EU Kids Online

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In their own words: What bothers children online?

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Summary

Nearly 10,000 children told us about what upsets them and their friends online. Their responses were diverse, revealing a long list of concerns.

Pornography (named by 22% of children who told us of risks) and violent content (18%) top children's online concerns. Overall, boys appear more bothered by violence than girls, while girls are more concerned with contact-related risks.

Violence receives less public attention than sexual material, but many children are concerned about violent, aggressive or gory online content. They reveal shock and disgust on seeing cruelty, killings, abuse of animals and even the news – since much is real rather than fictional violence, this adds to the depth of children's reactions.

As children told us, video-sharing websites are often associated with violent and pornographic content, along with a range of other content-related risks. Among the children who linked risks to specific internet platforms, 32% mentioned video-sharing sites such as YouTube, followed by websites (29%), social networking sites (13%) and games (10%).

Children's mention of risks rises markedly from nine to 12 years old. Younger children are more concerned about content and other risks. As they get older they become more concerned about conduct and contact risks. These are linked in many children's minds to the use of social networking sites such as Facebook.

Concern about risks is higher among children from 'high use, high risk' countries. Policy implications are identified and discussed.

In their own words

What worries me is how correct information is on a website. You can also end up on a site where you don´t wanna be. (Girl, 16, Belgium)

Violence, child pornography pictures, religious sects, self-harm or suicide sites. (Boy, 15, Greece)

To take a photo of me without my knowledge and upload it to an inappropriate website. (Girl, 10, Bulgaria)

When strangers message me on the Internet, sex sites that open without me clicking on them. (Boy, 10, Austria)

Videos where older teenagers mistreat disabled children and upload the video on YouTube. (Girl, 9, Italy)

Some types of pornography, websites containing pictures/film of dead people or animals. Entertainment sites that are racist and other things that are ethically wrong. (Boy, 11, Norway)

YouTube. The things that come up straight away as soon as you search for the website. Facebook shows scary things even if you click on something that does not look or sound scary. (Girl, 9, UK)

Kids can be distressed when something they have read on the internet and believed to be true turns out to be fake. (Girl, 11, Estonia)

Propositions to meet from people whom I do not know, photos of naked people, bullying somebody or scenes showing homicide. (Boy, 12, Poland)

Racist messages; sexual messages; some sending horror movies such as Russian Morgue. (Girl, 11, Romania)

I don't like it when people speak nasty to you. (Boy, 10, Slovenia)

EU Kids Online

Aims of this report

The EU Kids Online survey found that 55% of 9-16 year olds think that there are things online that bother children their age. Also, 12% of children (and 8% of their parents) say they have been bothered or upset by something online in the past year.[1] **What might they have had in mind?**

Adult society (parents, teachers, policy makers and the media) has shaped the policy agenda for understanding online risk and managing internet safety. Apart from early pan-European qualitative research which asked children to discuss online risk in their own words,[2] most research has sought standardised descriptions of risk as measured in survey questionnaires; and most has asked children about risks that worry adults rather than discovering what concerns children themselves.[3]

Although children are sometimes consulted in policy processes, there are few attempts to explore their perceptions in a systematic or comparative way. Having reported findings based on standardised questions in the 2010 EU Kids Online survey,[4] we now present answers in children's own words to the open-ended question included in the survey.[5] We aim to discover:

- What do children think are the worrying risks online, and how do they describe them?

- Are they concerned about risks that have been neglected from the policy agenda?

- Do their concerns vary by age, gender, culture or experience?

In their own words

In an open-ended part of the survey, we asked children, *"What things on the internet would bother people about your age?"*[6]

To maintain confidentiality, each child wrote his or her answer on a piece of paper and put it in a self-sealed envelope so neither interviewer nor parent (if present) could see how the child answered.

Also important, the open-ended question was asked *before any questions were asked about risk.* Thus children gave their unprompted views. [7]
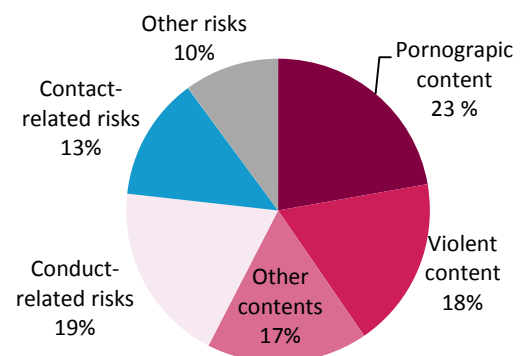
- **9,636 children (38%) of the 25,142 children surveyed identified one or more online risks that they think bothers people their age on the internet.**

- Response rates varied considerably by country, and this should be kept in mind when interpreting the report's finding (see Annex for methodological details).

Pornographic and violent content tops children's online concerns

Of the 9,636 9-16 year olds who identified risks, 54% identified one risk, 31% identified two risks, and 15% identified three or more risks. This report focuses on findings for the main or first-mentioned risk, to reflect children's prioritisation.[8] Figure 1 shows these risks coded by type.

- **Content risks dominate children's concerns: 58% identified pornographic, violent or other content risks first.**

- **Conduct- or contact-related risks, along with other risks (e.g. viruses), were mentioned first by 42% of children.**

Figure 1: What risks did children tell us about?

Base: N=9,636 children who identified one or more risks online.

Note: First mentioned risks are only included here. Risks are grouped as shown in the Annex. Additionally, the category of pornography includes children's comments coded as 'pornography' and 'violent pornography;' the category of violence includes children's comments coded as 'aggressive/ violent content' and 'gory content'.

- **Pornographic content tops the ranking of risks named by children in relation to the internet (22% of risks mentioned first by children).** Taking children's own words seriously suggests that policy attention to the availability of online pornography is well-founded. It is possible, however, that children are aware of adult concerns and media coverage regarding online pornography and that their responses reflect this climate of anxiety.

- **Violent and aggressive content is the second most common concern identified by children (18% of first mentioned risks).** Although traditionally flagged as a concern in relation to television and film and, more recently, video games, less policy attention is paid to violent and aggressive content on the internet.

- Many children are concerned about violent or aggressive or gory online content. Their quotes emphasise shock or upset on seeing cruelty, killings, abuse of animals and even the news. The fact that much of the content depicts real rather than fictional violence or aggression seems to add to the depth of children's reactions.

- Overall, children's rank order of concerns puts content first (58% of all first-mentioned risks in Figure 1), followed by 19% conduct-related risks, 13% contact-related risks and 10% other kinds of risks. This rank ordering reverses that of many parents (who would put contact-related risks at the top of their concerns).

- That conduct-related risks come second in children's ranking of concerns is doubtless because of cyberbullying and sexting linked to the widespread use of personal and networked devices.

Porn

One time I was looking for a game and rude pictures came on the computer, people without clothes on. (Girl, 9, Ireland)

See people having sex or naked people. (Boy, 10, Portugal)

I think it is not appropriate for children of my age to see images of naked women, as in online advertisements that pop up when I am not looking for it, such as on the website where I check my email. (Girl, 15, Italy)

Sex and ladies in their underwear (string). (Girl, 10, Norway).

Ugly pictures, ugly videos that suggest sex really bother me. (Boy, 11, Slovenia)

When I surf on a website, there are often pictures of naked women and men on the sites. (Girl, 10, France)

When I was ten years old, I played a game on the internet. Suddenly a naked woman appeared. I was very shocked and never wanted to play the game again. Months and years passed and I didn't play a single game, even if I wanted it, because I was afraid to see something like that again. But now it doesn't bother me anymore. (Girl, 12, Austria)

Pictures that appear on the side of Facebook that exhibit naked females. Conversations that regularly open up on Facebook or MSN. There should be specific sites for these people and not opened to everybody. (Girl, 12, France)

Violence

Those things that show other people's suffering or torment as a funny thing. (Boy, 14, Hungary)

Showing images of physical violence, torture and suicide images. (Girl, 12, Slovenia)

Everything about violence that can be seen on websites is not good for teenagers of my age. By that I mean violence against women and children and perverted humiliations and cruelty against people in general. (Girl, 14, Germany)

I logged onto a game website and clicked onto action games and see Alien vs Predator trailer. It was very blood and gory and it disturbed me. (Boy, 10, UK)

Smack Down games upset me, people fight too much. (Boy, 11, Turkey)

Animal cruelty, adults hitting kids. (Girl, 9, Denmark)

Some shocking news like terrorist attacks. (Boy, 12, Finland)

Children identify diverse risks

The most often named risks are pornography and violent content: together these comprise 40% of the risks first mentioned by children. **But well over half of children's concerns focus on other risks and it is notable that children took this chance to describe them.**

To recognise even rarely mentioned risks, Figure 2 includes all risks mentioned by children (whether listed first, second or third).

