UK CHILDREN GO ONLINE

End of Award Report

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SUMMARY

As UK households gain access to the internet, the growing significance of the internet in everyday life raises questions for social scientists and policy makers. The UK Children Go Online (UKCGO) project (www.children-go-online.net) was designed to contribute new qualitative and quantitative findings on how 9-19 year olds are accessing and using the internet to inform theory, research and policy. Key themes sought to balance an understanding of online opportunities and risks, examining how each relates to the other.

The project adopted a child-centred approach, also seeking the views of parents to complement or contrast with those of children in building up a picture of domestic internet use. The research design included three phases:

- Phase 1: 14 focus groups conducted with 9-19 year olds around the UK, together with nine family visits and a children's online advisory panel.
- Phase 2: A national, in-home, 40-minute face to face survey of 1511 9-19 year olds, together with a self-completion questionnaire to 906 parents of the 9-17 year olds.
- Phase 3: 13 focus group/paired-depth interviews, together with children's online panel and five interviews with youth website producers.

Given the sensitive nature of the questions asked, the research formulated a careful ethics policy (see www.children-go-online.net). Research highlights are as follows:

- Nearly all children and young people (98%) have used the internet: 75% of 9-19 year olds have accessed the internet from a computer at home, and school access is near universal (92%); 36% have more than one computer at home, 24% live in a household with broadband access; and 19% have internet access in their bedroom. Access platforms are diversifying, yet socioeconomic differences in the extent and quality of access persist, as do age and gender differences in the extent and quality of internet use. Indeed, the project identified a wide range of ways in which different groups of young people are using the internet.
- Looking beyond the idea of a binary divide, a continuum of digital inclusion is hypothesised, separating those for whom the internet offers a rich, engaging and stimulating resource and those for whom it remains narrow and unengaging, if occasionally useful. In this respect, the project contributes to ongoing research linking the digital divide to broader concerns over digital – or social – exclusion and inclusion, adding a new and distinctive focus on children and young people.
- Several methods explored children and young people's experience of undesirable forms of content and contact. For example, although more than half have seen pornography online, this was mostly unintentional and, interestingly, resulted in mixed responses. Some are unconcerned, some are disgusted or upset. Risky forms

of contact are also commonplace: one third of 9-19 year old daily and weekly users have received unwanted sexual or nasty comments online or by text message; 46% have given out personal information online, 30% have made an online acquaintance, and 8% have met an online acquaintance face to face. Again, following up these experiences with children reveals a range of responses, depending on age, gender, personality, family communication, etc, inviting a careful and contextualised response to online risks by policy-makers.

- A further theme was education and learning. Findings show that the internet has become a key information resource to support school work but that, despite their being widely identified as 'experts', 'the internet generation', children continue to struggle with the internet. A range of online competences were explored, from acquisition of specific skills to broader questions of critical literacy (e.g. evaluation of the trustworthiness and reliability of websites). Internet literacy emerges as an important player in the balance, struck differently in different households, between online opportunities and risks.
- Parents were found to be highly ambivalent regarding the internet, introducing it at home to support their child's education, but then anxious about the accompanying risks. Their expertise was found to lag behind that of their children, resulting in a series of misunderstandings which affect parental support for and regulation of children's internet use. Several project outputs analysed the complex relations between parental and child expertise and family dynamics in the home.
- Generally, parents seem to underestimate the risks their children experience online. On the other hand, it appears that children underestimate the rules and regulatory practices their parents attempt to implement. Parental anxieties may contribute to making domestic regulation ineffective, while children's enthusiasm for the internet (and for maintaining their online privacy) results in some risky behaviours. The challenge for policy intervention is considerable, and several dissemination activities and project outputs have been concerned to develop ways forward with policy makers, industry representatives, police, government departments (including the Department for Education and Skills and the Home Office), regulators (e.g. Ofcom), children's charities and parenting groups.
- Young people are primarily excited by the internet as a communication medium, and they relish making skilful choices about communication, comparing email/instant messenger/text etc in terms of intimacy, embarrassment, privacy and cost, even preferring mediated to face-to-face communication. Most online communication is with local friends and they show little interest in contacting strangers. Despite popular expectation, the research did not find that online communication particularly encourages online participation in civic or public spheres. Indeed, an emergent theme of the project was young people's disaffection not only with political participation in general but with the hope the internet could change things. Rather, they were sceptical of the online invitation to 'have your say', leaving such participation to those already interested in, rather than drawing in those new to, political or civic concerns.

The research findings have been widely disseminated through several launch events for research users, and through the mass media, , invited policy presentations, project reports to non-academic research users, and a series of particular policy or industry initiatives or outcomes, as detailed in the final report. Academic dissemination has followed, with 30 articles/book chapters published or in press, a series of keynote lectures to national and international conferences, and a monograph in progress (contracted by Polity Press).

MAIN REPORT

1. BACKGROUND

As UK households gain access to the internet, the growing significance of the internet in everyday life raises questions for social scientists and policy makers. Public discussion is moving beyond the initial hyperbole of high hopes or moral panics, as a complex picture emerges of the diverse ways in which people use this new technology (see 3, 23, 30[1]), suggesting in turn a range of ways in which the internet is socially shaped and socially embedded within the practices of everyday life (2, 4, 22).

Young people are the target of a range of policy initiatives designed to realise the benefits of the internet while minimising the potential risks. These are often developed, of necessity, in the absence of rigorous empirical data, making an informed assessment of access, attitudes, skills and uses essential. The research literature similarly is shifting from asking about access to asking about use, particularly regarding the quality, meaning, diversity and consequences of internet use across different contexts (1). Further, many have called for a continuing effort to identify emerging themes and issues regarding children's internet use.

2. OBJECTIVES

The *UK Children Go Online* (UKCGO) project was designed to contribute new qualitative and quantitative findings on how 9-19 year olds are accessing and using the internet, focusing on four key themes:

1. Access, inequalities and the digital divide
2. Undesirable forms of content and contact
3. Education, informal learning and literacy
4. Communication, identity and participation

Specific objectives were to:

1. Provide in-depth qualitative data on the emerging place of the internet in children and young people's lives.
2. Provide detailed, national survey data documenting the extent and nature of understandings, practices and contexts of internet use among 9-19 year olds and their parents.
3. Target original empirical research on key policy-relevant domains, drawing out timely policy recommendations.
4. Ensure that children's own voices are heard in public and policy debates.
5. Develop our theoretical understanding of household adoption and appropriation of the internet.

[1] All numbers in the text refer to references listed under 'Outputs'.

It is judged that the research objectives have been met successfully. The findings have advanced understanding of each theme and, additionally, of their interrelations (Objectives 1 and 2; see 'Results').

Analysis was structured to ensure prompt dissemination of headline findings to research users, with academic publications following after (see 'Outputs'). Theoretical work (Objective 5) comprises several articles in press and a book contracted by Polity Press (in preparation).

Objective 4 was met through the children's online advisory panel, the multimedia presentation of findings (including audio-recordings of children's voices), active dissemination to parent groups, police, charities, internet service providers, public policy groups, etc.

The project underwent minor changes to the anticipated timetable, starting three months later than anticipated, with ESRC permission, to recruit the research officer, and was then delayed by a few weeks ensure a satisfactory survey sample. Additionally, some changes to the original design are explained below.

3. METHODS

The project was designed with two overlapping phases, qualitative (16 focus groups) and quantitative (child plus parent surveys of 1000 internet users and 500 nonusers), together with a children's advisory panel. This was modified somewhat as follows:

- By the time the survey was commissioned, most children had experienced the internet, making for few nonusers. It was judged more productive to survey all 1500 using a common questionnaire, branched for non/low/medium/high users, to capture gradations in access and use.
- Some resources were retained for focus groups and interviews with website producers following the survey.
- Recruiting an offline children's advisory panel proved difficult, and so an online panel was drawn schools, previous focus groups and panels maintained by children's charities, permitting participation from young people across the UK in a non-threatening environment. The panel met daily over a two week period (1-2 hours each evening) in a private, secure chat room and message board area on LSE's WebCT service (in 2003 and 2005).

The final research design was as follows (see 'Annex' and Reports 1, 2 and 5):

- *Phase 1:* 14 focus groups conducted with 9-19 year olds around the UK, these consisting of a semi-structured discussion in secondary schools and post-16 colleges, and a mind-mapping exercise in primary schools (Summer 2003). Nine family visits (following up those from a previous project) combined separate parent and child interviews with in-home observations of internet use (2003/4). The children's online advisory panel informed the survey design (2003). All interviews were audio-taped, fully transcribed and analysed using Nvivo.
- *Phase 2:* A national, in-home, 40-minute face to face survey of 1511 9-19 year olds and 906 parents of the 9-17 year olds, using Random Location sampling across the UK. The design was informed by the qualitative research, the User Advisory Panel and other comparable surveys (SAFT, PEW, etc). The fieldwork was conducted by BMRB via multi-media computer-assisted personal interviewing

(CAPI) with children, including a 'private' self-completion section for sensitive areas of questioning, plus a paper questionnaire completed by their parents (January-March 2004). Both questionnaires were piloted prior to fieldwork. The dataset was cleaned and then analysed using SPSS and AMOS.

- *Phase 3:* 13 focus group/paired-depth interviews combining semi-structured discussion with website evaluation and observations of internet use (Autumn 2004). The children's online panel focused on emerging findings (2005). Five interviews with youth website producers were conducted. Interviews were recorded and analysed as above.

4. ETHICS

A range of experts were consulted (LSE Ethics Panel, BMRB, Market Research Society, guidelines from BPS, BSA and Children's Charities) before drawing up a project ethics policy (see www.children-go-online). In brief, all participants, plus the parents of under 18's, signed an age-appropriate 'informed consent' form outlining project aims, use of data, anonymity, etc.. Particular attention was paid to the section of the questionnaire completed by children in private.

All families received internet safety information form Childnet-International to address any later concerns. BMRB's quality-check interviews with 10% of respondents reported few or no problems. Participating schools and the family visit sample received the project's final report.

5. RESULTS

The main findings for each key area of the research are briefly summarised here (also see numbered outputs).

Access, inequalities and the digital divide

Nearly all children and young people (98%) have used the internet: 75% of 9-19 year olds have accessed the internet from a computer at home, and school access is near universal (92%); 36% have more than one computer at home, 24% live in a household with broadband access; and 19% have internet access in their bedroom. Access platforms are diversifying, with children' having computers (71%), mobile phones (38%), digital television (17%) and games consoles (8%) with internet access. Socioeconomic differences are sizeable: 88% of middle class though only 61% of working class children have accessed the internet at home.

Use is fairly frequent: 9-19 year olds are divided between daily users (41%) and weekly users (43%); however, some make low (13%) or no (3%) use of the internet. Of these, 47% of low/non-users say that they lack access, 25% are not interested, 15% don't know how to use it, and 14% lack the time. Most 9-19 year olds are online for less than an hour – still less than they watch television or listen to music: 19% spend about ten minutes per day online and 48% between half an hour and one hour.

Of 9-19 year olds who go online daily or weekly, 90% use it for school/college work, 94% for information, 72% to send emails, 70% to play games, 55% to send instant messages and 45% to download music. Further, 44% look for information on careers/education, 40% look for products/shop online, 26% read the news and 21% use

chat rooms. Some use it for less-approved activities: among 12-19 year olds who go online daily or weekly, 21% admit to copying schoolwork, 8% claim to have hacked, 5% visited a dating site, 4% have sent a hostile/bullying message and 2% visited a gambling site (Reports 1 & 2).

Undesirable forms of content and contact

The risks of undesirable content

More than half have seen pornography online (57% of 9-19 year old daily and weekly users), mostly unintentionally: 38% of 9-19 year old regular users have seen a pornographic pop-up advert while doing something else, 36% have accidentally found themselves on a porn site when looking for something else, and 25% have received pornographic junk mail. Parents and children agree that the internet is more likely to expose children to pornography than are television, video or magazines. Further, 22% of 9-19 year old daily and weekly users who have accidentally ended up on a site with violent or gruesome pictures, while 9% have found a site hostile or hateful to a group of people.

However, the survey and, especially, the focus group findings reveal mixed responses to online porn: more than half claim not to be bothered by it, but a sizeable minority are upset or disgusted. Interestingly, 45% of 18-19 year old internet users who have seen any pornography (on/offline) think they were too young to have seen it when they first did.

The risks of online communication

One third of 9-19 year old daily and weekly users have received unwanted sexual (31%) or nasty comments (33%) online or by text message, though only 7% of parents are aware that their child has received sexual comments and only 4% that their child has been bullied online. Also important is the frequency with which children divulge personal information online: 46% say that they have given out personal information to someone that they met online; further, 40% say that they have pretended about themselves online.

Although most children are aware, from media coverage, of the risks of meeting people they don't know, 30% have made an online acquaintance, and 8% say they have met face to face with someone whom they first met online. Nonetheless, follow up questions reveal that the vast majority told a friend or parent and, generally, went with a friend to the meeting, resulting in few less than positive meetings.

Multivariate analyses show that social-psychological factors, family communication patterns and gender all play a role in the interaction risks that are taken by teens online (29). While online psychological characteristics of the teens affect the frequency of online communication and of having online friends, offline confidence influences whether they look for personal advice or meet people offline. Offline family communication patterns and parental attitudes towards the internet and other media also had an impact on communication online by young people.

Education, informal learning and literacy

The internet has become a key information resource to support school work, and 60% of pupils regard the internet as the most useful tool for getting information for homework. Nonetheless, the research has identified a range of ways in which children struggle with the internet (6). Children and young people encounter some difficulties with searching, critical evaluation and a range of online skills, partly because they have received only patchy educational support (30). They lack key skills in evaluating online content: 38% of pupils aged 9-19 trust most of the information on the internet, and only 33% of 9-19

year old daily and weekly users have been taught how to judge the reliability of online information. Indeed, many (30%) have not received lessons on using the internet.

While the qualitative work suggests that young people prefer to learn about the internet informally, through trial-and-error, it is of concern that a sizable proportion has received little guidance on safety, reliability and searching – most notably the youngest and oldest groups. Indeed, the 18-19 year olds consistently show lower access, use and skills, compared with 16-17 year olds and younger teens, reflecting both their later introduction to the internet and their reduced access after leaving school. The 9-11 year olds reveal a greater desire to learn certain skills (e.g. webpage creation) than seems currently supported in schools.

Although most parents have acquired internet access at home in order to support their children's education, their attitudes are highly ambivalent towards this both-beneficial and risky, difficult technology. Interestingly, parents still think that books are most likely to help their child do better at school (82%), followed by the internet (73%) or the computer (40%).

Communication, identity and participation

Young people are more excited by the internet as a communication medium, with internet (instant message, email, chat) and mobile phone (talk, text) used mainly to contact local friends. They make skilful choices about communication, comparing the characteristics of different channels in terms of intimacy, embarrassment, privacy and cost, often preferring mediated to face-to-face communication. Generally, whether for passing time, making arrangements, getting advice, gossiping or flirting, the phone and text messaging are preferred over emailing or instant messaging. So, while 53% of email, IM and chat users think that talking to people on the internet is less satisfying as talking to them in real life, almost half have a different view.

Most online communication is with local friends. Being in constant contact is highly valued, and they show little interest in contacting strangers. 25% of 12-19 year old daily and weekly users say they go online to get advice. Interactive uses of the internet are popular: 44% 9-19 year old weekly users have completed a quiz online, 25% have sent an email or text message to a website, 22% have voted for something online and 17% have sent pictures or stories to a website. Further, 54% of 12-19 year olds who use the internet at least weekly have sought out sites concerned with political or civic issues.

Interestingly, many visit only one or two civic sites, and they take little further action; similarly, not all their websites are uploaded or maintained; the implication is that youthful participation online is enthusiastic but often short-lived, and it seems that many lack the motivation to participate (16, 17). Focus group discussions suggest that it is when the institutional structures (school, family, peers) that shape young people's daily lives support civic participation that young people feel enabled to engage with the civic or public sphere, on or offline (24).

Cluster analysis identified three groups of teenagers - interactors, the civic-minded and the disengaged - each of which is distinctive in its social context and approach to the internet. Drawing on insights from audience reception research, the project addressed attempts to engage youth through civic sites, analysing interviews with website producers and teenagers to contrast the aim of providing a youthful public sphere online with the difficulties of enhancing young people's political efficacy (11, 28).

Indeed, website producers stress 'being heard', but for young people, 'having your say' is not the same as 'being listened to', and many are critical of the online invitation to participate (24). This is partly because, as the qualitative research suggests, they are

constructed by adult society less as citizens with rights and responsibilities than as citizens-in-waiting.

Interrelating the themes

Access and use

Access strongly influences, though does not wholly determine, use. Multivariate analyses show that middle class teenagers, those with home access and those who have spent more years online tend to use the internet more often, spend more time online per day and, consequently, have greater online skills. Parents' experience of the internet matters: daily users have parents who use the internet more often and are more expert than less frequent users (Report 4). While inequalities across households are largely socioeconomic, within households age, gender and generation matter. Age trends are evident across all aspects of access and use while gender matters more for certain kinds of use, though less so for overall amount of use (6, 15, 18).

Looking beyond the idea of a binary divide, a continuum of digital inclusion is proposed. Gradations in frequency of internet use are found to map onto a progression in the take-up of online opportunities among young people (from basic through moderate to broad and then all-round users), with demographic, use and expertise variables all playing a role in accounting for variations in the take-up of online opportunities (27). Indeed, it seems that a new divide is opening up between those for whom the internet is an increasingly rich, engaging and stimulating resource and those for whom it remains a narrow, unengaging, if occasionally useful, resource (Report 5).

Balancing opportunities and risks- the role of internet literacy

Boys, older teens and middle class children experience a broader range of online opportunities and risks (26). A striking finding from multivariate analysis of the survey findings is that online opportunities and risks go hand in hand: the more children and young people experience the one, the more they also experience the other, and vice versa. Importantly also, internet literacy positively influences the breadth of both online opportunities and risks experienced. Indeed, not only do the most skilled young people fail to avoid online risks, but their risky encounters increase with increased use – though perhaps these young people are more able to deal with the risks. Additionally, parental rules and practices were found to indirectly increase both opportunities and risks if, and only if, they increase children's amount of use (and literacy).

Indeed, internet literacy emerges as an important mediator in the balance, struck differently in different households, between online opportunities and risks. Certainly children are gaining valued social status through their internet-related expertise, facilitating some reverse socialisation as children help parents use the internet (16). For example, only 12% of parents consider themselves 'advanced' users compared with 32% of children. Young people's range of internet literacy skills, while leaving much scope for development, is found to mediate the effectiveness of their use and, therefore, the opportunities they take up (Report 4). Further, path analysis techniques suggest that some forms of participation, especially interactivity and creativity, are encouraged by the experience of using the internet, thus gaining internet literacy (interest, skills, confidence, etc.), although other forms of participation (e.g. visiting civic websites) depends primarily on demographic factors (more older, middle class girls) (Report 3; 12, 24).

Regulating the internet at home

The research identified significant gaps in understanding between parents and children (in internet expertise, in awareness of risks and in acknowledgement of domestic regulation implemented) which impede effective regulation of children's internet use

within the home (19, 21). For example, most parents claim that they directly support their child on the internet, but their children are less likely to report this. Similarly, most parents ban their children from giving out personal information, yet only half of children recognise this rule and, further, half have given out such information (Reports 2 & 4; 26).

The research also shows that children are adept at evading regulation, suggesting a game of strategy and tactics played out between parents and children. Where policy positions regulation as a buffer against the impact of external harms, this is shown to be fallible, even undermining the 'democratic' family. It seems that negotiation and trust, rather than authority and rules, are hallmarks of the changing family, and this makes the internet attractive to children precisely as a means to express their identity, autonomy and privacy apart from their parents (2, 25). One result is that relying on parents to implement effective domestic regulation is problematic, not because parents are unwilling or incompetent but because this is a difficult task given the realities of everyday family life. The research shows that simple parental bans on certain online activities are ineffective and that more subtle regulation can have unpredictable effects. Generally, if parents exert tight controls over their children's online activities, this seems to undermine children's freedom and privacy to explore and express themselves online, albeit also reducing the risks, while if they loosen these controls, children encounter more online risks but also more opportunities.

The qualitative work, followed up by the survey, revealed a range of ways in which children and young people value and protect their privacy online, more from their parents than from commerce (20, see also 8, 10): 63% of 12-19 year old home users have taken some action to hide their online activities from their parents, and 69% of 9-17 year old daily and weekly users say they mind their parents restricting or monitoring their internet use. Theoretically, this raises interesting questions regarding the demarcation of the public/private boundary at home (10, 25). In policy terms, it raises problems for parental guidance and regulation. Further, the research identified a series of challenges for parents in managing their children's internet use – the greater internet expertise of children (18% of parents say they don't know how to help their child use the internet safely), the privacy of internet use, confusion over filtering (only 15% of parents say they can install this), and the difficulty of implementing clear rules.

6. FUTURE RESEARCH PRIORITIES

New questions arise as ICTs converge (television and internet, mobile and web, etc), altering domestic practices, challenging parental authority and expertise and stimulating new uses. This research project has stressed the importance in future research of hearing from children directly, comparing the experiences of children and parents, triangulating qualitative and quantitative data and informing theory in relation to the digital divide, literacy, participation and online risks.

The final report outlines research priorities to further academic and policy goals. Given the pace of technological and market developments, these include continuing to track and understand children and young people's access to and use of the internet (fixed and mobile), in relation to both opportunities and risks. Inequalities and digital exclusion will continue to demand research effort; especially for specific subgroups that require dedicated projects (disabled children, ethnic minorities, very young children, etc).

Project findings reveal the importance of researching websites/content so as to enable children's active participation online and improve their safety. Comparisons would be

fruitful between low/narrow users and those who are gaining creative, participatory or even socially inappropriate skills. Other priorities include research on critical and consumer literacy, children's privacy protections and designing effective safety awareness messages for children, parents and teachers.

7. ACTIVITIES

Project advisory panels

The User Advisory Panel met face-to-face in January, May and September 2003, June 2004 and February 2005, with regular email consultation in between. Members were:

- Karin Sieger - Director of Research & Analysis, AOL UK
- Camille de Stempel - Director of Public Policy, AOL UK
- Andrea Millwood Hargrave – Research Director, BSC/ITC
- Stephen Carrick-Davies – Chief Executive, Childnet-International
- John Fisher – Chief Executive, Citizens Online
- John Carr – Internet Advisor, NCH - Action for Children
- Alison Preston – Senior Research Associate, Strategy and Market Research, Ofcom
- Andrew Carruthers – Policy Executive, Content & Standards, Ofcom

The Children's Panel met for two periods over a full week 2003 and 2005 (comprising daily chat room logs and a series of linked message board contributions).

Public launch of findings

Survey findings launch: this took place in July with speeches/reception to an invited audience of 30+ representatives of the internet industry, children's charities, educators, content providers, law enforcement, parent representatives and government departments.

Final report launch: this presented an integrated account of the main findings together with policy recommendations, to 50+ senior user-community representatives in April 2005.

Press coverage: launch events and project reports were accompanied by press releases. The research was widely disseminated in the media (see list of over 120 reports in 'Society Today'), including the Today Programme, BBC1 Lunchtime News, BBC Evening News, BBC Breakfast News, GMTV Breakfast Bulletin, ITV News Online, the Guardian, Daily Mail, Metro, New Statesman, Higher Education Chronicle and many other international, national and local news reports.

Keynote/plenary presentations given by Sonia Livingstone on the project include:

- Information, Communication & Society Conference, Oxford Internet Institute, 2003
- EC's Safety Awareness, Facts and Tools Conference (SAFT), Stockholm, 2003
- Launch Conference, Centre for the Study of Childhood and Youth, University of Sheffield, 2004
- National Association of Advisors on Computers in Education Annual Conference, Scarborough, 2004
- Digital Generations: Children, young people and the media, Conference, Institute of Education, London, 2004

- Finnish Convention on Communication Research, Helsinki, 2005
- British Sociological Society's conference, Young People and New Technologies, Northampton, 2005
- Association of Internet Researchers Annual Conference, Chicago, 2005
- Conference, Safety & Security in a Networked World Conference, Oxford Internet Institute, 2005
- 9th Nordic Youth Research Information Symposium, Stockholm, 2006

Additionally, the research was presented at around 30 academic seminars and conferences in the Finland, Germany, Israel, Italy, The Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, UK and USA (see 'Society Today' database).

Talks by Sonia Livingstone to user-community include:

- Wise Kids Conference for EU Safer Internet Day, Cardiff, 2004
- Promoting Mobile & Internet Safety conference, London, 2004
- e-Society & Yahoo conference, Where is the internet going? London, 2004
- Communications Regulation and Low Income seminar, Ofcom, London, 2004
- Presentation to the Home Office Internet Task Force, in the presence of the Home Secretary, Charles Clark, MPs and task force members, London, 2005
- Cumberland Lodge Conference, Childhoods today, Windsor Great Park, 2005
- 'Children's media' presentation to BBC senior managers/specialist staff, 2005
- Westminster Media Forum, presentation on media literacy, 2005
- Protecting Children from Online Abuse, Capita conference, London July 2005

Workshop hosted:

'Qualitative, longitudinal research on families and technology', LSE, December 2004.

Additional activities, directly or indirectly resulting from the project, include:

Sonia Livingstone was invited to serve on:

- Home Office Internet Task Force Sub Group on Research Issues, and the Sub Group G 'Internet Safety Content Agent' Steering Committee (2005-6)
- Steering Committee, DFES' project to develop the DirectGov for Kids website (2005-6)
- Media Literacy Research Forum for Ofcom
- Conference committee, Voice of the Listener and Viewer's Annual Conference on Children's Media (Nov. 2005).

