

## *EU Kids Online II Dataset: A cross-national study of children's use of the Internet and its associated opportunities and risks*

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### **Abstract**

In the EU Kids Online II project, data were collected from children and parents via in-home face-to-face interviews in 25 European countries to examine children's Internet use, activities and skills, the risk of harm they encountered, parental awareness, and safety strategies regarding children's Internet use and risks. The project provides comparable cross-national survey data to inform social policies for children's Internet use and protection. Nationally representative survey samples were drawn in each country, with data obtained in a face-to-face interview with 25 142 Internet-using children aged 9–16 years together with one of their parents (c. 1000 child/parent pairs per country). Questions were primarily closed-ended, with an open-ended (qualitative) element and with sensitive questions asked of the child in private.

### **Dataset**

Location and DOI: The EU Kids Online II survey data is archived in the UK Data Archive: <http://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk/catalogue?sn=6885>

In the organisation list "UK Data Archive" should be selected.

Creator: 'EU Kids Online' network funded by the EC (DG Information Society) Safer Internet Programme (project code SIP-KEP-321803). Full information about the project, the survey and the results can be found at <http://www.eukidsonline.net>.

Date: 2010

Format: SPSS (.sav format)

Restrictions to use (if any): The use of the EU Kids Online II survey data is freely accessible to anyone who registers to use the archive, subject to the standard conditions of use of the UK Data Archive. In order to register, go to <http://ukdataservice.ac.uk/>; click on "Get data," then on "How to access." On this site, one needs to register to obtain a user ID and password by responding to the options provided. Registration is free of charge.

### **Introduction**

The project was funded by the EC Safer Internet Programme from 2009 to 2011. Of the 2 500 000 Euro budget, most went towards the cost of the data collection. The project was coordinated by a team at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE): Professor Sonia Livingstone (principal investigator, PI), Dr Leslie Haddon (project manager), Dr Anke Görzig (research officer) and Kjartan Ólafsson (research advisor). The PI was responsible for the success of the project in terms of finance, management and scientific output. The Coordinator worked

with a Management Group drawn from four further national teams: Germany, Portugal, Slovenia and Ireland, as well as with national teams in each of the remaining countries (making up 25 in total) and an International Advisory Panel. The survey was conducted by the fieldwork agency Ipsos MORI, selected through a public procurement process and subcontracted to LSE.

National teams, each with a key contact, came from Austria (AT), Belgium (BE), Bulgaria (BG), Cyprus (CY) the Czech Republic (CZ), Denmark (DK), Estonia (EE), Finland (FI), France (FR), Germany (DE), Greece (EL), Hungary (HU), Ireland (IE), Italy (IT), Lithuania (LT), the Netherlands (NL), Norway (NO), Poland (PL), Portugal (PT), Romania (RO), Slovenia (SI), Spain (ES), Sweden (SE), Turkey (TR), the United Kingdom (UK). The network encompassed expertise in media education, digital literacy, child psychology, youth media, sexuality, media globalisation, adolescence and identity, health communication, legal and regulatory perspectives on online safety and risk, ethical/citizenship dimensions, gender, consumption, family studies, minorities and comparative childhood studies. It also encompassed methodological sophistication spanning qualitative and quantitative methods, including experience with large datasets and comparative data analysis at European and international levels and with surveys of children's Internet use.

### **Research method**

The research design was comparative in several ways. Firstly, comparisons across countries were designed to reveal national similarities and differences by testing a series of hypotheses derived from the literature review (Hasebrink, Livingstone, Haddon & Ólafsson, 2009). The survey was also designed to be comparative across the range of risks experienced by children online, with parallel questions asked regarding cyberbullying, online pornography, sexual messaging ("sexting") and meeting online contacts offline ("stranger danger"). It was, finally, comparative in seeking to identify similarities and differences according to the child's age, gender and socio-economic status (SES).

Key items of the survey included:

- Detailed questions to children about when, where and how they accessed the Internet, for a range of activities and in relation to a range of digital skills
- Equivalent questions asked for each type of risk, to compare across risks and related risks to self-reported harm and coping strategies
- Matched questions to compare online with offline risks, to put online risks in proportion
- Matched questions to the parent most involved in the child's Internet use regarding children's online risks and strategies of parental mediation
- Measures of mediating factors: psychological vulnerability, social support and safety practices

The questionnaires used in the survey were developed by EU Kids Online network in collaboration with the fieldwork agency Ipsos MORI. The questionnaire includes nominal (yes/no), ordinal (ranking) and interval (6-level Likert scale) measures. Questions addressed usage, online activities and skills, risk factors, self-reported harm, children's coping strategies, and parental mediation strategies. They were tested and refined through a two-phase process of cognitive interviewing and pilot testing:

1 Phase one, cognitive testing, involved 20 cognitive interviews (14 with children and 6 with parents) in England using an English language questionnaire. Several refinements were made to the questionnaires. The amended master questionnaires were translated for cognitive testing via 113 interviews spread across the remaining 24 countries (at least four in each country, and the questionnaires were further refined.