- Some risks of concern to adults were very rarely mentioned by children. Less than 1% mention some of the risks much in the headlines (e.g. self-harm content or the danger of sharing personal information), though a few are concerned about reputational damage or other violations of privacy.

- Also, few mention commercial content, spending too much time online, other people accessing personal data or gambling.

- 'Stranger danger' is usually mentioned only vaguely (as forms of inappropriate contact), despite the anxiety over this in the media.

- Yet since many of their concerns do echo those publicised in the mass media, it may be that the very effort to raise awareness of online risks can worry children.

In all, it would seem that the very diversity of online risks makes it difficult for them and their parents to deal with. These include situations of social pressure, uncertain norms or even legality, lost trust or invaded privacy.

Many online risks worry children

If one of my friends finds out he has lost a friend on Facebook. (Boy, 10, Denmark)

The majority of children my age would be bothered if someone would access their personal information or would edit their words to damage their reputation and their group of friends. (Boy, 13, Romania)

The things that bother people about my age are the influence of bad websites such as how to diet or lose weight so you could be known as the pretty one; like vomiting things. (Girl, 15, Ireland)

Pop up with things where you have to buy something. Or people who want to cheat on you. (Boy, 10, Denmark)

Discrimination (as for clothing, look or personality). Anonymity (when getting anonymous messages one may read anonymous messages on forums). And perhaps the knowledge of the internetization of the world (everything is on the internet). (Girl, 16, Estonia)

A child can easily buy things behind his/her parents' back that they did not permit to buy. (Girl, 14, Poland)

When someone sends me a message like "I will kill you" or "I will steal all your money". (Boy, 12, Austria)

I'm worried about websites for poker, where you can get addicted. (Girl, 16, Belgium)

Viruses, they scare me the most. (Boy, 13, Czech Republic)

I unknowingly already made a contract on the internet and my mum had to pay almost 100€. And once there came a letter and mum had to go to a lawyer because she could not handle that by herself. (Boy, 12, Germany)

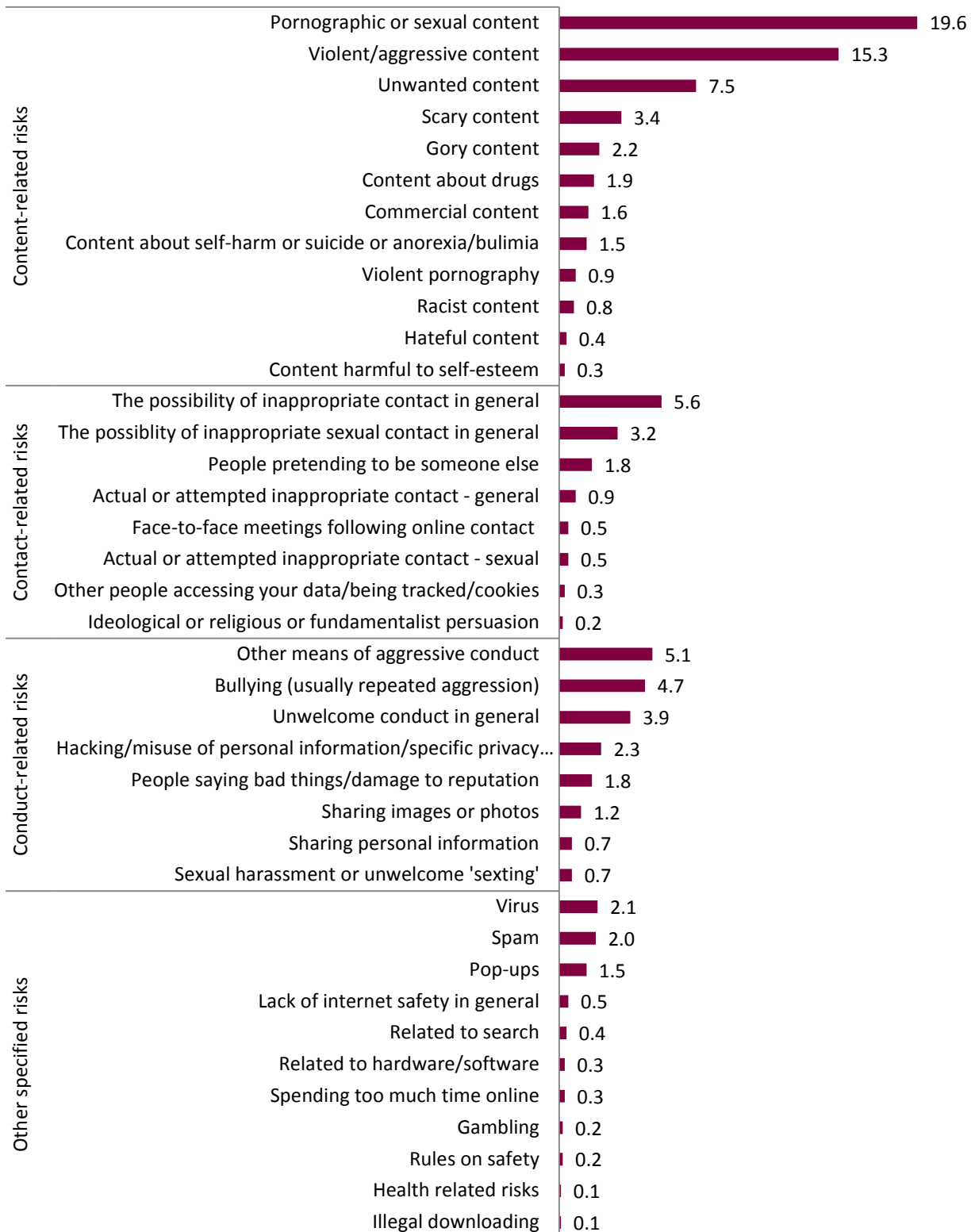I think there are sites dealing with drugs or sexuality, and about bombs, like for example how to make a Molotov cocktail. (Boy, 16, Hungary)

The unwanted political advertisement. (Boy, 16, Czech Republic)

Negative statements about my country and introducing Muslims and Turkey in a wrong way bother me. (Boy, 15, Turkey)

One can use things on a social network against you, for example when you look for a job. (Girl, 16, Austria)

Figure 2: What were all the online risks children mentioned? (% of all risks)

Content-related risks

Risk	%
Pornographic or sexual content	19.6
Violent/aggressive content	15.3
Unwanted content	7.5
Scary content	3.4
Gory content	2.2
Content about drugs	1.9
Commercial content	1.6
Content about self-harm or suicide or anorexia/bulimia	1.5
Violent pornography	0.9
Racist content	0.8
Hateful content	0.4
Content harmful to self-esteem	0.3

Contact-related risks

Risk	%
The possibility of inappropriate contact in general	5.6
The possiblity of inappropriate sexual contact in general	3.2
People pretending to be someone else	1.8
Actual or attempted inappropriate contact - general	0.9
Face-to-face meetings following online contact	0.5
Actual or attempted inappropriate contact - sexual	0.5
Other people accessing your data/being tracked/cookies	0.3
Ideological or religious or fundamentalist persuasion	0.2

Conduct-related risks

Risk	%
Other means of aggressive conduct	5.1
Bullying (usually repeated aggression)	4.7
Unwelcome conduct in general	3.9
Hacking/misuse of personal information/specific privacy…	2.3
People saying bad things/damage to reputation	1.8
Sharing images or photos	1.2
Sharing personal information	0.7
Sexual harassment or unwelcome 'sexting'	0.7

Other specified risks

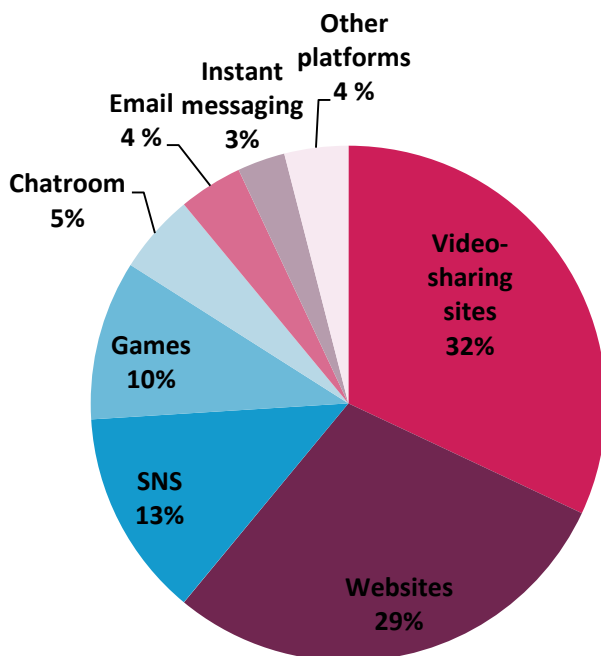| Risk	%
Virus	2.1
Spam	2.0
Pop-ups	1.5
Lack of internet safety in general	0.5
Related to search	0.4
Related to hardware/software	0.3
Spending too much time online	0.3
Gambling	0.2
Rules on safety	0.2
Health related risks	0.1
Illegal downloading	0.1

Base: this figure shows, for each of 40 types of risk coded, the percentage that each represents out of the total of all 15,444 online risks mentioned by children (i.e. it does not show the percentage of children who identified each risk).