She has been appointed Vice-Chair of the Internet Watch Foundation (2004-), and has conducted related consultancies for Vodafone Group (2004) on parental safety advice for mobiles, for Atticmedia/Culture Online/Department for Culture, Media and Sport (2004) on developing a creative website for children, and for Ofcom on media literacy.

8. OUTPUTS

The project website (www.children-go-online.net) contains project details and the six UKCGO projects, available for downloading; all were circulated electronically to a wide list of contacts (academic, industry, policy, public), and published versions of Reports 1

(750 copies), 2 (1000 copies) and 6 (1000 copies) have been widely circulated. Nearly 50 organisations have set up links to the project website.

Report 1 *UK Children Go Online: Listening to young people's experiences* (2003, October).

Report 2 *UK Children Go Online: Surveying the experiences of young people and their parents* (2004, July).

Report 3 *Active Participation or Just More Information? Young people's take up of opportunities to act and interact on the internet* (2004, October).

Report 4 *Internet Literacy among Children and Young People* (2005, February).

Report 5 *Inequalities and the Digital Divide in Children and Young People's Internet Use* (2005, April).

Report 6 *UK Children Go Online: Final report of key project findings* (2005, April).

Publications for non-academic audiences

- Livingstone, S. (2004). Interview for 'Media Literacy: Future proofing the viewer experience'. *Policy Tracker, #1.*
- Livingstone, S. (2004). What is media literacy? *Intermedia*, 32(3), 18-20. September.
- Livingstone, S., and Millwood Hargrave, A. (2004). *Response to the Consultation on Ofcom's Strategy and Priorities for the Promotion of Media Literacy*. London: Ofcom.
- Livingstone, S. (in press). Computers and the Internet. *The Chicago Companion to the Child.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- A multimedia presentation highlighting key findings, shown on several academic/policy occasions.

Academic publications

(1) Livingstone, S. (2003). Children's Use of the Internet. *New Media and Society*, 5(2), 147-166.

(2) Livingstone, S. (2003). Mediated Childhoods. In J. Turow and A. L. Kavanaugh (Eds.), *The Wired Homestead.* Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

(3) Livingstone, S. (2004). Media Literacy and the Challenge of New Information and Communication Technologies. *Communication Review*, 7, 3-14.

(4) Livingstone, S. (2004). The Challenge of Changing Audiences. *European Journal of Communication*, 19(1), 75-86.

(5) Livingstone, S. (2004). Internetkompetenz – Entwicklung und Grundzüge. In J. Lauffer (Ed.), *In 8 Sekunden um die Welt: Kinder, Jugendliche, Familien.* AJZ-Druck & Verlag.

(6) Livingstone, S., and Bober, M. (2004). Taking up Opportunities? Children's uses of the internet for education, communication and participation. *E-Learning*, 1(3), 395-419.

(7) Livingstone, S. (2004). Children Online: Consumers or citizens? *ESRC/AHRB Cultures of Consumption Working Paper Series.*

(8) Livingstone, S. (2005). Mediating the Public/Private Boundary at Home: Children's use of the internet for privacy and participation. *Journal of Media Practice*, 6(1), 41-51.

(9) Livingstone, S., and Bober, M. (2005). Data Tables from 'UK Children Go Online', in *2005 Social Trends*. London: ONS.

(10) Livingstone, S. (2005). Varieties of Publicness in the Individualised, Privatised Home. In S. Livingstone (Ed.), *Audiences and Publics*. Bristol: Intellect Press.

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(12) Livingstone, S., Bober, M., and Helsper, E. J. (2005). Active Participation or Just More Information? *Information, Communication and Society*, 8(3), 287-314. A webcast presentation/discussion of findings is online at http://webcast.oii.ox.ac.uk.

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Datasets

The following datasets have been submitted and accepted by the Essex Data Archive:

- Quantitative: (1) Children's survey, (2) Parents' survey
- Qualitative: (1) Family observations, (2) Focus groups, (3) Paired depth interviews

9. IMPACTS

Findings of the UKCGO research project have informed a range of initiatives including:

- Public safety campaign materials developed by the Virtual Global Taskforce
- Educational materials distributed to all UK secondary schools, as developed by Microsoft (including a summary of the project findings)
- The DfES' Parents' Online Guidance
- Children's Charities' Coalition for Internet Safety's (CHIS) digital manifesto on 'Child Safety Online'
- Development of the Government's Connexions' Epal website
- Childnet-International's Kidsmart Parent Seminars
- BBC New Media's Kids ID project
- BT's Digital Divide research
- Ofcom's work on assessment/promotion of media literacy
- USA's Office of Electronic Government and Technology report
- France's Internet Rights Forum research

UK Children Go Online reports have been requested by Government (HO, DfES, DCMS, Office for National Statistics) and related bodies (Becta, Connexions, Hansard, DirectGov, EU Safer Internet Action Plan, New Zealand Ministry of Education, Conservative Party, Nesta Futurelab), police constabularies, schools, parent organisations (e.g. Parents Online, National Family & Parenting Institute), children's charities (e.g. Unicef, Save the Children, NSPCC, Barnardo's, ChildLine, NCH, Childnet International, NCB, Kidscape, Children's Rights Alliance), broadcasters and regulators (e.g. BBC, BFI, BBFC, ICRA, IWF, Ofcom), internet/mobile service providers (e.g. AOL UK, Cable & Wireless, Intel, Wanadoo, Vodafone) and filtering services (e.g. Cyberpatrol) and new media companies (e.g. Intuitive Media, Cimex Media, Atticmedia).

ANNEX: RESEARCH SAMPLES

The UKCGO children and young people's survey sample (N=1,511)

Age	9-11 years (N=380), 12-15 years (N=605), 16-17 years (N=274), 18-19 years (N=251), Don't know (N=1)
Gender	Boys (N=842), Girls (N=669)
SES	AB (N=264), C1 (N=418), C2 (N=407), DE (N=422)
Region	England (N=1,228), Wales (N=69), Scotland (N=166) Northern Ireland (N=48)
Ethnicity	White (N=1,336), Non-white (N=171), Not stated (N=4)

The UKCGO parents' survey sample (N=906)

Age	18-24 years (N=5), 25-34 years (N=134), 34-44 years (N=470), 45-54 years (N=209), 55+ years (N=42), Not stated (N=46)
Relation to child	Mothers (N=659), Fathers (N=232), Other (N=10), Not stated (N=5)
SES	AB (N=167), C1 (N=254), C2 (N=257), DE (N=228)
Region	England (N=719), Wales (N=42), Scotland (N=109), Northern Ireland (N=36)
Ethnicity	White (N=841), Non-white (N=63), Not stated (N=2)

The UKCGO family visit sample

Family	Age of child	Gender	Area	Location	Social grade	Family type
1 'Ted'	18	Male	Town	Surrey	B – Middle class	Couple, single child
2 'Anisah'	15	Female	City	London	C2 – Skilled working class	Couple, one older brother and sister
3 'Megan'	12	Female	Suburb	Essex	C1 – Lower middle class	Couple, one older brother
4 'Jane'	18	Female	Rural	Surrey	C1 – Lower middle class	Couple, one older brother
5 'Poppy'	16	Female	City	London	B – Middle class	Couple, one older brother
6 'Eve'	13	Female	Town	Surrey	C1 – Lower middle class	Couple, one younger sister
7 'Simon'	13	Male	Town	Surrey	C1 – Lower middle class	Couple, one older, two younger sisters
8 'Wilf'	13	Male	Rural	Hertfordshire	C1 – Lower middle class	Couple, one younger brother
9 'Daniel'	20	Male	City	London	B – Middle class	Couple, single child

Note: The age of the child was recorded at the time of the return visit.

The UKCGO focus group sample (phases 1 and 3)

School	Type	Size	Area	Location	Social grade	Achieve-ment	Age	Date	N
A	Primary	97	Rural	Hertfordshire	Mixed	Above av.	10-11	July 2003	8
B	Secondary	369	Town/ rural	Derbyshire	Middle class	Above av.	12-13	July 2003	8
C	Secondary	928	City	London	Working class	Above av.	14-16	July 2003 Dec 2004	8 + 6
D	Secondary	1,148	Town	Essex	Mixed	Above av.	13 14-15	July 2003	14
E	Post-16	2,010	Town	Essex	Middle class	Slightly above av.	16-17	July 2003	10
F	Post-16	2,911	City	Greater Manchester	Working class	Below av.	17-19	June 2003	7
G	Primary	501	City	South Yorkshire	Working class	Average	10-11	Nov 2004	8
H	Secondary	763	City	South Yorkshire	Working class	Below av.	14-15	Dec 2004	5
I	Primary	178	Town/ rural	Oxfordshire	Mixed	Above av.	10-11	Dec 2004	8
J	Secondary	1,343	Town	Oxfordshire	Mixed	Above av.	14-15	Dec 2004	6

Note: School information came from the most recent OFSTED inspection report and compared with National Average Performance levels (see *www.ofsted.gov.uk*).

Children's online panel

Pseudo-nym	Age	Location	Panel year	Pseudo-nym	Age	Location	Panel year
'Anne'	15	Essex	2003	'Oliver'	17/18	Kent	2003/4
'Colin'	15	Essex	2003	'Greg'	15	Essex	2004
'Milly'	15	Essex	2003	'Lucy'	13	Cambridge	2004
'Caroline'	15	Essex	2003	'Tai-Tai'	15	Yorkshire	2004
'Amil'	15	Essex	2003	'Kacy'	15	Essex	2004
'Manu'	18	London	2003	'Kathleen'	15	Essex	2004
'Rosie'	13	Derbyshire	2003	'Eileen'	15	Essex	2004
'Bethany'	14/15	London	2003/4				

Interviews with website producers (Summer-Autumn 2004)

Name	Organisation	Website
Lindsay Jackson	DfES	www.need2know.co.uk
Alun Francis	Greater Manchester Connexions	www.epal.tv
Tanya Eddowes	Childnet Academy	www.childnetacademy.org
Rebecca Shallcross	BBC Children's Online	www.bbc.co.uk/cbbc & /cbeebies
Sarah Dain	BBC Teens	www.bbc.co.uk/teens

18 June 2003

Dear Parent/ Carer,

Your child's school has kindly agreed to let a researcher from the 'UK Children Go Online' project, which is based at the London School of Economics and Political Science, visit the school and talk to the children about how they use the Internet.

The government-funded research will involve small group discussions with the children regarding the four key areas of our research: (1) online communication, identity and participation in social networks; (2) education, learning and literacy; (3) digital inequalities and access to the internet; (4) inappropriate or unwelcome content. Whereas one part of this project investigates the opportunities of children going online (i.e. education, learning, literacy etc.), the other part deals with the problems the internet might bring. Therefore, we would like to explore any negative experiences or worries children and young people might have had in regards to the internet as well as their awareness of internet safety. However, the research will not involve intrusive or personal questions.

The children themselves will be asked to participate, and this letter is asking for your consent too. The group discussions will be conducted by an experienced researcher and will take place in times that are not disruptive to the school day or curriculum demands. The discussions will be tape recorded, and the tapes will be stored securely at the London School of Economics with only the research team having access. In written reports of the research, the school will be anonymous and the children will have their names changed and any identifying features disguised. After the completion of the research project, a copy of the report will be made available to the school.

We very much hope you will be happy for your child to be included in this study, but if you would prefer your child not to participate, please indicate this on the enclosed form. It is not necessary for your child to have internet access at home to participate in the study.

The data collected will provide valuable insights into children's engagement with internet contents and its consequences. The findings will contribute to the developing policies regulating children's and young people's internet use.

If you would like any more information about the project, please do not hesitate to contact the Research Officer, Magdalena Bober, by telephone (020 7955 6005) or email (m.bober@lse.ac.uk). Additional information is also available on the project web site www.children-go-online.net.

Yours sincerely,

Prof. Sonia Livingstone (Project Director) & Magdalena Bober (Research Officer)
London School of Economics and Political Science

(This letter is for you to keep. Please complete the other copy and give it to your child to return to his/her teacher within the next few days.)

CONSENT FORM

Dear Parent/ Carer,

Your child's school has kindly agreed to let a researcher from the 'UK Children Go Online' project, which is based at the London School of Economics and Political Science, visit the school and talk to the children about how they use the Internet.

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_____ (Please do not separate) _____

I give permission / do not give permission* for my child to participate in a group discussion for the 'UK Children Go Online' project. (* Please delete as appropriate)

Name of pupil: _____ Class: _____

Name of parent/ guardian: _____

Parent/ guardian signature: _____ Date: _____

(Please complete this form and give it to your child to return to his/her teacher within the next few days.)

This leaflet is just to give you some information about the research to help you think about whether you'd like to take part.

Remember: There are no right or wrong answers. We are interested to hear about your experiences.

Can you ask more?

Yes, of course. Call Magdalena on 020 7955 6005 (leave a message if she's not there) or email her on m.bober@lse.ac.uk. Or you can talk to Sonia or Magdalena when they're in school.

Can you change your mind about taking part?

Yes, of course. If you decide that you don't want to take part in the group discussion anymore, just tell us. Or if you feel uncomfortable during the discussion, you can just leave the room. It won't matter.

Adults have a lot of hopes about the internet but also a lot of fears. This project wants to listen to children and young people and make their views heard. We will talk to lots of different children, from different ages and different schools in the UK.

The results of this projects will be discussed with politicians and internet companies to help make the internet a fun and safe experience for young people.

Yes, I want to take part.

If you would like to take part, please fill out this form, sign it and give it to either Sonia or Magdalena when they're in school. The other copy is for you to keep.

I agree to take part in the group discussion for the research project 'UK Children Go Online'.

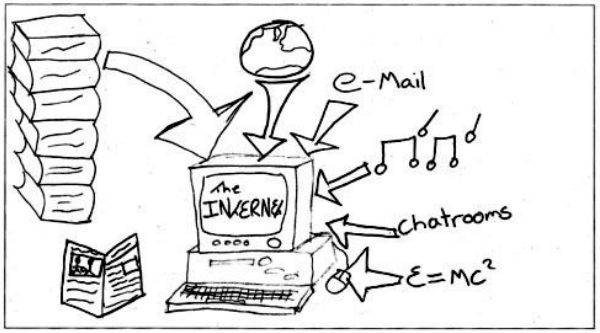
Your name: _____

Today's date: _____

Please sign here: _____

UK Children Go Online: Emerging Opportunities and Dangers

A research project listening to the views of young people



MEDIA@LSE

London School of Economics and Political Science

The research will …

Explore young people's experiences with the internet.

How will we do this?

By having a group discussion at your school with you and 2 or 3 of your class mates about how you use the Internet.

Who are we?

We are Sonia Livingstone and Magdalena Bober, and we work as a researchers at the London School of Economics which is part of the University of London.

Questions you might want to ask:

What will the group discussion be like?

It'll be 3 or 4 people from your class sitting around a table in a room in your school with either Sonia or Magdalena. We will talk about what you think about the internet and how you use it. It will be during school time and will last about 1 hour. We will record the discussion on tape, so we can remember everything afterwards.

What will you do with the tape?

We will listen to the tape from your group and those from other schools, and then we'll write a book or report about the experiences of young people with the internet. No-one else will listen to the tapes. We will not show the tapes to your teachers, other people from your school or your parents.

What do you want to know?

Does the internet help your education?
Is it good for communication?
Does it give you things to worry about?
Does it matter if you don't have it?

Will my name be used?

No, we'll give you a different name in the book or the report, so we can describe what you think without anyone knowing it's you. We will also change the name of your school and anyone else you talk about, so that no-one reading the book or report knows who you really are.

Is it confidential?

Yes. You can tell anyone you like about the research, but we will treat what you say as confidential. That means we won't tell anybody else about what you said in the discussion, not your teachers, not other people from your school and not your parents. Only if you say something that makes us very worried for your safety, would we talk to anyone else. We would not do this without talking to you about it first.

Will I see the report you write?

It is a lot of work to write a report and it takes us a long time to finish it, but we will send a copy of the report to your school when it is finished.

Survey administration and sampling procedures

In order to investigate 9-19 year olds' use of the internet, BMRB International was commissioned to conduct a survey across the UK among 9-19 year olds and parents of those aged 9-17.

Young people aged 9-19

The sample was drawn by means of Random Location sampling, providing a high-quality sample of young people within the target age groups.[1] Fieldwork was spread across 188 sampling points across the UK, and to increase fieldwork efficiency, areas were chosen which had a higher than average prevalence of 9-19 year olds.

The target was to provide 1,500 interviews. A screening interview was conducted on the doorstep to ensure that the young people were of the correct age, and interviewers worked to quotas by sex and age to ensure the required number of interviews in each sub-category.

Where a young person was aged 17 or younger and not living independently, written permission was sought from a parent or guardian. Parents were told the content of the interview and were asked to complete and sign a form to show that they were happy for their child to be interviewed.

In total, 1,511 interviews were achieved among 9-19 year olds. The table below shows the number of interviews conducted in each sub-category.

Table 1: Interviews with young people

	Girls	Boys	Total
Aged 9-12	241	314	555
Aged 13-16	268	301	569
Aged 17-19	159	227	386
Total	668	842	1511

Parents of 9-17 year olds

If the young person being interviewed was aged 9-17, we asked the adult in the household (preferably the parent or main carer) to complete a paper questionnaire. In order to obtain a maximum response rate, we encouraged respondents to complete the questionnaire while the young person was being interviewed. This enabled the interviewer to take the completed questionnaire away with them rather than leaving it with the respondent to send it back to BMRB in their own time. Where there was a mother and a father in the household, interviewers were briefed to ask the father to complete the survey to ensure that as many fathers as possible took part in the research. Usually, males have a lower response rate.

In total, 1,077 parents out of 1,259 eligible parents of children aged 9-17 agreed to complete a questionnaire, and 906 paper questionnaires were received. The response rate was 72% overall, which is very high.

Fieldwork

Fieldwork was conducted by BMRB's fully trained interviewers, working under supervision. (In Northern Ireland, the interviews were conducted by Millward Brown Northern Ireland.) Interviews were conducted face to face and in-home, with the young people's questionnaires being administered face to face by interviewers using multi-media computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI).

Both questionnaires were piloted prior to the main fieldwork taking place. The pilot took place in London with interviewers being accompanied by BMRB research executives and members of the LSE research team.

The most sensitive questions in the young people's questionnaire, specifically those relating to viewing pornographic and hate websites and meeting people through the internet, were contained in a self-completion section in the questionnaire, which ensured that these questions were answered in privacy. The interviewer showed the respondent how to use the computer and completed a small number of practice questions with them. The respondent was then left to read the questions on their own and key in their own answers. At the end of the self-completion section, the respondent was asked to give the computer back to the interviewer who finished the interview in the normal way.

The average length of the young people's questionnaire was around 40 minutes. The parent's questionnaire was eight A4 sides long and took around 15 minutes to complete. Copies of both questionnaires can be found on the project website, www.children-go-online.net.

All fieldwork took place between 12 January and 7 March 2004.

Weighting procedures

Rim weighting was applied to the data to correct for minor imbalances between the sample profile achieved and the known sample profile. Data from the young people's survey were weighted to data in BMRB's TGI (Target Group Index) and Youth TGI surveys. The weighting efficiency was 91%, and the effective sample size was 1,375.

As the sample frame was designed to be representative of the population of young people aged 9-19 years, the parents' data had the same weighting applied that was employed on the young people's data. For those parents who had a child aged 9-17 years and who had completed a questionnaire, the identical weight that had been applied to their child's data was used. This approach allowed for cross-comparisons between the children's and parents' data sets. Further, this weighting approach would ensure a high weighting efficiency and, therefore, a high effective sample size. The weighting efficiency was 91%, and the effective sample size was 824.

Reporting of findings

In the present report, findings are presented for the population as a whole (ie weighted sample) or stratified by age, gender and/or social grade. The social grade classification used is outlined in the table below and was obtained by questions put to parents at the end of each child's CAPI interview.

Table 2: Actual and target sample sizes

Demographic variable	Categories	Actual %	Target %
Sex	Male	56	51
	Female	44	49
Age	9-12 years	37	37
	13-16 years	38	37
	17-19 years	26	26
Social Grade	AB	17	26
	C1	28	26
	C2	27	21
	DE	28	27

Table 3: Social grade classification

Grade	Social Status	Occupation of Chief Income Earner
A	Upper middle class	Higher managerial administrative or professional occupations. Top level civil servants. Retired people previously graded A with a pension from their job and widows/widowers if they are receiving a pension from their late spouse's job.
B	Middle class	Intermediate managerial administrative or professional people. Senior officers in local government and civil service. Retired people previously graded B with a pension from their job and widows/widowers if they are receiving a pension from their late spouse's job.
C1	Lower middle class	Supervisory or clerical and junior managerial administrative or professional occupations. Retired people previously graded C1 with a pension from their job and widows/widowers if they are receiving a pension from their late spouse's job.
C2	Skilled working class	Skilled manual workers. Retired people previously graded C2 with a pension from their job and widows/widowers if they are receiving a pension from their late spouse's job.
D	Working class	Semi and unskilled manual workers. Retired people previously graded D with a pension from their job and widows/widowers if they are receiving a pension from their late spouse's job.
E	Those at lowest levels of subsistence	All those entirely dependent on the State long term through sickness unemployment old age or other reasons. Casual workers and those without a regular income.

[1] The sampling technique used in this survey is a tightly controlled form of random location sampling which aims to eliminate the more unsatisfactory features of quota sampling without incurring the cost and other penalties involved in conducting surveys according to strict probability methods. Crucially, the interviewers are given very little choice in the selection of respondents. Respondents are drawn from a small set of homogenous streets selected with probability proportional to population after stratification by their ACORN characteristics and region. Quotas are set in terms of characteristics which are known to have a bearing on individuals' probabilities of being at home and so available for interview. Rules are given which govern the distribution spacing and timing of interviews. The sample of areas takes as its universe all enumeration districts (groups of on average 150 households) in Great Britain. Enumeration districts are stratified thus: (i) Standard Region; (ii) Within Standard Region – by Acorn type; (iii) Within Standard Region by County and ITV Region. Thus, the design is single stage using direct selection of appropriate Enumeration Districts rather than taking streets at random from larger units, such as wards or parishes.

UK Children Go Online –
Schedule for focus group discussions (Ages 15-19)

Introduction

- Introduction of the research project/today's discussion
- Name labels (bring sticky labels and felt pen)
- Explain confidentiality - their names and name of college to be changed
- Discussion will be recorded - is that OK? Complete consent forms (or return if completed)
- Get everybody to introduce themselves: name, age, course, where they mainly use the internet (have home access?) and what they use it for, maybe favourite site etc.

(Note: Questions in a paler shade are for ages 17+.)

Internet literacy/ expertise

- Show advert for **Orange mobiles** with young boy as training manager
- Have you seen these adverts for Orange where this young boy is the manager of training and he teaches adults how to use their mobiles? They're also on TV.
- Is that also true about the internet - young people know more about it than adults?
- Do you think that you are the expert on the internet in your house? In what way? Are parents and teachers catching up?
- If they're not the experts, who is? Can you think of someone you know who is really good at using the internet?
- How do you tell they are good at it? What do they know that others don't know so well? How do you think they became so good at it?
- Think of someone who's useless at using it – what do they not know? How could they learn?

Communication

- Refer to **Orange ad** again: How do you decide when to phone someone and when to email them or use instant message or text messaging? Does it depend on what you want to say, or who they are, or how you feel? (Can you say different things online vs face to face? Do you know people differently online?)
- How do you keep in touch with your friends now? Did you know you are sometimes called the 'always on' generation – is that true? Why?
- Do you keep in touch with family in the same way (family in your house/ family elsewhere)
- Do you meet new people through the internet? How many people are you in touch with online, and where did you meet? How do you mix on and offline

communication? Is it important to you that the people you email/IM with are local or in the UK or perhaps overseas?

- If you didn't see someone face to face anymore, would you be able to stay in touch on the internet? Would it be the same?
- Do you communicate with people the same age as you or older/younger? (How do you know?) Do you sometimes pretend to be older when you're online?
- Does age matter less online? Do you feel you can have more of a say online?
- Have you ever sent an email to someone famous/ a politician/ someone important?

Participation

- The reason why I'm asking is because the internet is said to be more democratic, people can write directly to their MP or to the Prime Minister… Or are you not really interested in politics? Why do you think young people are seen as rather apathetic?
- I'm sure you remember the recent **stop-the-war protests** which also a lot of kids went to. They have been organised by email or on the internet. Do you think the internet is a good way to organise things like this?
- What about your **school web site** (show print out) (or local community site)? Do you use this site? If yes, for what?
- Do you think it's good? What would you like to see on it? What would be a good school web site (or good community web site)?
- Have you ever used the internet to find out what's going on round where you live? What was it for? Going out, cinema, some local club, sports club, football? Was it on a specific site, chat room etc.?
- Do you use the internet to **create content** yourself? Maybe you have your own homepage or you've posted messages in an online community on a message board or you've written a review of something etc.?

Music

- Something that's quite popular with young people is downloading music from the internet? Do you do that as well? Or do you prefer to buy CDs from a shop?
- Do you buy the album after you've heard it online and decided you like it?
- Which sites do you go on? What do you think about record companies wanting to close down such sites?
- Do you download other stuff as well, such as games or videos?

Undesirable content

- Show **Korean spam** from Yahoo Mailbox. ("I get 10 of these a day, I don't know how they got my email address, I can't even read them. I get rude ones as well, but I didn't print them out. Have a look, can you see what they're trying to say, because I don't know….")
- Do you get spam in your mailbox as well? What sort of spam do you get? Any sexually explicit ones? What do you usually do with it? Are you able to block/ filter spam?

