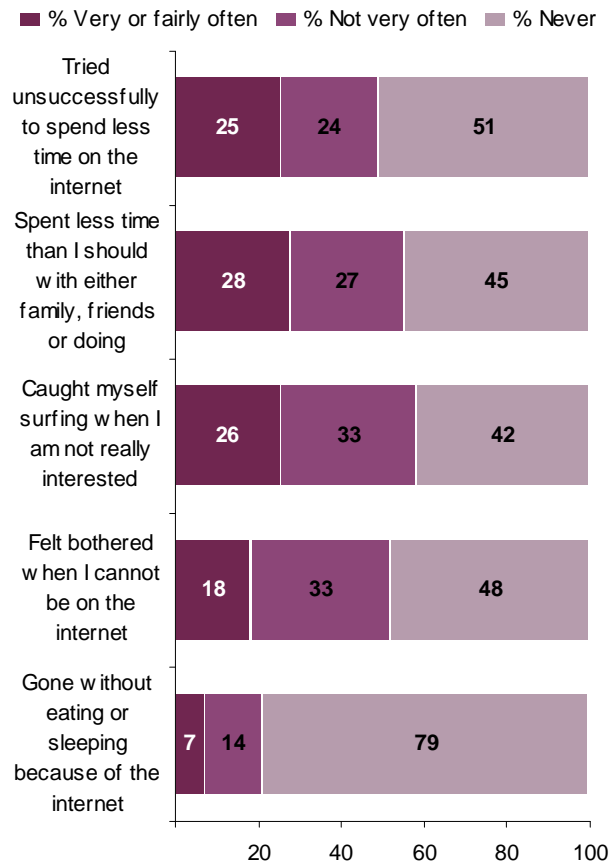
3.3 Excessive use of the internet

There has been considerable discussion over the past decade as to whether the internet is addictive¹¹. A part-UNESCO-funded report, looking at the effects of game-playing on gamers, comments that "addiction in a non-medical sense is an extremely controversial concept [...]. For example, the concept is almost exclusively used by people who perceive the activity in question as a deviation from the norm and a deviation from the desirable"¹². Such statements highlight the fact that people might make comments about 'addiction' as a part of passing judgement on other people's internet activities. Such judgements can lead to power struggles, especially between older children and their parents, resulting in conflict and concern. Even so, there is a growing interest in investigating 'excessive' internet use¹³. Drawing on prior measurements of computer or games addiction, *EU Kids Online* asked 11-16 year olds questions about their internet use. The focus was on the conflict their online activities might introduce with their family, or schoolwork tasks, together with whether the child had experienced not being able to reduce or stop their internet use.

Although many children report little experience of these indicators of excessive use, AU children's experiences are higher, compared with the European rankings (See below, Figure 7).

- Over half (55%) agree that they have spent less time with family and friends than they should have, because of time they spend on the internet (higher than the 35% European average).
- Three in five (59%) say they have caught themselves surfing when they were not really interested, with over half (51%) feeling bothered when they could not go online: higher than the European average (42% and 33%, respectively).
- Almost a half (49%) of AU kids say they have tried unsuccessfully to spend less time on the internet.
- As in Europe, it is much less common to go without sleeping or eating because of internet use (21%).

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 Australia's profile is joint first with Estonia, leading the 26 country comparison in terms of excessive internet use. 50% of Australian children answer 'fairly' or 'very often' to one or more of these five experiences, compared with a European average of 23%.

4. ACTIVITIES

4.1 Range of online activities

What do AU 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 Australian children do online.

- **Use of the internet for school work is the top online activity out of the 17 activities asked about - 86% of AU children use the internet for schoolwork, just above the 25 nation average (85%). This affirms the importance of incorporating the internet into educational contexts.**
- Watching video clips (85%) is the next most popular activity, followed by playing internet games (78%). In contrast, European kids rank playing games more highly (83%) followed by watching video clips (76%).
- Other forms of engaging with user-generated content, such as visiting a social networking site profile are similar in Australia (63%) and in Europe (62%).
- **Australia ranks email as the fourth most important use, with two-thirds of children doing this (67%), while half use instant messaging (51%, sixth priority). Only 18% of AU Kids say they've visited a chatroom in the past month. In Europe, communicating with others is also important (e.g. email 61%, instant messaging, 62%, visiting chatrooms 23%). Interestingly, 30% of Australian children have used a webcam, equivalent to their European counterparts (31%).**
- **Although creating content is generally less common than receiving content, Australian children do this more than in many other countries.** More children have created a character, pet or avatar (26% in AU vs. 18% in Europe), while the same percentage (16% in AU and in Europe) have spent time in a virtual world. 19% of Australian kids have used a file sharing site (18% in Europe generally), and 9% have blogged (11% in Europe).

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	
Used the internet for school work	84	84	88	88	86
Watched video clips	80	77	89	92	85
Played internet games on your own or against the computer	94	78	75	61	78
Sent/received email	48	55	74	91	67
Visited a social networking profile	35	50	85	84	63
Used instant messaging	29	36	63	74	51
Put (or posted) photos, videos or music to share with others	18	35	57	72	45
Played games with other people on the internet	60	39	54	20	44
Downloaded music or films	25	23	57	66	43
Put (or posted) a message on a website	23	28	49	64	41
Read/watched the news on the internet	26	19	52	38	34
Used a webcam	22	29	32	37	30
Created a character, pet or avatar	42	34	15	13	26
Used file sharing sites	8	8	30	26	19
Visited a chatroom	19	19	17	15	18
Spent time in a virtual world	20	17	14	13	16
Written a blog or online diary	7	5	6	17	9
Average number of activities	6.2	6.2	8.5	8.7	7.3

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?¹⁴ (*Multiple responses allowed*)

Base: All children who use the internet.

Table 4 also reveals some noteworthy age and gender differences.

- **Comparatively few activities span the age range (for example, using the internet for school work, visiting a chatroom). Some activities increase substantially over the years (email, social networking, posting videos or music to share, instant messaging and downloading music or films). Some decrease: playing internet games, creating avatars.**
- Some participatory activities (e.g. writing a blog) and some that may be considered risky (e.g. using file sharing sites) attract few younger children.
- **Both across the 25 nations, and in Australia, gender differences are generally small (except that boys play games more), this marking a change from earlier research, where many activities were found to differentiate girls and boys.**
- However, it is the case that, among younger children (9-12 years), girls use email, instant messaging and social network sites more, and are more likely to post photos and videos and use a webcam than boys. On the other hand, boys are more likely to watch the news online, create an avatar and play computer games alone or with others than are girls.
- Among teenagers (13-16 years), gender differences are still marked in relation to games, with boys playing more against the computer, and with others online, and using online news services. Girls are still more likely to email, to use instant messaging, to post photos, videos or music to share with others, and are almost three times more likely to say they blog.

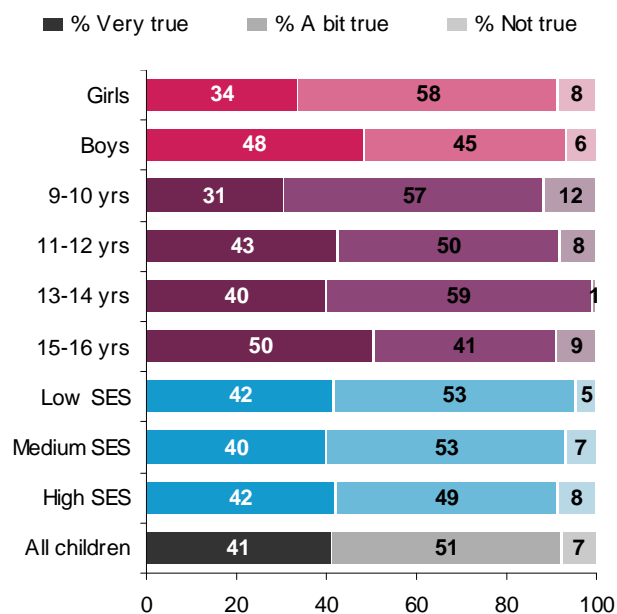
4.2 Quality of online content

Children do not enjoy equivalent opportunities to access 'good' material produced by their own cultural or language group, or reflecting their social and community values. **Although an objective assessment of online opportunities is difficult, the *EU Kids Online* survey asked children for their own assessment of 'good' content** (Figure 8).

- It is perhaps surprising, since Australia is a comparatively wealthy country, and since its national language dominates the internet worldwide, that Australian children are not more satisfied with online provision. Given the huge array of content online in the English language, one might conclude that what is offered online should be very satisfactory for Australian kids. This is not the case in Australia, Ireland or the UK. In contrast, the children in Lithuania, Greece and Belgium are the most satisfied in the European study.

- Nonetheless, 41% of AU children say it is 'very true' and 51% say it is 'a bit true' that there are lots of good things for them to do online; while 7% say the statement is 'not true'. **Australian children are, therefore, in line with most European children, for whom, on average, 90% (compared with 92% in AU) say it is 'very true' or 'a bit true' that there are lots of good things to do online.**

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, Australian girls are less enthusiastic about online content (34% AU girls vs. 42% European girls answering 'very true'), whereas Australian boys (48%) are slightly more positive than their counterparts in the 25 nation study (46%).
- As in *EU Kids Online* generally, AU teenagers aged 15-16 years are especially positive. In Australia, as in Europe as a whole, there is little SES difference.

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

Many children in Australia have a social networking site (SNS) profile, and this is also true for children in Europe. Even though the rules of sites such as Facebook say that children must be 13 or over to have an SNS profile, more than half of 11-12 year olds in the AU study say they have an SNS profile, underlining worries around companies' age checks and restrictions. Most SNSs offer exceptional opportunities for interactivity and online participation and, as the *EU Kids Online* research makes clear, "By integrating chat, messaging, contacts, photo albums and blogging functions, SNSs integrate online opportunities and risks more seamlessly than previously."¹⁵

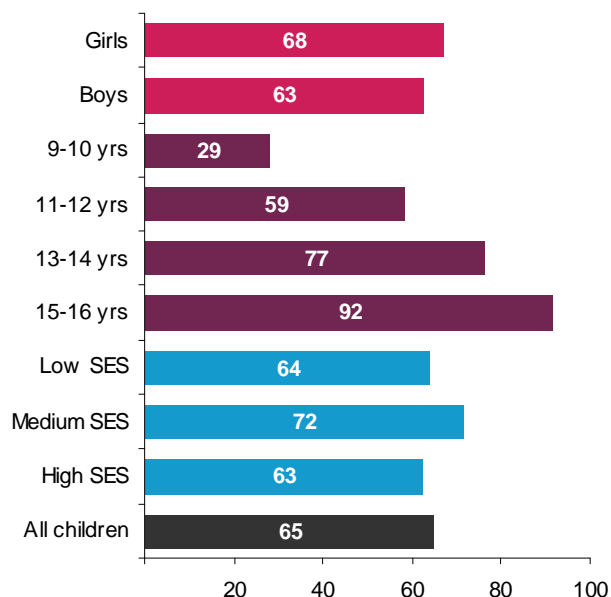
SNSs are one aspect of the growth of Web 2.0, which focuses on user-generated content, interactivity and participation. Other Web 2.0 applications include Wikis and blogs. Policy-makers, educators and parents can see the benefits of encouraging young people to use these opportunities to express themselves and collaborate with others, but SNS use raises issues about changing definitions of 'friendship', as well as concerns around privacy and the lasting nature of children's digital footprints. Further, integrating a range of social media applications within the SNS itself adds extra possibilities for perpetrating or experiencing anti-social online behaviour such as stalking, harassment and 'flaming'.

As shown in Figure 9:

- **65% of children who use the internet in Australia have their own SNS profile, this being a little higher than the European average of 59%.**
- **The older the child, the more likely they are to have profiles, rising to 92% of 15-16 year olds having an SNS profile.**
- **Since many SNSs have a minimum age of 13, the findings for 9-10 year olds (Australia 29%; 26% in Europe) and especially 11-12 year olds (Australia 59%; 49% in Europe) seem high, suggesting that some give a false age when setting up a profile.**
- The rise in SNS profiles for 11-12 year olds also suggests, in an Australian context, that the peer expectation of social networking starts before secondary school.
- More Australian girls than boys have profiles (68% vs. 63%): a bigger gap than in Europe (60% vs. 58%, respectively).
- It is perhaps puzzling that children from the highest SES homes are less likely to have a profile, even if almost two in three have one (63%). In contrast, in the European sample as a whole, 4% points

differentiate all three SES groups (57-61%). Closer examination suggests that for Australian children from high SES homes, there are significantly fewer 'under-age' users (9-12 years).

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.

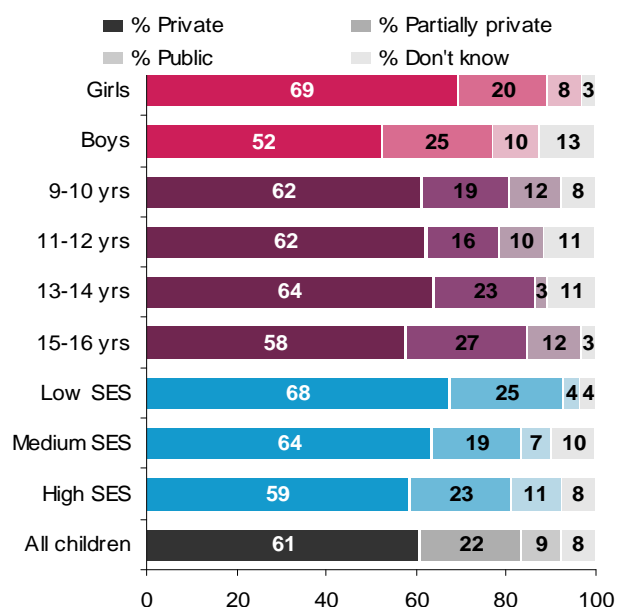
What do we know about how children use social networking, once they have a profile? The survey asked several questions of children with profiles.

- 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; and half have up to 50 contacts, 19% have fewer than 10.
- **Australian children report substantially more SNS contacts than in most of Europe, and more claim over 50 contacts than in any other country of the 26 compared. Among Australian SNS users, 16% report more than 300 contacts, 26% have between 100 and 300, 21% have between 51 and 100 and 24% have 11-50 contacts. Just 13% have fewer than ten contacts.**

Do such wide circles of contacts imply that Australian kids have no sense of privacy, including anyone as a 'friend'?

- **By contrast with many countries across Europe, Figure 10 shows that Australian SNS users are much more likely to have their profile set to private or partially private: 83% in Australia compared with 71% across the 25 European nations.**
- AU children are less likely to post their address or phone number (6%, compared with 14% in Europe).
- AU children are much more likely to say they show an incorrect age (34% compared with the Europe average of 16%).

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.

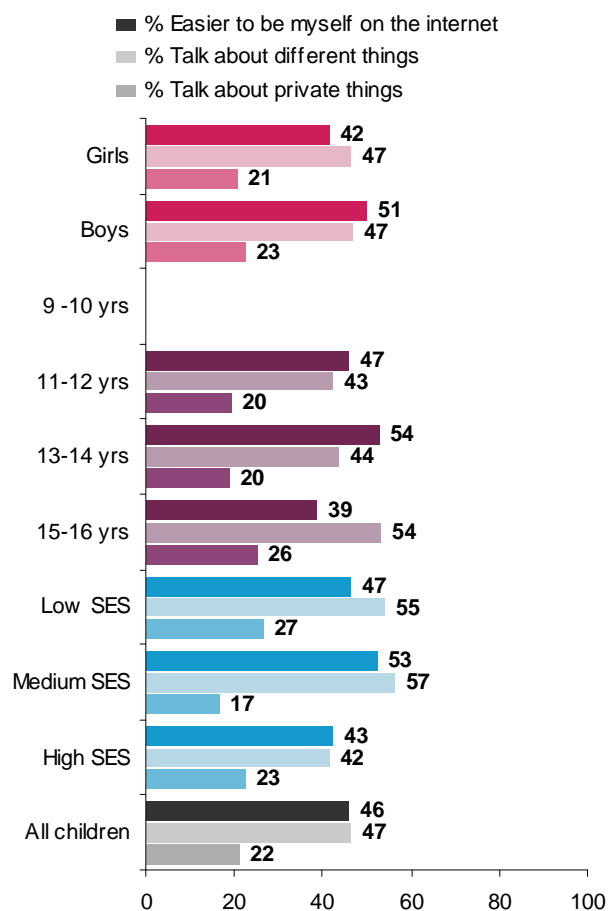
A breakdown of the use of privacy settings by socio-demographic factors is shown in Figure 10:

- **AU boys are more likely to have public settings (10% vs. 8% of girls), a much smaller prevalence but similar pattern to the European sample as a whole (where 30% boys v 23% girls use public settings).**
- Young teenagers (13-14) in Australia are least likely to have public settings (3%, compared to 25% in Europe). This rises to 12% for older children (15-16); while 12% (Australia) vs. 27% (Europe) have public profiles.

- Australian children from low SES homes are the most likely to choose private settings; in Europe it is high SES kids that are private.

One reason why children may use SNS communication is that it is easier for them to feel more confident online than in person. *EU Kids Online* explored this dimension by inviting children to compare their approaches 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'

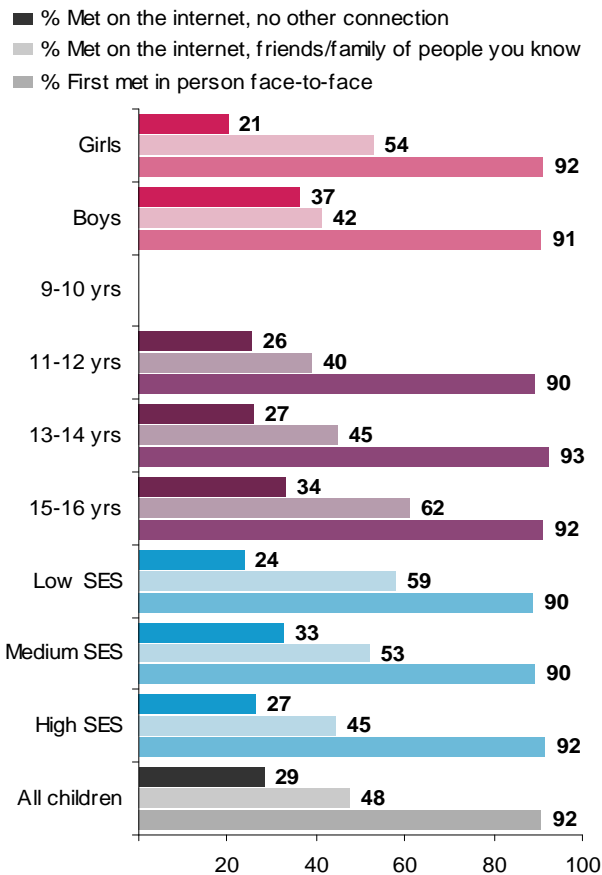
Base: All children aged 11-16 who use the internet.