Video-sharing sites top the ranking of risky platforms

- Over half of the children (55% of the 9,904 who answered the open-ended question) spontaneously mentioned a platform or technology when telling us about what bothers children their age on the internet (see Figure 3).

- **Video-sharing sites (such as YouTube, Redtube) were the most commonly mentioned – by 32% of children who mentioned any platform in describing online risks that bother their age group.**

- **Websites came second (29%), followed by social networking sites (13%). Games (10%) came fourth.**

Figure 3: Which platforms were linked to risks of concern to children?

Base: 9-16 year olds who mentioned a platform when describing online risks (N=4,356).

Video-sharing sites

YouTube. Terrible videos. Terrible images. (Boy, 13, UK)

People who have sex on You Tube. Pictures of intestines in the body. (Boy, 9, Denmark)

I saw a video in which a little boy was hanging in a Ferris wheel and men were filming it. I was shocked because the men did not help the boy, instead they stopped the wheel and the boy fell down. I have also seen a video in which men took off animals' furs even though the animals were alive. The animals were suffering pain and ended up dead. In a way I think it is good to have this kind of videos in internet because then you know what happens in the world. (Girl, 15, Finland)

On YouTube, people could type something in and the wrong thing could come up, which is not very nice. Sometimes rude pictures etc. could come up, or sometimes they could be sent to you, and you don't want to see it. (Girl, 14, UK)

These websites on YouTube that show sex or violence, they should not be allowed to upload these materials on the internet, or also videos with young people humiliating peers or bullying them. (Boy, 15, Italy)

Awful videos of real-life car accidents. (Boy, 12, Slovenia)

Social networking sites

Well, mostly social networking because it gives you a link to almost anyone and people can get overly obsessive about that, i.e. checking people's status all the time, judging them over their pictures and hearing gossip or having mean things said to you. That's exactly why cyberbullying is so huge! They could just delete their profile because they're getting treated badly but they just won't because they've put so much effort into it. (Girl, 15, Ireland)

Sometimes the internet contains photos that are put there without the person's consent; I know that also groups against someone can be formed, where everyone who hates the person joins the group. (Boy 15, Belgium)
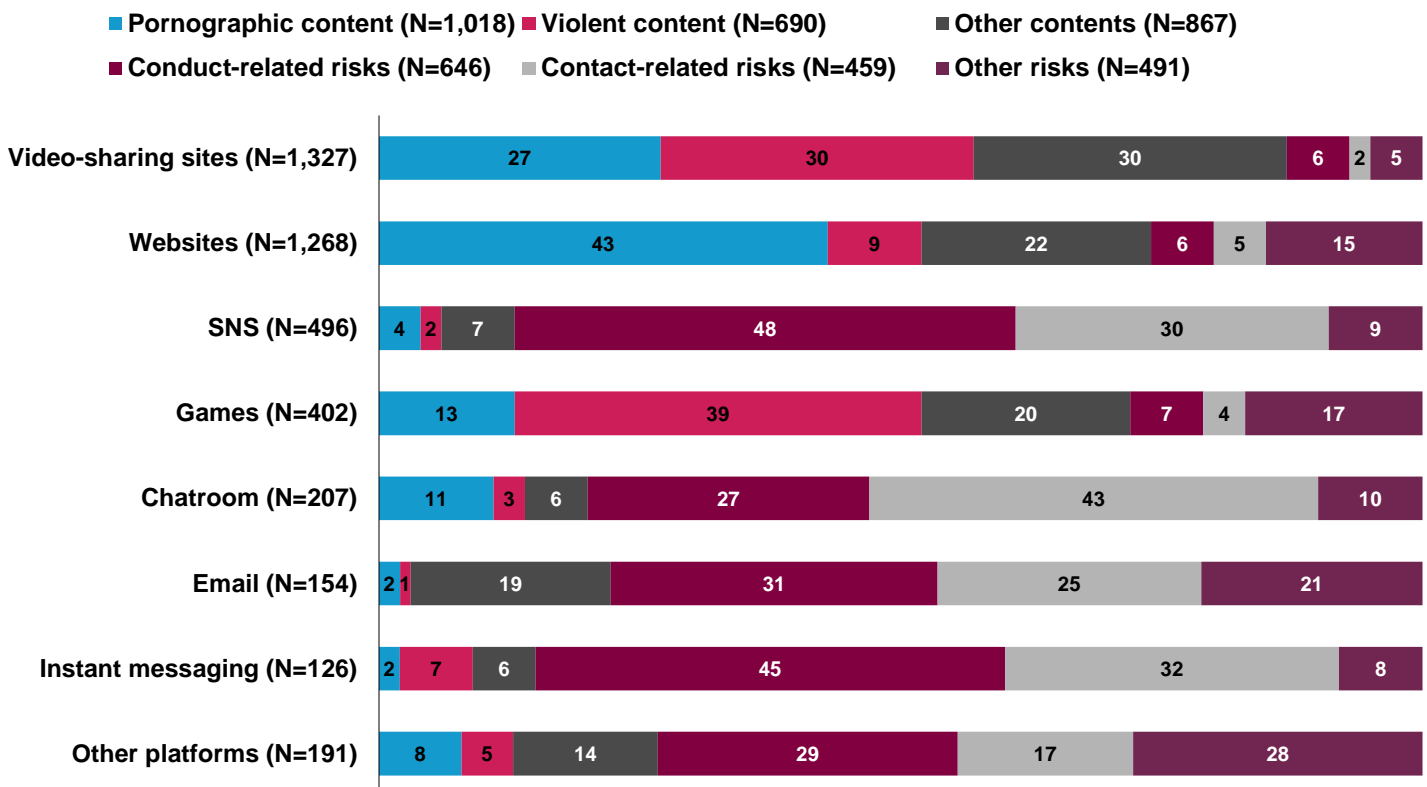
Well, for example, when I am stupidly accosted by some guy. Like, "Hey, can we meet some time? You are so cute!" or something like that. Well, I find molestations like that frightening. That's totally crazy, that once happened to a friend of mine. Some guy totally stalked her on "SchülerVZ". (Girl, 14, Germany)

I think people will get upset by people writing statuses about them. And people could be upset because if you write anything nasty there isn´t anything to remove it. (Girl, 9, UK)

Platforms are risk specific

- **Of the risks associated with video-sharing websites such as YouTube, most were violent (30%) and pornographic (27%) content risks, along with other content-related risks (30%).**

- Of the risks associated with social networking sites such as Facebook, by contrast, most are linked to conduct (48%) and contact-related risks (30%) in children's accounts.

- Of the risks associated with websites in children's accounts, most related to pornographic content (43%).

- Games are primarily linked to violent contents (39% of all risks linked to games).

- Chatrooms are mostly connected to contact-related risks (43%) and to conduct-related risks (27% of all risks linked to chatrooms).

Figure 4: Which risks are associated with which platforms? (%)

Legend:
- ■ Pornographic content (N=1,018)
- ■ Violent content (N=690)
- ■ Other contents (N=867)
- ■ Conduct-related risks (N=646)
- ■ Contact-related risks (N=459)
- ■ Other risks (N=491)

Platform	Pornographic content	Violent content	Other contents	Conduct-related risks	Contact-related risks	Other risks
Video-sharing sites (N=1,327)	27	30	30	6	2	5
Websites (N=1,268)	43	9	22	6	5	15
SNS (N=496)	4	2	7	48	30	9
Games (N=402)	13	39	20	7	4	17
Chatroom (N=207)	11	3	6	27	43	10
Email (N=154)	2	1	19	31	25	21
Instant messaging (N=126)	2	7	6	45	32	8
Other platforms (N=191)	8	5	14	29	17	28

Base: 9-16 year olds who mentioned a platform when describing online risks (N=4,171).