- What about advertising on the internet, what types of adverts have you seen (different formats)? (Do they recognise only pop-ups as ads or more 'hidden' advertising/sponsorship)
- The adverts you usually come across, what are they for? (Do they remember/ pay attention). Do they annoy you or are you not bothered?
- If you **compare the internet with other media**, like TV, videos or magazines, do you think that the internet has more advertising?
- Some say the internet is all porn and spam – how do you see it? Is that your own personal experience? Can you give examples? Or just what you heard from others (myths/hearsay)?
- Do you think it is more risky than other media? Have you found more inappropriate things online (email, www, chat, message boards, etc) than on TV, video, radio or in magazines?

Internet safety: Rules

- Are there rules for using the internet at college? What do they say? What about at home?
- Do you stick to all of the rules or do you try to get round some of them?
- Show the **Rules from Youth Club**. What do you think? Do these rules apply to you? Why/not? What age group are they for?
- Should children younger than you be allowed on the internet (ages, issues, reasons?)? Would you say the internet is dangerous for younger children? (sources of risk – sex, porn, gambling, race hate, misinformation, bullying, other?)
- If you were a parent, would you let your kids use the internet? What rules would you have?
- When you compare the internet with the street, kids know not to talk to strangers, tell their parents when they see someone dodgy or only go out in a group at night. What's different on the internet? Should there be similar rules?

Internet safety: internet filtering software

- Show advert for **Net Nanny** software
- Do you have similar software at college/at home? Do you know what gets filtered out?
- Does it work, can you get round it? Does it block useful sites? Or does it get it wrong? Do you know someone who tried accessing sites they shouldn't have? What happened?
- Would you prefer what's called a walled garden – where content is checked to make sure it's OK for you (safe, reliable, useful)? Or do you want to search everything yourself (free and diverse, but inefficient and risky)?
- Should sites be banned or would it be better if you were taught more about what's good and bad online? Whose responsibility is this?

Internet safety awareness: Hear'say story (Girls)

- Show them a printout of the story about Hear'say fan and say what it's about (A girl wrote to Myleene from Hear'say, how she was looking forward to meeting her….)

- Four quotes from readers, representing different arguments; each girl to read one and discuss.
- What rules do you think should people observe in chat rooms and when planning to meet up with someone from a chat room?

Internet safety awareness: Thinkuknow campaign and paedophiles (Boys)

- Have you seen this ad about paedophiles on the internet where you hear a boy's voice as if he was in a chat room, talking about football, and in the end it turns our to be some old bloke? What did you think of it? There was a web site, called Thinkuknow.co.uk. Did you go on it?
- There were also some pop-up ads for this campaign on the internet, in chat rooms. Did you come across those? Do you think there should be more such campaigns?
- Do you think you are in danger on the internet? Why (not)? How do you protect yourselves? How do you know who you're talking to in a chat room? Is it different for boys and girls?
- What rules do you think should people observe in chat rooms and when planning to meet up with someone from a chat room?
- Could **show them** Mirror/ Sun articles about online paedophile: Have a look at that. That was in the papers a couple of weeks ago. (A paedophile got 3 years for having sex with young girls he groomed in chat rooms). Have you heard anything about it on the news?

Internet past, non-use and exclusion

- Can you remember the **first time** you used the internet? What did you do? What was it like?
- How have things changed since then? Do you use the internet for different things now?
- Now that the internet is here and part of your life, what difference would it make if you no longer had access yourself?
- What difference would it make if the internet disappeared altogether? Would things be better or worse?
- Do you think we pay too much attention to computers in our society? Do we overrate the internet and how it can change things?
- What about those **left out**, those people who don't have internet access? Why might they not have or not want to have internet access? (luddites, disadvantaged/poor, etc).
- Do you think they're missing out on something? What consequences does it have for them? (no email – no peer network? No web – poor homework?)

Education

- Do you use the internet to revise for exams or for course work? Is it useful for that?
- Which web sites do you use? (commercial/ public service – do they notice?) Are they educational web sites, or do you just go to a Search Engine and see what comes up?

- Why do you think the sites are put there? Does it make a difference who put them there and why they did it?
- Do you think you can trust the information on the internet? How do you know the information on a web site is true? How do you tell when the information is not reliable?
- Do you particularly look for stuff from UK sites? (do you notice, how do you tell? How world wide is the web that you use?)
- Do you use books and the library less now that you can use the internet? Why?
- How would it make a difference if you didn't have the internet?

Transition from college to university/work

- Is college your main internet access point? After leaving college, where will you be using the internet then? Do you think you'll be using it more/less?
- How will you keep in touch with your friends from college (email, phone/mobile etc.)?

Help with personal problems

- **Show them message** from a girl upset about her parents breaking up.
- Some young people have started using the internet as a place to get advice. If you needed some advice about a personal problem, for example about relationships, family, health etc., where would you go? (Parents, books, magazine, teachers, friends, someone in your community, doctor, a telephone advice service, internet etc.)?
- Why/not use the internet? Girls also get their advice from teen mags. What about boys?

Privacy

- Who do you share with/let see what you do online? Friends, parents, brothers and sisters, etc. Who sees your emails, favourites, the sites you've visited in the cache, your MSN buddies list?
- Is what you do on the internet public or private? Compare with phone, face to face etc.
- How do you manage your privacy on the internet? (check who's watching over your shoulder? Deleting emails in inbox? Passwords? Etc) How successful are you in this? Do your parents check what you do on the internet? Does it bother you?
- What about external threats to your privacy – commercial organisations? Strangers?

Interest in the internet

- How much do you and your friends talk about the internet? Or other media
- Invite stories – what's the funniest story you've heard about the internet, the nastiest story, the scariest, the most surprising? (Discuss the likely reality of these stories.)

At the end: Letting them ask questions

- When we started the discussion, or before the discussion, what did you think it was going to be like, what did you think we would ask you? Or was it what you expected?
- Do you think there's anything else we should have asked you? Or anything else you would have liked to talk about – about the internet?
- Are there things you wonder about? Is there maybe something you'd like to ask for example Bill Gates about the internet?
- We're also going to interview some younger kids. What do you think we should discuss with them? What should we ask them? Any suggestions?

Debriefing

- Do you have any questions about the research or about what we'll do with the recording?
- **THANK YOU.**

UK Children Go Online
Schedule for focus groups: Media Cards (Ages 12-14)

Introduction

- Introduction of the research project/today's discussion
- Name labels (bring sticky labels and felt pen)
- Explain confidentiality - their names and name of college to be changed
- Discussion will be recorded - is that OK? Complete consent forms (or return if completed)
- Get everybody to introduce themselves: name, age, where they mainly use the internet (have home access?) and what they use it for, maybe favourite site etc.

Media cards: Communication

Images:

email, instant messaging, chat, SMS, mobile phone, landline telephone, fax machine, face-to-face conversation, letter writing (leave some blank cards in case they want to add something)

Questions:

- These cards show different ways of how we can talk to people and communicate with them. Which of these types of communication **have you used** / not used before?
- Which types of communication do you use **most often**?
- **What do you use it for**? To say what? To contact who?
- Which types do you use to stay in touch with **friends**?
- For communicating with **family** members? (family in your house/ family elsewhere)
- **How do you decide when to phone** someone and when to email them or use instant message or text messaging? Does it depend on what you want to say, or who they are, or how you feel? (Can you say different things online vs. face-to-face? Do you know people differently online?)
- Which ones do you think are best for meeting **new people**?
- Do you meet new people through the internet? How many people are you in touch with online, and where did you meet? How do you mix on and offline communication? Is it important to you that the people you email/IM with are local or in the UK or perhaps in other countries?
- Which one's do you think are best for fun/ **joking**?
- Flirting/ **dating**?
- Talking about serious issues or **problems**?
- Which ones are the **fastest/ slowest**?

- Do you think some of them are **dangerous**? Which ones? Why? Which are **safer**? What do you do or what do your parents do to **protect** you?
- Which ones are **cool** for kids your age?
- Which ones are used more **by adults**?
- Which ones are **old-fashioned/modern**?

Media cards: Information, education, entertainment

Images:

Internet, computer, printer, CD-rom, video games console, gameboy, TV, digital TV, video recorder, camcorder, satellite, radio, stereo, walkman, discman, books, comics, magazines, newspapers (leave some blank cards in case they want to add something)

(ALSO INCLUDE MOBILE PHONE?)

Questions:

- Now I will show you some different cards. Most of these you will all know and some you will have at home. But there are some which aren't very common. Are there any **things you don't know** much about?
- Which ones of these do you **have at home**?
- First I'd like you to divide these into **groups** of things that go together. You decide what the groups should be. There are no right or wrong answers, just what you personally think.
- Let's look at what you've done. How did you decide?
- Which are the **most/least interesting** groups?
- Can you give each of the groups a label or **title**? (Can you describe them?)
- What would a **typical user** be like? What kind of person would never use these things?
- Tell me about **typical situations** when you would use these things.
- Thinking of the ones you have at home, which one would you **miss most** if it broke down or if you couldn't get it anymore? Why? What would you do instead?
- Let's say you come home from school and you're **on your own**. What would you do? Would you use one of these?
- And if you come home **with a friend**, what would you do? Would you use one of these? Can you explain why that would be good?
- Are there any of these things that you think of as **old-fashioned**? Why?
- And which are the things you think of as really new – **modern**? What's new about them?
- Is there anything here that's really **exciting**, good fun? Why?
- Is there anything there that **absorbs you completely** so that, for example, if your mum called you might not hear her? Tell me a bit about what that's like.
- Is there anything that's really dull and **boring**? Why?

- What are the things that are **cool** to have for kids of your age? What about older kids/ younger kids? Is it the same?
- Now finally, can you pick out the ones that your **parents** think are good for you, the ones they like you to spend time with? Why do they approve of these? Do you agree?
- Do you like any of the things your **parents disapprove** of? When do you use them? Why do you like them?
- I want you to think about when you **last got a piece of new equipment** like this. Who specially wanted it in your family? Did you spend a lot of time with it? Do you still spend a lot of time with it? What was fun about it? Was it disappointing at all? Does it ever annoy/frustrate you?
- How did it change your life when you got it? Do you now use any of the other things you've got less?
- And thinking about the things you don't have, what would you like to get for your next **birthday** of for Christmas? When would you use it? How would it change things? Is there anything you would do less of? Do you know anyone who has it? Have you already used it anywhere before?

Debriefing

- Do you have any questions about the research or about what we'll do with the recording?
- **THANK YOU.**

UK Children Go Online
Schedule for focus groups: Mind maps (Ages 9-11)

Introduction

- Introduction of the research project/today's discussion
- Name labels (bring sticky labels and felt pen)
- Explain confidentiality - their names and name of college to be changed
- Discussion will be recorded - is that OK? Complete consent forms (or return if completed)
- Get everybody to introduce themselves: name, age, where they mainly use the internet (have home access?) and what they use it for, maybe favourite site etc.

Instructions for mind maps

- Introduce discussion: "An Alien from another world has been watching people here on the planet Earth very carefully. It has been able to see everything but meeting you is the first opportunity it has had to ask questions about things it has seen. It wants to know what the internet is, and you have to explain…."
- Place large sheet of paper (flip chart) on the table, each child gets a felt pen.
- In the middle is a picture of a little green alien with speech bubbles around it:

  "What is the internet?"

  "What can you do with it?"

  "Where can you use it?"
- The children will be asked to make quick drawings or just write words (no long sentences).
- Remind them that this is not a test and we don't want to hear what they've learned at school and that it doesn't matter if some of them write/draw the same things at the same time.
- Each child can write/draw something to the question of their choice and then draw a line, indicating which of the alien's question they have answered.
- Encourage them to explain their words/ drawings further (i.e. when someone writes 'email' or 'chat', ask them to write/draw more around that, explaining what it means and drawing further connecting lines.
- "Can you explain that in more detail to the alien?"
- Then take a break from writing/drawing and ask them to explain:

  "You wrote …/ You drew a … Why is that important? Why does the alien need to know that?"

  "Is that how/where you use the Internet? Can you tell me what you do?"
- Let them comment on each other's keywords/ drawings.

- Let them have another go at answering these questions if they haven't produced very much so far, otherwise add new questions:
- The alien also wants to know: (stick new speech bubbles on paper with blue tack)

  "What's the best thing about it?" (What's good about it?)

  "What's the worst thing about it?" ("What's bad about it?)

  OR:

  "What's fun about it?"

  "What's boring about it?"

  ALSO:

  "What's dangerous about it?"

  "What are the rules for using it?"

Debriefing

- Do you have any questions about the research or about what we'll do with the recording?
- **THANK YOU.**

UK Children Go Online
Schedule for family visits: Parent Interview

Introduction

- Introduction of the research project/today's interview (follow-up from last visit, but this time mainly focussing on the internet, we want to see how things have changed or developed)
- Explain confidentiality - their names and identifiers to be changed
- Discussion will be recorded - is that OK? Complete consent forms (or return if completed)

Background on area

- At first, let me ask about the area where you live.
- *For families who have moved:* Is this a good place to bring up a child of this age in? Is there enough for them to do? What's public transport like? How much freedom do they have to go out?
- *For others:* Has the area changed in the past two years? Is there less or more for your child to do as they're growing up?

Background on family

- Do you still work as … and your husband as …?
- Does your child still go to the same school?
- Does your child still like doing [hobby]?
- Have you acquired any new technologies since our last visit (cable/satellite/ digital TV etc.)?
- *If the above have changed, ask how that affects internet use later.*
- Do you spend more or less time together as a family now that your child is older? Does he/she spend more time in his/her room, with friends, doing homework on his/her own etc?
- Do you give him/her more freedoms now that he/she is older, e.g. staying up longer, watching more TV, going out later? What is he/she allowed to do now that he/she wasn't two years ago?

Parents' internet use

- Last time you told us how you personally use the internet. Has that changed? Do you use if more/ less now? For different/ new things? (work, entertainment, email, chat, IM, searching, browsing, games, music, web design, shopping, banking)
- What about your husband?

- Have you upgraded your computer or bought a new one since our last visit? Is it still in the same location?
- Have you changed your internet service provider? Do you pay per minute or a monthly flat rate? (Or maybe have broadband?)

Child's internet use

- What about your child? Does he/she use the internet more or less now? Do you know what he/she uses it for and how that has changed? More/less for schoolwork, communicating with others etc?
- When we visited last time X was the expert on computers and the internet in the family. Is that still the case? If not, how did the new person become the expert?
- Do you think your child's knowledge of the internet has grown? If yes, how? Through use at school, self-taught, learned for you?
- *If parents used to help:* Do you still help him/her with using the internet? Does he/she still ask you? Or does he/she use it on her/his own more now? Has he/she become somewhat of an expert now and you ask him/her for help and advice?
- Do you regulate how much he/she gets to use the internet? Are there ever any arguments about that?
- Do you check what he/she gets up to online? How? Just by looking over his/her shoulder and coming into the room from time to time or by checking the history file? Does he/she know/ mind?
- Are you (more) worried what he/she gets up to online? What are you worried about? Have you come across such material yourself? What about your child? What was his/her reaction?
- Have you installed an internet monitoring or filtering system, such as Net Nanny? Does your child know/ mind?
- If not, would you do it if your child was younger? Would you know how to do it?
- Have you spoken about issues of internet safety with him/her?
- Do they learn about that at school?
- What do you think should be done to make the internet safer for children?

At the end

- I would now like to talk to your son/daughter. Is there anything you think I should ask him/her? Anything particularly interesting?
- Do you have any further questions?
- THANK YOU.

UK Children Go Online
Schedule for family visits: Child Interview

Introduction

- Introduction of the research project/today's interview (follow-up from last visit, but this time mainly focussing on the internet, we want to see how things have changed or developed)
- Explain confidentiality - their names and identifiers to be changed
- Discussion will be recorded - is that OK? Complete consent forms (or return if completed)

Background on area

- At first, let me ask about the area where you live.
- *For children who have moved:* What's it like for someone your age living round here? Is there enough to do? How much freedom do you have to go out?
- *For others:* Is it better or worse than two years ago? Is there enough to do now that your older?

Background on family

- Do you still go to the same school?
- Do you still like doing [hobby]?
- *If the above have changed, ask how that affects internet use later.*
- Have you or your parents bought any new technologies in the last two years (cable/satellite/ digital TV etc.)? Any new technologies in your bedroom? Do you use them a lot (e.g. if you compare it to how much time you used to spend watching TV)? Do you use the internet more or less because of that?
- Do you spend more or less time together as a family now that you're older? Do you spend more time in your room, with friends, doing homework on your own instead of with your mum etc?
- Do you have more freedoms now that you're older, e.g. staying up longer, watching more TV, going out later? What are you allowed to do now that you weren't two years ago?

Internet use

- Now I have some questions about the internet. Do you use it more or less now than you used to? Do you spend more time on other activities instead, e.g. playstation, TV, friends, job etc?
- What do you use the internet for now and how had that changed? Do you use it more/ less for:
    - Schoolwork
    - Searching
    - Info on specific interest/hobby
    - Music
    - Games

    - Email
    - Chat
    - IM
    - Designing a homepage
    - Shopping
- Are there new things you have just recently started using the internet for?
- Do you use it more at home or school?
- Can you describe what a normal online session would be like? At what time do you usually go online, where, on your own/with friends, other people coming into the room, parents checking, music or TV in the background? What do you usually do first, e.g. check email? And then? And after that?
- What makes you go on the internet? To check email, or homework?
- Who long does a session usually take?
- Can I now ask you to go online as you would on a normal day, and do what you would usually do, or choose something you're interested in or your favourite site and describe what you're doing. I've left the tape on for that so I can remember it afterwards, and I'll take some notes as well.

Observation

During observation make note of:

- Surroundings, room, desk,
- What does the computer look like? Also desktop, wallpaper etc.
- Browser, ISP, how long it takes to connect
- URLs of websites visited and duration of visit
- Bookmarks and favourite sites
- Possibly messages in email inbox
- Strategies of moving from page to page (e.g. via hyperlinks, search engine, bookmarks, or typing in URLs)
- Searching strategies (i.e. if they are familiar with more advanced strategies or just basic searches)
- Body language and expressed feelings
- What else is going on, interruptions etc.

Ask questions from focus group schedule as and when they become relevant during the observation, for example:

- When on email, ask questions about communication, spam, safety.
- When on chat, ask questions about communication and safety.
- When on commercial site, ask questions about spam and advertising.
- When on search engine, ask questions about credibility of online material and undesirable content.
- Also ask about internet monitoring by parents and privacy issues.

MEDIA@LSE
Department of Media and Communications

LSE Parent Questionnaire

Thank you for taking the time out to complete this questionnaire. You will not have to answer all the questions, but please answer all the questions that apply to you by placing a cross ☒ in the appropriate box, or by writing in the space provided. Please ensure each cross covers the whole box, but please don't mark outside the box. If you change your mind, completely block out the box ■ you have crossed and then put a cross in your preferred answer box. All the information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence.

SECTION 1: ABOUT YOU

1. What is your age?
   Please write in the box below

   ☐☐ Years

2. What is your relationship with the child **being interviewed**?
   Please only cross ONE box
   - Mother/Step mother ☐
   - Father/Step father ☐
   - Other *(Write in)* ☐

3. What is your employment status?
   Please only cross ONE box
   - Working full time ☐
   - Working part time ☐
   - Retired ☐
   - Not working (e.g. looking after the home, long term sick/unemployed) ☐

4. Do you have internet access at home?
   Please only cross ONE box
   - Yes ☐
   - No, but used to have it ☐
   - No, never had internet access ☐

5. In your house, who is the **best** at using the internet?
   Please only cross ONE box
   - You ☐
   - Other parent ☐
   - Child being interviewed ☐
   - Other child ☐
   - Someone else *(Write in)* ☐
   - No one ☐
   - Don't know ☐

SECTION 2: USING THE INTERNET

6. How often do **you** personally use the internet nowadays from any location (e.g. work/home/library)?
   Please only cross ONE box

   A. Several times per day ☐
   B. About once a day ☐
   C. A couple of times a week ☐
   D. About once a week ☐
   E. About a couple of times a month ☐
   → **GO TO Q8**

   F. About once a month ☐
   G. Less often ☐
   H. Never ☐
   → **GO TO Q7**

PLEASE ONLY ANSWER Q7, IF YOU TICKED F/G/H AT Q6.
ALL OTHERS PLEASE GO TO Q8.

7. Which, if any, of these things stop you personally using the internet (more often)?
   Please cross ALL that apply to you

   I don't have access to the internet ☐
   I don't really know how to use the internet ☐
   It is too difficult/frustrating ☐
   I'm not interested in it ☐
   I think people rely on computers too much ☐
   It's too expensive ☐
   It's not really safe ☐
   I don't have time to use it (more often) ☐
   It is too slow/keeps going wrong ☐
   Other (*Write in*) ☐

IF YOU TICKED H AT Q6, PLEASE SKIP TO SECTION 3.
ALL OTHERS PLEASE ANSWER Q8 AND THE REST OF THE SECTION.

8. When did you personally **first** use the internet?
   Please only cross ONE box

   Less than 1 month ago ☐
   Over 1 month, but less than 6 months ago ☐
   Over 6 months, but less than 1 year ago ☐
   Over 1 year, but less than 2 years ago ☐
   Over 2 years, but less than 4 years ago ☐
   Over 4 years, but less than 6 years ago ☐
   Over 6 years ago ☐
   Can't remember ☐

9. Which of these have you personally ever used to access the internet?
   Please cross ALL that you have ever used

   Computer at work ☐
   Computer/laptop at home ☐
   Computer at someone else's house ☐
   Computer in a public library ☐
   Computer in an internet café or kiosk ☐
   Digital television at home ☐
   Mobile/ WAP phone ☐
   Games console at home ☐
   Other *(Write in)* ☐

10. Do you do any of these things on the internet?
Please cross ALL that you do

Visit chat rooms	☐	Use instant messaging	☐
Send and receive email	☐	Play/download music	☐
Play/download games	☐	Use it for work	☐
Search for information other than for work			☐
Check what's going on in your area (e.g. cinema, events)			☐
None of these			☐

11. Which of these things would you say you are good at doing?
Please cross ALL that you are good at doing

Finding the information you need on the web	☐
Setting up an email account	☐
Sending an instant message	☐
Downloading and saving an MP3 (music)	☐
Setting up a filter for junk mail or pop-up adverts	☐
Getting rid of a virus on your computer	☐
Fixing a problem by yourself when something goes wrong	☐
None of these	☐

12. Overall, how good would you say that you personally are at using the internet?
Please only cross ONE box

Beginner	☐
Average	☐
Advanced	☐
Expert	☐

SECTION 3: YOUR VIEWS ABOUT THE INTERNET

EVERYONE PLEASE ANSWER THIS SECTION

For the rest of the questionnaire, please answer the following questions about the child being interviewed.

Child's first name (Write in): ……..

13. Thinking about your child, which of these do you think is most likely to….?
Please tick as many as you would like in each row

	TV/ Video/ DVD	Books	Internet	Games Console	PC (offline)	None of these
Help him/her do better in school	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Prevent your child spending his/her time well	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Help your child learn worthwhile things	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Encourage values and behaviour you don't approve of	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Support your child's friendships	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

14. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with these statements about children and the internet in general: *Please only cross ONE box in each row*

	Agree strongly	Agree a bit	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree a bit	Disagree strongly	Don't know
It's safe for children to spend time on the internet	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Having the internet at home helps children with school work/college	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The internet can help children participate in the community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
It's a risk that children may give out personal or private information online	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Online, children discover interesting, useful things they didn't know before	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am concerned that children might see sexually explicit images on the internet	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Spending too much time online interferes with schoolwork/worthwhile activities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
People worry too much that adults will take advantage of children on the internet	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am concerned that children might see violent images on the internet	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The internet can help children learn about diversity and tolerance	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Going online a lot leads children to become isolated from other people	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Children who do not have/use the internet are at a disadvantage	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Using the internet undermines the values and beliefs that parents want their children to have	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am optimistic that the internet can help solve society's problems	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

15. Which of these benefits **your child** the MOST, and which do you worry MOST about?
Please only cross ONE box in each column

	Benefits	Worry
Television/Video/DVD	☐	☐
Books	☐	☐
Internet	☐	☐
Games Console	☐	☐
PC (offline)	☐	☐
None of these	☐	☐

16. Where, if at all, is your child most likely to come across sexually explicit or pornographic material?
Please only cross ONE box

On the internet	☐	On television	☐
On video or DVD	☐	In magazines	☐
None of these	☐	Prefer not to answer	☐

SECTION 4: USING THE INTERNET AT HOME

17. How often does your child **who is being interviewed** use the internet nowadays from any location (e.g. school/work, home or an internet café)?
Please only cross ONE box

A. Several times per day ☐
B. About once a day ☐
C. A couple of times a week ☐
D. About once a week ☐
E. About a couple of times a month ☐
→ **GO TO Q19**

F. About once a month ☐
G. Less often ☐
H. Never ☐
I. Don't know ☐
→ **GO TO Q18**

ANSWER Q18 IF YOU TICKED OPTIONS F/G/H/I AT Q17.
ALL OTHERS PLEASE SKIP TO Q19.