- Roughly half (46%) 11-16 year old Australian internet users say they find it 'easier to be myself' on the internet, while 47% say they talk about different things. Slightly more than one in five children (22%) talk more about private things when online than is the case with face to face.
- This is especially the case for 15-16 year olds, who appear to find the internet a particularly good place to talk about private matters.

- Boys (51%) appear a little more likely than girls (42%) to find the internet a good place to be themselves.

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 even though, as previous research suggests, people from within a child’s social circle pose the greatest threat¹⁶. Findings showed that:

- As in Europe, most Australian children who communicate online are in touch with people they already know face to face (Australia 92%; 87% in Europe). Thus online communication relies on and complements the communication that occurs in everyday social networks.
- Almost half Australian kids, 48% (whereas in Europe it is 39%), are in touch with people that they first met on the internet but with whom they have a connection through friends or family offline. These people form part of the child’s wider circle offline although the child may not have met them face to face.
- Almost three in ten Australian 11-16 year olds (29%) say they communicate online with people whom they first met online and who have no connection with their offline social networks. It is these contacts, arguably, that we need to understand better in the context of risk and safety issues. Further, the number who experience this risk in Australia is greater than the European average of 25%.
- Almost twice as many boys (37%) as girls (21%) communicate online with people whom they only know online. It may be that these are contacts sustained through online gaming (as shown earlier, gaming is the main online activity that distinguishes girls and boys).
- Over nine in ten respondents in each age group communicate online with their existing offline social circle. But, like their European counterparts, as Australian children grow older they widen their social circle by also communicating with people online who are connected to their offline circle but whom, nonetheless, they first met on the internet: 40% of 11-12 year olds, 45% of 13-14 year olds and 62% of 15-16 year olds. These figures are higher than European averages, which are: 31% (11-12), 38% (13-14) and 47% (15-16) respectively.
- The age differences in making new contacts online (i.e. with people who have no other connection with the child’s life) is similarly striking compared with Europe overall, especially in the youngest age range:
 - 26% of AU 11-12 year olds vs. 19% (Europe);
 - 27% of AU 13-14 year olds vs. 23% (Europe), and
 - 34% of AU 15-16 year olds vs. 33% (Europe).

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 kids to adopt risky or even deliberately risk-taking behaviours¹⁷. This is explored in Table 5, recording children’s answers when they were asked about their behaviour online.

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	76	9	15
Added people to my friends list or address book that I have never met face to face	80	10	11
Sent a photo or video of myself to someone that I have never met face to face	89	6	4
Sent personal information to someone that I have never met face to face	94	2	4
Pretended to be a different kind of person on the internet from what I really am	94	4	3

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.

- Whereas children from medium SES households in Australia are more likely to have an SNS profile, they are also more likely than other SES groupings to have diverse circles of online contacts, communicating with more people they meet on the internet who are unconnected with existing family and friends. In Europe, the higher the SES ranking, the more diverse the child's online contacts.

As 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 kids to adopt risky or even deliberately risk-taking behaviours. This is explored in Table 5, recording children's answers when they were asked about their behaviour online.

Table 5 indicates, children were asked about possibly risky practices relating to online contacts:

- **The vast majority of AU children aged 9-16 say that in the past year they have not sent a photo or video of themselves (89%) or personal information (94%) to someone they have never met face to face. Nor have they pretended to be a different kind of person on the internet (94%).**
- These findings indicate that Australian children may be less risk-taking than the European average, where such activities are more common.
- Four in five Australian kids (80%) say they have not added people to their friends' list or address book that they have never met face to face, nor have three-quarters (76%) looked for new friends on the internet.
- **However, a minority of Australian children say they have done some of these things. One in four (24%) has looked for new friends on the internet, while almost two-thirds (of these one in four, i.e. 15% of 11-16 year olds) have done this more often than monthly. One in five (21%) Australian kids has added contacts they don't know face to face, half of these more often than monthly.**
- Very few have sent images of themselves (10%), or personal information (6%), to people they haven't met in person.

Some of these approaches to communication might be judged to involve children in risky practices but, as the *EU Kids Online* overall framework asserts, the key question is whether or not these practices result in more risk-related behaviours or, importantly, more harm to children. This is 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.

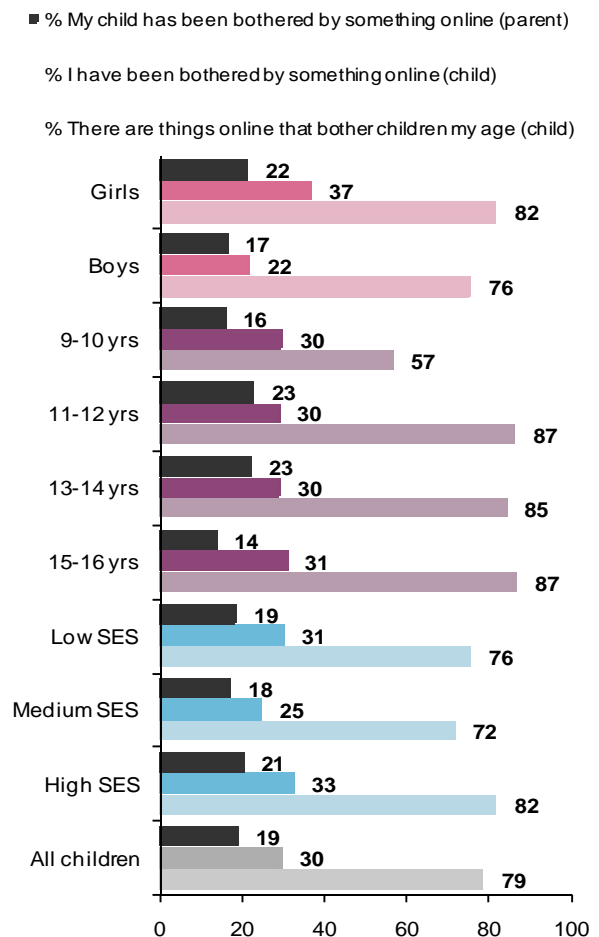
Following the approach of *EU Kids Online*, we asked children about experiences that had bothered them in some way, explaining that by 'bothered' we meant, "made you feel uncomfortable, upset, or feel that you shouldn't have seen it." The aim was to focus on the child's self-report of concern or distress, 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, more than three-quarters of Australian 9-16 year olds think that the internet bothers people their own age, the 79% figure is a much higher percentage than the 55% of children from the 25 nation study who say the same.
- Australian children are over two and a half times more likely to say that in the past 12 months things on the internet bothered other children (79%) than they are to say that they have been personally bothered (30%). However, 30% is a high proportion of Australian children to have been bothered; the average finding from the European study is 12%. Possibly kids worry for each other; possibly it is easier to say 'there are bad things out there' than to say 'it's happened to me.'
- Only one in five (21%) of Australian 9-16 year olds do not see the internet as problematic for children their age. Younger children are least likely to be concerned about other children (57%), though equally likely to have been bothered themselves (30%). Strikingly, in the 25 nation study, the likelihood of a child finding something on the internet that bothers them rises with age (Europe 9-10, 9%; Europe 11-12, 11%; Europe 13-14, 12%; Europe 15-16, 15%): not so in Australia.

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.

- A higher proportion of Australian children say they have been bothered by something they have experienced online in the past 12 months than is the case in any European country. In ranked order, the next four countries are Denmark (28%), Estonia (25%), Norway and Sweden (both 23%). It is hard to determine how much the later survey (6 months) and the smaller sample (400 families, instead of 1,000) would have affected this.

- Australian girls (37%) are significantly more likely than boys (22%) to say that something on the internet has bothered them. Parents mirror this gender difference, seeing the internet as more problematic for their daughters than their sons.
- Even though 30% of 9-10 year olds say they've been bothered by something online, their parents are unlikely to recognise this. Only 16% of their parents say 'yes, something has bothered my child online'.
- Reported problems online are static at 30% for 9-10 year olds, 11-12 year olds, and 13-14 year olds while parents are more likely to report concerns over the 11-14 year old cohort (23%) than the 9-10 year olds (16%). Since Australian children usually start secondary school around 11, parents may assume that children are more likely to encounter problems online with greater internet use, or the influence of a new peer group encouraging risk-taking, or the onset of adolescence.

5.2 Sexual images online

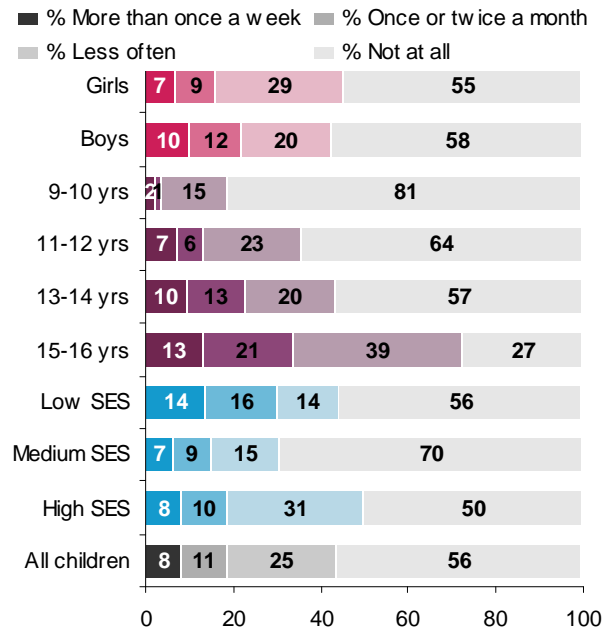
Pornography is not easy to define. It covers a wide range of material from the everyday to the illegal. For ethical reasons, pornography cannot be defined very explicitly in a closed-ended survey with children, for to do so might introduce new ideas to children who are hitherto unaware of such phenomena.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

- **Over two in five (44%) Australian 9-16 year olds say they have seen sexual images in the past 12 months, whether online or offline. This is much greater than the 25 country average of 23%. In the European study, only Norwegian children (46%) would have seen more.**
- As in Europe, age matters. More older children have seen sexual images. In Australia the biggest jumps in exposure are between 9-10 and 11-12 (17% more report seeing sexual images in the older cohort) and between 13-14 and 15-16 (30%).
- Gender differences are small, with Australian girls more likely than boys to have seen sexual images somewhere (45% vs. 42%); for Europe as a whole the likelihood is smaller, and 21% of girls say they have seen sexual images online or offline compared with 25% of boys.
- Like the European average, Australian children from higher SES homes say they see sexual images more frequently, though unlike their European counterparts, children from medium SES households in Australia are least likely to see sexual images. (In Europe, likelihood rises with SES ranking.)

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

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 any websites	16	13	45	39	28
On television, film or video/DVD	11	15	34	29	22
In a magazine or book	7	9	18	14	12
By text (SMS), images (MMS), or otherwise on my mobile phone	2	3	14	5	6
By Bluetooth	1	0	3	0	1
Has seen at all, online or offline	27	27	58	61	44

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.

This data is divided into two age groups, 9-12 and 13-16, differentiating around teen years.

- **The internet is the most common source of sexual images for Australian children (28%), although 22% say they have seen sexual images on television. This is almost double the European average where the internet is also slightly more common than television (14%. vs. 12%).**
- With 28% of Australian children reporting that they have seen sexual images online, Australia would rank equal fourth in European terms, with Denmark and the Czech Republic (both 28%), while children in Norway are most likely to report this (34%), followed equally by Estonia (29%) and Finland (29%), just above Australia (28%).
- Australian kids see more sexual images in magazines than their counterparts in Europe (12% vs. 7%).
- Gender differences are striking and increase with age. Younger boys (9-12 years) have seen sexual images on websites, although girls are more likely to have seen them on television. By 13-16, Australian boys are more likely than girls to say they have seen sexual images across the board, on websites, on television, film and video/DVD, in magazines or books, by text/image etc on a mobile¹⁸, or by Bluetooth. Counter-intuitively, however, more 13-16 year old AU girls (61%) have actually seen sexual images in any medium: more than is the case with

boys (58%), indicating that boys are more likely to have seen sexual images in more than one medium. This differs somewhat from the European picture, where there are few gender differences apart from more 13-16 year old boys than girls (24% vs. 17%) saying they have seen sexual images on websites.

Table 7 shows the type of sexual images children have seen.

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	14	45	24
Images or video of someone's 'private parts'	n.a.	8	14	29	17
Images or video of someone having sex	n.a.	6	11	29	16
Images or video or movies that show sex in a violent way	n.a.	4	8	7	6
Something else	n.a.	2	3	6	4
Seen sexual images online¹⁹	11	17	25	56	28

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.

- **24% of Australian 11-16 year olds say they have seen online sexual images including nudity; 17% have seen someone's genitals online; 16% (mostly 15-16) have seen images of someone having sex; and 6% say they have seen violent sexual images. These figures are all higher than the 25 nation averages which are 11% for nudity; 8% for genitals; 8% for seeing someone having sex and 2% for violent sexual images.**
- In all categories of Table 7, the Australian findings are higher than the European findings, although broadly in line with other countries where children go online at a young average age, especially Scandinavian and Baltic countries.

Previous research raised questions about what parents really know about their children's experiences online, such knowledge being an important 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 asked 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	38	17
No	49	47
Don't know	14	36
	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, one in three (35%) of their parents agree this has occurred, and this is broadly similar in Australia (38%). Just over one in eight (14%) of Australian parents say they don't know whether their child has seen sexual images online and this contrasts with one in four (26%) of their European counterparts. Significantly, half (49%) the parents of Australian children who say they have seen sexual images on the internet say their child has not seen such images.
- In Australia, parents are slightly less aware of their children’s experiences of online sexual images than in Europe generally. Among European children who have seen online sexual images, 40% of parents say their child has not seen such images (compared with 49% in Australia), while 35% recognise that they have (Australia 38%), and 26% (Australia 14%) say they don’t know (Table 8). Australian parents are more likely to be wrongly confident that their child has not seen sexual images online than is general in the other 25 countries.**

When does risk translate into harm? As argued by Livingstone and Haddon²⁰, risk is not always associated with harm. Instead, “the notion of risk refers to a probability, not a necessity, of harm”²¹ Unless it is argued that all children will be harmed by any exposure to sexual images, it follows that some children may see pornography without necessarily experiencing ill effects. Others may be harmed: they may be upset at the time; they may worry later about what they have seen; and their attitudes or behaviour may be influenced in future years²². So as not to presume that all risks result in harm, those children who said they had seen sexual images online were asked some extra questions, 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.

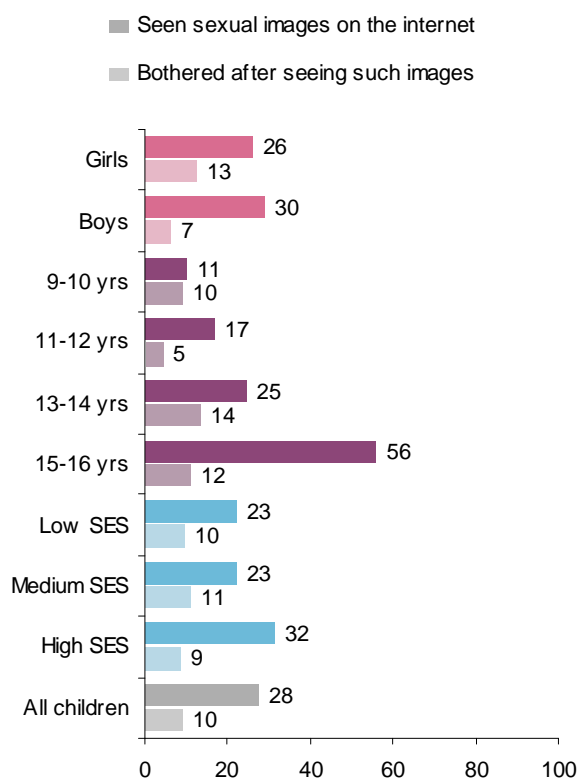
- Australian children’s responses are relatively high, compared with many European countries, in terms of overall exposure to online pornography (28%). Further, the percentage of Australian children who have been bothered by seeing such images (10%, i.e. over a third of those exposed) is also higher than the average for the 25 countries. This might be one of the factors contributing to the overall high number of Australian children that say they have been bothered by something on the internet (Section 5.1).**

Although Australian children are more likely to encounter sexual images they are not much more likely to be bothered by what they see than children in the other survey nations. Across Europe, 32% of those who have seen sexual images online were bothered by what they saw, compared with 36% in Australia.

Figure 15 shows which groups of children have seen sexual images on the internet and been bothered by this.

- Australian boys are slightly more likely to have seen sexual images online (30% vs. 26%, girls), the same pattern as in Europe generally (where the percentages are 16% vs. 12%). Across all European countries, boys had seen more sexual images online but girls were generally more likely to be bothered by such experiences.
- Seeing sexual images online is more common among teenagers than younger children. There are also more teenagers, especially those aged 13-14 years old, who report being bothered by this.
- As in other countries, 9-10 year olds are less likely to see sexual images online but more likely to be bothered or upset by the experience if they do see them. In Australia 11% of 9-10 year olds had seen sexual images and almost all of these, a total 10% of Australian 9-10 year olds, reported feeling bothered.**
- While there are some SES differences in seeing these images, a higher proportion of children from lower SES homes are likely to be bothered by seeing sexual images online (as in Europe generally).

Figure 15: Child has seen sexual images online and was 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.

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, the *EU Kids Online* network has judged that in a single country report the sample sizes are too small to report in detail how children coped, or not, with upsetting online experiences. This is especially the case in Australia, where the sample size is 400 children in contrast to the 1000 children interviewed in European countries. Even so, there are indicators that Australian children may be comparatively resilient in these matters and more research is called for.