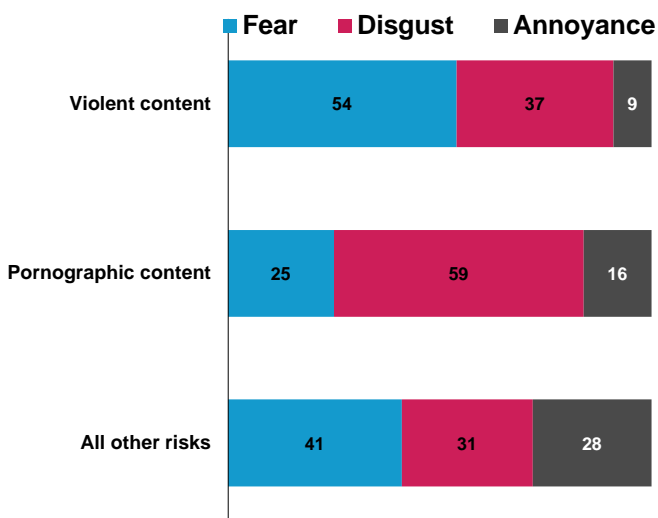## Emotional responses include disgust and fear

We did not ask children directly how they felt about online risk. But one in eight (12%) of them revealed an emotional response:

- 5% (431 children) indicated disgust, 4% (367 children) indicated fear, and 3% (254 children) indicated annoyance.

- **When children expressed an emotional response to violent content, this was mostly fear (54%) or disgust (37%) (Figure 5).**

- **This pattern was reversed for pornographic content – among those who expressed an emotion, it was most often disgust (59%), then fear (25%) or annoyance (16%).**

More detailed analysis of the results shows that:

- 23% of those who mentioned scary content expressed fear; 15% of those who mentioned commercial content seemed annoyed; 9% of those mentioning reputational damage expressed fear.

- Only 5% of those who mentioned pornographic content expressed disgust (but, put differently, of those who expressed disgust, 28% linked this to pornography). Other risks (hate, racism, violence, self-harm etc.) generated little expressed emotion.

Figure 5: Which emotions are linked to types of risk? (%)

Base: Children who mentioned risks and expressed an emotion (N=1,077).

Scary, disgusting and annoying

Scary things - I saw something at my friend's house and I can't get it out of my head. Things that wouldn't be appropriate to our age. (Boy, 11, Ireland)

People sometimes upload things online such as animal cruelty and other content that is not human! People may also upload films with violence online and then send it around. I believe that this is really shocking. (Girl, 15, the Netherlands)

Killing stories of all sorts; videos about torturing; it doesn't matter whether animals or children are bullied/tortured, both are disgusting. (Boy, 11, Estonia)

I hate when I see animals being beaten, or people fighting with each other, or those scary pictures and bloody things. (Girl, 13, Hungary)

I was shocked seeing a starving African child who was going to die and a condor waiting to eat him. Also, news about soldiers who died while serving the army, Palestine and Israel war scenes upset me very much. (Girl, 13, Turkey)

There are a lot of sites showing video clips with disgusting videos. A mate showed me once a video about an execution. It was not fun, but insane. I get scared. You can search for nearly everything and find a video with it. Then there is pornography here and there and just everything. (Boy, 15, Sweden)

My friend saw killing animals online and she became vegetarian ever since. (Girl, 15, Cyprus)

I am a member of "SchülerVZ". And once I was badly insulted because of my physical disability. That was totally uncool and I felt really bad. (Boy, 16, Germany)

When you are talking to a friend and suddenly someone you don't know comes in and insults or threatens you. (Girl, 9, Spain)
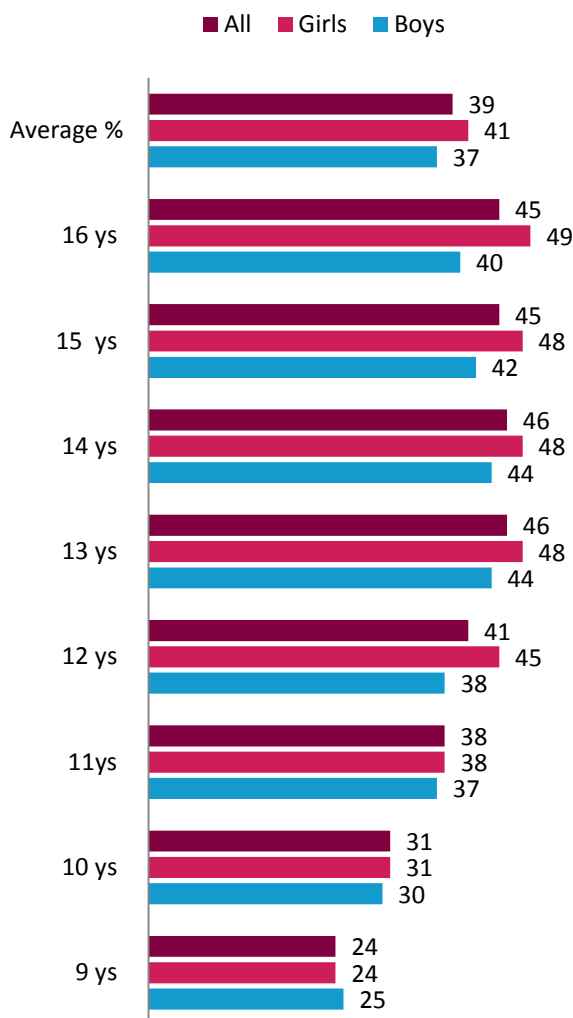
Age and gender make a difference

Slightly more girls (41%) than boys (37%) told us about online risks that concern children their age online (Figure 6). It may be girls are more talkative about risk or more obliging in completing a survey.

It is pertinent that the EU Kids Online survey found that, although girls and boys encounter risks online in similar numbers, girls are more likely to be upset by them.[9] This greater concern may explain why more girls answered the open-ended question.

Figure 6: Children who mentioned one or more risks, by age (%)

Base: 9-16 year olds who use the internet (N=24,511).

As children get older, their experience of the internet, their ways of interacting with it, and the risks it affords them all change over the years from 9-16.

- Nine year olds are least likely to mention any risks that bother children their own age (24%), rising to 45% of 16 year olds.[10]

- **Children's mention of risks rises markedly from nine to 12 years old.** Possibly, this younger group is becoming experimental online, adding new activities and trying out new freedoms faster than they are gaining the skills or maturity to cope with what they find.

- Also important is the finding that accounts of risk rise faster, and to a higher level overall, for girls compared with boys (see Figure 6). **From the early teenage years, girls are more likely than boys to identify risks online that concern their age group.**

Boys more bothered by violence, girls by contact-related risks

Figure 7: Which risks are mentioned by gender? (%)

Base: 5,033 girls and 4,603 boys who mentioned at least one risk (first-mentioned risks only).
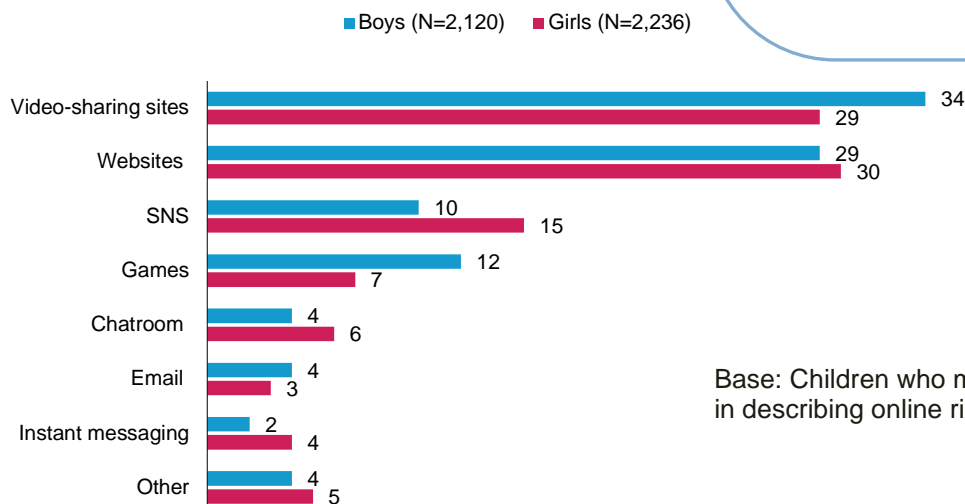
Figure 7 shows that:

- **Boys are more concerned about violent content (including violence, aggression and gory content) than girls (21% vs. 16%).**

- **Girls are more concerned than boys about contact-related (17% vs. 10%) and conduct-related (20% vs. 18%) risks.**

- **There is no gender difference for pornographic content: 22% of boys and girls mention pornographic content first.**

Unsurprisingly, then, we also find that boys and girls perceive online internet platforms differently as a source of risk for their age group. Figure 8 shows that:

- Boys are concerned more about videos available on the internet (34% boys who mentioned a platform vs. 29% girls) as well as about games (12% boys vs. 7% girls).

- Girls are concerned more about social networking sites (15% girls who mentioned a platform vs. 10% boys).

These findings point to familiar gender differences. Boys engage more broadly with entertaining content (videos, games), encountering more scenes of violence and gore that concern them. Girls focus on communication more, leading to concern with contact risks.

Figure 8: Which platforms do boys and girls link to risk?