18. Why does your child not use, or does not very often use, the internet?
Please cross ALL that you agree with

He/she doesn't have access to the internet ☐
He/she is not allowed to use the internet (more often) ☐
He/she finds it too difficult/frustrating ☐
He/she is not interested in using the internet (more often) ☐
It's too expensive ☐
It's not really safe ☐
He/she doesn't have time to use it (more often) ☐
It is too slow/keeps going wrong ☐
Don't know ☐
Other *(Write in)* ☐

EVERYONE PLEASE ANSWER THIS QUESTION

19. Does your child that is being interviewed ever use the internet **at home**?
Yes ☐ → **GO TO Q20**
No ☐ → **GO TO SECTION 5 (Page 6)**

20. Would you say that you (or your spouse/ partner) understand enough about the internet to do any of these things?
Please cross ALL that apply

Know what kinds of things your child does on the internet ☐
Know how to access your child's email account ☐
Know how to check which websites your child has visited ☐
Help your child use the internet safely ☐
Help your child get the best out of the internet ☐

21. Do you (or your spouse/partner) do any of these things nowadays?
Please cross ALL that you do

Make sure you stay in the same room or nearby when your child is online ☐
Sit with your child and go online together ☐
Help your child when he/she is on the internet ☐
Ask/talk to your child about what he/she is doing or did on the internet ☐

22. Do you (or your spouse/partner) do any of these nowadays?
Please cross ALL that you do

Keep an eye on what's on the screen while your child is online ☐
Check the computer later, to see which sites your child visited ☐
Check the messages in your child's email account ☐
Get annoyed with your child about his/her use of the internet ☐

23. When your child is on the internet, are there any things he/she is NOT allowed to do?
Please cross ALL that your child is not allowed to do

Give out personal information ☐
Use email ☐
Use chat rooms ☐
Use instant messaging ☐
Play games on the internet ☐
Download things (e.g. music, films, games or software) ☐
Buy anything online ☐
Fill out online forms or quizzes ☐
Other *(Write in)* ☐

24. Does the computer your child uses for the internet at home have any of these in operation?
Please cross ALL that are in operation

Filtering software (that blocks certain websites or activities) ☐
Monitoring software (that records where they go and what they do on the internet) ☐
Neither of these ☐
Don't know ☐

25. On the computer your child uses at home, are any of these sites or activities blocked or filtered?
Please cross ALL that are blocked or filtered

Email	☐	Chat rooms	☐
Instant messaging	☐	Pornographic sites	☐
Junk emails	☐	Adverts	☐
None of these	☐	Don't know	☐

SECTION 5: ABOUT YOUR CHILD

EVERYONE PLEASE ANSWER THIS SECTION

26. Which of these activities does your child have to follow any rules about …?
Please cross ALL that your child has to follow

How much time they can spend talking on the phone ☐
How much time they can spend watching television ☐
What kind of videos or television programmes they can watch ☐
How much time they can spend playing computer games ☐
How much time they can spend on the internet ☐

27. How would you judge your child's skills in using the internet?
Please only cross ONE box

Beginner ☐
Average ☐
Advanced ☐
Expert ☐
Don't know ☐

28. As far as you know, has your child ever …?
Please cross ALL that your child has ever done

Visited an internet chat room ☐
Made new friends over the internet ☐
Been bullied over the internet ☐
Received unwanted sexual comments over the internet ☐
Come across pornography on the internet ☐
Been sent unsolicited sexual material over the internet ☐
Come across violent or gruesome material on the internet ☐
Come across racist or hateful material on the internet ☐
Met someone face to face that they first met on the internet ☐
Given out information that they shouldn't on the internet ☐
None of these ☐

29. Are you confident that when your child is on the internet, he or she …?
Please cross ALL that that you are confident about

Knows how to protect his/her privacy ☐
Remembers the safety advice, e.g. not contacting strangers on the web ☐
Knows what to do if a situation makes him/her uncomfortable ☐
Would tell you (or your spouse/partner) if something made him/her uncomfortable ☐
Has learned how to judge whether information is reliable and trustworthy ☐
None of these ☐

30. Which of these would help you to make sure that your child uses the internet effectively and safely?
Please cross ALL that you think would help

A. More/better teaching and guidance on internet use for children in schools ☐
B. More/better information and advice for parents ☐
C. Improved parental controls (that sets limits on internet use for different users) ☐
D. Improved filtering software (that blocks certain websites or activities) ☐
E. Improved monitoring software (that records where users go and what they do) ☐
F. Stricter regulation for businesses that produce online content and services ☐
G. Tougher laws over online pornography ☐
H. More sites developed especially to meet children's needs and interests ☐
I. None of these ☐
J. Other *(Write in)* ☐

31. Which one from the list at Q.30 would be the most helpful to you?
Please write the corresponding LETTER in the box below

☐

32. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with these statements in relation to your child.
Please only cross ONE box in each row

	Agree strongly	Agree a bit	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree a bit	Disagree strongly	Don't know
The benefits of the internet for my child outweigh any risks	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I trust my child to use the internet safely	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My child has been taught at school how to use the internet safely and effectively	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

SECTION 6: QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR FAMILY

EVERYONE PLEASE ANSWER THIS SECTION

33. Do you agree with any of these statements?
Please cross ALL that you agree with

The internet helps people get ahead in life ☐
My child misses out by not using the internet and email (more) ☐
My child can find out all he/she needs from books ☐
My child sometimes feels left out when his/her friends talk about the internet ☐
The internet makes it easier to keep in touch with people ☐
My child would get better marks at school/college if he/she used the internet (more) ☐
My child would like to use the internet (more) in the future ☐
I would like my child to use the internet (more) in the future ☐

34. Here are some things people say about themselves and their families. These are NOT to do with the internet. Thinking about yourself and your family, do you agree or disagree?
Please only cross ONE box in each row

	Agree strongly	Agree a bit	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree a bit	Disagree strongly
I generally ask my child what he/she thinks when the family is talking about something	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I often say something to my child like, "you'll know better when you grow up"	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My child can tell me almost anything	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
In our family we like to look at different sides of an issue	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
It sometimes irritates me if my child's views are different from mine	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE. PLEASE RETURN IT TO THE INTERVIEWER OR DIRECTLY TO BMRB INTERNATIONAL IN THE PRE-PAID ENVELOPE PROVIDED. REFERENCE 45101870.

Data Capture, BMRB International Research, Hadley House, 79-81 Uxbridge Road, London W5 5SU

Young people and the internet - FINAL QUESTIONNAIRE

YPONLIN - JN: 45101870 - 12 Jan 2004

Quanquest v2.1 - QAL v2.2bmrb13 - CAPI

YPONLIN

Qconsen IF RESPONDENT IS UNDER 18 AND LIVING WITH PARENTS - HAVE YOU OBTAINED SIGNED CONSENT FROM RESPONDENT'S PARENT/GUARDIAN?

WARNING: IF YOU CODE NO (CODE THREE) THIS INTERVIEW WILL TERMINATE

IF YOU HAVEN'T OBTAINED PARENTAL CONSENT, OBTAIN IT BEFORE PROCEEDING

Yes	1	(108)
No - child lives independently/child is aged 18-19	2	
No	3	

Termin1
IF Qconsen = No - Termination with data (Quit)

IF Qconsen = Yes
THEN ASK: Qpap

Qpap ASK PARENT OR CARER TO COMPLETE THE PAPER QUESTIONNAIRE.
IF BOTH PARENTS ARE PRESENT IN HOUSEHOLD ASK THE FATHER. IF FATHER IS NOT WILLING TO COMPLETE QUESTIONNAIRE THEN ASK MOTHER.
IF ONLY MOTHER PRESENT - ASK MOTHER TO COMPLETE QUESTIONNAIRE.

READ OUT - As well as finding out about your child's use of the internet, we are also interested in finding out about your thoughts on internet use. I would be grateful if you could complete this paper questionnaire while I interview your child. When you are asked to think about your child's use of the internet, please think about this in relation to the child I am interviewing. It should take no longer than 15 minutes to complete.

CODE OUTCOME

YES mother will complete paper questionnaire	1	(109)
YES father will complete paper questionnaire	2	
NO parent will not complete paper questionnaire	3	
Don't Know	Y	
Other	0	

Other specify... (110 - 113)

IF Qpap = YES mother will complete paper questionnaire OR Qpap = YES father will complete paper questionnaire
THEN ASK: Qserial, Qchsk

ON THE NEXT TWO SCREENS YOU WILL BE PROMPTED TO ENTER THE SERIAL NUMBER FROM THE PAPER QUESTIONNAIRE THAT YOU ARE ABOUT TO HAND TO THE PARENT/CARER.

YOU WILL FIND THIS SIX OR SEVEN DIGIT SERIAL NUMBER IN THE BOX AT THE END OF THE PAPER QUESTIONNAIRE.

PRESS RED KEY TO CONTINUE

Qserial PLEASE ENTER THE FIRST FIVE NUMBERS OF THE SERIAL NUMBER FROM THE PAPER QUESTIONNAIRE.
(THESE ARE THE FIRST FIVE NUMBERS PRINTED IN THE BOX AT THE END OF THE PAPER QUESTIONNAIRE)
(IF THE SERIAL NUMBER HAS A LEADING ZERO IF MAY DISAPPEAR AFTER TYPING IT IN - IT IS FINE IF THIS HAPPENS)

(114 - 118)

Numeric Range	_____	
Don't Know	Y	(114)

Permitted Range
101 TO 15312 (Numeric Range)

Qchsk PLEASE ENTER THE REMAINING NUMBER(S) FROM THE SERIAL CODE
(THERE WILL BE 1 OR 2 DIGITS LEFT TO ENTER FROM THE BOX AT THE END OF THE PAPER QUESTIONNAIRE)

(119 - 120)

Numeric Range _____
Don't Know Y (119)

Permitted Range
0 TO 96 (Numeric Range)

QUANCEPT ITEM:

NOW HAND PARENT/CARER THE PAPER QUESTIONNAIRE AND ENVELOPE.

End of Filter lag

End of Filter Icon

NOW START THE INTERVIEW WITH THE CHILD/YOUNG PERSON

Qsex RECORD SEX OF RESPONDENT

Male 1 (121)
Female 2

I am going to be asking you questions about the internet. But first of all I would like to find out about you...

Qage What was your age on your last birthday?

(122 - 123)

Numeric Range _____
Don't Know Y (122)

Permitted Range
9 TO 19 (Numeric Range)

QUANCEPT ITEM:

INTERVIEWER: PLEASE SHOW SCREEN UNTIL INSTRUCTED OTHERWISE

IF dage = 16-17 OR dage = 18-19
THEN ASK: Qdoing

Qdoing I would like to get a few details about what you are doing at the moment. Which of the following best describes what you are currently doing?

SHOW SCREEN

Full time education (e.g. at school/college/university - including on vacation)	1	(125)
On government training/employment scheme	2	
In paid work full time (at least 30 hours)	3	
In paid work part time (less than 30 hours per week)	4	
Waiting to take up paid work already accepted	5	
Voluntary Work	6	
Unemployed and receiving benefit	7	
Unemployed, not receiving benefit, but actively looking for a job	8	
Unemployed, but not actively looking for a job	9	
Permanently sick or disabled	0	(126)
Looking after home or family	1	
Don't Know	Y	(125)
Refused	Z	

End of Filter lold16

IF dage = 9-11 OR dage = 12-15 OR dage = 16-17 AND Qdoing = Full time education (e.g. at school/college/university - including on vacation)
THEN ASK: Qscho

Qscho Can I check, are you attending school/college?

Yes	1	(127)
No	2	
Don't Know	Y	

IF Qscho = Yes
THEN ASK: Qyear

Qyear What year are you in at school?

Year 5	1	(128)
Year 6	2	
Year 7	3	
Year 8	4	
Year 9	5	
Year 10	6	
Year 11	7	
Year 12	8	
Year 13	9	
At college	0	(129)
Don't Know	Y	(128)
Other	0	

Other specify... (130 - 133)

End of Filter Ischo

End of Filter lyr

Qhhold Can you tell me which of these people lives in your household with you?

SHOW SCREEN
PROBE: WHO ELSE?

Mother/ Step mother/ girlfriend of father	1	(134)
Father/ Step father/ boyfriend of mother	2	
Brothers/ Sisters (including step)	3	
Own partner/ boyfriend/ girlfriend (16+)	4	
Own child/children	5	
Grandmother	6	
Grandfather	7	
Uncle	8	
Aunt	9	
Other relative	0	(135)
Other person who is not related to you/friends	1	
I live on my own	2	
Don't Know	Y	(134)
Refused	Z	
None of these	X	

I would like to find out whether you use the internet.

Qaccess Which of these have you EVER used to access the internet?

SHOW LIST AND PROBE, WHICH OTHERS?

Computer at school/college	1	(136)
Computer/laptop at home	2	
Computer/ laptop in someone else's house	3	
Computer in a public library	4	
Computer in an internet cafe or kiosk	5	
Computer at parent's work	6	
Computer in your own work place	7	
Digital television at home	8	
Mobile/WAP phone	9	
Games Console at home	0	(137)
Don't Know	Y	(136)
Refused	Z	
None of these	X	
Other	0	

Other specify... (138 - 141)

These questions are about what media you have in your home.

Qhomecp Do you have a computer or laptop at home that is used nowadays?

Yes	1	(142)
No	2	
Don't Know	Y	

IF Qhomecp = Yes
THEN ASK: Qhwmany, Qintacc

Qhwmany How many computers or laptops do you have in your house that are used nowadays?

(143)

Numeric Range _____		
Don't Know	Y	(143)

Permitted Range
0 TO 5 (Numeric Range)

Qintacc How many computers/laptops have internet access?

IF INTERNET ACCESS IS TEMPORARILY UNAVAILABLE/BROKEN (FOR UP TO 2 WKS) THEN ASK FOR RESPONSE THINKING ABOUT WHEN INTERNET ACCESS IS AVAILABLE.

None	1	(144)
One	2	
Two	3	
Three	4	
More than three	5	
Don't Know	Y	
None of these	X	

IF NOT (Qintacc = None OR Qintacc = None of these OR Qintacc = Don't Know)
THEN ASK: Qwhcp

Qwhcp Where exactly in your home are the computer/laptop(s) that you can access the internet from?

SHOW SCREEN TO RESPONDENT

Your bedroom	1	(145)
Brother's/sister's bedroom	2	
Parents' bedroom	3	
Lounge/ Family room/Dining room	4	
Hall/Landing	5	
Study/Office	6	
Move around (laptop)	7	
Don't Know	Y	
Other	0	

Other specify... (146 - 149)

End of Filter Iintacc

End of Filter Ihomecp

Qdigtv Do you have a digital television in your house that is used nowadays?

IF RESPONDENT ASKS WHAT THIS IS SAY IT IS A TV WITH A DIGI BOX

IF RESPONDENT STILL DOESN'T KNOW WHAT DIGITAL TV IS THEN CODE AS 'NO'

Yes	1	(150)
No	2	
Don't Know	Y	

IF Qdigtv = Yes
THEN ASK: Qdgacc

Qdgacc Does the digital television have internet access?

IF INTERNET ACCESS IS TEMPORARILY UNAVAILABLE/BROKEN (FOR UP TO 2 WKS) THEN CODE 'YES'

Yes	1	(151)
No	2	
Don't Know	Y	

IF Qdgacc = Yes
THEN ASK: Qwhdtv

Qwhdtv Where exactly in your home is the digital television that you can access the internet from?

Your bedroom	1	(152)
Brother's/sister's bedroom	2	
Parents' bedroom	3	
Lounge/ Family room/Dining room	4	
Hall/Landing	5	
Study/Office	6	
Don't Know	Y	
Other	0	

Other specify... (153 - 156)

End of Filter Idgacc

End of Filter Idigtv

Qgamesc Do you have a games console in your house that is used nowadays?

Yes	1	(157)
No	2	
Don't Know	Y	

IF Qgamesc = Yes
THEN ASK: Qgcacc

Qgcacc Does the games console in your home have internet access?

IF INTERNET ACCESS IS TEMPORARILY UNAVAILABLE/BROKEN (FOR UP TO 2 WKS) THEN CODE 'YES'

Yes	1	(158)
No	2	
Don't Know	Y	

IF Qgcacc = Yes
THEN ASK: Qwhgc

Qwhgc Where exactly in your home is the games console that you can access the internet from?

Your bedroom	1	(159)
Brother's/sister's bedroom	2	
Parents' bedroom	3	
Lounge/ Family room/Dining room	4	
Hall/Landing	5	
Study/Office	6	
Move around (laptop)	7	
Don't Know	Y	
Other	0	

Other specify... (160 - 163)

End of Filter Skip2

End of Filter Igamesc

QphoneDo you have your own mobile phone? Does it have internet access (WAP)?

SHOW SCREEN

Mobile phone (just call and SMS)	1	(164)
WAP/3G mobile phone	2	
Borrow someone else's sometimes	3	
No mobile phone	4	
Don't Know	Y	

Qmiss Which ONE would you miss most if it disappeared tomorrow?

SHOW SCREEN

Internet (plus computer)	1	(165)
Computer	2	
Television	3	
Mobile Phone	4	
Games Console	5	
Books	6	
Don't Know	Y	

Qease How easy is it to get to somewhere outside your home where you can use the internet (e.g. library, youth club, internet cafe)?

Very easy	1	(166)
Fairly easy	2	
Fairly difficult	3	
Very difficult	4	
Don't Know/ I never looked	Y	

IF Qdgacc = Yes OR Qgcacc = Yes OR Qintacc = One OR Qintacc = Two OR Qintacc = Three OR Qintacc = More than three
THEN ASK: Qkind, Qfirst, Qwith, Qusing

I'd like to find out some more about the internet access you have at home.

Qkind What kind of internet access do you have in your home?

SHOW SCREEN

Dial-up, pay for calls/pay per minute/pay as you go	1	(167)
Dial-up, monthly subscription/unlimited calls/flat-rate	2	
Broadband	3	
Don't Know	Y	

Qfirst When did you first get the internet at home?

SHOW SCREEN

Up to 1 month ago	1	(168)
Between 1 to 6 months ago	2	
Between 6 to 12 months ago	3	
Between 1 to 2 years ago	4	
Between 2 to 3 years ago	5	
Between 3 to 4 years ago	6	
More than 4 years ago	7	
Can't remember	8	

Qwith How do you MOSTLY use the internet at home?

SHOW SCREEN

By myself	1	(169)
With one or more friends	2	
With a brother or sister	3	
With my mother	4	
With my father	5	
Don't Know	Y	
Refused	Z	
None of these	X	
Other	0	

Other specify... (170 - 173)

Qusing How often is someone else already using the computer when you want to go online?
(IF RESPONDENT ONLY USES DIGITAL TV OR GAMES CONSOLE TO GO ONLINE, ASK THIS QUESTION IN RELATION THAT)

Daily	1	(174)
Once a week or more	2	
Not very often	3	
Never	4	
I'm the only one who uses that computer	5	
Don't Know	Y	

End of Filter linthme

Now I'd like you to think about the things you do in your leisure time

Qdaily2 Outside of school/college/work, how often do you spend time seeing friends these days?

Daily	1	(175)
A couple of times a week	2	
About once a week	3	
A couple of times a month	4	
About once a month	5	
Less often	6	
Never	7	
Don't Know	Y	

Qshop Outside school/college or work, how often do you go out (e.g. cinema, date, shopping, youth club, sports club) these days?

Daily	1	(176)
A couple of times a week	2	
About once a week	3	
A couple of times a month	4	
About once a month	5	
Less often	6	
Never	7	
Don't Know	Y	

Quse Overall, how often do you use the internet THESE DAYS (anywhere)?

IF INTERNET ACCESS IS TEMPORARILY UNAVAILABLE/BROKEN (FOR UP TO 2 WKS) THEN ASK RESPONDENT TO THINK ABOUT WHEN THEY NORMALLY HAVE ACCESS

Several times per day	1	(177)
About once a day	2	
A couple of times a week	3	
About once a week	4	
A couple of times a month	5	
About once a month	6	
Less often	7	
Never	8	
Don't Know	Y	

Qday On a typical school/college or work day, how much of your leisure time do you spend ...?

None	1	(178)
About 10 minutes or less	2	
About half an hour	3	
About 1 hour	4	
About 1 to 2 hours	5	
About 2 to 3 hours	6	
About 3 to 4 hours	7	
About 4 to 5 hours	8	
About 5 hours or more	9	
Don't Know	Y	
Refused	Z	

This question is repeated for the following loop values:

- watching television
- reading (not for school/college)
- playing computer/ electronic games
- doing homework/ projects/ work
- talking/ spending time with your family
- on the phone/ text messaging

A total of 6 iterations occupying columns (178) to (210)

Qwnd And at the weekend, or in the holidays, how much of your leisure time do you spend ...?

None	1	(211)
About 10 minutes or less	2	
About half an hour	3	
About 1 hour	4	
About 1 to 2 hours	5	
About 2 to 3 hours	6	
About 3 to 4 hours	7	
About 4 to 5 hours	8	
About 5 hours or more	9	
Don't Know	Y	
Refused	Z	

This question is repeated for the following loop values:

- watching television
- reading (not for school/college)
- playing computer/ electronic games
- doing homework/ projects/ work
- talking/ spending time with your family
- on the phone/ text messaging

A total of 6 iterations occupying columns (211) to (216)

IF NOT (Quse = Never)
THEN ASK: Qday1, Qday2

Qday1 On a typical school/college or work day, how much of your leisure time do you spend on the internet?

None	1	(217)
About 10 minutes or less	2	
About half an hour	3	
About 1 hour	4	
About 1 to 2 hours	5	
About 2 to 3 hours	6	
About 3 to 4 hours	7	
About 4 to 5 hours	8	
About 5 hours or more	9	
Don't Know	Y	
Refused	Z	

Qday2 And at the weekend, or in the holidays, how much of your leisure time do you spend on the internet?

None	1	(218)
About 10 minutes or less	2	
About half an hour	3	
About 1 hour	4	
About 1 to 2 hours	5	
About 2 to 3 hours	6	
About 3 to 4 hours	7	
About 4 to 5 hours	8	
About 5 hours or more	9	
Don't Know	Y	
Refused	Z	

End of Filter Skip4

IF NOT (dage = 18-19)

Qrul Do your parent(s) set rules for you about ...?

Yes	1	(219)
No	2	
Don't Know	Y	

This question is repeated for the following loop values:

- how much time you spend on the phone
- how much time you spend watching television
- what kind of videos or TV programmes you can watch
- how much time you can spend playing computer games

A total of 4 iterations occupying columns (219) to (222)

End of Filter I18

IF Qdgacc = Yes OR Qintacc = One OR Qgcacc = Yes OR Qintacc = Two OR Qintacc = Three OR Qintacc = More than three
THEN ASK: Qctrl

QctrlDoes your computer at home have ANY OF THESE?
(IF RESPONDENT ONLY USES DIGITAL TV OR GAMES CONSOLE TO GO ONLINE, ASK THIS QUESTION IN RELATION THAT)

SHOW SCREEN

Filtering software (that blocks certain websites or activities)	1	(223)
Monitoring software (that checks where you go and what you do on the internet)	2	
Yes, but not sure which one	3	
None of these	4	
Don't Know	Y	

End of Filter Iinthm2

IF Quse = Several times per day OR Quse = About once a day OR Quse = A couple of times a week OR Quse = About once a week

---

Qoft How often do you use the internet to ... NOWADAYS?

SHOW SCREEN

Every day	1	(224)
At least once a week	2	
About once a month	3	
Less often	4	
Never	5	
Don't Know	Y	
Refused	Z	

This question is repeated for the following loop values:

- use instant messaging (talking to people over the internet using MSN Messenger Buddy or AOL Instant Messenger (AIM))
- send/ receive emails
- use a chatroom
- do work for school/college
- get information for other things
- play games
- download music

A total of 7 iterations occupying columns (224) to (230)

Qofn And how often do you ... NOWADAYS?

SHOW SCREEN

Every day	1	(231)
At least once a week	2	
About once a month	3	
Less often	4	
Never	5	
Don't Know	Y	
Refused	Z	

This question is repeated for the following loop values:

- talk on the phone (fixed or mobile)
- send/ receive text messages

A total of 2 iterations occupying columns (231) to (232)

Now I'd like you to think some more about the things you do on the internet

---

IF NOT (dage = 9-11)
THEN ASK: Qdoint

Qdoint Which of these other things do you do on the internet nowadays?

SHOW SCREEN

PROBE: WHICH OTHERS?

Look for products or shop online	1	(233)
Go online to do something that someone else has asked you to do	2	
Watch/download video clips	3	
Plan a trip	4	
Look for cinema/ theatre/ concert listings and what's going on in your area	5	
Use message/ bulletin boards (where you post messages on a website for other people to read and to reply to)	6	
Look for information on careers/ further education etc	7	
Look for information on computers, programming or web design	8	
Look for news	9	
Look at other people's personal homepages	0	(234)
Don't Know	Y	(233)
None of these	X	
Other	0	

Other specify...	(235 - 238)

End of Filter Iold

Qsite Which of the following sites do you visit on the internet nowadays?

SHOW SCREEN

PROBE: WHICH OTHERS?

Search engines (e.g. Google, AskJeeves, Altavista)	1	(239)
Films, television programmes etc.	2	
Sports, sport teams etc.	3	
Music, bands, pop groups, singers etc.	4	
Computer/video games and cheats	5	
Mobile phone sites (for ring tones, logos, sending text messages etc.)	6	
Hobbies or particular interests	7	
Exam revision sites to help prepare for a test or exam	8	
Jokes or humour	9	
Where you make something (drawing, painting, story etc.)	0	(240)
For clubs, groups, or sports teams that you are a member of	1	
Don't Know	Y	(239)
None of these	X	
Other	0	

Other specify...	(241 - 244)

Qwebno In the last week, how many different websites have you visited?

None	1	(245)
1 to 4	2	
5 to 10	3	
11 to 30	4	
More than 30	5	
Don't Know	Y	

End of Filter Iuser1

IF Qdoing = Full time education (e.g. at school/college/university - including on vacation) OR dage = 9-11 OR dage = 12-15
THEN ASK: Qinfo, Qtrust, Qless

Qinfo Which one of these do you find MOST useful for getting information when doing homework or projects for school or college?