The key point from Figure 15, is that most Australian children (72%) have not experienced seeing sexual images online and, of those who have, almost two in three (64%) say they were not bothered or upset by the experience.

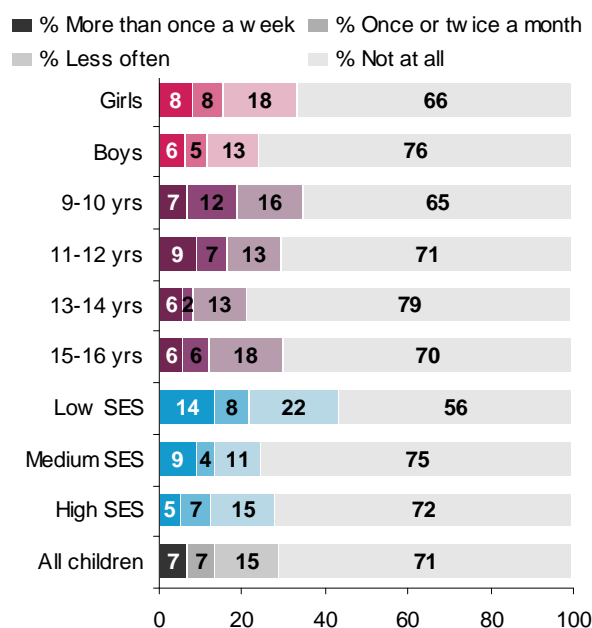
5.3 Bullying online

Being bullied is one of several risks that may lead to harm when children use the internet. "In some sense bullying builds on children's availability through and/or conduct in peer-to-peer exchanges and, often, the threat comes from a peer"²³. Online bullying is sometimes, but not always, associated with offline bullying. Further, while 'bullying' is an accepted term in some countries and languages, it is not a recognised pattern of behaviours in others, which makes the term difficult to translate. So, as with 'pornography', the term 'bully' was defined in the questionnaire:

"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 16: 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.

- **Three in five (29%) Australian children claim to have been bullied in the past year, according to the definition provided, with 7% bullied weekly (Figure 16).**
- Overall, bullying in Australia is fifty percent higher than across Europe (29% vs. 19%), though the European range is from 43% in Estonia, for having been bullied online or offline, to just 9% in Portugal.
- **The likelihood of online bullying in Australia is significantly more common than in the 25 countries: 13% (versus 6% in the study generally) have received a nasty or hurtful message online.**
- More Australian girls than boys claim to have been bullied (34% vs. 24%).
- More 9-10 year olds say they have been bullied (35%), the least bullied being 13-14 year olds (21%). This differs from the European pattern, where older children are most likely to be bullied.
- Children from lower SES homes in Australia claim to have been bullied most (44%), with those from medium SES homes the least (25%).

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.

Table 9 indicates the ways in which children are bullied.

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

%	9-12 years		13-16 years		All
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
In person face to face	16	26	17	20	20
On the internet	4	19	11	19	13
By mobile phone calls, texts or image/video texts	0	5	3	7	3
Has been bullied at all, online or offline	26	39	22	29	29

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 Australia, face to face bullying is more common than online bullying (20% vs. 13%), while 3% have also been bullied by mobile phone.
- Gender differences are much larger in the younger age group than the older one, with 9-12 year old girls more likely to be bullied than the boys.

Table 10 examines what children say about how they have been bullied online in the past 12 months.

- **Most common is messages sent to the child (7%), followed by messages being posted online or passed on (4%), and other hurtful things online (3%). 3% have been threatened using the internet.**
- Unlike the European findings, where 15-16 year olds are most likely to encounter the various forms of online bullying, there is little difference in the Australian findings relating to the variety of online bullying behaviours affecting 11-12, 13-14 and 15-16 year olds.

Table 10: 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	6	10	7
Nasty or hurtful messages about me were passed around or posted where others could see	n.a.	5	5	3	4
Other nasty or hurtful things on the internet	n.a.	3	6	1	3
I was threatened on the internet	n.a.	3	6	1	3
I was left out or excluded from a group or activity on the internet	n.a.	2	0	4	2
Something else	n.a.	2	1	2	2
At all on the internet	6	15	14	15	13

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.

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 11).

Table 11: 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	58	4
No	33	91
Don't know	9	6
	100	100

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

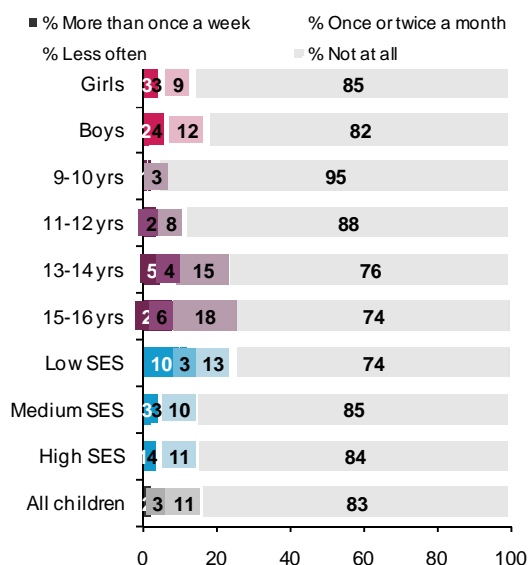
Note: sample sizes in this table are small (and confidence intervals high) so these findings to be treated as indicative only.

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

- Among the 13% of children who say they have been bullied online, most of their parents (58%) are aware of this, though one in three (33%) says this has not happened and 9% do not know.
- By comparison with parental awareness of children's exposure to online pornography, Australian parents seem more aware of when their child has been bullied online, in those cases where it has happened.

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 17: 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 17 shows that, in Australia, 16-17% (subject to rounding) of children say they have bullied others. This is more than half as many as say they have been bullied (29%).
- Bullying others (in general) is most common among the 15-16 year olds, and least common among 9-10 year olds, although 9-10 year olds are most likely to say they have been bullied.
- Children from lower SES homes are most likely to say they bully others, and are also most likely to say they have been bullied.
- 13% said they are bullied online, less than the 16% who say they bully others, on or offline.

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. In Australia however, as elsewhere, face to face bullying is more common than online bullying. Even so, the incidence of online bullying in Australia (13%) is twice as high as the European average (6%), although the small sample numbers prompt caution in interpretation.**

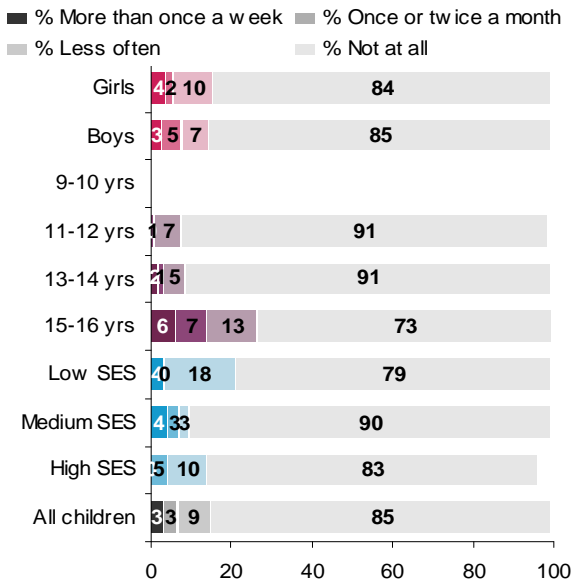
5.4 Sending and receiving sexual messages online

There are some reasons to believe that the internet, along with smart (camera)phones, may make it easier for peers to exchange sexual messages²⁴. Popularly termed 'sexting' because of the link with mobile phones and texting, the exchange of sexual messages and images has become a focus for policy concern and legal debate. 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 18: 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.

- Some one in seven children in Australia (15%) have seen or received sexual messages online, 3% receiving them more than once a week (Figure 18). This is in line with the 25 nation figures.
- In Australia, as in the European findings, there is no significant gender difference in receiving sexual messages.
- 15-16 year olds are more likely to receive sexual messages online than the younger age groups.
- Seeing/receiving sexual messages online is more common (though still a minority practice) than is posting/sending such messages. Only a very small proportion of children – 4% of 11-16 year olds – say they have posted or sent a sexual message online in the past 12 months.

Table 12 shows the type of sexual messages received by Australia children on the internet.

Table 12: 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	5	18	9
I have seen a sexual message posted where other people could see it on the internet	n.a.	1	2	9	4
I have seen other people perform sexual acts	n.a.	0	0	14	5
I have been asked on the internet for a photo or video showing my private parts	n.a.	0	2	7	3
I have been asked to talk about sexual acts with someone on the internet	n.a.	1	1	15	6
Has seen or received at all	n.a.	9	9	27	15

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.

- 9% of Australian 11-16 year olds have been sent a sexual message, and 6% have been asked to talk about sexual acts with someone on the internet. 3-5% have experienced one of the following: seen others perform sexual acts in a message, been asked for a photo or video showing their private parts or seen a sexual message posted online where others could also see it.
- The older the child, the more likely they are to have experienced sexting. The same patterns apply to the European data generally, although the figures are higher in Australia. For example, for 15-16 year old Australians, 18% have been sent a sexual message (Europe 11%); 15% of Australians have been asked to talk about sexual acts with someone online (Europe 3%); and 14% of Australians have seen images of other people performing sexual acts (Europe 8%).

Parents were asked about their child's experiences regarding online sexual messages (Table 13).

Table 13: 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	27	5
No	51	83
Don't know	22	12
	100	100

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

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

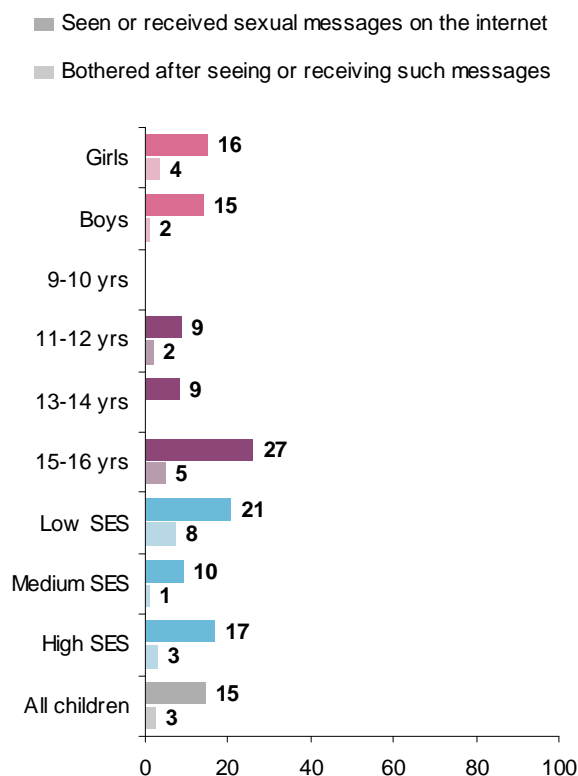
Base: All children aged 11-16 who use the internet and one of their parents.

- In Table 13, among the 15% of Australian children who say they have seen or been sent sexual messages online, a minority of their parents (27%) are aware of this, while half (51%) say this has not happened. One in five (22%) does not know.
- This level of parental awareness is a little higher than the European average, though findings are based on a subset of a smaller respondent population.

As noted in the discussion around 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 the European study, although 15% of children have seen or received a sexual message online, only 4% of children aged 11-16 both received sexts and were bothered by the experience. However, looked at differently, one quarter (25%) of the 15% who have received sexual messages were bothered by them.
- In Australia, while 15% have seen or received such messages, a slightly lower percentage - 3% - have been bothered by them. To put it another way, 20% or one in five Australian children who receive sexual messages online are bothered or upset by the experience.

Figure 19: 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?

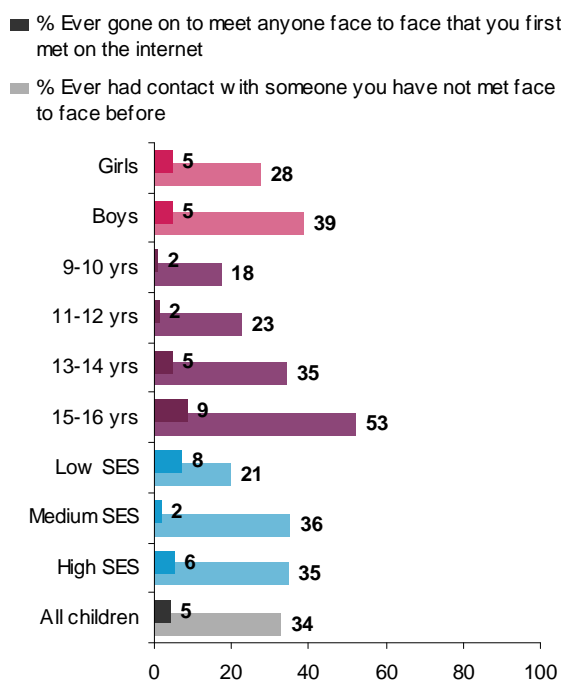
Base: All children age 11-16 who use the internet. Children who have seen or received sexual messages online in the past 12 months.

- Figure 19 shows that Australian girls are more likely than boys to have been bothered by receiving sexual messages (4% vs. 2%), in line with the 25 nation findings.
- The younger children, 11-12 year olds, are more likely to be bothered by these messages (as also indicated by the data from the larger study).

5.5 Meeting online contacts offline

One of the greatest fears held by many parents is that their child may meet a stranger online who subsequently abuses or exploits them in a face to face meeting. Even though this is a significant fear, and the focus of a number of policy interventions and extensive media debate, the risk of children coming to harm through a face to face meeting with a stranger they first met on the internet is small²⁵. One reason for this is that when children use the internet to find new friends they are almost always looking to meet people of their own age. Very few use the internet to meet adults, deliberately or without meaning to²⁶. “Further, although it is possible for contacts with new people online to result in harm, public concern tends to leave unclear just what harm may result (online exploitation or deception or offline abuse?)”²⁷. Figure 20 indicates which Australian children make new contacts using the internet, and whether this leads to meetings offline.

Figure 20: 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.

- 34% of Australian children have had contact online with someone they have not met face to face (the 25 nation average is 30%).
- 5% have gone to an offline meeting with someone first met online. This is about half the study average (which is 9% across all 25 countries). Indeed, as the pan-European report shows, children in the Baltic countries are most likely to have gone to an offline meeting with a contact first made online (25% in Estonia and 23% in Lithuania). Such offline meetings are comparatively uncommon in the UK and Portugal (each 5%), Italy and Ireland (each 4%), and least likely in Turkey (3%).
- 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 – although such instances are rare.
- Gender differences are minor, although girls (one in six, 5/28) are a little more likely to have gone on to meet someone than boys (one in eight, 5/39). This is contrary to the wider European pattern, although the age difference dimension is consistent with findings from the European study.
- Children from lower SES homes in Australia are less likely to have made contact, but more likely to have gone on to meet face to face, a person they first met online.

Are parents aware of such offline meetings? (Table 14)

Table 14: 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	11	0
No	78	98
Don't know	11	2
	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.

- The small sample size for meeting contacts offline means it is particularly difficult to extrapolate further valid information. Thus we note, as indicative only, that in most of the cases where a child has gone to such a meeting, parents seem unaware of this.

Making new contacts online and then arranging to meet these people offline is, perhaps, one of the most contested activities children may engage in. It 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, questions about subjective harm were prefaced with the following explanation:

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 research in the 25 country study, some follow up questions on children's responses to such meetings can be reported (pp. 92-95). 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 possibly harmful to children, have attracted little research as yet. These include exposure to potentially harmful user-generated content – i.e. not mass-produced commercial content but content generated through peer to peer activity.

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

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

Table 15: 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	18	17	21	47	26
Ways to be very thin (such as being anorexic or bulimic)	6	9	4	18	9
Talk about or share their experiences of taking drugs	9	4	11	26	12
Ways of physically harming or hurting themselves	16	8	11	20	14
Ways of committing suicide	1	5	7	4	4
Has seen such material at all on any websites	31	22	34	52	34

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

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

- **Overall, 34% of Australian 11-16 year olds have seen one or more type of potentially harmful user-generated content, rising to 52% of 14-16 year old girls. The overall Australian percentage (34%) is significantly higher than the percentage across the European study, where the average is 21%.**
- **The most common potentially harmful content is hate messages (26%), followed by people discussing ways of physically harming or hurting themselves (14%), and sites talking about drug experiences (12%). The first three percentages are above the European average. Few (5%) have visited a suicide site.** Sometimes such sites might assist in harm minimisation, or might be accessed by young people who seek to help friends.
- Older Australian girls are generally twice as likely as Australian boys to have visited troubling user-generated content sites, except that older boys are more likely to have visited sites that discuss ways of committing suicide (7% of Australian boys 14-16 vs. 4% Australian girls). The figures for younger children also show some gender differences, although young children are generally less likely to visit such sites than older children.

5.7 Misuse of personal data

As yet there is little research into the misuse of children's personal data online, although such data may enable ill-intentioned others to access children and/or their personal information. 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 16: 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	15	15	9	12	13
Somebody used my personal information in a way I didn't like	11	15	3	8	9
I lost money by being cheated on the internet	6	4	0	3	3
Has experienced personal data misuse of any kind	21	22	9	17	17

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 Australian children is when someone has used their password or pretended to be them (13%). Some have had personal information used in a way they did not like (9%). Findings are approximately double the 25 nation average, which are, in Europe: 7% (password), 4% (misuse) and 1% (cheated out of money).**
- Younger children have had these problems more than older children.

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 research²⁸, a series of questions were devised for children and their parents, distinguishing both '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 details of their internet use. Although informal, this support of children by children constitutes a potentially valuable form of peer mediation²⁹. **In sum, this section analyses eight sources of social support and mediation available to children³⁰:**

- 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 – the parent guides the child in using the internet safely, before, during or after the child's online activities, 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 – There are other sources of safety information apart from those mentioned above and

both parents and children may benefit from accessing 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.

- **76% of Australian 9-16 year olds go online daily or almost daily, and the same holds true for 79% of their parents. Even so, this does not mean the samples match because the selection procedure ensured all children, but not necessarily their parents, used the internet. Around 82% of parents of 9-12 year olds (kids = 62%) and 75% of parents of 13-16 year olds (kids = 90%) use the internet daily or almost daily.**
- Although SES differences in whether children use the internet daily are small, they are substantially larger for their parents: 86% of high SES parents, but just 74% of medium and 49% of low SES parents use the internet every, or nearly every, day.