Contact risks especially concern girls

That someone forced the person to do something they did not want to do, like turning on the web [cam] without the person wanting it. Having done something illegal without knowing it is surely very gross. (Girl, 12, Norway)

She was on Hyves and hence online; she was bothered by a guy who called her names the whole time. She was really very sad about it. (Girl, 9, the Netherlands)

I am also worried about the safety of the information that you disclose about yourself, and meeting people online. (Girl, 16, Belgium)

Conduct risks preoccupy many children

Violent video filmed at school or when somebody is harmed. (Girl, 10, Lithuania)

While gaming, some kids say nasty things to you. (Boy, 9, Greece)

They can gossip about me. They can tell lies about me. (Girl, 10, Czech Republic)

We had a fight with a friend at school and after classes we chatted on Skype and he threatened me. (Boy, 11, Bulgaria)

People who upload unwanted photos and record videos in class and upload them. (Boy, 11, Spain)

Put pictures of people on the internet to bully. (Girl, 14, Portugal)

When they are bullied for example on MSN and threatened if they would talk to other people about it. Therefore, they cannot tell their parents nor the police what happened. (Boy, 12, the Netherlands)

Negative/ criticising comments. (Girl, 14, Cyprus)

Boys (N=2,120) Girls (N=2,236)

Platform	Boys	Girls
Video-sharing sites	34	29
Websites	29	30
SNS	10	15
Games	12	7
Chatroom	4	6
Email	4	3
Instant messaging	2	4
Other	4	5

Base: Children who mentioned a platform in describing online risks (N=4,359).

Conduct risks concern teens most

Relevant to the theme of Safer Internet Day 2013, "Connect with Respect", we can see that questions of online conduct are particularly on the minds of older teens. Figure 9 shows that:
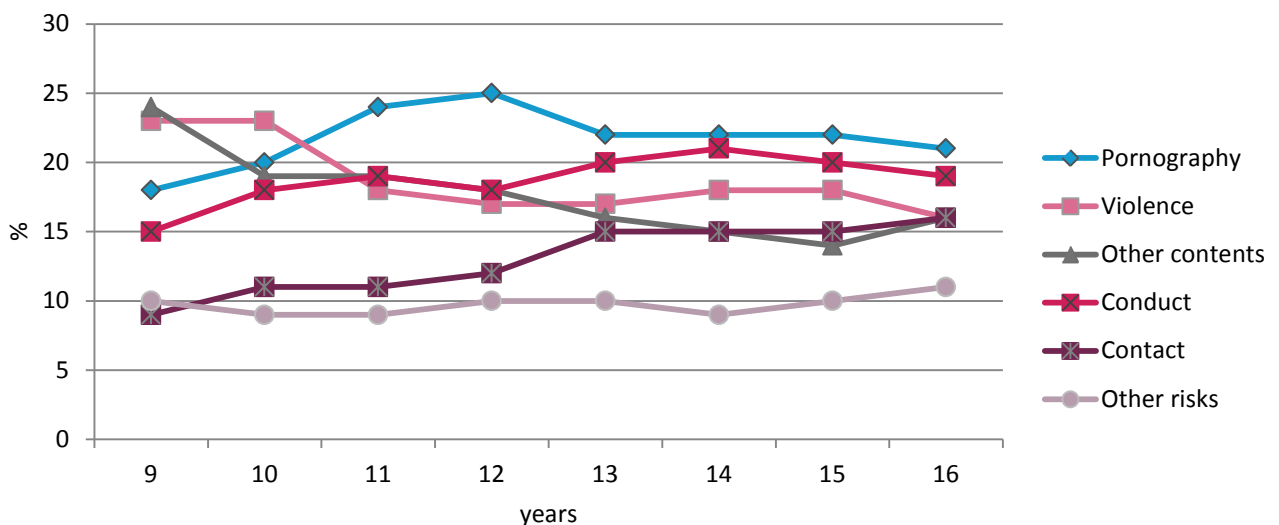
- **The youngest groups are more concerned about content and other risks. Then, as children get older they become more concerned about conduct and contact risks.**

- Children become more concerned about pornographic content as they enter their teens, and then their level of concern declines.

- Concern over violent (including aggressive and gory) content, along with other content-related risks, declines with age.

- Concern over conduct-related and, especially, contact-related risks increases with age.

It would seem, therefore, that experience of the internet alters the balance of risks that concern children, but does not eliminate them. Experience brings resilience and the ability to cope, on the part of many. But it also enables children to do more online, pursuing more opportunities. Insofar as these include peer to peer networking opportunities, this brings new challenges as well.

- Detailed findings show that although concern over other content (e.g. self-harm/ suicide, bulimia/ anorexia, drugs, commercial and racist content) is low, it increases with age.

- Further, concerns about inappropriate conduct is most common among the 9-10 year olds; concern about bullying increases with age and peaks at 13-14 years, while concerns with unwanted sharing of personal information, images or photos increase with age, becoming most common among the oldest group. All these changes seem to be an effect of increasing internet activity and enriching social and online experience in young people.

- Last, concern about inappropriate contacts in general decreases with age, to be replaced by concern about inappropriate sexual contacts and people who pretend to be someone else online. These changes seem to result from widening social circles among teenagers.

Figure 9: Percentages of children mentioning each type of risk, by age

Base: Children who mentioned at least one online risk (N=9,636).

Concern about risks is greater in 'high use, high risk' countries

Does children's concern with online risk vary by country? Does it make a difference if internet use is more or less in different countries? Since response rates to the open-ended question varied considerably by country, we group countries according to EU Kids Online's classification:[11]

- 40% of children in 'lower use, lower risk' (Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Hungary) mentioned risks in the open-ended question.

- 31% of children in 'lower use, some risk' (Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Turkey) mentioned risks.

- 38% of children in 'higher use, some risk' (Cyprus, Finland, Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, UK) mentioned risks.

- 59% of children in 'higher use, higher risk' (Denmark, Norway, Sweden) mentioned risks.

- 35% of children in 'newer use, newer risk' (Bulgaria. Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania, Romania) mentioned risks.
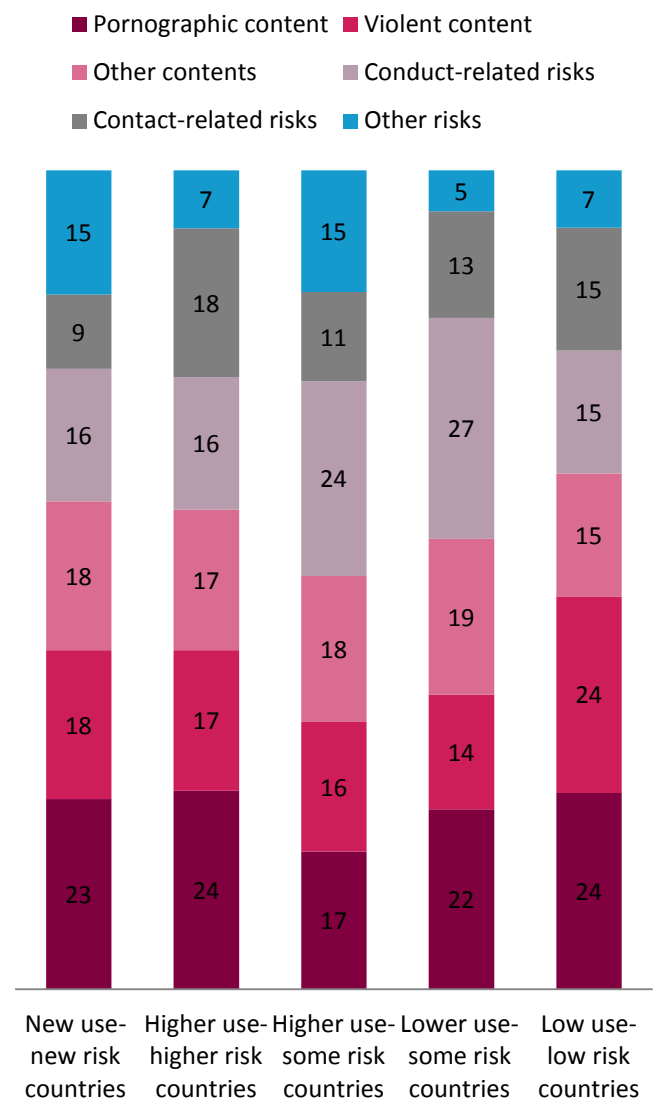
This suggests that awareness of and concern about risks is highest in the 'higher use, higher risk' countries where children's internet use has become thoroughly embedded in everyday life. Even though children may be gaining resilience in these high use countries, they still have many concerns.

Figure 10 shows that the risks that most concern children vary for the country groupings.

- Pornographic content is of less concern to children from 'higher use, some risk' countries (17% only, versus 22% to 24% for other country groupings).