SHOW SCREEN

Books	1	(246)
CD-ROM	2	
Television	3	
Internet	4	
Friends	5	
Parents	6	
Don't Know	Y	
None of these	X	
Other	0	

Other specify... (247 - 250)

Qtrust How much of the information on the internet do you think you can trust?

READ OUT

Most of it	1	(251)
Some of it	2	
Not much of it	3	
None of it	4	
Don't Know	Y	

Qless How many lessons or training sessions have you had in learning how to use the internet?

READ OUT

A lot	1	(252)
Some	2	
Just 1 or 2	3	
None	4	
Don't Know	Y	

IF Qaccess = Computer at school/college
THEN ASK: Qinsch

Qinsch Do you sometimes use the internet at school/college for any of these things?

SHOW LIST

PROBE: WHICH OTHERS?

Use instant messaging	1	(253)
Send/ receive email	2	
Visiting chatrooms	3	
Playing games	4	
Surfing for fun	5	
Don't Know	Y	
None of these	X	

End of Filter Iintsch

End of Filter Isch

IF Quse = Several times per day OR Quse = About once a day OR Quse = A couple of times a week OR Quse = About once a week
THEN ASK: Qusint, Qever, Qhelp

Qusint How old were you when you FIRST started using the internet? (This can include using email, the web or anything else on the internet)

(254 - 255)

Numeric Range _____		
Don't Know	Y	(254)

Permitted Range
0 TO 20 (Numeric Range)

Qever Have you EVER been told how to do any of these?

SHOW SCREEN

PROBE: WHICH OTHERS?

How to stay safe on the internet (e.g how to behave in a chat room, not to give out personal details etc)	1	(256)
How to search for information effectively (using search engines, key words etc)	2	
How to decide if information online can be trusted or reliable	3	
Don't Know	Y	
None of these	X	

Qhelp Who or what has helped you learn how to use the internet?

SHOW SCREEN

PROBE: WHO OR WHAT ELSE?

Mother/ father	1	(257)
Brother/ sister	2	
Friends	3	
Teacher	4	
An internet site or online course	5	
Don't Know	Y	
None of these	X	
Other	0	

Other specify... (258 - 261)

IF NOT (dage = 9-11)

End of Filter iyoun

qgood2 Which of the following are you good at?

SHOW SCREEN

PROBE: WHICH OTHERS?

Finding the information you need on the web	1	(262)
Setting up an email account	2	
Sending an instant message	3	
Downloading and saving an MP3 (music)	4	
Setting up a filter for junk mail or pop-up adverts	5	
Getting rid of a virus on your computer	6	
Fixing a problem by yourself when something goes wrong	7	
Don't Know	Y	
None of these	X	

Qgood How good are you at using the internet?

Do you think you are.....

SHOW SCREEN

Beginner	1	(263)
Average	2	
Advanced	3	
Expert	4	
Don't Know	Y	

Qeng How would you describe your searching on the internet?

SHOW SCREEN

I always find what I'm looking for	1	(264)
I usually find what I'm looking for	2	
I can't always find what I'm looking for	3	
I often can't find what I'm looking for	4	
Don't Know	Y	

Qgen When searching on the internet, do you generally do any of these?

SHOW SCREEN

PROBE: WHICH OTHERS?

Just look at the first ten sites in the list	1	(265)
Check when the site was last updated	2	
Ask someone for help	3	
Bookmark a good site (Add to Favourites)	4	
Check information across several sites	5	
Don't Know	Y	
None of these	X	

Qhouse In your home who is best at using the internet?

PROMPT IF NECESSARY

You	1	(266)
Mother	2	
Father	3	
Brother	4	
Sister	5	
Relate	6	
Don't Know	Y	
Other	0	

Other specify... (267 - 270)

IF Qoft(1) = Every day OR Qoft(1) = At least once a week OR Qoft(1) = About once a month OR Qoft(1) = Less often OR Qoft(2) = Every day OR Qoft(2) = At least once a week OR Qoft(2) = About once a month OR Qoft(2) = Less often OR Qoft(3) = Every day OR Qoft(3) = At least once a week OR Qoft(3) = About once a month OR Qoft(3) = Less often
THEN ASK: Qsay2

Qsay2 Here are some things people say about the internet compared to real life face to face. Which ones do you agree with?

SHOW SCREEN
PROBE: WHICH OTHERS?

Talking on the internet is less satisfying than in real life	1	(271)
It's easier to keep things secret or private on the internet than in real life	2	
It's fun being rude or silly on the internet	3	
It's easier to talk about personal things on the internet	4	
When I'm on the internet I forget about the safety rules	5	
I feel more confident on the internet than I do in real life	6	
Don't Know	Y	
None of these	X	

End of Filter Icie

The next few questions are about how you contact your family and friends

IF NOT (dage = 9-11)

Qtou If you want to get in touch with a friend who wasn't with you in order to ..., which one of these would you do?

SHOW LIST

Talk on the phone/ mobile	1	(272)
Send text messages	2	
Use email	3	
Use instant messages	4	
Don't Know	Y	
None of these	X	

This question is repeated for the following loop values:

- Just pass time
- Make arrangements
- Get personal advice or support
- Gossip
- Flirt

A total of 5 iterations occupying columns (272) to (276)

End of Filter I12

IF Qoft(2) = Every day OR Qoft(2) = At least once a week
THEN ASK: Qdiff

QdiffIn the last week, how many different people have you been in touch with by email?

None	1	(277)
1 or 2	2	
3 to 5	3	
6 to 10	4	
More than 10	5	
Don't Know	Y	

IF NOT (Qdiff = None)
THEN ASK: Qpeop

Qpeop Are these people.....?

SHOW SCREEN
PROBE: WHO ELSE?

Friends who live near you	1	(278)
Friends who live further away	2	
Family who live with you	3	
Family who live elsewhere	4	
People you haven't actually met	5	
Someone else	6	
Don't Know	Y	
None of these	X	
Other	0	

Other specify... (308 - 311)

End of Filter Inot

End of Filter Iemail

IF Qofn(1) = At least once a week OR Qofn(1) = Every day
THEN ASK: Qnotel

Qnotel In the last week, how many different people have you talked to on the phone?

None	1	(312)
1 or 2	2	
3 to 5	3	
6 to 10	4	
More than 10	5	
Don't Know	Y	

IF NOT (Qnotel = None)
THEN ASK: Qpeop2

Qpeop2Are these people.....?

SHOW SCREEN
PROBE: WHO ELSE?

Friends who live near you	1	(313)
Friends who live further away	2	
Family who live with you	3	
Family who live elsewhere	4	
People you haven't actually met	5	
Someone else	6	
Don't Know	Y	
None of these	X	
Other	0	

Other specify... (314 - 317)

End of Filter Inotel

End of Filter Itel

IF Qofn(2) = At least once a week OR Qofn(2) = Every day
THEN ASK: Qtext

Qtext In the last week, how many different people have you been in touch with by text message?

None	1	(318)
1 or 2	2	
3 to 5	3	
6 to 10	4	
More than 10	5	
Don't Know	Y	

IF NOT (Qtext = None)
THEN ASK: Qtextw

Qtextw Are these people.....?

SHOW SCREEN
PROBE: WHO ELSE?

Friends who live near you	1	(319)
Friends who live further away	2	
Family who live with you	3	
Family who live elsewhere	4	
People you haven't actually met	5	
Someone else	6	
Don't Know	Y	
None of these	X	
Other	0	

Other specify... (320 - 323)

End of Filter Inotext

End of Filter Itext

IF Qoft(1) = At least once a week OR Qoft(1) = Every day
THEN ASK: Qpeop3

Qpeop3In the last week, how many different people have you been in touch with by instant messaging?

None	1	(324)
1 or 2	2	
3 to 5	3	
6 to 10	4	
More than 10	5	
Don't Know	Y	

IF NOT (Qpeop3 = None)
THEN ASK: Qnoim

Qnoim Are these people.....?

SHOW SCREEN
PROBE: WHO ELSE?

Friends who live near you	1	(325)
Friends who live further away	2	
Family who live with you	3	
Family who live elsewhere	4	
People you haven't actually met	5	
Someone else	6	
Don't Know	Y	
None of these	X	
Other	0	

Other specify... (326 - 329)

End of Filter InoIM

End of Filter Iim

IF Qoft(3) = At least once a week OR Qoft(3) = Every day
THEN ASK: Qnochat

Qnochat In the last week, how many different people have you been in touch with in chat rooms?

None	1	(330)
1 or 2	2	
3 to 5	3	
6 to 10	4	
More than 10	5	
Don't Know	Y	

IF NOT (Qnochat = None)
THEN ASK: Qwhoch

Qwhoch Are these people.....?

SHOW SCREEN
PROBE: WHO ELSE?

Friends who live near you	1	(331)
Friends who live further away	2	
Family who live with you	3	
Family who live elsewhere	4	
People you haven't actually met	5	
Someone else	6	
Don't Know	Y	
None of these	X	
Other	0	

Other specify... (332 - 335)

End of Filter Ichatr

Qchtyp Which kind of chat rooms do you go into?

SHOW SCREEN

PROMPT: WHICH OTHERS?

Chat rooms for kids	1	(336)
Chat rooms for teens	2	
Chat rooms meant for adults only	3	
Chat rooms for everyone	4	
Don't Know	Y	
None of these	X	

Qmon Are the chat rooms you use monitored/moderated? (This means that someone checks and approves the messages sometimes before or sometimes after they appear)

Yes, all of them	1	(337)
Some of them	2	
No	3	
Don't Know	Y	

Qchatsa Here are some things people say about chat rooms. Are any of these true for you?

SHOW SCREEN
PROBE: WHICH OTHERS?

I enjoy talking to new people in chat rooms	1	(338)
It's fun that no-one knows who I really am in a chat room	2	
It's hard to know if people are telling the truth in a chat room	3	
Chatrooms give me a chance to express my thoughts and feelings	4	
Don't Know	Y	
None of these	X	

End of Filter Ichat

IF Qoft(3) = Never OR
THEN ASK: Qroom

Qroom Was there a time when you did use chat rooms before?

Yes	1	(339)
No	2	
Don't Know	Y	

IF Qroom = Yes
THEN ASK: Qstop

PLEASE TURN THE SCREEN AWAY FROM RESPONDENT FOR THE NEXT QUESTION

Qstop Why did you stop using them?

DO NOT PROMPT

I don't like not really knowing who you are chatting with	1	(340)
I prefer instant message or email	2	
My parents stopped me going to chat rooms	3	
I don't have the time anymore	4	
The chat room has closed down	5	
Don't Know	Y	
Other	0	

Other specify... (341 - 344)

PLEASE TURN SCREEN BACK SO THAT THE RESPONDENT CAN SEE IT

End of Filter Idid

End of Filter Inochat

PRACTICE SELF COMPLETION SECTION

For the next few questions I'd like you to use the lap top yourself as you may find that you'd like to answer some questions by yourself. You don't have to answer any questions you don't want to.

To show you how to use the computer, I'll do a few practice questions with you. If at any time you have any problems, just ask me.

Qbirth Have you had your birthday in the last THREE months?

Yes	1	(345)
No	2	
Don't Know	Y	

Qmths What are the three months immediately before the month of your birthday?

SELECT THREE MONTHS FROM THE LIST

January	1	(346)
February	2	
March	3	
April	4	
May	5	
June	6	
July	7	
August	8	
September	9	
October	0	(347)
November	1	
December	2	
Don't Know	Y	(346)

QUANCEPT ITEM:

Qmonth Please type in the month of your birthday.

(348 - 351)

Don't Know	Y	(348)

This is the start of the self completion section. Please follow the instructions on the screen. If you have any problems do let me know.

If you want to answer 'don't know' to any question, just enter 'DK'.

Now press the RED key to continue

Qpret When you are on the Internet, have you ever pretended that you.....?

SELECT ALL THE THINGS YOU HAVE DONE

Have a different name	1	(352)
Are a different sex	2	
Are a different age	3	
Are a different ethnicity	4	
Have a different appearance	5	
Do things that you never do in real life	6	
Pretend in other ways	7	
No, I do not pretend on the Internet	8	
I don't want to answer	9	
Don't Know	Y	

IF NOT (dage = 9-11) AND Qgcacc = Yes OR Qdgacc = Yes OR Qintacc = One OR Qintacc = Two OR Qintacc = Three OR Qintacc = More than three
THEN ASK: Qintho

Qintho When you go on the internet, which of the following have you EVER done?

SELECT ALL THAT APPLY

Deleted emails so no-one else could read them	1	(353)
Minimized a window when someone else came into the room	2	
Used someone else's password without their permission	3	
Hidden or mislabelled files to keep them private	4	
Deleted the history file (that shows what websites you've visited)	5	
Deleted unwanted cookies on your computer	6	
I don't want to answer	7	
None of these	8	
Don't Know	Y	

End of Filter Ihome

Qcomp Imagine you were entering a competition, what information about yourself would you give to be able to win a prize on the internet?

SELECT ALL THE TYPES OF INFORMATION YOU WOULD GIVE OUT

Personal e-mail address	1	(354)
Full name	2	
Age and date of birth	3	
Phone number	4	
Your interests or hobbies	5	
A photograph of you	6	
Parent's names	7	
School	8	
I have never given out information about myself	9	
I don't want to answer	0	(355)
Don't Know	Y	(354)

Qtold While on the internet what information have you ever given to another person that you have not met face to face? (Not met them face to face before you gave that information)

SELECT ALL THE INFORMATION YOU HAVE GIVEN

Personal e-mail address	1	(356)
Full name	2	
Age and date of birth	3	
Phone number	4	
Your interests or hobbies	5	
A photograph of you	6	
Parent's names	7	
School	8	
I have never given out information about myself	9	
I don't want to answer	0	(357)
Don't Know	Y	(356)

IF NOT (dage = 9-11)
THEN ASK: Qonline

Qonline Which of these have you ever done?

SELECT ALL THAT APPLY TO YOU

Hacked into someone else's website or email	1	(358)
Visited an online dating site	2	
Copied something for a school project and handed it in as your own	3	
Sent a message to make someone feel uncomfortable or threatened	4	
Gambled for money on the internet	5	
None of these	6	
I don't want to answer	7	
Don't Know	Y	

End of Filter Itwel

Qsexual Have you ever received unwelcome sexual comments from someone in any of the following ways?

SELECT ALL THAT APPLY

By email	1	(359)
By instant message	2	
By text message	3	
In a chat room	4	
No, none of these	5	
I don't want to answer	6	
Don't Know	Y	

IF Qsexual = By email OR Qsexual = By instant message OR Qsexual = By text message OR Qsexual = In a chat room
THEN ASK: Qwhen

Qwhen When this happened what did you do? (If this has happened more than once, think about what you did the last time it happened)

SELECT EVERYTHING YOU DID

I deleted it straight away	1	(360)
I tried to block messages from the person	2	
I told a parent	3	
I told a friend	4	
I replied to the message to ask them to stop	5	
I replied to the message to send sexual comments to them	6	
I don't want to answer	7	
other	8	
Don't Know	Y	

IF Qwhen = other
THEN ASK: Qwhenot

Qwhenot You chose 'other' when asked what you did the last time you received unwelcome sexual comments. Could you describe what you did?

(361 - 364)

Don't Know	Y	(361)

End of Filter Iwhen

End of Filter Isex

Qnasty Has someone ever said nasty or hurtful things to you in any of the following ways?

SELECT ALL THAT APPLY

By email	1	(365)
By instant message	2	
By text message	3	
In a chat room	4	
No, none of these	5	
I don't want to answer	6	
Don't Know	Y	

IF Qnasty = By email OR Qnasty = By instant message OR Qnasty = By text message OR Qnasty = In a chat room
THEN ASK: Qwhen2

Qwhen2 When this happened what did you do? (If it has happened more than once, think about what you did you last time it happened)

SELECT EVERYTHING YOU DID

I deleted it straight away	1	(366)
I tried to block messages from the person	2	
I told a parent	3	
I told a friend	4	
I replied to the message to ask them to stop	5	
I replied to the message to send nasty comments to them	6	
I don't want to answer	7	
Other	8	
Don't Know	Y	

IF Qwhen2 = Other
THEN ASK: Qwhe2ot

Qwhe2ot You chose 'other' when asked what you did the last time someone said nasty or hurtful things to you. Could you describe what you did?

(367 - 370)

Don't Know	Y	(367)

End of Filter Iwhen2

End of Filter Inasty

Qonly Do you know someone that you ONLY talk to online using email, IM or chat?

Yes	1	(371)
No	2	
Don't want to answer	3	
Don't Know	Y	

Qmet Have you ever met anyone face to face that you first met on the internet?

Yes	1	(372)
No	2	
I don't want to answer	3	
Don't Know	Y	

IF Qmet = Yes
THEN ASK: Qolder, Qsug, Qtell

Qolder Was the person you met....? (If you have met more than one person that you first met on the internet, think about the last person you met)

SELECT ONE ANSWER

Much older than you	1	(373)
A bit older than you	2	
About the same age	3	
Younger than you	4	
I don't want to answer	5	
Don't Know	Y	

Qsug Who suggested the meeting?

I did	1	(374)
They did	2	
We both did	3	
Don't remember	4	
I don't want to answer	5	
Don't Know	Y	

Qtell Before you met, did you tell anyone you were going?

SELECT ALL THAT APPLY TO YOU

Mother or father	1	(375)
Other adult	2	
Brother or sister	3	
Friends (same age as me)	4	
Someone else	5	
No I didn't	6	
I don't want to answer	7	
Don't Know	Y	

IF Qtell = Someone else
THEN ASK: Qtellot

Qtellot When asked if you told anyone before going to meet someone face to face that you had met on the internet, you said you had told someone else. Could you describe who you told?

(376 - 379)

Don't Know	Y	(376)

End of Filter Itell

IF NOT (Qtell = No I didn't)
THEN ASK: Qbring

Qbring Did you bring any of these people to the first meeting?

SELECT ALL THAT APPLY

Mother or father	1	(380)
Other adult	2	
Brother or sister	3	
Friends (same age as me)	4	
Someone else	5	
No I didn't	6	
I don't want to answer	7	
Don't Know	Y	

End of Filter Itold

Qhow How did the meeting go?

SELECT ALL THAT APPLY

I had a really good time	1	(408)
It was okay, nothing special	2	
I didn't enjoy it	3	
The other person upset me	4	
They turned out to be different from what I expected	5	
We didn't meet after all	6	
I don't want to answer	7	
Other	8	
Don't Know	Y	

IF Qhow = Other
THEN ASK: Qhow2

Qhow2 When asked how the meeting went, you answered other. Could you describe what you meant by this?

(409 - 412)

Don't Know	Y	(409)

End of Filter Ihow

Qafter Did you tell anyone what happened afterwards?

SELECT ALL THE PEOPLE YOU TOLD

Mother or father	1	(413)
Other adult	2	
Brother or sister	3	
Friends (same age as me)	4	
Someone else	5	
No I didn't	6	
I don't want to answer	7	
Don't Know	Y	

IF Qafter = Someone else
THEN ASK: qafter2

qafter2 When asked if you told anyone what happened afterwards, you answered other. Could you describe what you meant by this?

(414 - 417)

Don't Know	Y	(414)

End of Filter Iafter

End of Filter Imet

The next questions are about porn which is stuff meant for adults. For example, nude people, rude and sexy pictures.

Qporn When on the internet, have you have ever.....?

SELECT ALL THAT APPLY

Ended up on a porn site ACCIDENTALLY when looking for something else	1	(418)
Visited a porn site ON PURPOSE	2	
Seen a pop-up advert for a porn site while doing something else	3	
Received pornographic junk mail by email/instant messaging	4	
Been sent porn from someone you know	5	
Been sent porn from someone you met on the internet	6	
None of these	7	
I don't want to answer	8	
Don't Know	Y	

IF Qporn = Visited a porn site ON PURPOSE OR Qporn = Ended up on a porn site ACCIDENTALLY when looking for something else
THEN ASK: Qpurp

Qpurp When (or the last time) you were on a porn site, what did you do?

SELECT ALL THAT APPLY

I left the site immediately without looking at it	1	(419)
I looked at it first and then left the site	2	
I went back to it another time	3	
I sent the website address to a friend	4	
I clicked on some links to see what else was there	5	
I told a parent or teacher	6	
I told a friend	7	
I don't want to answer	8	
Other	9	
Don't Know	Y	

IF Qpurp = Other
THEN ASK: Qpurp2

Qpurp2 When asked what you did last time you were on a porn site, you answered other. Could you describe what you meant by this?

(420 - 423)

Don't Know	Y	(420)

End of Filter Ipurp

End of Filter Iporn

IF Qporn = Been sent porn from someone you know OR Qporn = Received pornographic junk mail by email/instant messaging OR Qporn = Seen a pop-up advert for a porn site while doing something else OR Qporn = Been sent porn from someone you met on the internet
THEN ASK: Qrecpo

Qrecpo When (or the last time) you were sent porn, what did you do?

SELECT ALL THAT APPLY

I clicked on some links to see what else was there	1	(424)
I told a parent or teacher	2	
I told a friend	3	
I deleted it immediately without opening	4	
I opened and looked at it	5	
I don't want to answer	6	
Other	7	
Don't Know	Y	

IF Qrecpo = Other
THEN ASK: Qrecpo2

Qrecpo2 When asked what you did the last time you were sent porn, you answered 'other'. Could you describe what you meant by this?

(425 - 428)

Don't Know	Y	(425)

End of Filter Irecpo

End of Filter Ijunk

IF NOT (qporn = Don't Know OR qporn = I don't want to answer OR qporn = None of these)
THEN ASK: Qfeel

Qfeel Last time you saw porn on the internet, how did you feel about it?

SELECT ALL THAT APPLY

I didn't think too much about it	1	(429)
I thought it was disgusting	2	
I thought it was interesting	3	
I wish I had never seen it	4	
I enjoyed it	5	
I didn't like it	6	
I don't want to answer	7	
Other	8	
Don't Know	Y	

IF Qfeel = Other
THEN ASK: Qfeel2

Qfeel2 When asked how you felt about receiving porn, you answered other. Could you describe what you meant by this?

(430 - 433)

Don't Know	Y	(430)

End of Filter Ifeel

End of Filter Ihadpor

IF NOT (dage = 9-11)
THEN ASK: Qtv, Qvid, Qmag

Qtv Overall, how many times have you seen porn on television?

A lot (more than 5 times)	1	(434)
A few times (1-4 times)	2	
Never	3	
I don't want to answer	4	
Don't Know	Y	

Qvid How many times have you seen porn on video or DVD?

A lot (more than 5 times)	1	(435)
A few times (1-4 times)	2	
Never	3	
I don't want to answer	4	
Don't Know	Y	

Qmag How many times have you seen porn in magazines?

A lot (more than 5 times)	1	(436)
A few times (1-4 times)	2	
Never	3	
I don't want to answer	4	
Don't Know	Y	

IF NOT (Qporn = None of these)
THEN ASK: Qsawp

Qsawp Overall, how many times have you seen porn on the internet?

A lot (more than 5 times)	1	(437)
A few times (1-4 times)	2	
Never	3	
I don't want to answer	4	
Don't Know	Y	

End of Filter Inop

End of Filter Iage

IF Qporn = Visited a porn site ON PURPOSE OR Qporn = Ended up on a porn site ACCIDENTALLY when looking for something else OR Qporn = Seen a pop-up advert for a porn site while doing something else OR Qporn = Received pornographic junk mail by email/instant messaging OR Qporn = Been sent porn from someone you know OR Qporn = Been sent porn from someone you met on the internet OR Qtv = A lot (more than 5 times) OR Qtv = A few times (1-4 times) OR Qvid = A lot (more than 5 times) OR Qvid = A few times (1-4 times) OR Qmag = A lot (more than 5 times) OR Qmag = A few times (1-4 times) OR Qsawp = A lot (more than 5 times) OR Qsawp = A few times (1-4 times) AND dage = 18-19
THEN ASK: Qoldp, Qwhporn

Qoldp How old were you when you first saw porn?

Type in '0' if you don't want to answer

(438 - 439)

Numeric Range _____		
Don't Know	Y	(438)

Permitted Range
0 TO 20 (Numeric Range)

Qwhporn Where did you first see porn?

SELECT ONE FROM THE LIST

On the internet	1	(440)
On television	2	
On video	3	
In magazines	4	
I don't want to answer	5	
Other	6	
Don't Know	Y	

IF Qwhporn = Other
THEN ASK: Qwhpor2

Qwhpor2 When asked where you first saw porn, you answered other. Could you describe where this was?

(441 - 444)

Don't Know	Y	(441)

End of Filter lwhporn

Qthink Thinking back to when you first saw porn, would you say.....

SELECT ONE FROM THE LIST

I was too young to see it then	1	(445)
I was about the right age to see it then	2	
It would have been OK if I'd seen it before then	3	
I don't want to answer	4	
Don't Know	Y	

Qseen Do you think that your parents know you have seen porn?

Yes	1	(446)
No	2	
I don't want to answer	3	
Don't Know	Y	

Qtalk Have your parents ever talked to you about seeing porn?

Yes	1	(447)
No	2	
I don't want to answer	3	
Don't Know	Y	

End of Filter loldp

The next few questions are about hate websites and violent or gruesome pictures (e.g. gory or nasty images of people being hurt) you may have seen on the internet.

Qviol When on the internet, have you ever.....?