The fact that older Australian children use the internet more frequently than their parents, as do children from lower SES homes, should be borne in mind when asking how parents mediate their children's internet use.

However, **less than 7% of the Australian parents interviewed were non-internet users, suggesting that in recent years parents may have made considerable efforts to get online and 'keep up' with their children.**

Previous research has revealed a considerable generation gap, with parents reporting more mediating activities than are recognised by their children³¹. 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 Australian parents 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.

Table 17 examines supportive forms of active mediation and co-use by parents, as reported by the child.

Table 17: 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	68	70	69	59	67
Stay nearby when you use the internet	73	74	54	52	63
Encourage you to explore and learn things on the internet on your own	49	48	42	36	44
Sit with you while you use the internet	46	41	43	31	40
Do shared activities together with you on the internet	45	47	31	31	38
One or more of these	89	96	94	86	91

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

Base: All children who use the internet.

- **Most Australian parents talk to their children about what they do on the internet (67%), making this, as in Europe generally, the most popular way to actively mediate children's internet use.**
- Second most popular mediation is staying nearby (63%), and third is encouraging the child to explore and learn things on the internet (44%). This and the other strategies are adopted by around two parents in five.
- **Overall, it seems there is a fair amount of general positive mediation taking place. These findings for Australia (91%) are a little higher than the 25 nation average (overall, 87% of European child respondents report one or more of these activities by parents).**

- Gender differences are often small in the European sample, and this is also the case with Australian kids, aged 9-12, although parents seems slightly more likely to say they sit with their son while he uses the internet. Apart from doing more shared activities online with both older boys and girls, Australian parents are more likely to mediate their teenage sons' internet use.
- **For most strategies, as in the European study generally, parents carry out more active mediation of younger children's use of the internet.**
- **Notably, about one in ten parents (9%) never engage in any of these forms of mediation, according to their children.**

Table 18: 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	4	5	29	62
Stay nearby when you use the internet	17	12	20	51
Encourage you to explore and learn things on the internet on your own	25	9	31	35
Sit with you while you use the internet	37	11	23	29
Do shared activities together with you on the internet	40	8	22	30

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.

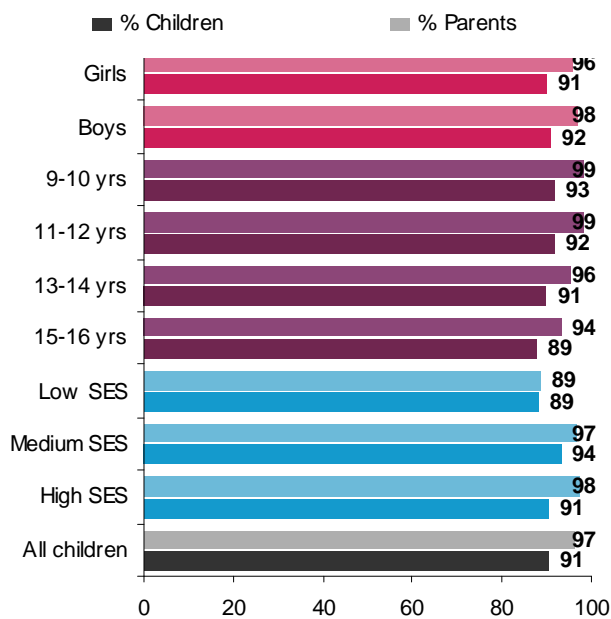
Table 18 compares the accounts of parents and children, examining the relation between the child's answers (yes, their parent does mediate or no, they don't) and those of their parent.

- In 20-31% of cases, parents claim a mediating practice that their child does not acknowledge (see third column). There could be a social desirability effect on the part of parents who wish to appear 'good'. Or, parents may be more aware of practices that their children might not notice or might forget.

- Interestingly, in 5-12% of cases, the child perceives parental mediation that the parent themselves does not report (second column). This may arise because children may wish to represent their parents as doing more than they do; or they may notice a practice that is so routine for the parent that it goes unnoticed.
- Adding the percentages in the second and third column suggests that **up to 40% of parents and children disagree about whether these different forms of mediation are taking place, depending on the strategy. Therefore, in about three homes in five, they agree. This ratio is a little less than that in the European study, where about seven in ten agree.**

To show demographic differences, Figure 21 is based on the row, 'One of more of these' responses in Table 17 – i.e. it combines the various forms of active mediation.

Figure 21: 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.

- Active mediation by parents is highest for young children and reduces as children grow older: 93% of parents do one of more of the activities shown in Table 17 in relation to their 9-10 year olds, according to the child, dropping to 89% for 15-16 year olds.
- Perhaps most notable is that even for the oldest group, almost 9 in 10 parents pursue some forms of active mediation with their teenagers.

- **There are few differences for sons and daughters, and differences by SES are also small.**

How does Australia compare to other countries?

- The pan-European report found that, overall, levels of active mediation range from 98% of parents in the Netherlands who engage in one or more forms of active mediation, down to 73% in Turkey, according to children. At 91%, active mediation of internet use in Australia is similar to the level for many other countries.

Table 21 examines the child's perception of the role their parents play in helping keep them safe online.

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

% who say that their parent does...	9-12 years		13-16 years		All
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
Helped you when something is difficult to do or find on the internet	83	88	75	71	79
Explained why some websites are good or bad	72	78	80	67	74
Suggested ways to use the internet safely	76	78	72	76	75
Suggested ways to behave towards other people online	60	75	69	64	44
Helped you in the past when something has bothered you on the internet	41	51	35	48	67
Talked to you about what to do if something on the internet bothered you	57	72	61	67	64
One or more of these	94	99	95	90	94

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

Base: All children who use the internet.

These children recognise their parents as involved in keeping them safe online.

- **Helping when something is difficult to do or find (79%), suggesting how to use the internet safely (75%) and explaining why websites are good or bad (74%), are all common strategies of safety mediation, used by three in four Australian parents.**
- **Less than half of Australian parents suggest how their child should behave towards others online (44%), while 67% have helped their child if something online bothered them, and 64% have discussed with their child ways in which they can respond to things that might bother them online.**

Children's and parents' answers are compared in Table 20.

Table 20: Parent's active mediation of the child's internet safety, according to child and parent

% who say that their parents sometimes...	Child		Parent	
	no	yes	no	yes
Helped you when something is difficult to do or find on the internet	9	12	11	67
Explained why some websites are good or bad	7	7	19	67
Suggested ways to use the internet safely	8	14	16	61
Suggested ways to behave towards other people online	15	13	18	54
Helped you in the past when something has bothered you on the internet	39	16	16	29
Talked to you about what to do if something on the internet bothered you	16	13	19	52

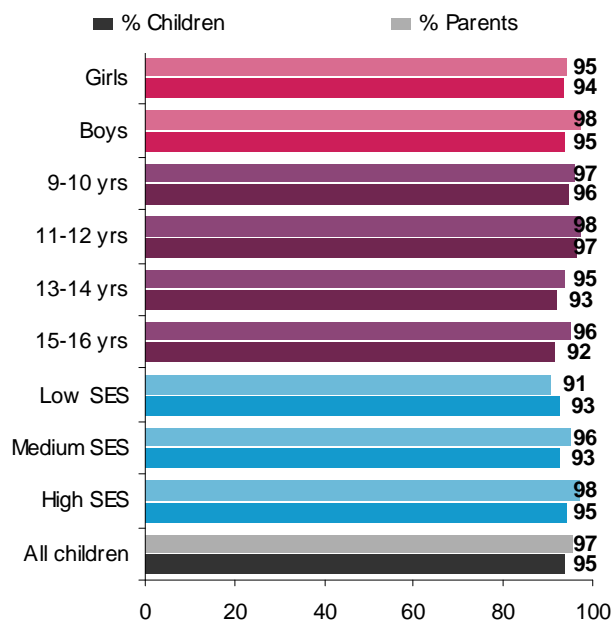
QC329 and QP222: Has your parent/either of your parents [have you] ever done any of these things with you [your child]?

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.**
- Parents and children disagree between about a quarter and a third of the time, depending on the strategy, with parents a little more likely to over-claim compared with their children.

Figure 22 shows the demographic differences in parental mediation of the child's internet safety.

Figure 22: Parent's active mediation of the child's internet safety, according to child and parent



QC329 and QP222: Has your parent/either of your parents [have you] ever done any of these things with you [your child]?

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

- There are few gender differences in parental safety mediation.
- Parents mediate a little more for younger children and a bit less for older children.
- Differences are small, but higher SES parents are more likely to say they engage in safety mediation.

Looking across Europe, although there is a wide range in parents' safety mediation practices, the Netherlands has the highest rate (98% of parents mediate children's internet safety, according to their children) and Turkey, the lowest (73%). At 95%, Australia would be second in a ranking of countries in terms of parents actively mediating their children's safety online.

In addition to active mediation, which both enables opportunities and enhances safety, parents have long been advised to set rules or restrictions in order to manage their child's internet use. These may be simple bans such telling the child they are not permitted to undertake a particular online activity, or they may be partial restrictions such as permitting the child to do that activity only under supervision. Both these were treated as measures of restrictive mediation, compared with children for whom no restrictions apply (Table 21).

Table 21: 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	95	100	83	79	89
Download music or films on the internet	89	91	42	32	63
Upload photos, videos or music to share with others	84	83	36	34	59
Have your own social networking profile	72	75	26	27	49
Use instant messaging	73	71	25	21	47
Watch video clips on the internet	54	64	20	19	39
One or more of these	99	99	83	83	91

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 21 shows that **parents impose most rules in relation to the child's disclosure of personal information online: 89% of Australian children say that they are either not allowed to do 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 downloading material (63%) and uploading material (59%), though possibly this reflects rules in cases where photos or videos are of the children themselves. In the European study generally, 57% of children are restricting in their downloading activities.
- Roughly one in two Australian children (49%) are restricted in their use of social networking sites, 47% are restricted in their use of instant messaging, and 39% experience rules around watching video clips.

- Gender differences vary by type of mediation. They are relatively small for disclosing personal information but younger girls generally experience more rules than do younger boys, while teenage boys face more rules than teenage girls.
- Across all areas of internet use, younger children face more parental restrictions.**

Table 22: 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	3	7	0	88
Download music or films on the internet	28	9	12	51
Upload photos, videos or music to share with others	27	14	6	53
Have your own social networking profile	39	12	6	43
Use instant messaging	44	10	7	39
Watch video clips on the internet	45	16	9	30

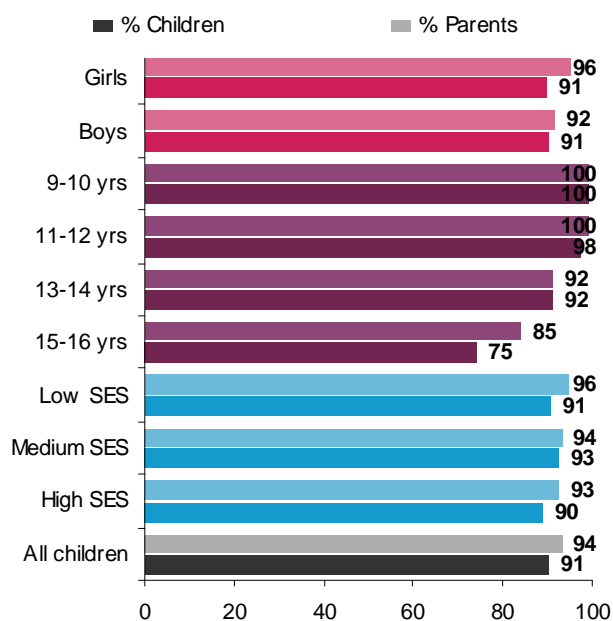
QC328 and QP221: For each of these things, please tell me if your parents CURRENTLY let you [your child is allowed to] do them whenever you want, or let you do them but only with your parent's permission or supervision, or NEVER let you do them.

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 22 shows that there is more agreement between parents and children about whether rules exist – 91% (i.e. 3% + 88%) – regarding rules related to giving out personal information, dropping to 75% in the case of watching video clips.

Figure 23: 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.

- Compared with the various forms of active mediation (see Figure 21), **the decline in restrictive mediation with age is more dramatic, falling from 100% for 9-10 year old Australian child respondents facing such rules, to 75% for 15-16 year olds.**
- The majority of Australian teenagers are expected to follow rules when using the internet. According to parents, girls are slightly more restricted than boys, but the difference is only 4%. There is very little difference by SES.
- Looking across the 25 European countries the range of restrictions, according to the child, varies from 93% in Portugal and Ireland down to 54% in Lithuania – indicating that country differences in restrictive mediation are substantial.
- At 91% Australia would be relatively high up this list, joint fourth with France and Cyprus, behind Germany (92%, third) and Ireland and Portugal (93%, first). **Thus Australian parents are generally more likely than their counterparts in Europe to impose restrictions on their children's internet use.**

Given that a computer keeps a digital record of the sites it has accessed, it is comparatively easy for parents to check their children's internet activities during (or after) their time online. Monitoring as a means of overseeing children's online activities can raise issues of trust between parents and children. Consequently, monitoring is generally less favoured as a mediation strategy than restrictive mediation, even though restrictions can lead to arguments between parents and their children³².

Table 23: 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	61	62	49	42	53
Your profile on a social network or online community	60	61	48	42	49
Which friends or contacts you add to social networking profile	46	56	29	35	38
The messages in your email or instant messaging account	41	28	15	8	18
One or more of these	54	64	60	60	59

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

Base: All children who use the internet at home.

- Monitoring strategies are adopted by almost three in five Australian parents, making this fairly common and yet the least favoured strategy by comparison with positive support, safety guidance or making rules about internet use (as in the European study generally).**
- Checking which websites children visit is the most common form of monitoring (53%) in Australia, perhaps reflecting the relative ease of doing this.
- Checking social networking profiles (49%) or the friends who are added to those profiles (38%) is a little less common, though still more practised than actually checking the content of children's messages.
- Some gender and age differences are striking. **Younger girls are monitored more than younger boys, apart from parents checking the contents of boys' messages. Teenage boys are monitored more than teenage girls, except for the friends that girls add to their SNS profiles.**

Table 24: Parent’s monitoring of the child’s internet use, according to child and parent

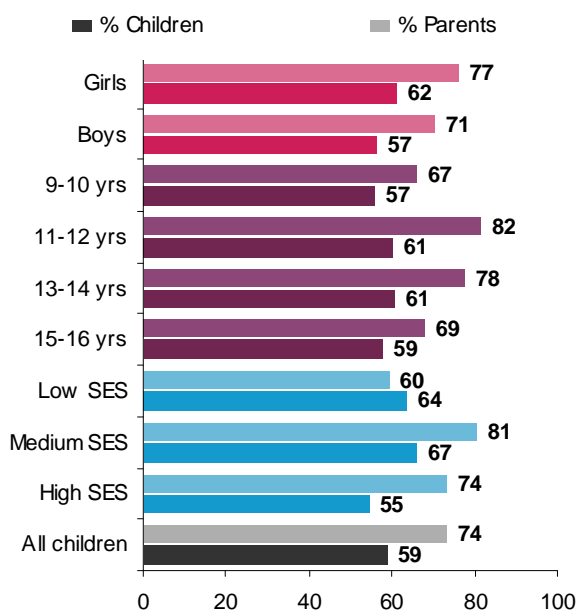
% who say parents check...	Child no parent no	Child yes parent no	Child no parent yes	Child yes parent yes
Which websites you visited	28	11	19	41
Your profile on a social network or online community	31	8	19	43
Which friends or contacts you add to social networking profile	41	9	21	29
The messages in your email or instant messaging account	63	5	20	13

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 24, it can be seen that **Australian 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 21% of Australian parents who say they monitor their child’s SNS contacts when their child says they do not, it may be that children simply do not know what monitoring their parents undertake.
- As with other mediation activities, parents are more likely than their children to claim that they do certain things, rather than their children saying that their parents do something that the parents themselves claim that they do not do.

Figure 24: Parent’s monitoring of the child’s internet use, according to child and parent



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

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

- Figure 24 reveals less monitoring of 9-10 year old Australians, a peak at 11-12 years, then a decline in monitoring as children grow older: 82% of the parents of 11-12 year olds say they use one or more forms of monitoring, but only 69% do so for 15-16 year olds.
- Parents from lower SES homes are less likely to say they monitor their children.

Country differences, as detailed in the cross-national report, are substantial, ranging from 61% of parents monitoring children’s activities in one or more ways in Poland, according to the child, down to 26% doing this in Lithuania. At 59% Australia would be high up this list as Australian parents monitor their children more than parents in many other countries, according to their children. Parents generally report more monitoring than their children do, but at 74% Australia would be fourth in a combined 26 country ranking (after Norway, Poland and Ireland).

For the internet in particular, ‘parental tools’ have been developed as technical solutions to the challenge of parental mediation. Thus, finally, parents and children were asked if the parents use any technical means to monitor what the child does online (Table 25).