- More children in 'lower use, lower risk' countries (24%, versus 14-18%) say that violent content bothers them online.

- Conduct-related risks are mentioned more by children from 'lower use, some risk' (27%) and 'higher use, some risk' countries (24%).

- Contact-related risks are mentioned by children from 'higher use, higher risk' countries (18%) and least often mentioned by those from 'new use, new risk' countries (9%).

- Other risks are mentioned most often (15%) by children from 'new use, new risk' and 'higher use, some risk countries'.

Figure 10: Type of risks mentioned by children, by country group

Legend: Pornographic content · Violent content · Other contents · Conduct-related risks · Contact-related risks · Other risks

	New use-new risk countries	Higher use-higher risk countries	Higher use-some risk countries	Lower use-some risk countries	Low use-low risk countries
Other risks	15	7	15	5	7
Contact-related risks	9	18	11	13	15
Conduct-related risks	16	16	24	27	15
Other contents	18	17	18	19	15
Violent content	18	17	16	14	24
Pornographic content	23	24	17	22	24

Base: Children who mentioned one or more risks (first mentioned risks) (N=9,636).

Comparing unprompted and prompted accounts of online risk

Our European survey was informed by EU Kids Online's classification of content, contact and conduct risks.[12] Focusing on the main risks on the policy agenda, the in-home, face-to-face survey of 25,142 children aged 9-16 years found that when they were prompted, they reported that: [13]

▪ 30% had had contact online with someone not met face to face, though only 9% in all had gone to a face to face meeting with someone first met online.

▪ 21% had come across at least one type of potentially harmful user-generated content (11-16 year olds only).

▪ 15% had seen or received sexual messages on the internet (11-16 year olds only).

▪ 14% had seen sexual images on websites in the past year (though 23% had seen such images somewhere).

▪ 6% had been sent nasty or hurtful messages on the internet (though 19% had had this happen somewhere).

This suggests a rank ordering of risks experienced from new online contacts (the most common risk) and user-generated content down to bullying (the least common of the risks we asked about, and one that is still more frequent offline than online).[14]

Encountering risk is not the same as experiencing harm, so in the survey, we also asked those who encountered a risk whether it had bothered or upset them. These findings suggested another ranking: bullying results in the highest proportion of children being upset; sexting and pornography are less often upsetting; meeting new online contacts offline is the least likely to result in upset.

From our analysis of children's unprompted accounts of online risk, several points emerge:

▪ **Our focus in the survey on four main risks on the public policy agenda now seems rather narrow. It is the sheer diversity of risks that concern them, albeit often in small numbers, that stands out in the present report.**

▪ **Our focus in the survey on sexual content, contact and conduct also seems rather narrow. Particularly striking in the present report is the importance of violent, aggressive and gory content.**

▪ Still, it is also the case that children are indeed concerned about pornography, the risks of inappropriate contact, and a range of forms of unwelcome peer conduct.

▪ Such risks should be taken seriously but not exaggerated. Less than half (39%) of the children surveyed completed the open-ended question analysed here, suggesting many had no great concerns to report.

▪ Also, not all concerns are based on direct experience – most notably in the case of the many comments we received about fear of strangers. But as the quotations we have included here imply, many do reflect direct experience, and so should be clearly heard.

Policy implications

EU Kids Online has developed extensive evidence-based policy recommendations from its survey of children and parents.[15] However, listening to children's accounts of online risk as expressed in their own words leads us to suggest the following:

▪ The priority given by children to concerns over violent content should be heard and addressed by parents, teachers and policy makers, as should the negative reactions of many to the ready availability of pornography. Children's comments reveal that violent content online goes beyond concerns with bullying to include much graphic and extreme imagery that disturbs or scares children.

- Children's emotional responses to the internet should be attended to. No-one wishes children to fear the internet, or to feel disgust at the adult world depicted online. Much digital literacy teaching, awareness-raising and parental guidance focuses on skills and tools, but listening to children's emotions is also important.

- Wider use of end-user filtering or parental control tools could address some of children's concerns. Our research shows that parental mediation of all kinds (active or technical) depends in part on parental confidence with the internet.[16]

- However, parental tools generally filter mass-produced rather than user-generated content, and much of the content that bothers children is user-generated, whether by their peer group or from further afield. Since video-sharing sites also contain much which children also enjoy and wish to access, managing which contents they can or cannot access needs considerable care.

- Parents should feel empowered to take time to explain, comfort and give age-appropriate rules about conduct to their children online as for traditional media. For video-sharing sites, as for television or film, the power of the moving image is particularly strong in shaping the imagination. Not wanting to be 'left out' seems to result in many children being exposed to the circulation of upsetting images.

Just as in the offline world, it seems that many problems can be identified online; indeed, for children especially, the online/ offline distinction is ever less relevant. The challenge for policy makers in addressing this diversity of risks is considerable. In so doing, children's own voices should be taken into account.[17]

Youthful views on what should be done

In my opinion all sites are welcome, if you don't like a certain site, you simply avoid it. We are different people, with different tastes. So, on the internet there should be all sorts of websites, with ample, diverse content, for all tastes. (Boy, 14, Romania)

Excessive violence, porn, commercial products that are totally annoying and I think the European Union should use its power at computer level to block websites that we all know where we can find that content. (Boy, 15, Portugal)

I think that many youths in my age are worried about some people like paedophiles and other guys who want you to tell them how you look like. But it is only to say no and block them. You should absolutely not give away personal information. And it is not so bad to tell some of it to your parents so they know something about what is happening. That is what I have done. (Girl, 16, Sweden)

It depends what age you are. If you are around 10 years then it might be gross to suddenly end up on a porn-site. When you are a little older and end up in a porn site, you do not care so much and just cross it out instead. (Girl, 15, Norway)

Blocking some beneficial websites that we are happy to use (such as video and music sharing sites) and difficulty in accessing whatever we want on internet bother us. The restriction of things that we wonder at and the availability of the things that make us unhappy bother us as well. (Boy, 15, Turkey)

I think that the fewer things a kid knows about the internet, the greater the risks. Nevertheless, I may accidentally come across violent or inappropriate scenes while doing coursework online. Also, a stranger might bother me. (Girl, 12, Greece)

If we sit too much in front of the computer we become 'square-headed geeks'. I think 1 or 2 hours are more than enough for playing games, it's more than enough for a child. (Girl, 9, Hungary)
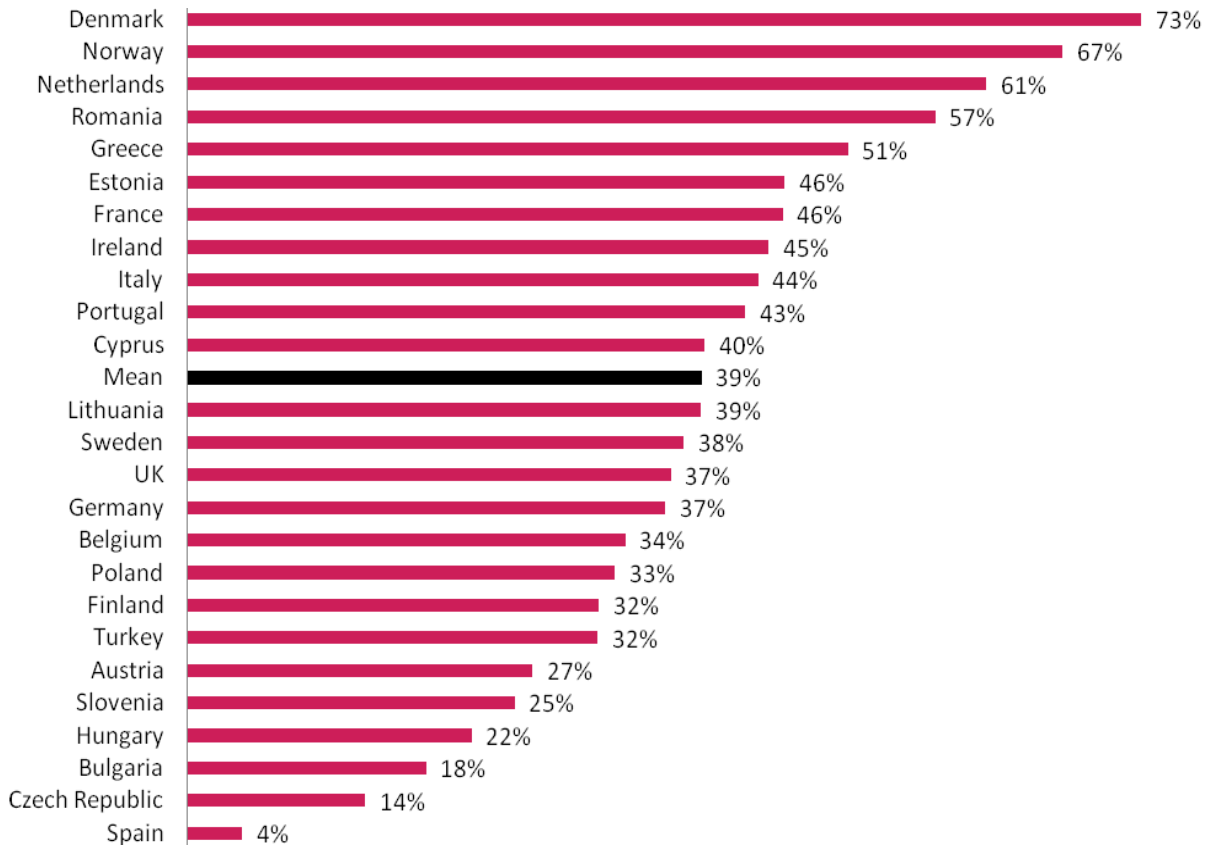
For many young children I certainly think that sites do exist with very shocking or annoying information and images which are too easy to access! (e.g. sites that contain pornography, child abuse, information about terrorists, murders, etc.). (Boy, 16, the Netherlands)