SELECT ALL THAT APPLY

Ended up ACCIDENTALLY on a site with violent or gruesome pictures (e.g. gory or nasty images of people being hurt)	1	(448)
Visited a site with violent or gruesome pictures ON PURPOSE	2	
Ended up ACCIDENTALLY on a site that was hostile or hateful to a group of people	3	
Visited a site that was hostile or hateful to a group of people ON PURPOSE	4	
None of these	5	
I don't want to answer	6	
Don't Know	Y	

IF Qviol = Ended up ACCIDENTALLY on a site with violent or gruesome pictures (e.g. gory or nasty images of people being hurt) OR Qviol = Visited a site with violent or gruesome pictures ON PURPOSE OR Qviol = Ended up ACCIDENTALLY on a site that was hostile or hateful to a group of people OR Qviol = Visited a site that was hostile or hateful to a group of people ON PURPOSE
THEN ASK: Qvdo

Qvdo When (or the last time) this happened, what did you do?

SELECT ALL THAT APPLY

I left the site immediately without looking at it	1	(449)
I looked at it first and then left the site	2	
I went back to it another time	3	
I sent the website address to a friend	4	
I clicked on some links to see what else was there	5	
I told a parent or teacher	6	
I told a friend	7	
I don't want to answer	8	
Other	9	
Don't Know	Y	

IF Qvdo = Other
THEN ASK: Qvdo2

Qvdo2 When asked what you did the last time you saw gruesome images or pictures/that were hostile or hateful, you answered other. Could you describe what you did?

(450 - 453)

Don't Know	Y	(450)

End of Filter Ivdo

Qfeelv How did you feel about it?

SELECT ALL THAT APPLY

I didn't think too much about it	1	(454)
I thought it was disgusting	2	
I thought it was interesting	3	
I wish I had never seen it	4	
I enjoyed it	5	
I didn't like it	6	
I don't want to answer	7	
Other	8	
Don't Know	Y	

IF Qfeelv = Other
THEN ASK: Qfeelv2

Qfeelv2 When asked How you felt about visiting sites with gruesome pictures/that were hostile or hateful, you answered other. Could you describe what you meant?

(455 - 458)

Don't Know	Y	(455)

End of Filter lfeelv

End of Filter lviol

IF Qctrl = Filtering software (that blocks certain websites or activities) OR Qctrl = Monitoring software (that checks where you go and what you do on the internet) OR Qctrl = Yes, but not sure which one
THEN ASK: Qfilt

Qfilt As far as you know, are any of these sites or activities blocked or filtered on your home computer?
(IF RESPONDENT ONLY USES DIGITAL TV OR GAMES CONSOLE TO GO ONLINE, ASK THIS QUESTION IN RELATION THAT)

READ THROUGH THE LIST AND SELECT ALL THAT APPLY

Email	1	(459)
Chat rooms	2	
Instant messages	3	
Porn sites	4	
Junk emails (adverts sent by email)	5	
Adverts	6	
None	7	
Don't Know	Y	

End of Filter lfilt

End of Filter luser2

IF Quse = About once a month OR Quse = A couple of times a month OR quse = Less often OR Quse = Never
THEN ASK: Qsixmth, Q3mths, Qmthb

PRACTICE SELF COMPLETION SECTION

For the next few questions I'd like you to use the lap top yourself as you may find that you'd like to answer these by yourself. Remember you don't have to answer any questions you don't want to.

To show you how to use the computer, I'll do a few practice questions with you. If at any time you have any problems, just ask me.

Qsixmth Have you had your birthday in the last THREE months?

Yes	1	(460)
No	2	
Don't Know	Y	

Q3mths What are the three months immediately before the month of your birthday?

SELECT 3 MONTHS FROM THIS LIST

January	1	(461)
February	2	
March	3	
April	4	
May	5	
June	6	
July	7	
August	8	
September	9	
October	0	(462)
November	1	
December	2	
Don't Know	Y	(461)

Qmthb Please type in the month of your birthday.

(463 - 466)

Don't Know	Y	(463)

This is the start of the self completion section. Please follow the instructions on the screen. If you have any problems do let me know.

If you want to answer 'don't know' to any question, just type in 'DK'

Press the RED key to continue

IF NOT (dage = 9-11)
THEN ASK: Qtv2ddd, Qvid2, Qmag2, Qsawp2

The first few questions are about porn which is stuff meant for adults. For example, nude people, rude and sexy pictures.

Qtv2ddd Overall, how many times have you seen porn on television?

A lot (more than 5 times)	1	(467)
A few times (1-4 times)	2	
Never	3	
I don't want to answer	4	
Don't Know	Y	

Qvid2 How many times have you seen porn on video or DVD?

A lot (more than 5 times)	1	(468)
A few times (1-4 times)	2	
Never	3	
I don't want to answer	4	
Don't Know	Y	

Qmag2 How many times have you seen porn in magazines?

A lot (more than 5 times)	1	(469)
A few times (1-4 times)	2	
Never	3	
I don't want to answer	4	
Don't Know	Y	

Qsawp2 Overall, how many times have you seen porn on the internet?

A lot (more than 5 times)	1	(470)
A few times (1-4 times)	2	
Never	3	
I don't want to answer	4	
Don't Know	Y	

End of Filter I1119

End of Filter Inoint

Here are some things people say about themselves and their families. These are NOT to do with the Internet. Thinking about yourself and your family nowadays, do you agree or disagree with them?

Press the RED key to continue

QstaHow much do you agree or disagree with this? -
...

Agree a lot	1	(471)
Agree a little	2	
Neither agree or disagree	3	
Disagree a little	4	
Disagree a lot	5	
Don't Know	Y	

This question is repeated for the following loop values:

- "I'm happy with my life at the moment"
- "I would like to change things in my life"
- "I worry about what other people think of me"
- "I feel shy around people I don't know"
- "I often do dangerous things for fun"
- "My parents generally ask what I think when the family is talking about something"
- "My parents often say something like "You'll know better when you grow up""
- "In my family, people like to look at different sides of an issue"
- "I can tell my parents almost anything"
- "My parents sometimes become irritated if my views are different from theirs"

A total of 10 iterations occupying columns (471) to (480)

IF Quse = About once a month OR Quse = A couple of times a month OR Quse = Less often OR Quse = Never

This is the end of the self completion section. Please let the interviewer know you have finished this section and hand the laptop back to them.

End of Filter Skip3

IF qUSE = Several times per day OR Quse = About once a day OR Quse = A couple of times a week OR Quse = About once a week AND dage = 9-11
THEN ASK: Qapp2, Qmind2

The last two questions in this sections are about your parents and the internet

Press RED key to continue

Qapp2 Which of these things apply to you?

SELECT ALL THAT APPLY

I would tell my parent(s) if something on the internet makes me uncomfortable	1	(508)
I know how to get around/disable the parental controls/filtering software	2	
I have managed to get around the parental controls/filtering software	3	
I don't want to answer	4	
Don't Know	Y	
None of these	X	

Qmind2 Tell me which of these you mind (or would mind) your parents doing.

SELECT ALL THAT APPLY

Check on your email messages	1	(509)
Block certain websites to protect you	2	
Check up on your internet use without your knowing	3	
Check up on your internet use provided you know about it	4	
None of these	5	
I don't want to answer	6	
Don't Know	Y	

This is the end of the self completion section. Please let the interviewer know you have finished this section and hand the laptop back to them.

End of Filter Skip1

IF (quse = About once a day OR quse = Several times per day OR quse = A couple of times a week OR quse = About once a week) AND (NOT (dage = 9-11))
THEN ASK: Qpers

This section is about where you go for advice.

Qpers If you want some personal information or advice on things like relationships, family problems, sex, health, drugs etc., which if any of these do you use?

SELECT ALL THAT APPLY

Television	1	(510)
Internet	2	
Magazines	3	
Books	4	
Information leaflets	5	
Telephone helpline	6	
None of these	7	
I don't want to answer	8	
Don't Know	Y	

IF QPERS = Internet
THEN ASK: Qinad

Qinad You said you use the internet to get advice. In which ways have you looked for advice?

SELECT ALL THAT APPLY

Looked up information on a website	1	(511)
Looked up advice on a website	2	
Used 'ask an expert' or emailed an expert advisor	3	
Emailed a friend or discussed via instant message	4	
Discussed in a chat room or on a message board	5	
None of these	6	
I don't want to answer	7	
Other	8	
Don't Know	Y	

IF qinad = Other
THEN ASK: Qinad2

Qinad2 When asked in which ways you looked for advice on the internet, you answered other. Could you describe what you meant by this?

(512 - 515)

Don't Know	Y	(512)

End of Filter Iinad

Qadin Which of these things have you used the internet for to get advice or information on?

SELECT ALL THAT APPLY

Relationships	1	(516)
Family problems	2	
Alcohol/drugs/smoking	3	
Health/medical	4	
Sex, contraception, pregnancy	5	
Coming out/being gay	6	
Advice about school/college/work	7	
Money advice	8	
I don't want to answer	9	
Other	0	(517)
Don't Know	Y	(516)

IF qadin = Other
THEN ASK: Qadin2

Qadin2 When asked which things you had used the internet to get advice or information on, you answered other. Could you describe what you meant?

(518 - 521)

Don't Know	Y	(518)

End of Filter Iadin

End of Filter Iadint

IF NOT (Qpers = Internet)
THEN ASK: Qnoint

Qnoint You said you haven't used the internet to get advice. Why not?

SELECT ALL THAT APPLY

I prefer to talk to someone I know	1	(522)
I prefer to talk to someone face to face	2	
I don't think the advice would be reliable	3	
I think they wouldn't understand my situation	4	
The wrong people might get personal information about me	5	
Someone might see/find out what I said	6	
I don't want to answer	7	
Other	8	
Don't Know	Y	

IF qnoint = Other
THEN ASK: Qnoint2

Qnoint2 When asked why you haven't used the internet to get advice, you answered other. Could you describe what you meant?

(523 - 526)

Don't Know	Y	(523)

End of Filter Inoint2

End of Filter Inoad

IF NOT (dage = 18-19)
THEN ASK: Qapp, Qmind

Qapp Which of these things apply to you?

SELECT ALL THAT APPLY

I would tell my parent(s) if something on the internet makes me uncomfortable	1	(527)
I know how to get around/disable the parental controls/filtering software	2	
I have managed to get around the parental controls/filtering software	3	
I don't want to answer	4	
Don't Know	Y	
None of these	X	

Qmind Tell me which of these you mind (or would mind) your parents doing.

SELECT ALL THAT APPLY

Check on your email messages	1	(528)
Block certain websites to protect you	2	
Check up on your internet use without your knowing	3	
Check up on your internet use provided you know about it	4	
None of these	5	
I don't want to answer	6	
Don't Know	Y	

End of Filter In1819

This is the end of the self completion section. Please let the interviewer know you have finished this section and hand the laptop back to them.

End of Filter Iuse

Qdes Have you heard or read any stories or ad campaigns that you have come across for example, on television or on the news, that make you think the internet can be dangerous?

Yes	1	(529)
No	2	
Don't Know	Y	

IF Qdes = Yes
THEN ASK: Qdesc

Qdesc Please describe the stories or campaigns you are aware of.

PROBE FULLY, TYPE VERBATIM

(530 - 533)

Don't Know	Y	(530)

End of Filter Iseen

IF Quse = Several times per day OR Quse = About once a day OR Quse = A couple of times a week OR Quse = About once a week
THEN ASK: Qworry

Qworry Which of these things, if any, do you worry about when you use the Internet?

SHOW LIST
PROBE: WHICH OTHERS?

Being contacted by dangerous people	1	(534)
People finding things out about you that are personal or private	2	
Seeing things that might bother or upset you	3	
Spending too much time on the internet	4	
Possibility of getting a computer virus	5	
Don't Know	Y	
None of these	X	

IF (Qhhold = Mother/ Step mother/ girlfriend of father OR Qhhold = Father/ Step father/ boyfriend of mother) AND (NOT (dage = 18-19))
THEN ASK: Qpar, Qpar2, Qpar3

Qpar When you use the internet at home, do your parent(s) do any of these things?

SHOW SCREEN
PROBE: WHICH OTHERS?

Stay in the same room or nearby when you're online	1	(535)
Expect you to tell them whenever you go online	2	
Keep an eye on what's on the screen while you're online	3	
Ask/ talk to you about what you are doing or did on the internet	4	
Know what you're doing (or the kind of things you do) on the internet	5	
Don't Know	Y	
None of these	X	

Qpar2 And do they sometimes.....?

SHOW SCREEN
PROBE: WHICH OTHERS?

Sit with you and go online together	1	(536)
Suggest interesting sites for you to visit	2	
Help you when you're on the internet	3	
Check the computer later, to see which sites you visited	4	
Check the messages in your email account	5	
Get annoyed about your use of the internet	6	
Don't Know	Y	
None of these	X	

Qpar3 Which of these apply to you.....?

SHOW SCREEN
PROBE: WHICH OTHERS?

My parent(s) set rules about how much time I spend on the internet	1	(537)
My parent(s) know how to access my email account	2	
My parent(s) know how to check which websites I have visited	3	
Don't Know	Y	
None of these	X	

End of Filter Inopar

IF NOT (dage = 9-11)

And what about these things.

Qfave Do you ...

Always	1	(538)
Sometimes	2	
Never	3	
Don't Know	Y	

This question is repeated for the following loop values:

- Trust your favourite website to keep your personal information safe
- Give full and correct information if a site asks for personal details
- Read the privacy policy on a website
- Leave a site if it asks for personal information

A total of 4 iterations occupying columns (538) to (541)

End of Filter Inoyou

Qallow Are there any of these things which you are NOTallowed to do on the internet.....?

SHOW LIST
PROBE: WHAT ELSE?

Give out personal information	1	(542)
Use email	2	
Use chat rooms	3	
Use instant messaging	4	
Play games	5	
Download things	6	
Buy anything	7	
Fill out forms or quizzes	8	
Don't Know	Y	
None of these	X	
Other	0	

Other specify... (543 - 546)

Qpage Have you ever tried to set up a webpage (e.g. a homepage about yourself, or one of your interests, or a webpage for a school project)?

Yes	1	(547)
No	2	
Don't Know	Y	

IF Qpage = No
THEN ASK: Qnoweb

Qnoweb Why not?

PROBE: WHAT ELSE?

Don't know how to do it	1	(548)
Wouldn't know what to put on it	2	
Too time consuming	3	
Doesn't interest me	4	
Nobody would be interested in visiting it	5	
Don't Know	Y	
Other	0	

Other specify... (549 - 552)

End of Filter Inopage

IF qpage = Yes
THEN ASK: Qweb, Qyweb

Qweb Is or was it online?

It is online now and I update it regularly	1	(553)
It is online but I haven't updated it for a long time	2	
It was online but now I've taken it down	3	
I'm not sure if it is still online	4	
I made the site but I didn't manage to put it online	5	
Don't Know	Y	

Qyweb Why did you make the site?

PROMPT: WHAT ELSE?

I wanted to share my interests/ hobbies with others	1	(554)
I wanted to learn/ improve web design skills	2	
I like doing creative things	3	
My friends have done it	4	
I had to do it for school	5	
I set it up for someone else/ for an organisation	6	
Don't Know	Y	
Other	0	

Other specify... (555 - 558)

End of Filter Ipage

Qquiz Here are some things people do on websites, do you ever do any of these things?

SHOW SCREEN
PROBE: WHICH OTHERS?

Do a quiz	1	(559)
Send pictures or stories	2	
Offer advice to others	3	
Fill in a form about myself	4	
Sign a petition	5	
Vote for something/ someone	6	
Contribute to a message board	7	
Send an email or text message to a site	8	
Don't Know	Y	
None of these	X	

IF NOT (dage = 9-11)
THEN ASK: Qvis

Qvis Have you ever visited websites about.....?

SHOW SCREEN
PROBE: WHAT ELSE?

Human rights/ gay rights/ children's rights etc	1	(560)
Protecting the environment	2	
Improving the conditions at school/ college/ work	3	
A charity or organisation that helps people	4	
A government website	5	
Don't Know	Y	
None of these	X	
Other	0	

Other specify... (561 - 564)

IF Qvis = None of these
THEN ASK: Qnosite

Qnosite Are there any particular reasons why you haven't visited these kinds of websites?

SHOW SCREEN
PROBE: WHAT ELSE?

I'm not interested	1	(565)
I'm too young to find out these issues	2	
I don't know how to find these sites	3	
I don't think the internet is a good way to find out about these issues	4	
These kinds of sites aren't aimed at young people	5	
I don't really trust or respect political organisations	6	
Don't Know	Y	
None of these	X	
Other	0	

Other specify... (566 - 569)

End of Filter Inosi

IF NOT (qvis = None of these OR qvis = Don't Know)
THEN ASK: Qcont

Qcont You said you visited sites about &Qvis&. Have you ever done any of these things?

SHOW SCREEN
PROBE: WHAT ELSE?

Yes, I sent an email/ message	1	(570)
Yes, I joined in a chat room discussion	2	
Yes, I voted for something/ signed a petition	3	
No, I just checked it out	4	
Don't Know	Y	

End of Filter Inosit

IF Qoft(1) = Every day OR Qoft(1) = At least once a week OR Qoft(1) = About once a month OR Qoft(1) = Less often OR Qoft(2) = Every day OR Qoft(2) = At least once a week OR Qoft(2) = About once a month OR Qoft(2) = Less often OR Qoft(3) = Every day OR Qoft(3) = At least once a week OR Qoft(3) = About once a month OR Qoft(3) = Less often
THEN ASK: Qiss

Qiss Do you ever talk to anyone about any of the issues covered by these websites by email, instant messaging or chat rooms?

Often	1	(571)
Sometimes	2	
Once or twice	3	
Never	4	
Don't Know	Y	

End of Filter leimc

End of Filter l11

End of Filter laluse

IF Quse = Never
THEN ASK: Qtime

Qtime Was there a time before when you used to use the internet?

Yes	1	(572)
No	2	
Don't Know	Y	

IF Qtime = Yes
THEN ASK: Qnol

QnolWhy do you no longer use the internet?

SHOW SCREEN
PROBE: WHICH OTHERS?

I haven't got access anymore	1	(573)
My parents don't let me use it any more	2	
I found it too difficult/ frustrating	3	
I'm not interested	4	
I think people rely on computers too much	5	
It's too expensive	6	
It's not really safe	7	
I don't have time	8	
It is too slow/ keeps going wrong	9	
No reason	0	(574)
Don't Know	Y	(573)
Other	0	

Other specify... (575 - 578)

End of Filter Iused

IF Qtime = No
THEN ASK: Qnouse

Qnouse Which, if any of these things stop you from using the internet?

SHOW SCREEN
PROBE: WHAT ELSE?

I don't have access to it	1	(579)
My parents don't let me use it	2	
I don't really know how to use it	3	
It is too difficult/frustrating	4	
I'm not interested	5	
I think people rely on computers too much	6	
It's too expensive	7	
It's not really safe	8	
I don't have time	9	
It is too slow/keeps going wrong	0	(580)
No reason	1	
Don't Know	Y	(579)
Other	0	

Other specify... (608 - 611)

End of Filter Istop

End of Filter Inon

IF Quse = A couple of times a month OR Quse = About once a month OR Quse = Less often
THEN ASK: Qlow

Qlow Was there a time when you used to use the internet more often?

Yes	1	(612)
No	2	
Don't Know	Y	

IF Qlow = Yes
THEN ASK: Qbef

Qbef Why do you no longer use the internet as often as before?

SHOW LIST
PROBE: WHAT ELSE?

I haven't got access anymore	1	(613)
My parents don't let me use it any more	2	
I found it too difficult/ frustrating	3	
I'm not interested	4	
I think people rely on computers too much	5	
It's too expensive	6	
It's not really safe	7	
I don't have time	8	
It is too slow/ keeps going wrong	9	
No reason	0	(614)
Don't Know	Y	(613)
Other	0	

Other specify... (615 - 618)

End of Filter loft

IF Qlow = No
THEN ASK: Qbef2

Qbef2 Why don't you use the internet more often?

SHOW SCREEN
PROBE: WHAT ELSE?

I haven't got internet access	1	(619)
My parents don't let me use it	2	
I find it too difficult/ frustrating	3	
I'm not interested	4	
I think people rely on computers too much	5	
It's too expensive	6	
It's not really safe	7	
I don't have time	8	
It is too slow/ keeps going wrong	9	
Don't Know	Y	

End of Filter loft2

End of Filter Ilow

IF Quse = A couple of times a month OR Quse = About once a month OR Quse = Less often OR Quse = Never

---

I'm now going to show you some things people have said about using the internet. Please tell me how much you agree or disagree with each of them

---

Qlo How much do you agree or disagree:
...

Agree a lot	1	(620)
Agree a little	2	
Neither agree or disagree	3	
Disagree a little	4	
Disagree a lot	5	
Don't Know	Y	

This question is repeated for the following loop values:

- "I'm missing out by not using the internet and email (more)"
- "I can find out all I need from books"
- "The internet helps people get ahead in life"
- "I sometimes feel left out when my friends talk about the internet"
- "The internet makes it easier to keep in touch with people"
- "I would like to use the internet more in the future"

A total of 6 iterations occupying columns (620) to (625)

IF dage = 9-11 OR dage = 12-15 OR Qdoing = Full time education (e.g. at school/college/university - including on vacation)
THEN ASK: Qlow2

Qlow2 How much do you agree with the statement:
"I'd get better marks at school/college if I used the Internet (more)"?

Agree a lot	1	(626)
Agree a little	2	
Neither agree or disagree	3	
Disagree a little	4	
Disagree a lot	5	
Don't Know	Y	

End of Filter Ied

Qdo If you did use the internet (more often), what would you do online?

SHOW SCREEN
PROBE: WHICH OTHERS?

Make something (drawing, painting, story etc.)	1	(627)
Use instant messaging (talking to people over the internet using MSN Messenger Buddy or AOL Instant Messenger (AIM)	2	
Send/ receive emails	3	
Use a chatroom	4	
Do work for school/college	5	
Get information for other things	6	
Play games	7	
Download music	8	
For clubs, groups, or sports teams that you are a member of	9	
Exam revision sites to help prepare for a test or exam	0	(628)
Computer/video games and cheats	1	
Don't Know	Y	(627)
None of these	X	
Other	0	

Other specify...	(629 - 632)

Qdo2 And what about about these. Which of the following would you do online (more often?)

SHOW SCREEN
PROBE: WHICH OTHERS?

Look for products or shop online	1	(633)
Watch/download video clips	2	
Plan a trip	3	
Look for cinema/theatre/concert listings and what's going on in your area	4	
Use message/bulletin boards	5	
Look for information on careers/further education	6	
Look for information on computers, programming or web design	7	
Look for news	8	
Don't Know	Y	

End of Filter Ilowno

We are coming to the end of the survey now, I just need to ask you a few more questions about yourself

Qeth Could you tell me which of these best describes you?

SHOW LIST

White British	1	(634)
White Irish	2	
Any other White background	3	
White and Black Caribbean	4	
White and Black African	5	
White and Asian	6	
Any other Mixed background	7	
Indian	8	
Pakistani	9	
Bangladeshi	0	(635)
Any other Asian background	1	
Caribbean	2	
African	3	
Any other Black background	4	
Chinese	5	
Don't Know	Y	(634)
Other	0	

Other specify... (636 - 639)

Qdisab Can I just check, do you have any long-standing illness, disability or infirmity? By long-standing I mean anything that has troubled you over a period of time or that is likely to affect you over a period of time?

Yes	1	(640)
No	2	
Don't Know	Y	

Qlang Now thinking about language. Is English your first language?

Yes	1	(641)
No	2	
Don't Know	Y	

IF Qlang = No
THEN ASK: Qnoeng

QnoengWhat is your first language?

Arabic	1	(642)
Bengali	2	
Chinese	3	
Gujerati	4	
Hindi	5	
Punjabi	6	
Somali	7	
Urdu	8	
Vietnamese	9	
Welsh	0	(643)
Don't Know	Y	(642)
Other	0	

Other specify... (644 - 647)

End of Filter Ilang

Qrel Do you consider yourself to be practising a religion, for example you attend a church or mosque?

Yes	1	(648)
No	2	
Don't Know	Y	

That is the end of the main part of the interview, thank you very much for taking part. I just need to obtain some further information about your household, before I do that - here is a letter giving you a little more information about the research project, and a leaflet giving you hints and tips on safe internet use.

PLEASE HAND A COPY OF THE LSE THANK YOU LETTER AND A CHILDNET INTERNATIONAL LEAFLET TO THE RESPONDENT (IT DOESN'T MATTER WHICH LEAFLET YOU GIVE OUT)

INTERVIEWER: PLEASE TURN SCREEN AWAY FROM RESPONDENT

Qrm WAS A PARENT OR SOMEONE ELSE IN THE ROOM WHILE THE INTERVIEW WAS TAKING PLACE?

CODE ALL THAT APPLY

Yes, they interfered with the interview as it was taking place	1	(649)
Yes, they commented or helped the respondent, but did not influence their response	2	
Yes, but they did not interfere with the interview as it was taking place	3	
No	4	
Don't Know	Y	

Qbox USE THIS BOX TO RECORD ANY INFORMATION YOU FEEL MAY BE RELEVANT ABOUT THE WAY IN WHICH THE INTERVIEW WAS CONDUCTED

(650 - 653)

Don't Know	Y	(650)

IF Qpap = YES mother will complete paper questionnaire OR Qpap = YES father will complete paper questionnaire
THEN ASK: Qcolpap

Qcolpap COLLECT PAPER QUESTIONNAIRE FROM PARENT/CARER.