Table 25: 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	74	73	80	80	78
Parental controls or other means of keeping track of the websites you visit	57	54	31	27	36
Parental controls or other means of blocking or filtering some types of website	50	34	29	34	35
A service or contract that limits the time you spend on the internet	28	21	19	20	21
One or more of these	83	68	85	84	81

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 (78%) does not relate to children's safety concerns, but rather to security, being used to control spam and viruses (Table 25).** This is the same pattern as in Europe.
- Beyond this, use of technical tools is lower, especially by comparison with other parental mediation strategies. Still, **over one third of Australian parents (35%) say they block or filter websites, and a similar proportion track the websites visited by their child (36%), as reported by children.** Both of these percentages are higher than in Europe generally (28% and 24% respectively).
- Younger children face more technical restrictions, apart from the use of software to prevent spam, junk mail and viruses.
- **It seems children and parents largely agree over whether parents use technical tools to mediate their children's internet use (Table 26).**

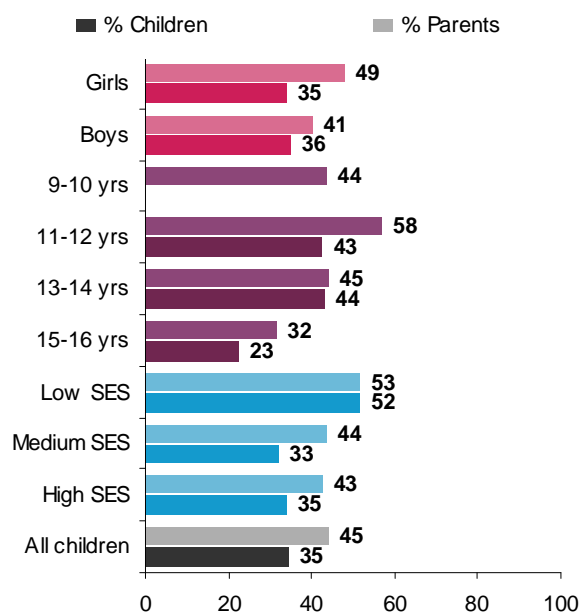
Table 26: Parents' technical mediation of the child's internet use, according to child and parent

% 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	5	5	16	74
Parental controls or other means of keeping track of the websites you visit	49	8	15	28
Parental controls or other means of blocking or filtering some types of website	51	7	15	28
A service or contract that limits the time you spend on the internet	69	8	10	13

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 25: 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.

Figure 25 presents the demographic findings solely relating to parental use of filtering technology (the third row from Table 26).

- **Parents claim to use controls to filter or block the sites their child can visit somewhat more than their children believe happens (45% vs. 35%).**
- Boys claim to have their internet use blocked or filtered slightly more than girls claim this (36% vs. 35%).
- Apart from 9-10 year olds, filtering tools are used less for older children – and they are used by just under a quarter (23%) of parents of 15-16 year olds, according to their children (Figure 25).
- **Looking across the European study countries, UK parents top the rankings for their use of filtering technology. UK parents also filter more than Australian parents. According to parents, Australia (45%) would be third, after the UK (54%) and Ireland (48%). Australia would be sixth according to children (35%), behind the UK (46%), Ireland (41%), Turkey and France (both 38%) and the Netherlands (37%). The 25 nation average is 33% (according to parents; 45% in Australia) and 28% (according to children; 35% in Australia).**

6.2 Judging parental mediation

Does parental mediation work? *EU Kids Online* has observed that, while it is difficult to be sure that mediation works in terms of reducing children’s exposure to risk and experience of harm, parents and children can be asked whether they think that what parents do makes a difference. For this reason, parents and children were asked to judge the effectiveness of parental mediation, hoping to throw some light on what seems to work and, if mediation 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.

The survey asked children and parents whether parental mediation activities are generally helpful or not (Table 27). **Both children and parents consider parental mediation helpful to some degree. Almost three-quarters of Australian children (74%) say it helps a lot or a little; in line with the 25 nation European average.**

Table 27: 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	38	44	18
	Parent says	38	44	18
13-16 years	Child says	13	53	34
	Parent says	40	32	28
All children	Child says	25	49	26
	Parent says	39	38	23

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.

- 9-12 year olds are more positive about what their parents do, perhaps reflecting their relative lack of skills. For them, parental mediation may indeed be more helpful.
- Parents in general are inclined to think their mediation is more helpful than their children think.

Why, overall, might a quarter of Australian children find parental mediation very helpful (25%), almost a half find it a little helpful (49%), and just over a quarter consider it not helpful (26%)? The *EU Kids Online* survey pursued several possibilities, 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 28: 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	48	59	24	33	41
Quite a bit	33	27	52	30	36
Just a little	18	12	23	34	22
Nothing	1	2	1	3	2

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 28 shows that **just over three quarters of Australian children (77%) think their parents know a lot or quite a bit about their child's internet use, a slightly higher percentage than in the European study (68%), while only 2% claim that their parent knows nothing.**
- Younger children are more likely to think their parents know more, in line with the finding that parents of 11-12 year olds mediate their experiences more than they do older children.
- Girls are more inclined than boys to think that their parents know a lot.

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 feel confident that they can help their child deal with anything on the internet that bothers them, and they may also feel that their child is themselves better able to cope with their online experiences than is the case.

Table 29: 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	10	41	48
Parents of children aged 13 to 16 years	3	14	35	49
Parents of all children	2	12	38	48

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	12	16	57	16
Parents of children aged 13 to 16 years	1	12	51	36
Parents of all children	6	14	54	26

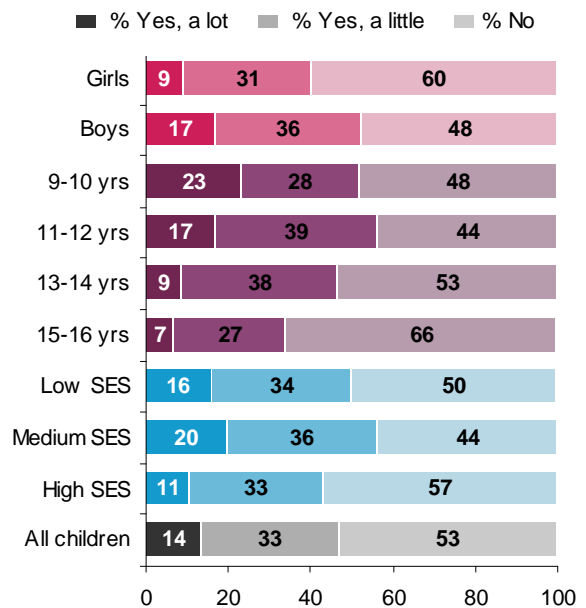
QP233: To what extent, if at all, do you feel you are able to help your child to deal with anything on the internet that bothers them?
 QP234: To what extent, if at all, do you think your child is able to deal with things on the internet that bothers them?

Base: Parents whose child uses the internet.

- Table 29 shows that **the great majority of parents (86%) are confident about their role, feeling that they can help their child a lot, or a fair amount, if the latter encounters something that bothers them online.**
- Regardless of the child's age, almost half of Australian parents (48%) are inclined to say they can help a lot.
- Parents are also confident in their child's ability to cope with things online that may bother them, with four fifths (80%) 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 the parent's activities limit what the child can do online (Figure 26).

Figure 26: 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.

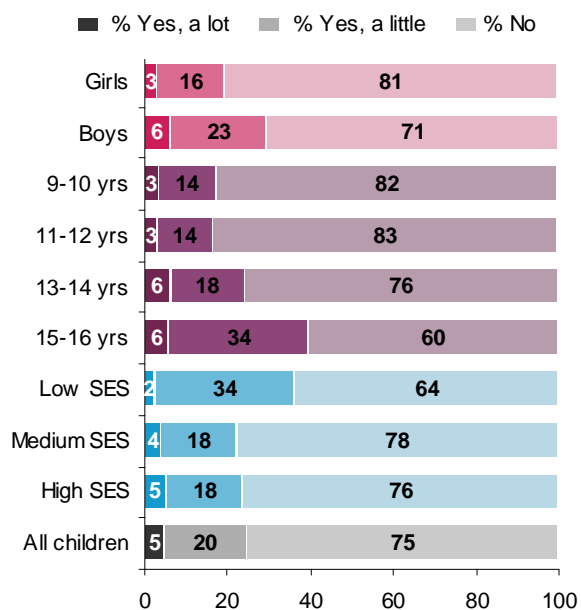
- Figure 26 shows that **almost one in two Australian children (47%) think that parental mediation limits what they do online; 14% say it limits their activities a lot.**

- As might be expected, given greater parental mediation, 11-12 year old children are more likely to say it limits them, while more 9-10 year olds believe that it limits them a lot. It is worth noting, however, that the opposite result might have been predicted, namely that teenagers would feel more restricted by parental activities than would younger children.
- Boys are more inclined to think that mediation limits them a lot or a little compared to girls (52% vs. 40%).
- Children in some countries feel rather more restricted by parental mediation (e.g. in Turkey [61%], Ireland [51%] and Bulgaria [51%]) than in others (e.g. Hungary [16%], and the Netherlands [24%]). At 47%, Australian children would rank at joint sixth (with Italy and Spain) in feeling limited by parental mediation.

Examining any association between the reported amount of parental mediation and children's sense of being restricted is a task for a future *EU Kids Online* report.

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

Figure 27: 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.

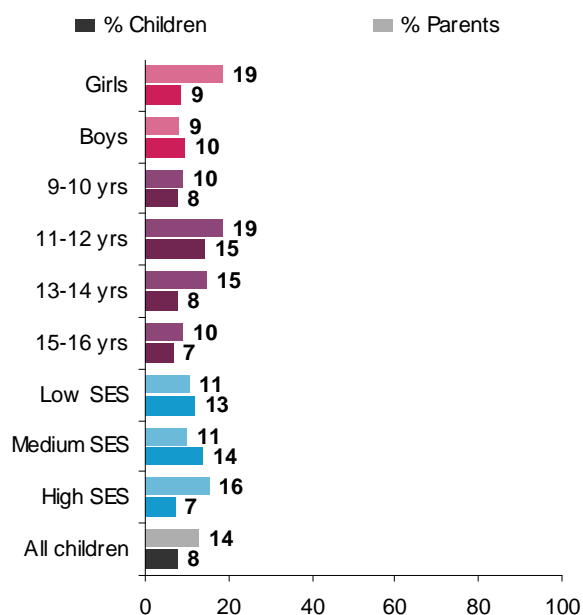
- Figure 27 shows that **for many children, parental mediation is seen to have some effect. Three quarters of Australian children (75%) say they do not simply ignore it, which is some eleven percentage points higher than the European average (64%). However, 20% say they ignore**

their parents' mediation efforts a little and 5% of Australian children say they ignore their parents' mediation a lot.

- 15-16 year olds are most likely to say they ignore what their parents do or say about their internet use, 34% saying they ignore it a little.
- Girls are less likely to claim they ignore their parents' mediation, which is similar to the European pattern.

Whether effective or not, there is clearly a considerable amount of parental mediation of different kinds being practised in Australian families. In a cross-sectional survey, it is not possible to determine whether this mediation reduces the risk of harm to children online. Indeed, it is possible that parents' mediating activities are a response to problematic experiences in the past. Or it may be that parents do what they do because they anticipate future problems, and seek to prevent them. The *EU Kids Online* survey asked both children and parents about this possibility.

Figure 28: 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 28 shows that **only 14% of Australian parents claim that they mediate differently because of something that had bothered the child in the past. Just 8% of children give this as an explanation of their parent's current mediation.**
- 19% of Australian 11-12 year olds claimed that parents mediate differently because of a past event, and this may explain the increased rates of mediation evident in Figures 24 and 25.
- High SES children are half as likely as other children to say their parent is doing something differently.
- Looking at variation across the European study, 18% of children claim their parents mediate differently because of something that upset them in Estonia, compared with 3% in Hungary. Claims by parents reveal even greater national variation, from 29% in Turkey to 5% in Greece. Australia lies in the middle of the range, close to the 25 nation average of 6% (Australia is 8%) claimed by children; 15% by parents (Australia is 14%).

It may not be past problems, but rather the anticipation of future problems, that stimulates parents to mediate their children's internet use. Table 30 shows parental anticipation of future problems around internet use that lie ahead for their children.

Table 30: 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	27	16	24	16	21
Not very likely	42	43	43	52	45
Fairly likely	25	31	26	21	25
Very likely	6	10	7	11	8

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 30 suggests **two thirds of Australian parents are confident (66%) that it is not very, or at all, likely that their child will encounter anything that bothers them online in the next six months.**
- However, 33% think it fairly, or very, likely that their child will experience something that bothers them online in the next six months.**
- There is a gender and age effect - the proportion of parents who think it is fairly or very likely that girls aged 9-12 may experience something that will bother them (41%) is higher than same-aged boys (31%),

whereas their concern for older girls decreases in the 'fairly likely' category (31% declining to 21%), while other cohorts remain broadly equivalent.

- The 25 nation findings indicate few age or gender differences.

Last, we explored 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 31: 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	10	10	4	7	8
A little more	16	12	5	11	11
Stay the same	61	73	76	74	71
A little less	11	4	11	7	8
A lot less	2	1	4	1	2

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

Base: All children who use the internet.

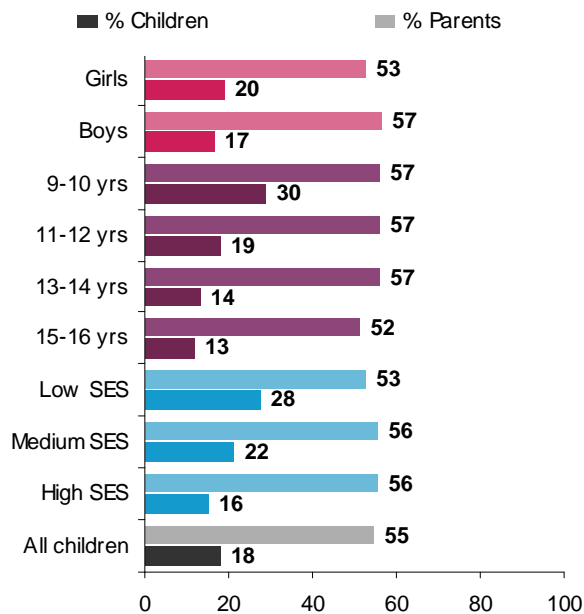
- Table 31 shows that **for most Australian children (71%), and slightly more for teenagers, parents have got it about right, according to their children. These children think the level of parental interest in their online activities should stay the around same.**
- 19% would like their parents to do a little or a lot more, however. On the other hand, some 10% would like their parents to do rather less.**
- These findings are broadly in line with the European study average.

Figure 29 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.

- 18% of children would like their parents to take more of an interest in their internet use, while 55% 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 (30%).**

- Gender differences are small. The lower the SES level, the more the children would like their parents to take more interest. This is in line with the European study pattern, where children from lower SES homes wish for more interest, and where there seems little difference between parents according to SES levels.

Figure 29: 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. Australian children are towards the top third of this ranking (joint seventh) in desiring more input from parents.
- Parents take a different view, and their views show little relation to their children's wishes. Thus parents in Cyprus, Romania, Bulgaria, Norway, Greece and Turkey, think they should do more; while parents in

Austria, the Netherlands and Germany are least likely to think this. At 55%, Australian parental desire to do more is a little higher than the European study average (53%).

6.3 Teachers

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

One question was 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?').³³ Then we asked about mediation of internet safety, using questions also asked of parents (Table 31).

- 97% of children say their teachers have done at least one of the forms of active mediation asked about. This is substantially higher than the European average of 73% and makes Australia top of a combined 26 country ranking for reported teacher mediation.
- Over four in five AU children think their teachers have engaged with their internet use in terms of suggesting ways to use the internet safely (74%), helping them when something was difficult to find or do (79%) and explaining why some websites are good or bad (30%).
- Over four fifths (83%) had talked to children about what to do if something bothered them, and over two thirds (70%) say their teachers have helped when something bothered them on the internet. As with other findings, this is substantially higher than the 24% reported by European study children overall.

Table 32: 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	66	78	74	81	74
Explained why some websites are good or bad	33	41	22	26	30
Helped you when something is difficult to do or find on the internet	80	86	73	75	79
Suggested ways to behave towards other people online	66	73	75	84	75
Talked to you about what to do if something on the internet bothered you	80	83	80	90	83
Helped you in the past when something has bothered you on the internet	70	67	66	79	70
One or more forms of active mediation	97	98	96	96	97
Made rules about what you can do on the internet at school	97	96	96	90	95
Talked to you about what you do on the internet	69	77	74	78	74
One or more of all of the above	98	99	96	99	98

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

Base: All children who use the internet.

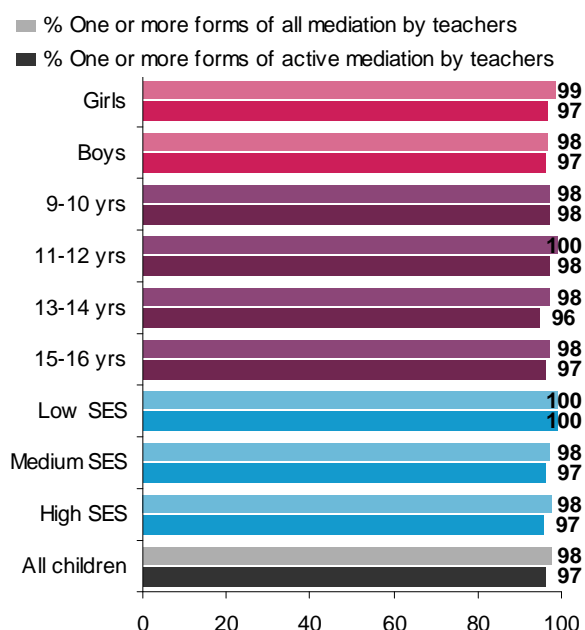
- Older children and younger children report equivalent mediation by teachers, indicating little further scope for mediation in Australian schools. This differs from Europe, where one in ten children who use the internet has received no guidance or advice from their teachers.

There are some gender differences, but this depends on age and the particular form of mediation. Older girls are more likely than older boys to say that teachers have helped them in the past when something has bothered them (79% vs. 66%), talked about what to do if something on the internet bothered them (90% vs. 80%) and how to behave towards others online (84% vs. 75%). Turning to the bottom section of Table 32, above, which focuses on active mediation, nearly all children (98%) say that teachers have made rules about what they can do on the internet at school. By comparison, only 62% of children across the 25 nation study say teachers make such rules.

- Almost three in four Australian children (74%) say their teachers talk to them about what they do on the internet, more for older children. This is better than in Europe, where 53% of kids say this.

Figure 30 reveals few differences by gender, age or SES in children's experience of mediation of the internet by teachers.

Figure 30: 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.

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 regarding children's friends (see Table 33).