Dad told me that there are people online who try to get in contact with us children just to hurt us, so if it happens, I must not reply and turn the computer off (Boy, 11, Italy)

Annex on Methodology

Response rates varied by country as shown in Figure 11 below. [18]

Figure 11: Percentage of children who answered the open-ended question, "What things on the internet would bother people about your age?" in each country?

Country	Percentage
Denmark	73%
Norway	67%
Netherlands	61%
Romania	57%
Greece	51%
Estonia	46%
France	46%
Ireland	45%
Italy	44%
Portugal	43%
Cyprus	40%
Mean	39%
Lithuania	39%
Sweden	38%
UK	37%
Germany	37%
Belgium	34%
Poland	33%
Finland	32%
Turkey	32%
Austria	27%
Slovenia	25%
Hungary	22%
Bulgaria	18%
Czech Republic	14%
Spain	4%

Coding process

Since children's accounts of online risk were expressed in 25 languages, they were coded by all teams in the network.[19] A standard coding scheme was developed, piloted in four countries, and revised, before two coders per country independently coded the data and inter-coder reliability was calculated. [20]

Children's answers were coded in terms of: A. Type of response / B. Type of platform / C. Number of risks / D. Type of first risk mentioned / E. Type of second risk mentioned / F. Type of third risk mentioned / G. Emotional reaction.

Coding reliability

Each national team coded the verbatim responses for their country, using two independent coders. First, the paired coders discussed the coding scheme to be sure of understanding it. Then they coded together the first 100 answers from children that reported risks. Thereafter, the coders worked separately to code the remaining answers.

Table 1. Kappa coefficients for between-coder agreement for each variable.

Type of Child's response	Type of platform	Number of risks mentioned*	1st mentioned risk	2nd mentioned risk	3rd mentioned risk	Emotion conveyed
0.95	0.82	0.87	0.78	0.74	0.77	0.63
N=12,361	N=6,579	N=6,570	N=6,306	N=2,636	N=765	N=6,435

Note: Data from Sweden not included
* Pearson correlation coefficient.

Detailed codes

A. **Type of response (choose ONE):**
1. Does not answer (space blank)
2. Does not know/doesn't want to answer
3. No problems online, nothing is upsetting
4. Many problems online, everything is upsetting
5. Gives an irrelevant or invalid response (e.g. *Power off. My mum needs to go on*)
6. Reports a problem of any kind

For responses 1-5, <u>END</u> coding now. For response 6, <u>CONTINUE</u> coding as below.

B. **Type of platform (or technology or format) (choose ONE –** the first or main one**):**
1. None mentioned
2. Email
3. Instant messaging
4. Chat/chat room
5. Facebook, Hi5, other SNS
6. Twitter (or similar)
7. Games/gaming
8. Video-sharing sites (incl. YouTube)
9. Images
10. Websites
11. Mobile phones
12. Other (e.g. *'the computer'*)

C. **Number of risks mentioned (Choose ONE):**
0. None (JUMP TO CODE G)
1. One (CODE UNDER D)
2. Two (CODE UNDER D & E)
3. Three (CODE UNDER D, E & F)
4. More than three (CODE FIRST THREE RISKS ONLY UNDER D-F)

D. **Code first risk mentioned (if applicable) using codes 1-40 as below:**
E. **Code second risk mentioned (if applicable) using codes 1-40 as below:**
F. **Code third risk mentioned (if applicable) using codes 1-40 as below:**

Content-related risk (on sites, in mass messages, images, etc.)
1. Unwanted content in general (not further specified – e.g. *inappropriate images*)
2. Violent/aggressive content (e.g. *Violence, torture, killing animals*)
3. Gory content (blood, pain, etc.)
4. Scary content
5. Pornographic or sexual content (including 'adult content'/ 'inappropriate content'): (E.g. *see naked people; pornography; private images)*
6. Violent pornography (e.g. *violation, rape*)
7. Commercial content (e.g. *advertising to make money; sites that promise money*)
8. Racist content
9. Hateful content
10. Content about drugs

11. Content about self-harm or suicide or anorexia/bulimia
12. Content harmful to self-esteem (e.g. *sites for us to feel badly about our body*)

Contact-related risk (usually from adults):
13. The possibility of inappropriate contact in general (e.g. *nasty/bad people, strangers*)
14. The possibility of inappropriate sexual contact in general (e.g. paedophile, grooming)
15. Actual or attempted inappropriate contact – general
16. Actual or attempted inappropriate contact – sexual
17. Face-to-face meetings following online contact (e.g. *meeting strangers*)
18. Ideological or religious or fundamentalist persuasion
19. Other people accessing your data/ being tracked/ cookies
20. People pretending to be someone else (e.g. *can't tell who someone is, people lying about their identity, impersonation, fake identities*)

Conduct-related risk (usually from other young people):
21. Unwelcome conduct in general (e.g. *bad behaviour, vulgar language or swearing*)
22. Bullying (usually repeated aggression)
23. Other mean or aggressive conduct (e.g. *receiving nasty messages; threats, Insults that lower our self-esteem and affect us psychologically*)
24. Sexual harassment or unwelcome 'sexting'
25. Sharing images or photos
26. Sharing personal information
27. Hacking or misuse of personal information or data, specific violation of privacy
28. People saying bad things about you/damage to your reputation

Other risk-related mentions:
29. Rules on safety (e.g. *don't out give information)*
30. Gambling
31. Pop-ups (*unspecified, or commercial/marketing/advertising*)
32. Spam, phishing, scams, fraud (e.g. *false companies, fraudulent information*)
33. Illegal downloading
34. Spending too much time online (e.g. *missing homework, sleep, meals etc; addiction*)
35. Health related risks (*muscular, eye-sight etc.*)
36. Lack of internet safety in general
37. Related to hardware/software (e.g. *computer breakdown, slow internet, hard to install*)
38. Related to search (e.g. *hard to find things, difficult to evaluate, unreliable information*)
39. Virus (e.g. *sites that show us issues of our interest and then come with virus*)
40. Other – any other risk not coded above

G. Emotional reaction (if discernible in the respondent's account - choose ONE):
0. No emotion conveyed in the response
1. Fear (e.g. *scary, worrying*)
2. Disgust (e.g. *gross, nasty, offensive*)
3. Annoyance (e.g. *annoying, irritating*)
4. Positive reaction (e.g. *exciting, curious, cool, funny*)
5. Other – any other emotion not coded above

EU Kids Online

Recent reports from EU Kids Online

- D'Haenens, L., Vandoninck, S., and Donoso, V. (2013) *How to cope and build online resilience?* (http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/48115/)

- Smahel, D., Helsper, E.J., Green, L., Kalmus, V., Blinka, L., and Ólafsson, K. (2012) *Excessive internet use among European children.* (http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/47344/)

- Haddon, L., Livingstone, S., and the EU Kids Online network (2012.) *EU Kids Online: National perspectives.* LSE, London: EU Kids Online. (http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/46878/)

- Livingstone, S., Ólafsson, K., O'Neill, B. and Donoso, V. (2012) *Towards a better internet for children* (http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/44213/)

- Dürager, A. and Livingstone, S. (2012) *How can parents support children's internet safety?* (http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/id/eprint/42872)

- Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A. and Ólafsson, K. (2011) *EU Kids Online final report* (http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/39351/)

- O'Neill, B., Livingstone, S. and McLaughlin, S. (2011) *Final recommendations for policy, methodology and research* (http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/39410/)

- Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A. and Ólafsson, K. (2011) *Risks and safety on the internet: The perspective of European children: Full findings* (http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/33731/)

- Görzig, A. (2011) *Who bullies and who is bullied online? A study of 9-16 year old internet users in 25 European countries* (http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/39601/)

- Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A. and Ólafsson, K. (2011) *Disadvantaged children and online risk* (http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/39385/)

- Livingstone, S., Ólafsson, K. and Staksrud, E. (2011) *Social networking, age and privacy* (http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/35849/)

- Sonck, N., Livingstone, S., Kuiper, E. and de Haan, J. (2011) *Digital literacy and safety skills* (http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/33733/)

- Livingstone, S. and Ólafsson, K. (2011) *Risky communication online* (http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/33732/)

- Hasebrink, U., Görzig, A., Haddon, L., Kalmus, V. and Livingstone, S. (2011) *Patterns of risk and safety online* (http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/39356/)

- Lobe, B., Livingstone, S., Ólafsson, K. and Vodeb, H. (2011) *Cross-national comparison of risks and safety on the internet* (http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/39608/)

- Hasebrink, U., Livingstone, S., Haddon, L. and Ólafsson, K. (eds) (2009) *Comparing children's online opportunities and risks across Europe* (http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/24368/)

- Staksrud, E., 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* (http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/2852/)

- Lobe, B., Livingstone, S., Ólafsson, K. and Simões, J.A. (eds) (2008) *Best practice research guide: How to research children and online technologies in comparative perspective* (http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/21658/)

- Stald, G. and Haddon, L. (eds) (2008) *Cross-cultural contexts of research: Factors influencing the study of children and the internet in Europe* (http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/24380/)

Our book is now published

The *EU Kids Online* network has been funded by the EC Safer Internet Programme in three successive phases of work from 2006-14 to enhance knowledge of children's and parents' experiences and practices regarding risky and safer use of the internet and new online technologies.

As a major part of its activities, *EU Kids Online* conducted a face-to-face, in home survey during 2010 of 25,000 9-16 year old internet users and their parents in 25 countries, using a stratified random sample and self-completion methods for sensitive questions.

Now including researchers and stakeholders from 33 countries in Europe and beyond, the network continues to analyse and update the evidence base to inform policy.

For all reports, findings and technical survey information, as well as full details of national partners, please visit www.eukidsonline.net

Endnotes

[1] See Figure 30 in Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A., and Ólafsson, K. (2011) *Risks and safety on the internet: The perspective of European children. Full findings,* http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/33731/.

[2] See Eurobarometer (2007) *Safer Internet for Children – children's perspectives, see* http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/sip/surveys/qualitative/index_en.htm. Four types of risk were drawn out from children's (9-10 and 12-14 years) discussion: (i) Risks affecting the computer (viruses, hacking), (ii) Inopportune appearance of images or the mistaken access to undesired websites (violence, pornography), (iii) Cons and fraud (illegal use of bank details, dishonest proposals, false competitions), (iv) Anything that puts the child him/herself in difficulties or in danger: physical assaults and sex attacks by malicious adults.

[3] Other qualitative work conducted since 2007 tends to be single-country only. Note that EU Kids Online is conducting new focus groups with children across Europe to understand their perceptions of online risk and safety. The findings will be reported in Autumn 2014.

[4] The survey examined risks faced by children in 25 European countries. Interviews were conducted during 2010 in children's own homes among a random stratified sample of 25,142 children aged 9-16 who use the internet, plus one of their parents. See Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A., and Ólafsson, K. (2011) *EU Kids Online II: Final Report,* http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/39351/. For detailed survey findings, see Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A., and Ólafsson, K. (2011) *Risks and safety on the internet: The perspective of European children. Full findings,* http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/33731/. All our reports are at www.eukidsonline.net.

[5] We acknowledge that children do not find it easy to talk about risks, and nor can risk be simply defined, consensually understood or easily translated. For example, it makes a difference if an online contact is described as a 'contact', 'friend', 'stranger' or 'paedophile'. Terminology serves to make significant distinctions, and it can signal values, attitudes and likely behaviours. The salience or evaluation of particular risks or safety practices may vary among children, see Ponte, Simões and Jorge (in press) Do questions matter on children's answers about internet risk and safety? *Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace.*

[6] Note that in the EU Kids Online survey, we separated questions about risk (such as exposure to pornography or sexting) from questions about harm (i.e. whether such exposure bothers or upsets children). But in the open-ended question, children were asked about what bothers children their age - consequently, the findings in this report should be read as revealing those risks which children associate with harm, rather than about risks that they can brush aside. However, for ethical reasons, we did not ask the child what bothers them personally, for there was no way to promise the child confidentiality in their reply (by putting their answer paper in a sealed envelope) and yet be in a position to address a present threat to the child's safety should they report such a thing. Hence, we asked children a deliberately indirect question, making the assumption that, in telling us what they think bothers their peers, they were likely to reveal their own concerns (although we should note that the third person effect means that people often consider others more vulnerable to media harm than they consider themselves to be). Interestingly, some children decided to present *their own* experience, using the first person (*I, us*) as it is visible in several answers in this report. Additionally, parents were asked, "*Can you tell us about an event that was particularly bothering to your child?"* Possibly because the survey was time-consuming, only 6.6% of parents answered this question; thus these findings are not analysed here.

[7] The risks asked about in the survey were pornography, cyberbullying, sexting (sending and receiving sexual messages or images) and meeting people offline who the child had first met on the internet. The interviews included questions about how offline experiences compare with online ones (e.g., bullying versus cyberbullying), whether the child experienced these as negative (or not) and, if negative, how children tried to cope with the experience. Additionally, demographic and contextual data were collected to help understand responses to risk including socio-demographic variables, psychological profiles of the children, the range of technologies they access and how they use them, and parental strategies to mediate their child's online experiences.

[8] This decision makes little difference to the results. In all, 15,444 risks were mentioned by children: 55% were related to content, 21% related to conduct, 13% related to contact and 11 % were other risks.

[9] See Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A., and Ólafsson, K. (2011) *Risks and safety on the internet: The perspective of European children. Full findings,* http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/33731/.

[10] Note that the EU Kids Online survey found that the youngest group was least likely to encounter risk but more likely to be upset by what they did encounter. It is, thus, possible, that part of the low percentage of risk mentioned here by the younger groups is due to a response bias (their reluctance to write down their answer – though in some cases, the interviewer wrote it for them).

[11] The four categories of country are explained in Livingstone, S., et al. (2011) *EU Kids Online II: Final Report*, see http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/39351/. See also

Lobe, B., Livingstone, S., Ólafsson, K. and Vodeb, H. (2011) *Cross-national comparison of risks and safety on the internet: Initial analysis from the EU Kids Online survey of European children.*
http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/39608/

[12] *Content* risks are those where the child is positioned as the recipient of, usually, mass-produced images or texts (although user-generated content is of growing significance; *contact* risks places the child as participant in adult-initiated activities, possibly unwillingly or unwittingly; and *conduct* risks places the child as an actor in a peer-to-peer context.

[13] For question phrasing, and demographic/country breakdowns, see *Risks and safety on the internet: The perspective of European children. Full findings*, http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/33731/.

[14] Recall that the survey findings were based on a representative sample of European children, while the open-ended responses, since they were provided by just half of the sample, are less representative – particularly given the low response rate in some countries.

[15] See O'Neill, B., Livingstone, S. and McLaughlin, S. (2011) *Final recommendations for policy, methodology and research.* LSE, London: EU Kids Online. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/39410/

[16] See Livingstone, S., Ólafsson, K., O'Neill, B., and Donoso, V. (2012) *Towards a better internet for children: Findings and recommendations from EU Kids Online for the CEO Coalition.* http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/44213/

[17] For youth views on internet governance, see Nordic Youth Forum, *Youth Have Their Say on Internet Governance* (Nordicom 2012) http://www.nordicom.gu.se/clearinghouse.php?portal=publ&main=info_publ2.php&ex=364&me=3

[18] The wide variation in how many children and parents answered the open-ended questions in each country may be due to genuine differences in the level of concern, or it may be an artefact of the methodology (in some countries, fieldworkers may have been less conscientious or less persuasive, or respondents may have been more tired or less motivated to provide answers, or children may be more confident in expressing their views in some countries). This variation means that caution is needed in interpreting findings in countries where responses are low and, further, in comparing across countries.

[19] Languages by country, which include some minority as well as national majority languages, are listed in Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A. and Ólafsson, K. (2010) *Technical report and user guide: the 2010 EU Kids Online Survey.* LSE, London: EU Kids Online. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/45271/

[20] The unit of analysis was the child, since we already knew a lot about each child from the survey data. Most children mentioned just one risk in their response, but some children mentioned several risks. For example, "Scary clips or pictures/horror. Abusive messages/ bullying" is taken as giving two answers. But the child who says, 'Comments on people's social account. I mean posting offensive language to me,' is taken as giving one answer (i.e. a risk plus an explanation of it). To allow for this variation, up to three risks per child were coded.