Yes questionnaire collected	1	(654)
Not able to, parent will send on	2	
No parent refused to complete	3	
Other	0	

Other specify... (655 - 658)

End of Filter Ipap

IF RESPONDENT IS UNDER 16, PLEASE ASK ALL DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS (INCLUDING SOCIAL GRADE) TO PARENT.

YOU CAN NOW TURN THE SCREEN BACK TO THE RESPONDENT

QUANCEPT ITEM:

UK Children Go Online – Focus group schedule 2004

Websites to be discussed in focus groups (include links on UKCGO website)

Definitely show these:

www.need2know.co.uk (DfES)

www.bbc.co.uk/teens (BBC teenage site, pink/blue split)

www.childnetacademy.org (Would it encourage them to set up a webpage?)

www.epal.tv (Connexions Service, see 'Submit your stuff', 'Become a youth consultant')

If time left, also show these:

www.young.gov.uk (youth section of the new Government portal Directgov, see 'Have your say', 'Find your representative', 'What would you do if you were Scotland's First Minister – with £20bn to spend?')

www.rockthevote.org (see Youth as E-citizens report, K. Montgomery)

www.mykindaplace.com (commercial e-zine for girls, has an advice section)

www.monkeyslum.com (mykindaplace equivalent for boys)

www.teentoday.co.uk (teen chat and community site set up by a teenager)

www.dubit.co.uk (company set up by a group of teenagers, see 'Let them know what you think' and 'Companies want to talk to opinion formers')

www.thesite.org.uk (popular personal adivice site)

Others:

www.cypu.gov.uk/youth/index.cfm (boring website for young people by the Children's and Young People's Unit, 'This is your chance to have your say and really influence the Governments plans to create better services for children and young people all over England.')

www.bbc.co.uk/cbbc (BBC children's site)

www.websafecrackerz.com (games and info around online safety)

www.ukyouthparliament.org.uk (boring site of the UK Youth Parliament)

www.childrens-express.org (young people's news agency, no possibility to submit stories)

http://student-voices.org (project by the Annenberg Public Policy Center encouraging the civic engagement of young people through education)

www.michaelmoore.com

www.developingcitizenship.org.uk/dp_sc.htm (teaching resource about citizenship)

www.nya.org.uk/Templates/internal.asp?NodeID=90728 (info about Local Democracy Week, National Youth Agency website)

www.byc.org.uk (British Youth Council)

http://web.ask.co.uk/uk?q=how+do+I+make+a+personal+homepage&qsrc=0&o=0&rb=1 (Search results for 'How do I make a personal homepage')

www.bbc.co.uk/dna/ww2 (BBC educational resource on 'WW2 People's war')

www.youngscot.org (p (Scottish youth information portal for 12-26 year olds)

www.talktofrank.com (personal advice site about drugs)

www.there4me.com (NCPCC personal advice site)

Interview schedule for secondary schools

(1) Introduction

- We would like to know whether the internet is something more than entertainment or help with school work. Does it give you a chance to contribute your own ideas, or join in with public debate, or express yourselves so that lots of other people can hear your opinions? Is it a new source of advice and help for young people? We've been talking to some of the people making different kinds of websites for young people - from government, from business, from young people's organisations - and they are really hoping that they can design the kind of material that you'd like on the internet, that would give you a chance to benefit, and join in. But, now we are to get an idea from you about what young people themselves might want, since there are many people putting money and effort into this.
- Get general views at this point.
- We'd like to show you some of the sites out there. Perhaps you have some good sites to show us also? If so, let's see these first.

(2) Research questions to consider

- Examine interactivity closely – how do they respond to the various appeals (to send an email, to have their say, becoming a certain kind of person (what), joining peers, to join a community, to reach an elite figure, etc) – how do they evaluate the interactivity on offer (do they ask whether their contribution will be noticed, valued, replied to; do they expect/want a clearer payoff – feedback on who replies, on how engagement results in a benefit to society or directly to those who participate, etc).
- Examine participation carefully: If they participate, what do they think they are participating in exactly, and how do they value that? Do the sites live up to their promise, indeed, what do they promise as the kids see it? How do they envisage the links to political elites/processes? Who do they think is listening, what happens to their contributions, what feedback/consequences would they most like, and what do they expect in practice?
- What makes some but not all go from just information to interacting/contributing – is it a matter of design, of fears, of purpose, etc?
- Distinguish between being told to go to such sites (eg by school, parents) and choosing it oneself
- What kids might like about the sites – the fact that they can visit anonymously, with low commitment, or do they want commitment, to exercise rights without being expected to take on responsibilities?

(3) Questions to the kids

- <u>Initial reactions:</u>
    - Do you know the site?
    - What do you think of it? What do you like (or don't like) about it? Why?
    - (Observe how they go about exploring it. Which parts do they pay attention to, which parts do they read, which links do they follow?)
    - What purpose do you think this site is for?
    - For what purposes could you use the site – for information, for interaction, to contribute, to mobilise?

- Where do the sites lead (or could lead)? Do they take you on a journey, open up new possibilities, or do they keep you on site? Do they mainly promote activities online or offline?
- What do you think will happen if you click/respond/email etc? What would you like to happen?
- In what ways does the site surprise or disappoint you?
- Do you know similar/ better sites?

- Trustworthiness:
  - Who do you think has set it up? Why?
  - Do the sites make clear who funds them, what their purposes are, etc (eg Rock The Vote funded by MTV)? Is this transparent?
  - Would you trust the site? Why (not)?
  - What is important to make a site (look) trustworthy?
  - Do you think young people have been involved in setting up this site?
  - Would it be better/ would you trust it more if they had?
- Identity/selfhood consequences of participation:
  - What kind of person do you think is this site for?
  - What would it say about them if they engaged with it?
  - How would their friends regard them?
  - (Recall that teens struggle to be both distinctive/individuated and accepted/normative to peers.)
- Lack of interest:
  - Is it that you're not in interested in such websites or that you're not interested in such issues in general (even offline)?
  - Does/could the internet make a difference? If not, what would?
  - Are they apathetic about all sites, all interests, or is it something specific about participation – compare advice, content creation and political sites.
- Explore the term 'politics':
  - Why is it boring, negative etc?
  - Is this about shame (peer group pressure) or about identity (only nerds do politics)?
  - Who finds political participation interesting?
  - Is it the performance of politics that's unattractive (not glossy, nerdy, hierarchical, a space where you are not listened to, full of jargon, approved of by parents)?
  - How much should young people be involved in politics?
  - Why (to practice and develop skills for when they are 18, or because young people's voices matter now, or because it is wrong that they are neglected and misunderstood, or what?)?

(3) At the end of the interview

- Ask about the value (as they see it) of the internet for these purposes.
- Who do you think should be producing these sites? (public/commercial, adult/youth, etc)

- Do you think this should be different for personal advice sites, political sites or youth sites?
- How could it be improved etc and who should do it?
- Who would benefit from hearing your views?
- Would it matter if these sites did not exist? Are you glad someone is making them?
- What kind of world would it be if no one wanted to get young people active?
- Do you have other places to go with your interests/concerns/energies? Where else would you turn to organise/get advice/be heard, etc – community spaces, face to face meetings, letters to the newspaper, youth magazines, etc?
- Link to their citizenship curriculum - is this all a matter for schools or not? See http://www.ncaction.org.uk/subjects/citizen/targets.htm: *"At the end of Key Stage 3, pupils…*

- *"have a broad knowledge and understanding of the topical events they study; the rights, responsibilities and duties of citizens; the role of the voluntary sector; forms of government; provision of public services; and the criminal and legal systems*
- *"show how the public gets information and how opinion is formed and expressed, including through the media; and how and why changes take place in society*
- *"take part in school and community-based activities, demonstrating personal and group responsibility in their attitudes to themselves and to others."*

Interview schedule for primary school kids: Design a website for your school

Materials:

Large paper pad (from flip chart), Post-it notes in different sizes and colours, marker pens in different colours, digital camera

Introduction:

Researcher sticks Post-it with "School websites" written on it on the top of the sheet of paper to demonstrate how to do it (i.e. write/draw an element of the website on a Post-it note (e.g. link, picture, text etc.) and stick it on the page, they can be moved around and changed later), explaining that they can change the name of the website to something different and more interesting but not use their schools real name because we might show their design to someone else

Post-it notes:

I think it is better to use Post-it notes than to ask them to write/draw directly onto the paper as it saves time not having do decide who draws what and where. If they don't like what they draw at first, it can easily changed and moved around.

Possible elements: (Let them develop their own ideas first, then suggest other elements; explore each element separately, see notes below.)

About the school:

- Pictures *(What should/ should not be on the pictures? Are they aware of who might see them? Are they aware of the policy not to identify children on photos?)*
- Space to display school projects *(Who is the site for? Would they like a wider audience to see what they're doing at school?)*
- Info on partner schools *(Explore global reach of websites)*
- Separate sections for children/ teachers/ parents *(Explore different interests of each group)*

About the local community:

- Local news/ events *(Are they interested in what's going on in their local area?)*
- Info on their local area/ town/ city

Communication:

- Chat
- Instant messaging
- Email
- *Explore safety issues*
- *Would this be for everybody or just school community?*
- *Do they already use this elsewhere?*

School work:

- Search *(Explore problems with searching and if they have been taught it)*
- Help/ "Ask a teacher" *(Do they already use such services on other sites?)*

Entertainment:

- Games
- Quizzes
- Competitions

Jokes

Fun activities

Should they be part of a school website or would they just distract from school work?

Other:

Design *(Do they want bright colours/sound/animation or a plain but functional site?)*

Security, Log-in *(Explore their awareness of online safety)*

Adverts *(Do they mind/ notice adverts on the web? Which companies would they like to sponsor their school?)*

Links *(Explore what their favourite sites are)*

Website team (*Who should be involved in building it?)*

Note 1: This school's website is offline at the moment so can't be incorporated into the focus group.

Note 2: This school recently had online safety training.

At the end:

Take a photo of the website design in case Post-it notes fall of during transport.

References:

Large, A., Beheshti, J., Nesset, V., & Bowler, L. (forthcoming). Designing Web Portals in Intergenerational Teams: Two Prototype portals for Elementary School Students. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology (JASIST)*.

Large, A., Beheshti, J., Nesset, V., & Bowler, L. (2003, May). Children as Web Portal Designers: Where Do We Start? In W. C. Peekhaus & L. F. Spiteri (Eds.), *Bridging the Digital Divide: Equalizing Access to Information and Communication Technologies. Proceedings of the 31st Annual Conference of the Canadian Association for Information Science, Dalhousie University, 30 May - 1 June 2003* (pp. 139-152). Halifax: CAIS.

Additional info

Rock the Vote

Could a website like this work in the UK to get more young people to vote and get engaged?

Rock the Vote was established by music industry leaders to engage youth in the political process. It is best known for its work to organize voter registration drives, get-out-the-vote events, and voter education efforts for young adults. But its web mission is wider, as its boldly colored, Flash-enhanced website makes clear.

The interactive menu featured at the top of every web page offers a spectrum of options: "Action," "Issues," "Programs," "Street Team," "Donate," "RTV Blog," "RTV Gear," and, of course, "Register to Vote." "Register to Vote" links to a voter registration form that visitors can fill out and send to their state elections office. **Rock the Vote** uses the slogan, "Fill it and print it, lick it and mail it," to describe the process. A section of the site called **"Chicks Rock, Chicks Vote!"** focuses on young women. It provides links related to women's issues and activism, a "Government 101" fact sheet, and quotes from "women who rock."

The "Action" section spurs young people to take political and social action on "the issues you believe in." The page links to six issues -- free expression, violence, environment, education, economy, and debt -- where a paragraph highlights the problem and invites young people to take a stand. Minimal background information is provided, but for each issue links to activist organizations are supplied.

Rock the Vote keeps alive its roots in popular culture with "Community Street Teams." These teams of young people set up voter registrations stands at concerts and community events; visitors to the website are invited to join. **Rock the Vote** also partners with popular musicians to promote its cause, recently enlisting the Dixie Chicks in an effort to persuade young people, particularly young women, to register to vote in time for the 2004 election. The site also accommodates online donations and sells official **Rock the Vote** merchandise, from t-shirts to a RTV thong.

(http://www.centerforsocialmedia.org/ecitizens/rtv.htm)

Need2know

The Need2know website provides access to a wide range of information for young people on subjectsas diverse as health and relationships, facts about law, travel advice or even money issues. The site gives 13-19 year-olds the information they want, when they want it.

(http://www.dfes.gov.uk/deptreport2004/showcase/need2know.cfm)

The key objectives of the portal are:

- to provide an electronic ‘one stop shop’ for sign-posting information and services from private and public sector organisations
- to bring together everything that young people want and need to know from government in user friendly language
- to change the way government departments think about and respond to young people’s needs and to change how government communicates with young people
- to make the democratic process more effective by encouraging young people to take an interest in what government does and how it affects them by building that relationship

(Source: DfES Young People's Portal Research and Involvement Programme)

Epal

The epal project is based on the creative use of new media and technologies, combined with innovative approaches to the design and delivery of public services, to produce a unique resource for 13-19 year olds in Greater Manchester. It is an electronic information service, fronted by an electronic personal assistant, which creatively combines contributions by young people for young people; information, advice and guidance for young people; opportunities for consultation, dialogue, and participation with a range of public and voluntary sector agencies; and opportunities for young people to develop their skills and knowledge both electronically and in face to face settings.

The primary aim of epal is to provide a multi-channel electronic platform through which a virtual community of young people can access information and services useful to them, supported by a virtual community of specialist agencies; and through which young people can also participate in the ongoing design and development of those services, and in contributing their own content.

The objectives of epal are to:

- contribute, alongside more traditional ways of doing things, to improved outcomes for young people, measured in terms of their capacity to negotiate the risks and challenges of teenage life,
- maximise their opportunities for personal and social development;
- gain achievements in terms of informal and formal education;
- and achieve a successful transition to adulthood.

It is also, through innovative and creative means, to exploit the potential of new technologies for supporting and promoting the wider participation of young people as citizens, in social and political life.

(Source: Greater Manchester Connexions, epal conference description)

UK CHILDREN GO ONLINE

Listening to young people's experiences

Authors: Sonia Livingstone
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October 2003

E-SOCIETY
Innovative Academic Research on the Digital Age

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Executive Summary & Recommendations

Project overview

UK Children Go Online. This new research project, part of the ESRC's E-Society Programme, focuses on the nature of children's internet use. The report presents qualitative research findings, drawing on fourteen focus groups with children. The next step will be to survey internet-related attitudes and practices among 9-19 year olds across the UK.

Aims. The report addresses two areas of opportunity:

Learning - education, informal learning and literacy,

Communication - social networks, participation and identity,
and two areas of risk:

Dangers - of undesirable forms of content or contact and

Inequalities - exclusion and the digital divide.

Key findings on learning

Children as the internet experts. Although many households contain one or more computer-literate parents, children consider themselves more expert in using the internet. Indeed, both girls and boys gain significant, perhaps even unprecedented, social status and domestic power through the value that adults place on this expertise. Although parents may be 'catching up', young people's willingness to experiment may make this a lasting reversal of the generation gap.

The internet as a flexible medium. Children and young people regard the internet as a flexible medium which allows them to find information for school, communicate with friends and relatives using email, instant messaging and chat rooms, play games, download music and visit fan sites.

Learning by doing. In addition to new technical skills, young people's expertise may also include a change in learning styles and knowledge – to 'learning by doing' rather than rule-bound learning.

Downloading and hacking as alternative skills. Teens especially were keen to discuss alternative forms of expertise. In addition to, or even more than, educational skills they place a high value on music file-sharing, hacking and communication skills as central to their peer culture.

Limitations on literacy. Despite young people's enthusiasm for the internet, 'internet literacy' is still developing. Young people admit to aspects of internet use which they find problematic, including searching and information overload. Awareness of the motives behind websites and a critical attitude towards their credibility and trustworthiness appear little developed.

"My dad hasn't even got a clue. Can't even work the mouse … so I have to go on the internet for him." (Nina, 17, from Manchester)

"It's better to do trial and error because you can learn from the mistakes, and you can find new places, for different sorts of things." (Kim, 15, from Essex)

"Every time I try to look for something, I can never find it. It keeps coming up with things that are completely irrelevant and a load of old rubbish really." (Heather, 17, from Essex)

Key findings on communication

Constant contact with friends. Children's motivations for going online centre on new opportunities for communication and identity play. While the conversational content is often mundane, being readily in touch with their friends is important to them.

Online communication fosters offline links. Online communication is rarely an escape from real life. The internet appears to foster, rather than undermine, existing social contacts, for example with friends from school, connecting children into local, rather than global, networks.

Avoiding contact with strangers. The internet also facilitates some broadening of everyday networks, sustaining connections with friends from abroad or distant relatives. However, most young people see little point in talking to strangers on the internet, regarding unknown online contacts as 'dodgy'.

Shifting from chat to instant messaging. Although some younger teens enjoy 'messing around' in chat rooms or pretending to be someone else, many are leaving chat rooms in favour of instant messaging (and SMS) with their local circle of friends.

A wide range of communication choices. While adults tend to judge online communication against an ideal of face-to-face conversation, young people evaluate a wide range of options – face-to-face, email, instant message, chat rooms, phone, SMS – according to their communicative needs. Their criteria include immediacy, message complexity, mobility, cost, privacy and embarrassment.

Little interest in political participation and online content creation. Young people appear uninterested in the possibility of political participation via the internet, being cynical about the likelihood that politicians would listen to them. Although they relish participating in a globalised and commercialised youth culture online, they are less interested in creating their own websites.

"Even if you've just seen them at school like, it'll be like you're texting them or talking to them on the phone or on MSN." (Kim, 15, Essex)

"If you're talking to someone you haven't met, how do you know if what they're telling you is the truth? You don't really mean some things you say, like, it is a bit fake." (Mark, 17, from Essex)

"Chat rooms, you really don't know who you're talking to. Whereas instant messaging – you do." (Cameron, 13, from Derbyshire)

"You can email your MP, but is he going to listen?" (Heather, 17, from Essex)

"I get in touch with celebrities once in a while, and they send an email back." (Padma, 15, from London)

Key findings on online dangers

'Weirdos, spam and porn' as downsides. Children associate the internet with paedophiles in chat rooms, spam mail and advertising, online pornography and viruses. Insofar as use of the internet poses a threat to children and young people, their relatively trusting, uncritical approach to the internet is a matter for concern.

Varying experiences of pornography. Many children and young people claim to have seen pornography online. For some this is definitely unwelcome, and here gender is important. Teenage boys, far more than girls, express interest in seeing online pornography, though many – especially older boys and girls – claim to be indifferent. Teens say they encounter pornography more easily and more often on the internet than via other sources. They have varying views on whether access to pornographic online content should be restricted.

Raised awareness of chat room dangers. Chat rooms appear to be losing popularity in favour of instant messaging, reflecting the success of media awareness campaigns warning children of the risks. Younger children have been especially impressed by media stories, though older teens may regard the risks online as less than those they encounter offline in their neighbourhood.

Some children still taking risks. Perhaps the 'comparative safety' of the internet leads some teens to take risks. Some are motivated to acquire social status through making new contacts online. Some avoid telling their parents of the risks. Some admit to forgetting safety advice when in a chat room.

Parents are monitoring and restricting internet use. Children report that, responding to a mix of media stories and personal experiences, parents are restricting or monitoring their internet use, employing a variety of regulatory practices. Young people are particularly frustrated by overly restrictive or inefficient filtering, both at home and school.

Children value their privacy. Domestic regulation of the internet can undermine trust between parents and children. Children spoke strongly of their value for privacy, objecting to being monitored or checked up on – likening this to having one's pockets searched or one's personal space invaded. In response, they attempt to evade or outwit their parents, and they outline a range of tactics for doing this.

"The internet is just like life as I see it, but just easier. So if these 13 or 14 year olds want to find stuff (pornography)**, they're going to find it in real life or on the internet."** (Lorie, 17 from Essex)

"There's obviously the scare of paedophiles and people like that on chat rooms… it's on the news, and there are ad campaigns against it." (Alan, 13, from Essex)

"Talking to your parents about the internet is bad for you. They might try and think about taking the internet off your computer." (Amir, 15, from London)

"My mum's always watching me when I'm in a chat room to check there's no trouble." (Rosie, 13, from Derbyshire)

"Because you want your independence, really, you don't want your mum looking over your shoulder checking what you're doing all the time." (Steve, 17, from Manchester)

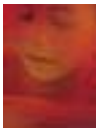
Key findings on inequality

If the internet disappeared tomorrow. Enthusiasm for the internet, though considerable, remains less than for other activities – going out, meeting or phoning friends, watching television. Seen as a great convenience, young people remain confident they could do all they need or wish without the internet if necessary.

Non-users feel excluded. The few children who lack home access to the internet claim to miss out on communicating with friends and feel left out of conversations about popular websites. However, they try to develop strategies to compensate.

"If we didn't have the internet, we'd get everything we have on the internet somewhere else." (Marie, 16, from Essex)

"They're missing out on downloading stuff and using chat rooms … Some people can't afford it, which is just a sad truth." (Steve, 17, from Manchester)



Five Recommendations

On the basis of this report we offer five key recommendations to policy makers, internet service providers, teachers, parents and children:

Developing critical evaluation skills. Children and young people's 'internet literacy' requires further support and development. This must look beyond technical and searching skills to encompass a critical awareness of the quality, purpose and reliability of websites. Being able to make an informed evaluation of online sites and services is crucial if children are both to benefit from online opportunities and to avoid the dangers. Hence, while parents, teachers and others should continue to value children's expertise, it should be recognised that they also need continued guidance in use of the internet.

Parental trust in children. Simply pressing for more parental monitoring, restriction and control could encourage children's evasion rather than their cooperation with attempts at internet regulation in the home. While often naïve about threats to their privacy from external sources, children are fiercely protective of their privacy in relation to their parents. Parents need more information, confidence and guidance so that they feel empowered to discuss the risks with their children, especially as they grow older. An explicit negotiation of the balance between children's safety and children's privacy is important to the trust relationship between parents and children.

Improving levels of internet safety awareness. Many children have direct experience of pornography online, and many know of stories of risky encounters in chat rooms. As in other safety campaigns or other areas of public information, it seems easier to get the message across than to ensure safe practices under all circumstances. It is encouraging to note the widespread awareness of chat room dangers, and this must be sustained through continued campaigns. However, under particular circumstances, it seems that young people continue to engage in risky behaviour, necessitating more careful, targeted strategies for safety awareness.

Maximising opportunities for participation and creativity. Young people's cynicism or lack of interest in political participation using online resources poses a challenge to policy makers especially. These might usefully take as their starting point the nature and channels of participation which young people enjoy – creating links with music, fashion, animals, the environment, etc. It is particularly disappointing how few young people feel encouraged or inspired to create their own internet content. There is a considerable challenge, not least to internet service providers, to provide young people with accessible and stimulating possibilities for content creation.

Overcoming the digital divide. It should not be assumed that all children have free access to the internet, despite the minimal conditions of access becoming more widespread. Too little is known as yet of the social, educational and other consequences of exclusion, but it is clear that internet access remains heavily stratified and that, especially for popular and social uses of the internet, some children are being left out. If internet use is restricted to educational uses in schools, libraries etc, then children lacking home access may still feel excluded from their peer culture.

Project Overview

The present report

UK Children Go Online is a new research project exploring the nature and meaning of children's internet use. With a timetable from April 2003 to March 2005, the research team is conducting qualitative work and a survey of internet-related attitudes and practices among 9-19 year olds across the UK, comparing girls and boys of different ages and backgrounds. The project asks how the internet may be transforming, and may itself be shaped by, family life, peer networks and informal learning processes. It develops an earlier project in which the first author conducted participant observation in thirty families (Livingstone and Bovill, 2001).[1] It also extends the work of the second author on young people's construction of personal homepages (Bober, 2002; 2003).

In this first report we present qualitative research findings, drawing on a series of focus groups and individual interviews with children conducted during summer 2003. The next report (due spring 2004) will present findings from a national face-to-face survey of children and parents. For full details of the research and related publications, see www.children-go-online.net.

Context

Many households, especially those with children, now have domestic internet access, although some do not. In the first quarter of 2003 54% of UK adults (aged 16+) had used the internet (up from 49% in 2002), and 60% had used it at any one time (up from 55%) (ONS, 2003). Overall, some 11.7 million UK households (47%) have access to the internet at home (up from 43% in 2002). The ways in which internet use is becoming embedded in everyday life, potentially transforming society for better or for worse, is attracting considerable attention. In public and private sectors, the very rapidity and scope of internet adoption across Western societies and beyond adds urgency to the many questions being asked. From a household or consumer perspective, these include:

- What skills and opportunities are people gaining by using the internet?
- Who lacks access, and in what ways are they getting 'left out'?
- Does online communication enhance or undermine face-to-face interaction?
- Does it support traditional, or new, forms of community participation?
- Are children benefiting from the educational potential of the Internet?
- What about the dangers of engaging in risky or harmful behaviour?

Given the present climate of speculation and hyperbole, sound empirical evidence and a sceptical mindset is much needed. In response, a growing body of academic research is examining the social shaping and social consequences of new information and communication technologies, particularly the internet, in relation to work, leisure, politics, culture and the family (Lievrouw and Livingstone, 2002). Understanding the domestic use of the internet is crucial because the regulatory, social and economic frameworks that will shape its future consequences are being developed now.

Considerable attention, and anxiety, is focused on children and young people. They are seen as 'the digital generation', being in the vanguard of new skills and opportunities, yet also vulnerable and potentially at risk. Households with children 'lead' in internet access, making young people in key respects the 'pioneers' of new media cultures (Drotner, 2000). The 2002 BECTa survey shows that 84% of 5 to 18 year olds in the UK have used the internet (up from 73% in 2001), with 71% using it at school (up from 56%) and 56% at home (up from 45%).[2] Moreover, 68% of 5-18 year olds have access to the internet at home (up from 64% in 2001).