Table 33: 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	69	72	80	79	75
Explained why some websites are good or bad	40	32	40	47	39
Helped you in the past when something has bothered you on the internet	25	37	29	56	37
Suggested ways to behave towards other people online	26	27	38	43	33
Suggested ways to use the internet safely	29	29	34	36	32
One or more of all of the above	80	76	83	88	82

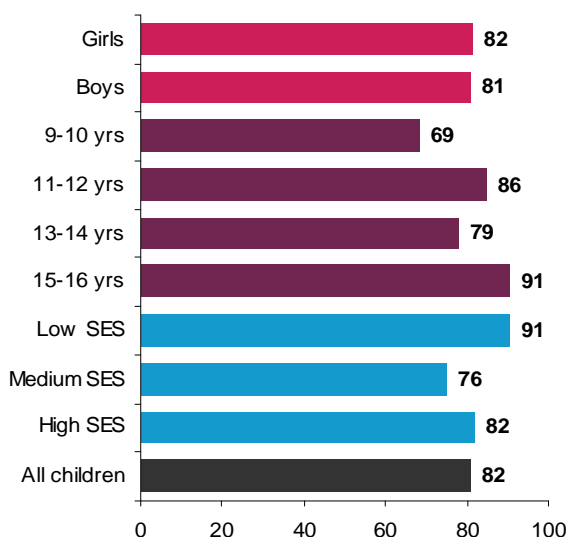
QC336: Have your friends ever done any of these things? (Multiple responses allowed)

Base: All children who use the internet.

- Over four fifths (82%) of Australian children say their peers have helped or supported their internet use in at least one of the five ways asked about (Table 33).
- As was found for teachers, this suggests that children do consider other children supportive in general, more so in the case of older children.

- Friends are much more likely to mediate in a practical way, helping each other to do or find something when there is a difficulty (75%). Fewer say that friends help when they are bothered by something (37%), but this may reflect the fact that few are bothered. When children are bothered by something online, more turn to a teacher (70%) than to a parent (67%), or a friend (37%).
- Compared with help from teachers, it seems that friends of Australian kids are much less likely to give safety (32% vs. 74%), or ethical, advice (33% vs. 75%).
- Younger Australian boys report more peer mediation than do younger girls (80% vs. 76%), while older girls report more peer mediation than do older boys (88% vs. 83%).
- Specifically, older Australian girls claim more than older boys that friends help when something on the internet has bothered them (56% vs. 29%); and explain why some websites are good or bad (47% girls vs. 40% boys); and suggest ways to behave towards other people online (43% girls vs. 38% boys). Older boys and girls are more or less equivalent in asking friends for help when something is difficult to do or find on the internet (boys 80% vs. girls 79%) and in asking friends to suggest ways to use the internet safely (boys 34% vs. girls 36%).

Figure 31: Peer mediation of child's internet use, according to child



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

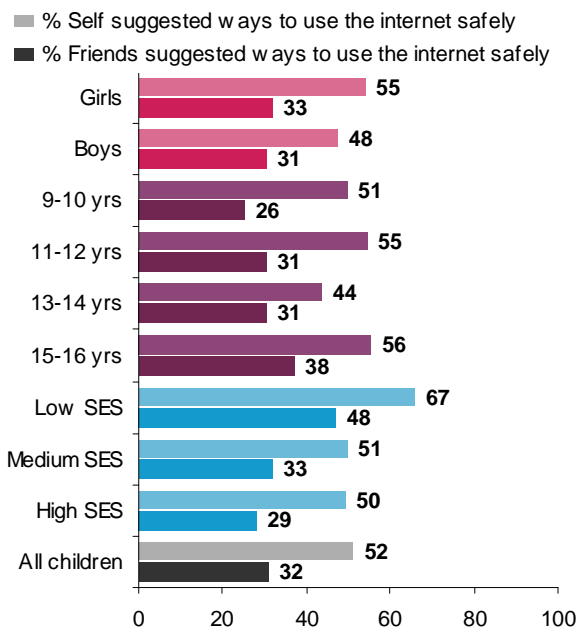
Base: All children who use the internet.

- Figure 31 indicates that looking across age groups, and types of mediation, peer support is equivalent for boys and girls.
- It reaffirms the finding that older children think their friends mediate more, the exception being the drop in mediation for 13-14 year olds.

The overall European study average is 73% of children say their friends help in term of one or more of the types of mediation asked about. The Australian finding is higher, at 82%, placing it in the company of many Scandinavian and Baltic countries: Finland and Estonia (tie first, 86%), Czech Republic (85%), Germany, Sweden and Norway (tie fourth, 83%), Australia and Belgium (tie seventh, 82%). France is at the bottom of the ranking (63%). **Thus it seems that Australian children rely more on peer support than in many other countries.**

EU Kids Online argues that, distinctively, peer mediation can work both ways. Thus children were also asked if they help their friends in similar ways with online matters, specifically as regards how to use the internet safely.

Figure 32: 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 32% of Australian children say they have received some guidance on safe internet use from their friends, 52% say that they have also provided such advice to their friends** (Figure 32).
- Australian girls report that they are more likely to help friends in this particular respect (55% vs. boys 48%).
- Older children both help and are helped by friends in terms of suggesting how to be safe online, with a drop for 15-16 year olds. 13-14 year olds children say they support others more than they themselves benefit from such help.
- Considerable national differences are evident in the degree of peer support reported. In a combined list of the 26 countries ordered in terms of children suggesting to their friends how to use the internet safely, Australia would come second (after Cyprus, 54%), with 52% saying they have provided help to friends. In the Netherlands (32%), Slovenia (31%), Belgium (29%), and France (28%), fewer than one in three children report helping friends. The differences are greater for children who say they receive advice from their friends on using the internet safely – 32% in Australia compared with 44% (average) across the 25 countries. Germany is highest at 73% vs. Netherlands lowest at 17%, and Australia is in bottom third at 32%.

6.5 Parent, teacher and peer mediation compared

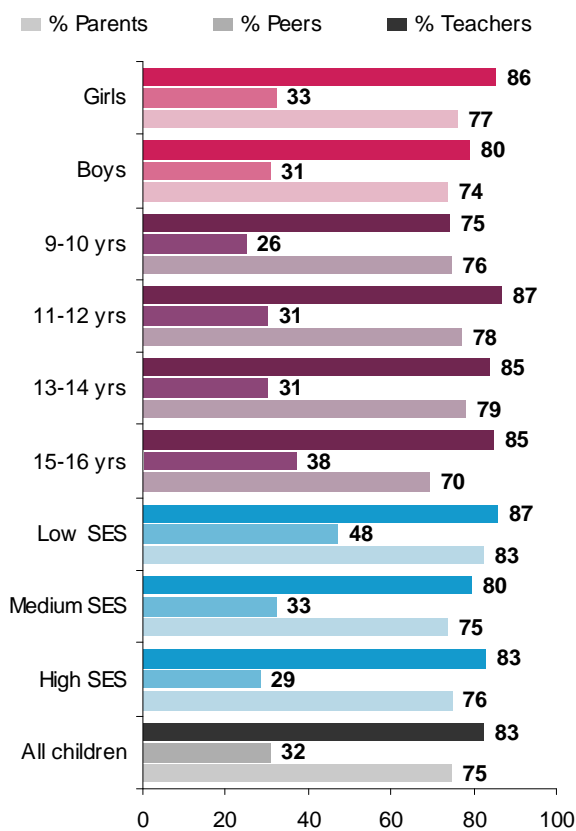
In designing the questionnaire, for reasons of both interview length and question repetition (which is useful for making comparisons but boring for the child respondent), not all questions were asked of all forms of mediation. **One question was repeated across all the contexts discussed above: have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

Figure 33 compares children's receipt of internet safety advice from parents, teachers and peers.

- **It seems that, for Australian children, internet safety advice is received first from teachers (83%), then parents (75%), then peers (32%), whereas the 25 European countries generally have parents, then teachers, then peers.**
- While the order is the same for boys and girls, boys are less likely to say that other people have suggested ways to use the internet safely.
- There is little difference between teachers and parents for the 9-10 year olds. Differences are more noticeable from ages 11-12 onwards, with parental influence waning for the 15-16 year olds.

- There is little difference in relative support from teachers or parents according to SES ranking, although Australian peers from lower SES homes are more likely to support their friends (48% [low] vs. 33% [medium] vs. 29% [high]).
- While in most of the 26 countries involved in this research parents give more advice, in the UK and Portugal, as in Australia, teachers give more safety advice; in Italy and Romania peers (after parents) give more advice than teachers; and in Germany it is peers who give the most advice.

Figure 33: 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 34.

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

Table 34: Children's sources of advice on internet safety (other than parents, teachers or friends)

% Source	9-12 years		13-16 years		All
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
Other relative	61	66	45	55	57
Television, radio, newspapers or magazines	27	29	34	45	34
Librarian	28	22	14	24	22
Someone whose job is to give advice over the internet	21	20	16	29	22
Websites	11	14	26	25	19
Internet service provider	2	7	20	13	11
Youth or church or social worker	9	3	15	15	11
I haven't received advice from any of these	29	24	18	17	22

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 (57%) are important in providing advice to children on the safe use of the internet.**
- One in three Australian kids gets safety advice from traditional media (34%), more than from websites (19%).
- 22% of Australian children receive advice from online advisors, more than twice as many as in Europe (9%).
- 22% of Australian kids also get help from librarians. Rather fewer get advice from websites (19%), youth workers (or similar) or internet service providers (both 11%).

- Older children get more advice from traditional media, youth/church/social workers, websites and internet service providers; younger ones use relatives and librarians.
- Australian girls are more likely than boys to say they receive advice from other relatives and from traditional media, librarians and youth/church/social workers. Older girls receive more than older boys from librarians and from people whose job it is to give help over the internet, while older boys are more likely to turn to an internet service provider.
- Interestingly, in Table 34, **more than one in five children (22%) report that they have not received safety guidance from any of these sources, and younger children, especially boys, report receiving less advice than do teenagers.**
- These percentages are better than in the 25 European countries, where 34% of children report receiving no safety guidance from these sources.

Similar questions were 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, so as to focus future awareness-raising activities (Table 35 and Table 36).

- Table 35 indicates that **Australian parents receive internet safety advice first and foremost from family and friends, and from their child's school (58%), then from traditional media (42%), government and local authorities (34%), internet service providers (32%), and websites (30%); while one in four (25%) say they get safety advice from their child.**
- Those with the youngest children (9-10 years) seem not to have a preferred source of safety advice. This is the age group where least mediation is practiced in Australia, with a jump in mediation in the 11-12 year olds, indicating a possible benefit for bolstering services targeting advice for parents of younger children.
- About one in twenty parents (4%) reports getting no advice from any of these sources.

Table 35: 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	56	59	59	57	58
Your child's school	45	71	61	55	58
Television, radio, newspapers or magazines	41	38	47	41	42
Government, local authorities	28	37	37	35	34
Internet service providers	18	35	36	36	32
Websites with safety information	30	29	29	32	30
From my child	16	21	31	33	25
Other sources	15	19	22	18	19
Manufacturers and retailers selling the products	18	16	23	15	18
Children's welfare organisations/charities	10	11	9	8	9
None, I don't get any information about this	3	4	1	6	4

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.

- When asked where they would like to get advice from in the future (Table 36), the child's school is the most popular choice for parents at 65%, with government and local authorities (55%), safety websites (47%), traditional media (44%) and internet service providers (43%) all coming before family and friends (37%).
- Almost no Australian parents (1%) say they do not want further information on internet safety.**

Table 36: 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	65	70	72	55	65
Government, local authorities	51	52	58	60	55
Websites with safety information	47	51	51	39	47
Television, radio, newspapers or magazines	46	41	52	37	44
Internet service providers	36	50	48	37	43
Family and friends	46	37	37	30	37
Manufacturers and retailers selling the products	35	31	38	20	31
From my child	23	24	32	22	25
Children's welfare organisations/charities	21	29	28	22	25
Other sources	22	18	18	10	17
None, I don't want more information about this	1	1	1	2	1

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. CONCLUSION

Smart handheld devices allow Australian children to access the internet from wherever they are. Compared with the children in the *EU Kids Online* study, Australian children are more likely to have access to mobile digital devices for going online. This is especially true for teenagers and children in higher SES families. Figure 42 underlines the differences. Whereas 46% of Australian children say they access the internet via a smart handheld device other than a basic mobile phone, this is true of only 12% of European children. The next highest countries are Norway (31%) and the UK (26%). Mobility of access provides a new context for policy development, and for the many stakeholders working to support children's online opportunities while protecting them from harm.

A focus on younger children. As children go online at younger ages, so it becomes increasingly imperative to develop policy initiatives to help them keep safe. While support for older children remains important, campaigns should be developed to target primary school students. Children in the 9-10 year old age group are willing to defer to others: 62% say they do not know more than their parents about the internet, and 30% say they would like their parents to take more interest in what they do online (Figure 29). This provides an opportunity for parents and teachers to become more involved with helping younger children gain the skills they need to stay safe. There is a comparative lack of research with 5-8 year olds, but Australian parents need alerting to the risks younger children face. Given that many 11-12 year olds do receive active parental mediation, but that this is less true for 9-10 year olds (Figures 25 and 25), the challenge is urgent.

Are safer internet initiatives working? The overall relatively high levels of online risk experienced by Australian children, in line with children from Scandinavian and Baltic nations, suggests that the considerable efforts towards teaching protective skills and promoting online safety have not necessarily reached their targets. Even so, Australian children have learned it is unwise to post their address or phone number on their SNS profiles (6% compared to Europe, 14%), and four in five know it is best to keep their profile private or partially private. On the other hand, there is less than average awareness among Australian parents of whether their child has seen sexual images online compared with parents in European countries. Australian parents are more aware of whether their child has experienced nasty or hurtful comments from online contacts.

Overall levels of risk found in the Australian survey are summarised in Table 37.

Table 37: 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	11	17	25	56	28
Have been sent nasty or hurtful messages on the internet in past 12 months	6	15	14	15	13
Seen or received sexual messages on the internet in past 12 months	n.a.	9	9	27	15
Ever had contact on the internet with someone not met face to face before	18	23	35	53	34
Ever gone on to meet anyone face to face that first met on the internet	2	2	5	9	5
Have come across one or more types of potentially harmful user-generated content in past 12 months	n.a.	27	33	43	34
Have experienced one or more types of misuse of personal data in past 12 months	n.a.	20	17	14	17
Encountered one or more of the above	24	57	63	84	58
Acted in a nasty or hurtful way towards others on the internet in the past 12 months	0	5	7	8	5
Sent or posted a sexual message of any kind on the internet in the past 12 months	n.a.	5	0	5	4
Done either of these	0	8	5	8	5

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.

Australian findings around risk are generally higher than across the 25 European countries, although the 400 case sample size (compared with 1000), and the six months later data collection, are reasons for caution. Examining the proportions of children who have experienced at least one of the types of risk asked about, there is a steady

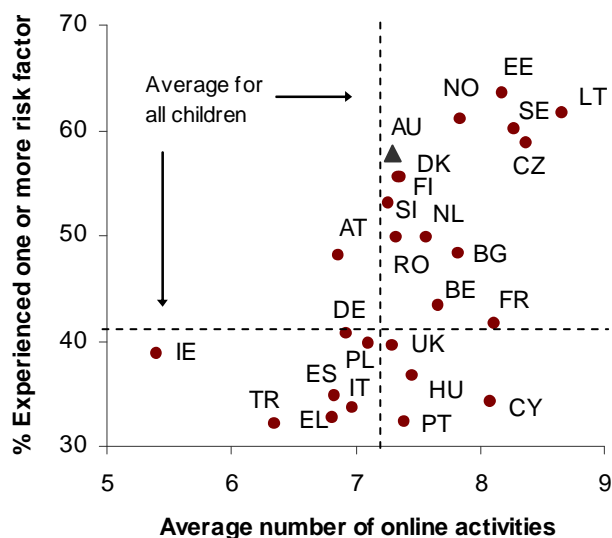
increase from a minority, but still one in four (24%), of 9-10 year olds who use the internet; to over half of 11-12 year olds (57%); rising to more than four in five of 15-16 year olds (84%). We urgently require more information about the intensity and duration of Australian children's reactions to risky online experiences that bother them.

Deliberate risk-takers? Australian children are more than twice as likely as their European counterparts to post an incorrect age on their SNS profile (34% compared with the European average of 16%) and more likely than is the case in any of the other 25 countries. Assuming that children say they are older than they are, this can lead to them experiencing risks that they are not yet equipped to handle. Further, where the fictional age is used to gain access to a SNS, the child might enter an environment which is not designed for under-13s. As well as studying the safety strategies of younger children who take risks and are not bothered by what they find online, we also need to know more about how children develop resilience in response to risk-taking, and whether an individual choice to take risks is important in this process.

Children are all different. Children differ by age, gender, socio-economic status and by where, when, how often and for how long they go online. Psychological and emotional factors differ, as do socio-cultural dimensions, such as religion. Even so, it is possible to use the 25 nation study to provide pointers to risk-taking that are also relevant in Australia. "Those who encounter most risk online (often, teenagers, boys) are not necessarily those most bothered or upset by the experience (often, younger children, girls)"³⁴. The next stage of *EU Kids Online* research will investigate the specific characteristics of children who are distressed by the risks they encounter, to help inform policy supporting their internet use.

Increased internet use leads to increased opportunity and to increased risk. The *EU Kids Online* research, and this associated Australian study, both demonstrate that "opportunities and risks go hand in hand"³⁵. Figure 34 is taken from the European report³⁶ with the addition of Australia (marked by a triangle). It plots the information from Table 37 (the percentage of children experiencing one or more "online risk factors shaping children's probability of experiencing harm") against that from Table 4 (The average number of "children's activities online in the past month").