2 A pilot survey was conducted to test all aspects of the survey including sampling, recruitment, administration and the interview process. A total of 102 pilot interviews (43 with children aged

9 and 10 years and 59 with children aged 11–16 years) were carried out across five countries, selected for diversity in region, Internet penetration and population size: Germany, Slovenia, Ireland, Portugal and the UK.

The survey was administered in-home, face-to-face during Spring and Summer 2010. Children were selected by random stratified survey sampling. One parent was also interviewed (where more than one parent was present in the home, the parent or carer “most involved in the child’s Internet use” was interviewed; in three out of four instances, this was the mother). Countries used either computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI) or paper and pencil interviewing (PAPI) administration. CAPI captures respondents’ answers electronically during fieldwork, so no data entry to SPSS is required. For countries using PAPI, the data from paper questionnaires were either scanned or were entered by local data processing teams. Industry standard quality control and back-check procedures were carried out to ensure a high quality of data.

By taking the child as the unit of analysis, an analytic path can be traced which connects Internet access, usage, opportunities, risks, parental responses and, importantly for our child-centred approach, children’s own developing digital skills and coping responses. This provided the basis for the analyses conducted thus far—see especially Livingstone, Haddon, Görzig and Ólafsson (2011a, 2011b, 2011c) and Livingstone, Haddon and Görzig (2012). Further cross-national, thematic and nationally specific analyses are listed at <http://www.eukidsonline.net>. For key comparative findings across countries, including country clusters, see Helsper, Kalmus, Hasebrink, Sagvari and de Haan (2013); for cross-national policy implications, see O’Neill (2014). For a discussion of the process of disseminating findings to stakeholders, see Livingstone (2013). Many possibilities for further analysis remain. Suggestions include identifying the predictors of digital activities and skills, examining how online risk varies by location of access, and relating national findings to external indicators of national culture, education or regulation policy. The dataset also offers numerous possibilities for comparing child and parent answers on a range of issues.

### **Ethical considerations**

Children’s exposure to risks on the Internet is a particularly sensitive topic. Across Europe, many universities impose no ethical requirements on researchers (Stald & Haddon, 2009), so the coordinator applied for research ethics approval from LSE’s Research Ethics Committee on behalf of fieldwork in all countries. Additionally, the fieldwork agency conformed to the standards of the European Society for Opinion and Marketing Research (ESOMAR).

All aspects of the methodology and approaches to survey implementation were developed with respondent well-being in mind. Particular attention was paid to ensuring informed consent from child as well as parent. Each household received written information about the study’s funding, aims, intended value and national/coordinator contacts; this was also explained to parents and children verbally. In all countries/languages, separate versions of the text were tailored for children of different ages.

Only conditional confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed, with the proviso that if the interview provided an indication of a child being at risk (defined as the fieldwork witnessing “something any reasonable person could not ignore”), the fieldworker would inform his/her supervisor in case further action was required. No incidents were reported during fieldwork, although national and coordinator contacts were called by a few parents to check the legitimacy of the survey. Interviewers were instructed while in the home not to close a door against parents or to prevent those who wished to remain in the vicinity of their child as they completed the interview from doing so; parental proximity was recorded as part of the data collection. Children were clearly advised that they could stop the interview at any point or choose not to answer any question if they felt uncomfortable doing so. Sensitive questions on risk, harm and parental

mediation were administered in confidence (if CAPI, by turning the screen to the child; if PAPI, by a self-completion questionnaire in a self-sealed envelope).

Interviewers were selected by the national fieldwork agencies for their experience of working with children. Relevant security checks were carried out on interviewers according to country-specific legal requirements. Interviewers explained to all children that if they have experienced harm, they should tell a trusted adult. Families were provided with an information leaflet at the end of the interview containing tips, advice and sources of help and information about online risk and safety.

## Limitations

### *Limits on sampling*

Despite repeated return visits to sampled households and every effort made to encourage participation, the recruitment process may not have reached the most vulnerable or marginalised children.

### *Questionnaire limits*

The questionnaire was designed to take, on average, 30 minutes for children to complete (and 10 minutes for parents), but in practice, it took rather longer than this: just under 1 hour for the child and parent interviews combined. It is not easy to hold children's attention for longer; 9 to 10-year-olds received a shorter version of the questionnaire. Difficult decisions were taken about which questions to include. For reasons concerning the technical facility of national fieldwork agencies, in over half the countries, the self-completion section of the questionnaire was completed by pen and paper (PAPI), which limited the degree of routing, ie, the degree to which questions could follow up on children's answers (see Livingstone *et al.*, 2011a); this was not found to affect the findings (Görzig, 2012). For ethical reasons, certain explicit questions (eg, about types of pornography) could not be asked of the youngest group (9–10 years old) or in certain countries, such as Greece, Italy and Turkey.

### *Survey context*

Every effort was made to encourage honest answers, to promise anonymity and privacy, including reassuring children that their parents would not see their answers. Parental presence had a slight effect on reporting of risk by children, although the exact pattern of findings was complex (Görzig, 2012).

## Acknowledgements

This article draws on the work of the 'EU Kids Online' network funded by the EC (DG Information Society) Safer Internet Programme (project code SIP-KEP-321803). We thank our colleagues in the EU Kids Online network (<http://www.eukidsonline.net>).

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