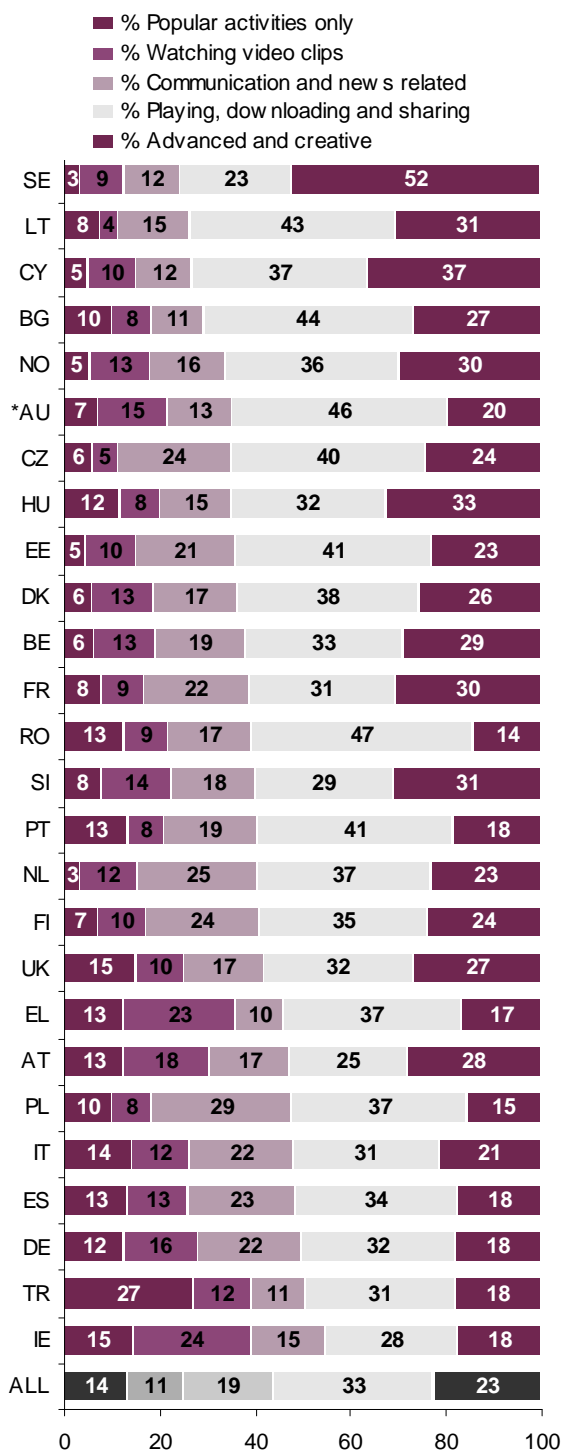
Figure 34: Children who have encountered one or more online risk factors by children's average number of online activities, by country³⁷



The Australian position on this graph is particularly interesting, since it aligns Australia more closely with "high use, high risk" countries³⁸ in Scandinavia and the Baltic region, rather than with other first language English speaking nations such as Ireland and the UK, which are both slightly less than average in terms of children's experiences of risk. Of interest for future policy development is the 'slightly above average' status of Australian children in terms of the number of different online activities undertaken in the past month, compared with their 'substantially above average' experience of one or more risk factors. Even so, "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"³⁹

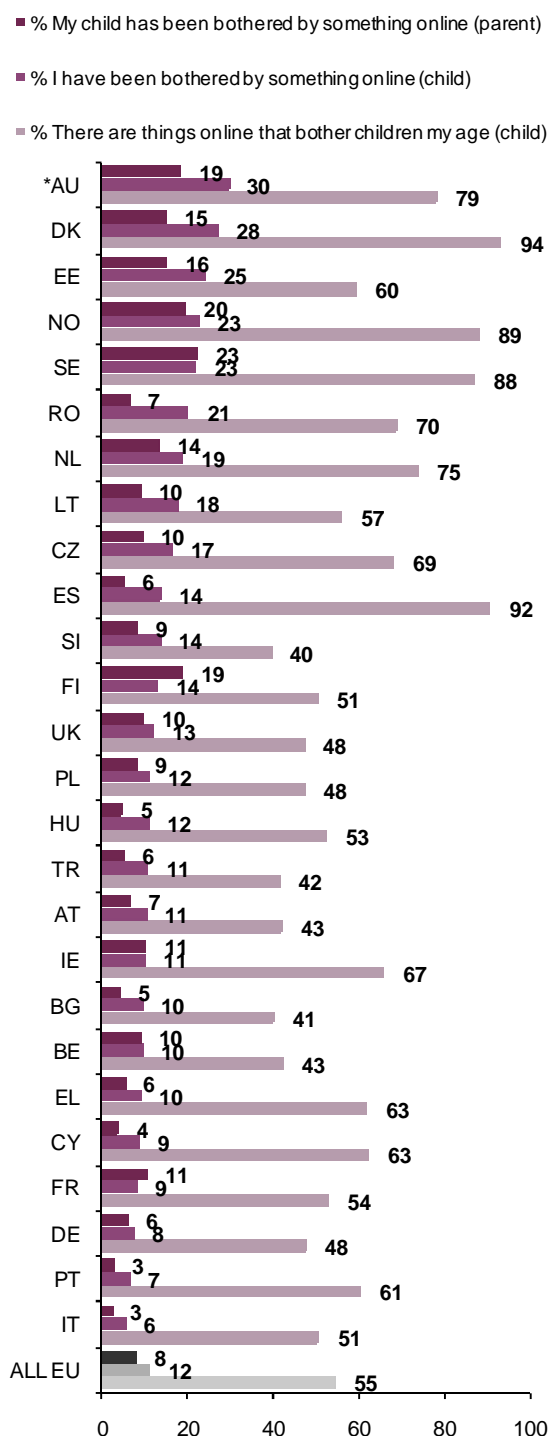
The ladder of opportunities.⁴⁰ The *EU Kids Online* project offers ways in which to identify and investigate policy frameworks adopted by nations which have optimised the balance between opportunity and risk. The ladder of opportunities categorises children's activities in increasing order of interactivity⁴¹. Two in three Australian children (66%) are operating beyond a basic level of activity and are involved in active and creative internet uses, viz: 'Playing, downloading and sharing' and 'Advanced and creative [use]' (Figure 35). Australian children rank 6th out of 26 countries, and are similar in a number of respects to other countries where children report a high number of activities, such as Norway (Figure 34). In many of these countries, as in Australia, children started going online at a comparatively young age.

Figure 35: Ladder of opportunities, by country



Increased internet use broadly correlates with advanced skills, as well as increased exposure to online risks. When children’s likelihood of experiencing one or more risk factors is plotted against the average number of online activities, this positions Australia alongside Estonia, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden, the Czech Republic, Denmark and Finland (Figure 34). Figure 35 indicates those countries where children are most likely to have creative and productive internet skills, including the capacity for advanced and creative work, and playing, downloading and sharing files. While the opportunities are chiefly in evidence among the high use, high risk countries, including Australia, it is interesting to note that Cyprus (third) and Belgium (fourth), are ranked highly on the Ladder of opportunities (Figure 35), even though Belgium is comparatively lower in risk exposure than most other high-opportunity countries (Figure 34), and Cyprus is significantly lower than average (also Figure 34). While exposure to risk does not necessarily entail experience of harm, future research will explore the dynamics of how to promote high online opportunities for children while minimising the experience of harm. The policy environment of Cyprus and Belgium may be interesting in this respect.

Figure 36: Online experiences that have bothered children, according to child and parent, by country



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.

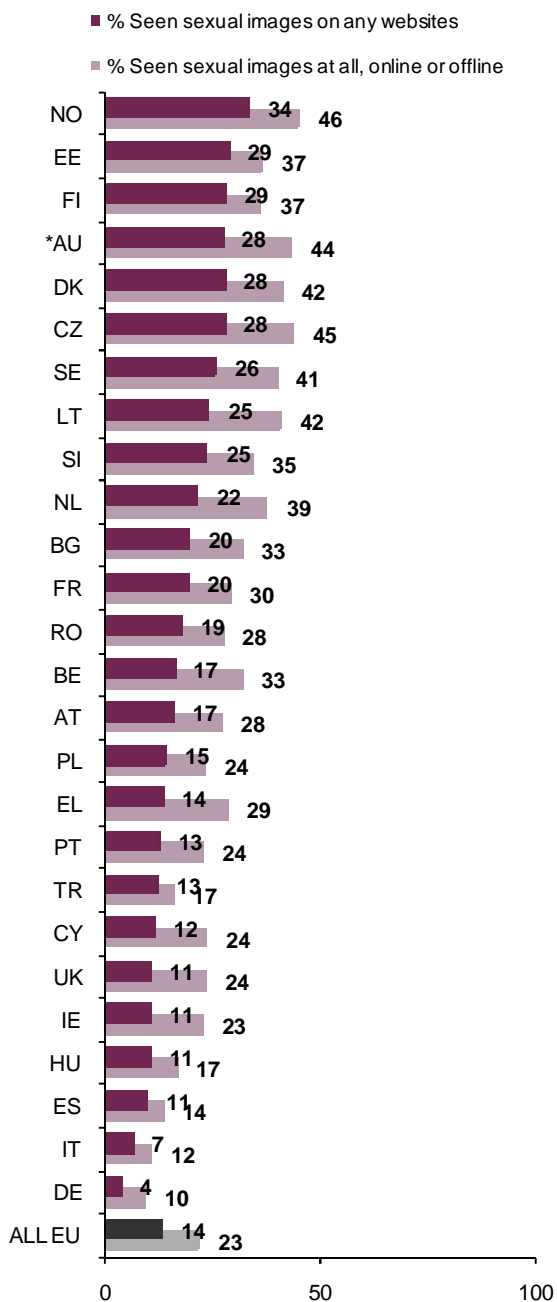
Although exposure to risk does not necessarily involve experience of harm, Australian children are particularly likely to have been 'bothered' by something they experienced on the internet. As illustrated in Figure 36, Australian children are more likely than children in any of the 25 European countries to say that 'I have been bothered by something online'. This is true of 30% of Australian children, compared with 28% in Denmark, 25% in Estonia and 23% in each of Norway and Sweden, across a 25 nation average of 12%.

Parents in Norway (23%), Sweden (20%) and Finland (19%, the same as Australia) are equally or more likely to identify that their child has been bothered by an online experience, but awareness in Australia lags behind that in Norway and Sweden, as a proportion of children bothered, while Finish parents are more likely to say that their child has been bothered than the child is. Analysis reported earlier, in Section 5, Risk and Harm, indicates that where parents' and children's perceptions are analysed together there are a number of false negatives (where parents say their child has not been bothered when the child has been bothered), and fewer false positives (where the parent thinks the child has been bothered and the child disagrees).

Six key risk areas were explored in depth in the *EU Kids Online* research as a means of identifying why a child might say that they are bothered as a result of an online experience. These risks comprise (i) seeing sexual images online, (ii) bullying, (iii) sending/receiving sexual messages (sexting), (iv) meeting new people online who are not already members of the child's offline social circle, (v) other and emerging risk factors such as hate sites, anorexia and bulimia sites, self-harm and suicide sites and (vi) the misuse of personal data.

Analysing the relative positioning of Australia in country-level comparative tables addressing these risk factors indicates the specific risks to which Australian children are most likely to be exposed, and which are most likely to account for their relative degree of feeling bothered. As indicated by Figure 37, Australian children, more than is generally the case for children in the 25 nation comparison, have been exposed to sexual images online and offline.

Figure 37: Child has seen sexual images online or offline in past 12 months, by country



QC128: Have you seen anything of this kind [obviously sexual]?
 QC131: Have you seen these kinds of things on any websites in the past 12 months?

Base: All children who use the internet.

While some risk-taking older children may choose to seek out sexual images, this is less the case with younger children, and younger children are more likely to be bothered when they encounter sexual images online (Figure 15). More than one in four Australian children (28%) have seen sexual images online whereas more than two in five Australian children (44%) say they have seen sexual images in any location, both online and offline. In these respective cases, Australia is equal fourth (with Denmark) in terms of exposure to online images, and third (after Norway and the Czech Republic) in terms of all exposure to sexual images across the combined 26 countries. These figures also indicate that seven in ten 9-16 year old Australians have not seen sexual images online.

When exposure to sexual images is compared with the rates of children being bothered by such exposure, Table 38, Australia moves from fourth to fifth place, with 38% of those exposed to sexual images saying they were bothered by this. It should be noted, however, that numbers involved are small.

Table 38: Child has seen sexual images online and was bothered by this, by country

%	All children who use the internet		Child bothered, of those who have seen sexual images online
	Child has seen sexual images online	Child bothered by seeing sexual images online	
EE	29	14	49
TR	13	6	49
RO	19	8	44
IE	11	4	38
*AU	28	10	36
DE	4	2	35
PL	15	5	33
ES	11	3	32
FR	20	6	32
AT	17	5	30
BE	17	5	30
HU	11	3	30
DK	28	8	28
CY	12	3	26
IT	7	2	26
SE	26	7	26
UK	11	3	24
CZ	28	6	23
LT	25	6	23
NL	22	5	23
NO	34	9	23
PT	13	3	23
FI	29	6	20
BG	20	4	17
EL	14	2	15
SI	25	4	15
ALL	14	4	32

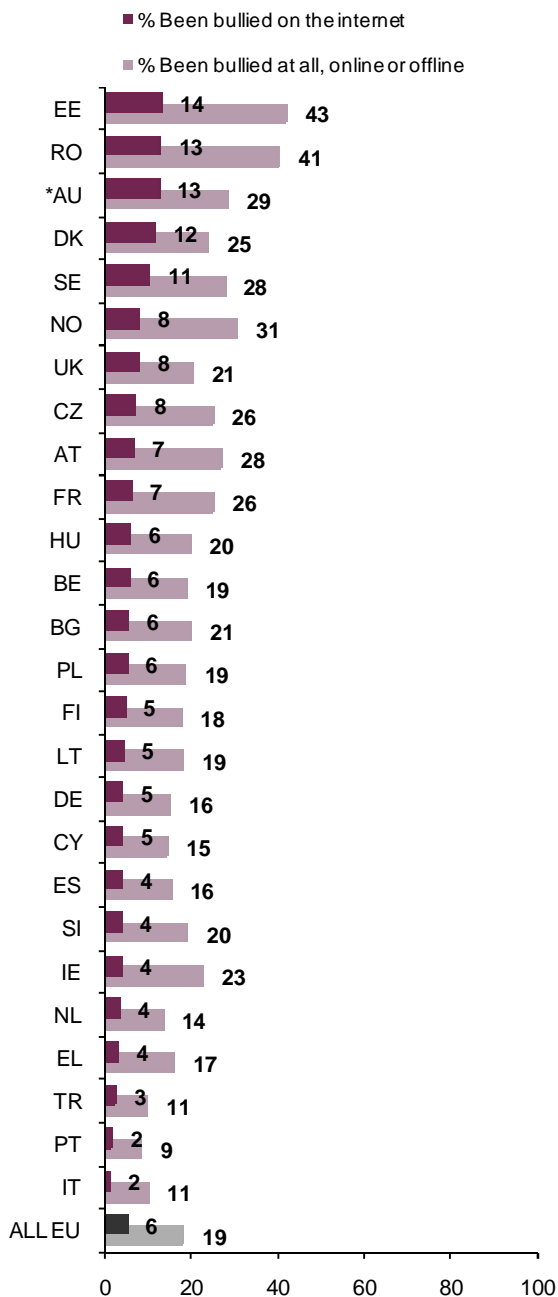
QC131: Have you seen these kinds of things on any websites in the past 12 months? And QC134: In the LAST 12 MONTHS have you seen any things like this that have bothered you in any way? For example, made you feel uncomfortable, upset, or feel that you shouldn't have seen them.

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

Note: The 95% confidence intervals for the numbers behind this graph are fairly high (+/- 5-10%) or very high (+/- 10%). So the numbers for individual countries should be considered as indicative only.

Sexual images are not the only online risk experienced by a significant proportion of Australian children. As indicated in Figure 38, Australian children are third out of the 26 countries combined in being likely to say they have been bullied online. This might indicate that where an Australian child feels bothered by online experiences, this could reflect exposure to bullying, instead of, or as well as, exposure to sexual images. In the risk behaviour associated with 'sexting' however, AU children would rank 16 out of the total 26 countries, indicating that this risk behaviour is likely to be comparatively less important in explaining Australian children's feelings of being bothered (Figure 39).

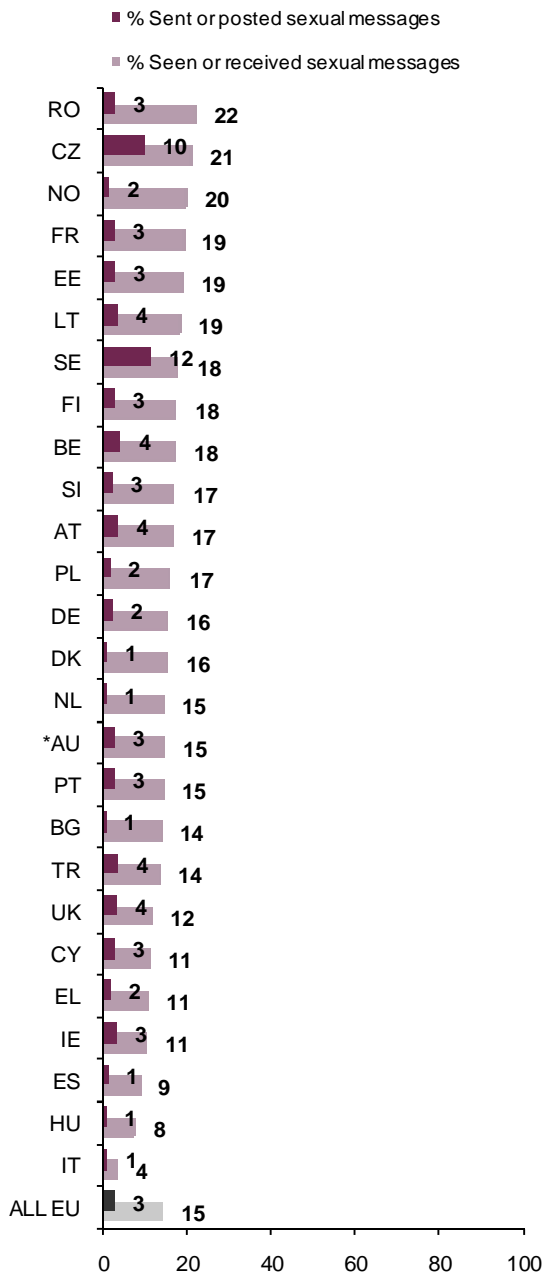
Figure 38: Child has been bullied online or offline in past 12 months, by country



QC112: Has someone acted in this kind of hurtful or nasty way to you in the past 12 months? QC115: At any time during the last 12 months has this happened on the internet?

Base: All children who use the internet.

Figure 39: Having seen or received or sent sexual messages in past 12 months (children aged 11-16), by country

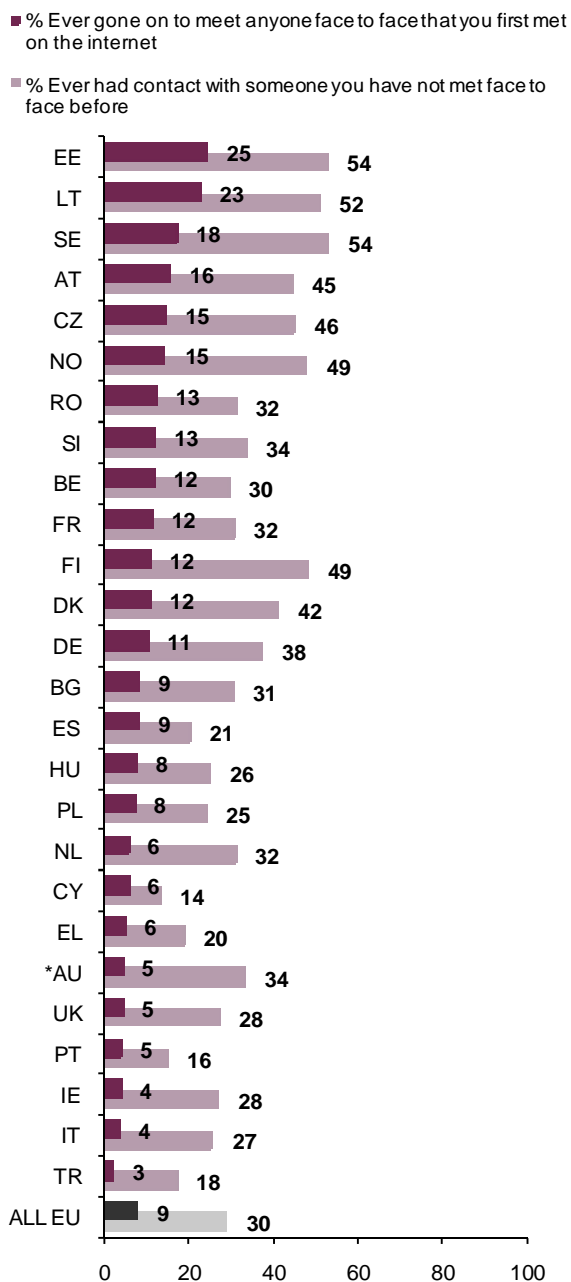


QC167: In the past 12 months have you seen or received sexual messages of any kind on the internet? This could be words, pictures or videos. QC179: In the past 12 months, have you sent or posted a sexual message (words, pictures or video) of any kind on the internet? This could be about you or someone else.

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

Similarly, Australian children are less likely than most European children to have communicated online with someone they had not met previously in a face to face context, and also comparatively unlikely to go on to meet a stranger offline that they first met online (Figure 40).

Figure 40: Child has communicated online with, or gone to an offline meeting with, someone not met face to face before, by country



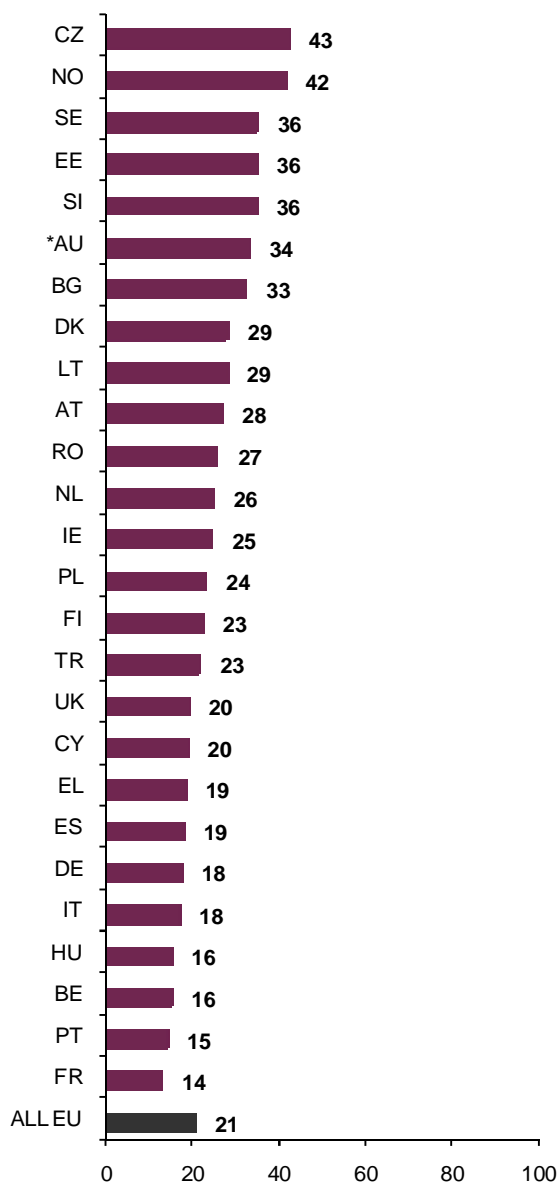
QC147: Can I just check, have you ever had contact on the internet with someone you have not met face to face before?
 QC148: Have you ever gone on to meet anyone face to face that you first met on the internet in this way?

Base: All children who use the internet.

The small numbers of Australian children who go on to meet face to face strangers who have previously only been met online means that this is unlikely to explain any significant part of the comparative rates of Australian children feeling bothered by their internet experiences.

On the other hand, the data around the new and emerging risk factors related to potentially harmful user-generated content again places Australian children towards the top of a cross-national comparison of risk-exposure (Figure 41).

Figure 41: Child has seen potentially harmful user-generated content on websites in past 12 months (age 11+), by country

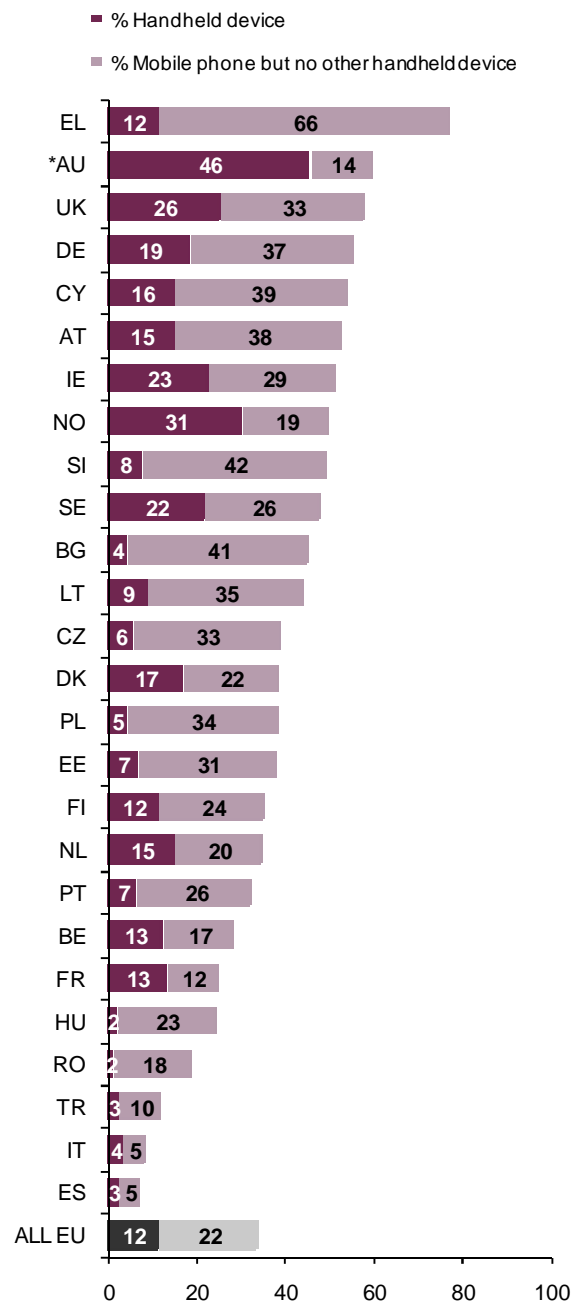


QC142: In the past 12 months, have you seen websites where people discuss...? Bars show percentage of children who have seen any such material at all on websites (i.e. bottom row of Error! Reference source not found.).

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

The figures for potentially harmful user-generated material include hate sites, anorexia, bulimia, self-harm and suicide promotion. The sixth place ranking of Australian children's exposure to these risks indicate that potentially harmful user-generated content may line up alongside exposure to bullying and seeing sexual images as a probable contributing factor to Australian children's overall levels of risk. One or more of these three risk behaviours is likely to underpin the finding that Australian children are more likely to say that they are bothered than is the case with children in the 25 country European study. There is a further factor, however, which relates to where children go online and the possible role of peers in influencing what they choose to access.

Figure 42: Child accesses the internet using a mobile phone or handheld device, by country



QC300h, e: Which of these devices do you use for the internet these days?

Base: All children who use the internet.

In attempting to context the risks that may have contributed to Australian children reporting higher degrees of feeling bothered by experiences online, it is relevant to consider a particularly Australian aspect of the experience of going online which both highlights the challenge for policy makers and indicates possible future directions for a strong research focus in Australia, Europe and elsewhere. Australian children are disproportionately likely to go online using a smart handheld device and it may be that access using such devices is less likely to be effectively mediated by parents and others (Figure 42). Children might also be more experimental with new technology, and might be more likely to take risks as part of shared peer group experience.

Australian researchers from the ARC Centre of Excellence for Creative Industries and Innovation, together with colleagues from Edith Cowan University, Queensland University of Technology and the University of New South Wales, will be working with the *EU Kids Online* network until at least 2014 with the aim of exploring more of these comparisons, and as a way of providing support for the development of evidence-based policy in this area. In our future research, we will explore country-level factors that may explain some of these cross-national differences. To stay in touch with future research arising from the *EU Kids Online* network, including Australia as an international partner, please sign up for email updates at 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

The methods followed those used in the EUKids Online project as closely as possible to facilitate comparisons. Full details of procedures used in each country in the EUKids Online project can be found in the EUKids Online Full Technical Report (see www.eukidsonline.net). The following details refer to the AUKids Online project.

Sampling

- Samples were stratified by state and by metro/rest of state for the larger states, with probability of selection proportionate to population.
- The primary sampling units were drawn from all census collection districts in Australia.
- Addresses were selected randomly from each sample point by using a Random Walk procedure.
- 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 Australia from 13 November 2010 to the 9th February 2011, although 78% of interviews were completed before the end of 2010. A parent interview was conducted for every child interviewed.

Questionnaires were administered face to face using computer assisted interviewing. Answers to sensitive questions to children were entered by the child directly into the computer.

The original 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 in five countries to test all aspects of the survey including sampling, recruitment and the interview process.
- In Australia, nine cognitive tests (six with children and three with parents) were carried out in September, 2010 generally confirmed the questionnaire design. Only minor changes were made to the questionnaire to maximise comparability with the UK and other country results (for example substitution of the Australian term “wagging” school instead of the UK term “bunking”).

Data processing

- The source questionnaires from the original EUKids project, with all response options and full interviewer instructions, are online at www.eukidsonline.net.
- Weighting: three forms of weighting have been applied to the EUKids Online data and these were used when making country comparisons with the Australian 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 country level weight which adjusts for country level contribution to the overall results according to population size.
- 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 for the original EUKids Online project are available at 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.

If outputs result from the use of these resources, the project management team requests that an email is sent to inform them of this use, to Eukidsonline@lse.ac.uk. The dataset itself will be made public in late 2011.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ For example, Albury, K. and Crawford, K. (forthcoming, 2012). Sexting, consent and young people's ethics: Beyond Megan's story, *Continuum: journal of media and cultural studies*.
- ² Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A., and Ólafsson, K., (2011). *Risks and safety on the internet: The perspective of European children. Full findings*. Available at www.eukidsonline.net
- ³ Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A. and Ólafsson, K. (2011). *Risks and safety for children on the internet: the UK report*. EU Kids Online, London School of Economics & Political Science, London, UK. (p. 10)
- ⁴ Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A., and Ólafsson, K., (2011). *Risks and safety on the internet: The perspective of European children. Full findings* Available at www.eukidsonline.net (p. 15)
- ⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2011). *Australian social trends June 2011: Children of the digital revolution*. www.abs.gov.au/socialtrends
- ⁶ 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.
- ⁷ In Figure 2, the percentage for 'mobile phone' may overlap with handheld device as multiple responses were allowed. In Figure 3, these are recalculated as mutually exclusive.
- ⁸ Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A., and Ólafsson, K., (2011). *Risks and safety on the internet: The perspective of European children. Full findings*. Available at www.eukidsonline.net
- ⁹ Hasebrink, U., Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., and Ólafsson, K. (2009). *Comparing children's online opportunities and risks across Europe: cross-national comparisons for EU Kids Online* (2nd edition). At <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/24368/>
- ¹⁰ Livingstone, S. and Helsper, E.J. (2010). Balancing opportunities and risks in teenagers' use of the internet: The role of online skills and internet self-efficacy. *New Media & Society*, 12(2): 309-329
- ¹¹ Widyanto, L. and Griffiths, M. (2007). Internet addiction: Does it really exist? (revisited), *Psychology and the internet: Intrapersonal, interpersonal, and transpersonal implications*, J. Gackenbach (ed) (2nd ed), Amsterdam: Elsevier/Academic Press, pp. 127–149
- ¹² Nordicom (2004). *Playing with fire: How do computer games influence the player?*, Gothenburg University, Sweden: Nordicom, The International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media (p. 34)
- ¹³ Smahel, D. and Blinka, L. (forthcoming, 2012). Excessive internet use among European children, *Children, risk and safety online: Research and policy challenges in comparative perspective*, Livingstone, S., Haddon, L. and Görzig, A. (eds), Bristol, UK: Policy Press
- ¹⁴ To be sure children understood these questions, most options included national examples. For instance, in the Australian questionnaire, option 15 was phrased: "Used file sharing sites (peer-to-peer) (e.g. Limewire, Kazaa, torrents)."
- ¹⁵ Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A., and Ólafsson, K., (2011). *Risks and safety on the internet: The perspective of European children. Full findings* Available at www.eukidsonline.net (p. 36)
- ¹⁶ Finkelhor, D. (1980). Risk factors in the sexual victimization of children, *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 4(4): 265-273
- ¹⁷ See: Livingstone, S., and Helsper, E. J. (2007). Taking risks when communicating on the internet: The role of offline social-psychological factors in young people's vulnerability to online risks. *Information, Communication and Society*, 10(5): 619-643.
- ¹⁸ This gender difference is partly explained by boys more often choosing the option 'don't know' or 'prefer not to say'.
- ¹⁹ Information on whether child has seen sexual images online at all are available for all age groups, but the 9-10 year olds were not asked about the types of sexual images seen online. The total figures here are included for comparative purposes

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- ²⁰ Livingstone, S. and Haddon, L. (forthcoming, 2012). Theoretical framework for children's internet use, *Children, risk and safety online: Research and policy challenges in comparative perspective*, Livingstone, S., Haddon, L. and Görzig, A. (eds), Bristol, UK: Policy Press
- ²¹ Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A., and Ólafsson, K., (2011). *Risks and safety on the internet: The perspective of European children. Full findings* Available at www.eukidsonline.net (p. 56)
- ²² See Livingstone, S. (2010). 'e-Youth: (future) policy implications: risk, harm and vulnerability online.' Keynote at e-Youth: *Balancing between opportunities and risks*. University of Antwerp, May (<http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/27849/>)
- ²³ Görzig, A. (2011). *Who bullies and who is bullied online? A study of 9-16 year old internet users in 25 European countries*. Available at ([http://www2.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/research/EUKidsOnline/EUKidsII%20\(2009-11\)/BullyingShort.pdf](http://www2.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/research/EUKidsOnline/EUKidsII%20(2009-11)/BullyingShort.pdf)) (p. 1)
- ²⁴ Livingstone, S. and Görzig, A. (forthcoming, 2012). 'Sexting' – the exchange of sexual messages online among European youth, *Children, risk and safety online: Research and policy challenges in comparative perspective*, Livingstone, S., Haddon, L. and Görzig, A. (eds), Bristol, UK: Policy Press
- ²⁵ Wolak, J., Finkelhor, D., Mitchell, K. and Ybarra, M. (2008). Online 'predators' and their victims, *American Psychologist*, 63(2): 111-128
- ²⁶ Barbovski, M., Marinescu, V., Velicu, A. and Laszlo, E. (forthcoming, 2012). Meeting new contacts online, *Children, risk and safety online: Research and policy challenges in comparative perspective*, Livingstone, S., Haddon, L. and Görzig, A. (eds), Bristol, UK: Policy Press
- ²⁷ Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A., and Ólafsson, K., (2011). *Risks and safety on the internet: The perspective of European children. Full findings* Available at www.eukidsonline.net (p. 85)
- ²⁸ Livingstone, S., and Helsper, E. J. (2008) Parental mediation of children's internet use. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 52(4): 581-599 <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/25723>. But see also 'Agents of mediation and sources of safety awareness: a comparative overview' (Pasquier, D., Simões, J. A., and Kredens, E.) and 'The effectiveness of parental mediation' (Garmendia, M., Garitaonandia, C., Martínez, G. and Casado, M. A.) in: Livingstone, S., Haddon, L. and Görzig, A. (eds) (forthcoming, 2012). *Children, risk and safety online: Research and policy challenges in comparative perspective*, Bristol, UK: Policy Press
- ²⁹ Kalmus, V., von Feilitzen, C. and Siibak, A. (forthcoming, 2012). Effectiveness of children's and peers' mediation in supporting opportunities and reducing risks online, *Children, risk and safety online: Research and policy challenges in comparative perspective*, Livingstone, S., Haddon, L. and Görzig, A. (eds), Bristol, UK: Policy Press
- ³⁰ 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.
- ³¹ Livingstone, S., and Bober, M. (2006). Regulating the internet at home: Contrasting the perspectives of children and parents, *Digital Generations*, D. Buckingham and R. Willett (eds.) (93-113). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum. <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/9013/>
- ³² Livingstone, S., and Bober, M. (2006). Regulating the internet at home: Contrasting the perspectives of children and parents, *Digital Generations*, D. Buckingham and R. Willett (eds.) (93-113). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum. <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/9013/>
- ³³ 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 ...*
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- ³⁵ Livingstone, S. and Helsper, E.J. (2010). Balancing opportunities and risks in teenagers' use of the internet: The role of online skills and internet self-efficacy. *New Media & Society*, 12(2): 309-329
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