Children and young people are generally enthusiastic and creative adopters of the internet – for communication, entertainment and education. Parents hope that home access will improve their children's educational prospects, although many are unsure how to guide their children towards valuable sites, and they are concerned about online dangers. In school, pupils increasingly rely on online educational resources, and the internet is becoming a key mediator of informal learning, linking home and school.

Commercial interests seeking to expand the child and youth market increasingly centre on the development of targeted online contents and services, while in the public sector there are hopes that the internet may stimulate young people's political engagement and community values. The opportunities are considerable,

though in many ways still untapped at present. But media attention – and hence public concern – mainly alerts people to the potential risks and dangers, leading to discussions of how to regulate or restrict young people's internet access and use. In policy terms, society must strike a balance between two risks: the failure to minimise the dangers and the failure to maximise the opportunities (Livingstone, 2001).

Theoretical framework

Most empirical research on the social uses and impacts of the internet has neglected children, presuming them to be included in research on 'the population' or 'spoken for' in surveys of parents (Livingstone, 2002a). With notable exceptions (e.g. Pew 2001a/b; BECTa, 2002), research on children tends to be small-scale, and little is known about online contents and services available to children or how they interpret, evaluate or use them.

Two broad and competing frameworks have emerged to interpret the societal significance of new forms of information and communication technology. One framework stresses historical continuities, sceptical of utopian and dystopian claims for a technology-led future, critically questioning whether everyday life is being fundamentally transformed. The opposing framework postulates radical change, seeing the internet as a facilitator of larger social, cultural, political and psychological changes – whether towards the network society, the postmodern condition or a dystopian nightmare.

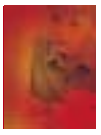
UK Children Go Online steers a course between these polarised approaches, arguing that empirical findings are essential if we are successfully to chart the unfolding relation between continuity and change. It draws on three theoretical traditions.

1. Drawing on the 'continuity' approach, the project contextualises new media in relation to older media. The historical lesson of previously-new media is one of diversification rather than displacement, with repositioning and specialisation of older media (Bolter and Grusin, 1999). Since little evidence supports claims for the child as dramatically affected by the supposed harms (or benefits) of changing media, this approach invites us to locate the young internet user within ever-widening social circles – home, family, peers, school, community, nation – to analyse their responses to an increasingly media-rich environment. The internet, after all, represents one element among many in a more gradual and multidimensional process of social change - in the family and childhood, leisure and lifestyles, youth culture and consumer culture, work and education and in social values (Drotner, 2000; Fornäs, 1995; Kinder, 1999).

2. From the 'change' approach, while eschewing any simple technological determinism, the project draws on some of the questions asked about how information and communication technologies may drive forward the inevitable processes of social and cultural change. It leads us to ask, for example, how children respond to the introduction of the plural, even anarchic, hypertextual forms of knowledge representation, which may be replacing the once-linear, authoritative media texts (educational, public service, adult-approved). Or, is the once-mass audience fragmenting into multiple individualised niche markets, and does this matter? Or, what does it mean to claim that the boundaries between once-distinct domains of entertainment/ education, work/ leisure, public/ private, local/ global and producer/ consumer are becoming blurred (Snyder, 1998; Poster, 2001; Turkle,1995)?

Yet these approaches are media-focused, asking about the internet – its forms and contents - first and then considering its consequences for users. This is usefully complemented by a user, or child-centred, focus:

3. Taking a 'child-centred' focus, the project regards children as active and interpretative agents who appropriate and shape the meanings and consequences of the 'new' through a series of well-established social and semiotic practices. For, whether information and communication technologies are incorporated into the ongoing stream of social life or whether they reorient or open up alternative trajectories, new media depend on the beliefs and actions of their users to activate particular trajectories over others and to give them meaning and value in daily life. Hence we need an account of the changing conditions of childhood, together with an analysis of how children themselves play a role – through their



imaginative responses, their creative play, their micro-practices of daily life - in establishing the emerging uses and significance of the internet (Buckingham, 2002; James, Jenks, and Prout, 1998; Seiter, 1999). Listening to what young people have to say is especially important because they keep surprising us in their pioneering of new media practices – the unexpected growth of text messaging being a good example. Particularly, this approach avoids construing children as passive or vulnerable rather than as agents in their own right, although nor should their oft-claimed sophistication in internet use be exaggerated.

Aims

Given these contextual and theoretical considerations, the project aims to understand how children and young people are using the internet at the start of the twenty-first century. This will, it is hoped, contribute to the development of a balanced and grounded policy framework.

More concretely, the project will balance an assessment of two areas of opportunity:

(i) education, informal learning and literacy
(ii) communication, participation and identity

with two areas of risk:

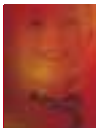
(iii) undesirable forms of content or contact
(iv) inequalities and the digital divide.

Methods

In framing a project with children, we have been guided by the following principles (Greig and Taylor, 1999): empirical data should be collected from children directly, as part of working with (rather than upon) children; ethical aspects of the research require specific and careful attention; triangulation of qualitative and quantitative methods is vital particularly when researching private, domestic practices; rigorous, representative quantitative research is needed to permit generalisations to the population; and, intellectual and policy frameworks should jointly guide research design and interpretation.

The research triangulates three data sources: initial qualitative work, a national survey of children and their parents, and follow up qualitative work (see Work in Progress: Next steps). In the qualitative research presented here, 14 focus group interviews were conducted in schools with children between the ages of 10 and 19, and return visits to children who participated in the earlier project were begun (see Technical Appendix). Combining interviews in a school and a home environment enabled us to explore different aspects of children's relationship with the internet.

Interviewing children and young people individually at home provided direct access to their domestic media environment. Discussions of internet use and parental rules arose naturally and could be pursued in context, and the content and context of internet use could be observed directly. Interviewing in schools explored their internet-related interests and experiences and allowed us to observe the peer context within the group situation.



Contextualising Children's Internet Use:

The Case Studies

To set the scene for the discussion to follow, we present three case studies from the home-based interviews. Each draws on initial interviews with parents and the child, conducted separately, followed by two periods of observation of the child using the internet (carried out during 1999-2000), and recently extended by a three or four year return visit combining interviews and observation (in summer 2003). The combination of methods is important, because a typical picture from the interviews is one of great expectations and good intentions, while the observations - especially when followed up some time later - suggest more modest or narrow uses of the internet together with a series of practical hindrances.

Megan[3]

At 8, Megan was one of the youngest children we visited in 1999. A very bright and lively girl, she lives in a small modern house on a quiet suburban estate with her hard-working and rather quiet parents – both white collar workers - and her older brother, a computer enthusiast. A rather 'stay-at-home family', her parents spend much of their leisure time watching television, and they are keen to acquire and keep up with the latest screen technologies. By contrast, Megan's interests centre on reading and writing stories, for example about her pets. She does this on the computer which had been acquired a year earlier and is squeezed into a small space next to the front door. Both children are figuring out how to get what they want from the internet – with a little help from their father. Her parents are delighted to describe Megan as 'an information junkie', having very high aspirations for her. But they are cautious in relation to the internet, encouraging a focus on visiting well-known and trusted sites rather than bold exploration, and gently restricting her to information rather than communication applications.

By observing her internet use it soon became apparent that Megan's skills were somewhat exaggerated by her parents, her internet use being narrowly concentrated on three sites – AskJeeves for searching, Nickelodeon for games (following up on her liking for the children's television series Rugrats) and a few sites relating to pets (e.g. Petstore.com). Her use of these sites often proved frustrating and inefficient. Her parents keep an eye on her internet use from the living room. They have banned email, chat, downloading and most interactive functions, resulting in little need to be concerned about the risks of internet use. Megan provided one of the funny moments in the project when we asked about content her parents would disapprove of. She told us of a site for sexing your hamster – 'they don't like me seeing male bottoms', she said with a cheeky grin. Overall, however, we came away from this family feeling that neither her parents nor the design of the websites she visited were encouraging Megan to explore and benefit from the opportunities she is more than capable of.

Four years on, now that Megan is 12, there have been some changes. Her father has changed jobs, her mother now works full-time, her brother has taken over the father as the 'computer buff', the computer has been replaced, and Megan has begun secondary school. Yet it is the constancies that are more striking in this still close, quiet family. Lively and chatty as ever, dressed in 'grunge clothes' though not quite a teenager yet, Megan still reads and writes stories – now on the computer, sometimes using the AOL story-writing option on the kids' page. She still searches for home-work or leisure-related interests, now using Google. She has also become a fan of the computer simulation game The Sims, visiting the Sims website and sites with cheats for the game. As before, she follows her interest in animals onto the internet – for example using Neopets to name and keep a virtual pet. But as before, her skills are more limited than her confident talk leads one to expect – she has lost the password for her 'neopet', nor can she manage to get the webmaster to email it to her. Unlike before, she does now have an email and instant messenger account, but rarely uses it, and there is nothing in her inbox when she looks. She says she ignores any invitations on sites she visits to chat, vote or email. Generally, her online style is quick and competent, getting where she wants efficiently, but her range is narrow, with little exploration. Even when we ask what is listed under 'favourites', she says she does not know, having never looked, and when something goes wrong, she skims over the problem rather than stopping to figure out what happened.

Two new themes have emerged. First, Megan has become aware not only that her father is Jewish but also that her school harbours some anti-Semitic feelings. This she chooses to counter head-on by researching and presenting a paper to her tutor group on Judaism – surely a particular and valuable use of the internet. Second, in common with many girls of her age,[4] she has developed a taste for adventure and horror. We have a long conversation about how to murder your Sims, full of gore and tragedy. She also shows us her current story, a complex and imaginative though ghoulish and melodramatic thriller about a mysterious and beautiful foreign woman uncovering a trail of murder and destruction. The contrast between this protective, contented home with its well-behaved children and Megan's fascination for such melodrama is thought-provoking, suggesting that the internet provides what Bettelheim (1976) describes (in relation to fairy tales)

as a vital but safe opportunity for children to explore the possibility of disaster, desertion and death. Yet her explorations are highly focused, not carrying over to other online possibilities. So still there is little need to worry about online risks, for Megan appears to have internalised the caution once explicitly impressed on her by her parents.

Anisah

Fifteen year old Anisah is from a Ghanaian family and lives on a once-very troubled housing estate. We first visited Anisah, the middle child and a lively and confident girl, when she was 12. The family lived then in a very small two-bedroom flat, the computer finding a place in the living room along with most other family activities. Her educated parents have not found work in the UK which matches their qualifications, leading them to place huge expectations on their three children. Two of the children are sent to private school, and the older boy is now studying medicine. There is ample evidence of the stress placed on education, from the several sets of encyclopaedias and educational CD-roms to the emphasis placed on homework and computer access. The family has had a computer for ten years already and the internet for two, and both parents help the children with these technologies. Anisah is active and outgoing, but lives far from her school friends and so spends a fair amount of time on her own. Still, she dances, plays netball, likes shopping, socialises through the church, and she also has responsibilities around the house.

She uses the internet on most days, expressing a preference for making friends in chat rooms, which she finds exciting and which perhaps compensates for feeling separated from her friends in the evenings. She also enjoys feeling ahead of her classmates in having domestic access to the internet (this was three years ago, and her peer group is not well off), often using the internet to research school projects (using Yahoo, Excite or BBC Online). The internet, she finds, is better than books (quicker and more precise) though her skills are imperfect: she tells us about a project on China (the country) for which she downloaded an illustration of china (porcelain from America). She does not use email, perhaps because only a minority of her friends have access. Anisah and her mother agree that so far, pornography or other undesirable content has not been a problem – though she now chats on the Nickelodeon website because of some dubious experiences in adult chat rooms. Her mother stresses the importance of a strong moral framework online as well as offline.

In 2003, Anisah at 15 has become a charming, strong-minded, articulate teenager, doing well at school and hoping to become a designer. Having moved to a new house, she and her sister now have a bedroom to themselves and, to her delight, this also houses the computer. The family's serious, moral attitude is still strong in Anisah. She is the first and only child we have observed to read the news on the homepage of her internet service provider, for instance. While still a very keen internet user, her usage has changed as she has grown up. Now she uses email and instant messenger, and is scathing about chat rooms. This is both because of negative publicity about paedophiles, dangerous contacts, etc, and because she sees chatting to someone she does not know as pointless.

As for many of her age, the internet now is a means of keeping in contact with pre-existing friends whom she sees every day at school, and she often chats with them until late at night, after the family has gone to bed. As she is about to enter her GSCE year, she also spends a lot of time on the BBC's exam revision site, Bitesize, which she considers extremely helpful. We have an interesting discussion about how – unlike her peers – she refuses to download music, it being both illegal and wrong. Otherwise, she uses the internet in a purposeful manner – to research art work for a project, to follow her interest in design, to find a cheap flight, etc. Largely she uses public-service oriented sites, with little evident advertising, and she claims to have seen no pornography or otherwise problematic material.

As she remains present for the interview with her mother, following this observation session, we unwittingly occasion a lively debate between them regarding parental monitoring and intervention. For Anisah, her use of the internet is private, though she acknowledges her mother's right to check on her occasionally. For her mother, such checking must be undertaken frequently – though perhaps she claims more than she practices – precisely because 'children are children' and require guidance. She expresses this view even though she sees Anisah's generation as the 'guru generation' in relation to the internet. Hence, she is scathing of parents who express such trust in their children that, as she sees it, they neglect to monitor and regulate their children's internet use in practice.

Ted

We first visited Ted, a middle class white boy, when he was 14. An only child, privately educated, Ted's life is far more privileged than either Megan's or, especially, Anisah's – though Ted is dyslexic. A delightful, if rather over-protected boy, Ted likes to spend his time with friends, cycling and playing rugby and cricket. He also watches a lot of television and listens to music. Education seems rather less emphasised in this household except as a means to gaining a comfortable lifestyle. The parents subscribe to the middle-class distrust of screen media, though this hardly prevents their considerable use of it. Like many children, Ted cannot remember a time before the family had a computer, though the internet is recent, but he does not know a lot about either of these technologies. 'I haven't got a clue', he says, when things go wrong. Being a computer consultant, his mother is the expert at home, guiding Ted in his use of the internet. It is she who bookmarked Bitesize for him, for example, although he does not use it. Having internet access – 'mainly for homework, sometimes for fun', and to support the father's home-based business, the family is still at the stage in which planned uses greatly exceed actual usage.

Internet use is fairly social. Often one of his parents are present in the father's study, where the computer is located, when Ted researches his homework online or plays games, or Ted's friend Mark, his internet 'guru', visits and they go online together, Ted following Mark's lead. They check on their favourite stars, television programmes, sports stuff, send a few jokey emails to their mates, and they visit Yahoo Chat – pretending to be older, to be other people, to meet girls. So for Ted, the internet is mainly 'fun and funny, it's good, frustration sometimes' – especially when it comes to the difficulties of effective searching. Worry about viruses makes his mother stop Ted downloading, and she checks the history file occasionally to see where he is going, although, as she says somewhat ruefully, 'he probably thinks he knows more than me'. This family, like several others we have visited, has its story of the dodgy encounter. In their case, Ted searched for the pop group 'The Spice Girls', and his mother saw the unexpected outcome – 'very scantily clad ladies came up on the screen', she remarks. This story is offered

by both Ted and his mother as their justification for caution online, but also as a story of trust – she has seen what can happen and understands about accidents, he will discuss with her what he's seen, and so they have an open channel of communication.

We return to visit Ted when he is 18, waiting for A-level results, about to go to university. Family life has changed, with fewer family activities and Ted spending a lot of time in his room. A number of the earlier plans have not worked out. His father's business does not have the web page they intended, though the mother does more work-based searches to support his business. Despite the passage of four years, Ted still says his mother is better at using the internet than he is, particularly for searching. Indeed, when we observe his searching, he is not especially skilled, nor has he thought about why sites exist and what they might want from him.

Like many teens, Ted now spends a lot of time downloading music via the peer-to-peer file sharing system Kazaa. As we also saw with Anisah, instant messaging with friends has replaced meeting strangers in chat rooms. He has 19 people on his 'buddy' or contact list, and he also emails them or sends text messages to their mobile phones.[5] Typically, he 'communicates' with his friends in such ways while downloading music, multitasking to relieve the boredom of having to wait. Internet safety issues are no longer an issue now that Ted is 18, as his parents say, and they are confident he is 'not the kind of kid' to go to inappropriate sites – fortunate, because Ted gets annoyed if he thinks they are checking up on him. However, Ted hardly searches the web at all now – only checking out university sites for possible courses when he needs to – and generally, the internet has become for him a medium of communication and music, not of information or education.

Learning from three children?

The changes evident within this four year time frame remind us that all 'answers' to questions of internet use are inevitably provisional because both the technology and its social contexts of use are changing. Moreover, any answers are inevitably diverse, because however unified the medium may be – and of course it is not – families are far from homogenous. These case studies show how children's experience of the internet is grounded in their domestic and family circumstances, circumstances which are both structural (dependent on age, socioeconomic status, etc) and individual (dependent on particular life histories, personalities, interests, etc).

Anchoring our key themes – education, communication, protection, etc – in real life contexts also reminds us that these themes are strongly interlinked. For example, the child who loves to chat online may also be the child who does not take advantage of educational opportunities, undermining any simple continuum of use/non-use. Megan mainly uses the internet to search websites – what McMillan (2002) terms user-documents interactivity, while for Ted, user-user interactivity (chat, email) is much more important. Anisah makes perhaps the broadest use of online options, treating the internet as a more flexible and diverse tool than the other two. How should we link this to Megan's more protective parents, Anisah's more ambitious and informed domestic background, or Ted's economic privileges? Certain themes are already in evidence. Each of these children – for reasons of gender, class, ethnicity or special needs – illustrates the concerns of the digital divide. Each is treading a careful line between parentally-approved and child-favoured activities, raising issues of domestic regulation (and its dependence on national regulation) which balance freedom, safety and privacy. Each is developing valued expertise which we might term 'media literacy' (Livingstone, 2003), though these are centred on making the interface work than part of a broader critical literacy.

However, these are just three children. What do the focus group interviews tell us that adds to and develops these emerging themes? [6]

Emerging Findings from the Focus Groups

What is the internet?

Children and young people see the internet as a flexible and diverse medium, helping them to find information for school and homework, communicating with friends from school and relatives using email, instant messaging and chat rooms, as well as playing games, downloading music and visiting fan sites.

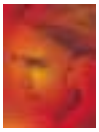
A flexible medium

"I use it for like homework, emailing my cousin in Australia and keeping in touch with my friend in Cornwall." (Linda, 13, from Derbyshire)

"The best thing about the internet is downloading music, things like that, and MSN." (Ryan, 14, from Essex)[7]

"You can do anything with music – download it, watch videos, contact bands. The internet is really useful for music." (Abdul, 17, from Essex)

"Internet's quite exciting because when you open your inbox, you want to see how much you got! You go 'Yes! I've got this much today!'"
(Salimah, 15, from London)[8]



However, the internet also has negative connotations, including the dangers of chat rooms, spam mail and advertising, online pornography and viruses. A group of 10-11 year olds from Hertfordshire drew us a 'mind map' of what the internet meant to them (see figure). This showed that the 'opportunities and dangers' framework is as salient to children as to adults:

Mind maps

"The internet is where you can find lots of things to do, you can find out about the news and lots of other different things, like games. Keep in contact with friends. Best: Play games. Worst: If you by accident go on a web page and then put your address in, then bad things happen. Get parent/guardian permission before you go on it because something could happen to your computer." (Brian, 10)

"The internet is a place where you can find websites, and we call that surfing the net. You can also play games or find out information. The internet can be dangerous if you enter chat rooms or email people you don't know. You can access the internet at school, the library or at home." (Ellen, 10)

There are also things the internet is not. Some questions we asked did not generally attract children's interest, particularly the idea of participating in local networks or political processes, as we shall show.

Children access the internet from various locations – public libraries, internet cafes or parents' work as well as the major access points of home and school. However, the computer remains the major route to go online - few had accessed the internet via the mobile phone, public telephone or digital television, and most were not aware of this possibility.

In what follows, we present the children's discussions in the focus groups according to the four project themes. Inevitably, certain aspects of each theme are focused on, leaving others for later research.

Children's 'mind map' of the internet

Theme 1: Opportunities for education, learning and literacy

Great expectations

Parents commonly say that supporting their children's education is their main reason for investing in a home computer and internet access. Yet in pointing to the 'uncertain pedagogy of the home computer', Buckingham (2002) identifies some unresolved questions regarding the benefits of domestic internet use.[9]

What skills are children learning through computer use? Is the internet better than books and encyclopaedias? Do young people learn through 'edutainment' games? Does computer and internet use at home compensate for deficiencies in, or complement, use at school? Are young people developing new styles of learning? Are traditional skills and values being lost?

Beyond the possible educational consequences of domestic internet access, the social implications of extending education further into the home are noteworthy. The home, once supposedly a sanctuary from the demands of work and education, is increasingly transformed into an informal learning environment, extending the responsibility of parents to embrace a learning-support role and demanding that children learn constantly - through play, through media use, through well-spent leisure. We begin to address these issues here, focusing on questions of expertise and literacy.

Expertise

In stark contrast to other expensive domestic goods, the computer is associated with an image of the child as expert. Although many households contain a computer-literate parent, children are likely to consider their parents less knowledgeable when it comes to using the internet. By contrast with the early days of computers, where attitudes and experiences were often gendered, we found boys and girls equally confident of their expertise.

Inexpert parents

"Well, my mum doesn't use the computer, she doesn't even log on. But my dad – he doesn't know how to use the computer as well – but he always asks me 'how do you do –?' It doesn't take a day to learn how to use a computer, it's very difficult to use it. But when you get used to it, you're able to use it." (Amir, 15, from London)

"My dad hasn't even got a clue. Can't even work the mouse … so I have to go on the internet for him." (Nina, 17, from Manchester)

I had to show her how to load up games and things. It was really funny. She's like going 'Right, so how do I open that?' and I was like 'Oh, nan'.

Possessing a type of expertise valued by adults has significant consequences (Facer, Sutherland, Furlong, and Furlong, 2001; Ribak, 2001). Children gain status through the public valuing of their ability to access information resources in a way which is, perhaps, unprecedented. Papert (1996) points out that for children, computers are about mastery; the internet may offer an experience of mastery not otherwise forthcoming in their lives. More concretely, they gain responsibility, and therefore some power, in the home through taking on new tasks – researching family holidays, finding information, even helping with the accounts. Thus children are reversing the hierarchical teacher-pupil relationship, teaching their parents or grandparents, as 13 year old Rosie from Derbyshire explains:

Teaching the grandparents

Rosie: **My nan has got … my step dad's old lap-top computer and - I took it over to Spain and used it 'cause I go to Spain every holiday … I had to show her how to load up games and things. It was really funny. She's like going 'Right, so how do I open that?' and I was like 'Oh, nan'.**

Interviewer: You taught her everything?

Rosie: **Yeah, because I was brought up with computers. We've all been brought up with computers 'cause my step dad builds them, and like I've got my own computer.**

This may be only a temporary role-reversal, as parents are also improving their skills, as these two 17 year olds from Manchester note:

Parents catching up

Nina: **My mum … She didn't know how to switch a computer on about two years ago. Now she can do everything on it.**

Steve: **Yeah, I'm probably the expert in my house, but not that big, because my dad's got a thing about fiddling with the computer … so he's starting to catch up with me. But my mum will only play Solitaire on it, so she doesn't like the internet or anything, she just wants to play cards on it.**

Insofar as children act as pioneers of technological developments, they may retain their advantage. On the other hand, for the 'expert' child to ask for advice or help is to relinquish some social status, possibly inhibiting such requests.

Literacy

Is this expertise broader than a set of specific technical skills? Is it rather, as it was for print media, a matter of literacy, a whole way of thinking and knowing? This emerged as a theme when we asked children how they had gained their internet skills and why some people lacked them. Here a group of 15 year old girls from Essex discuss the importance for them of learning by trial and error instead of reading a manual or being taught formally how to use the internet. The implication is that what may appear to the observer as just 'messing around' may reflect a process of 'learning through play' or 'learning by doing'.

A different way of thinking

Claire: **I don't think you can really teach anyone how to use it. You sort of just have to try yourself.**

Kim: **Yeah, I think it's better to do like trial and error because you can like learn from the mistakes from it, and you can find new places and stuff, for different sorts of things.**

Milly: **Like, um, I go to London, and if I'm lost, I just walk around until I find a tube station, and then I know where I am. But my mum would like have a map out, be like 'Where am I, ahhhhh'. They really need something to follow, to know where they are.**

While the map or rule-book analogy is a good one, for most young people the key contrast is with books – a 'boring' world of libraries and indexes, authoritative sources, endless lines of print and too few images. Using the internet as an information resource is far more fun and far more rewarding – producing images as well as text, interesting and quirky facts, as little or as much detail as needed, and all without going to the library. These views are particularly common among children and younger teens, as illustrated by this group of 14-16 year old boys from London:

The internet is seen as better than books by younger children

Interviewer: And how would you compare Encarta and the internet? If you had a project, which would you turn to first?

Several: **Internet.**

Amir: **Internet, then Encarta, then books, then people, then…**

Prince: **Encyclopaedias are hard to use really… Because there's so many, and you don't actually know which one of them to use. And how to get what you really want, except if you have a very long time.**

Interviewer: That's interesting, because I've heard people say that, exactly that, about the internet – that there's so much…

Elkan: **But if you search for something –**

Faruq: **You've got to get used to the internet. It depends how long you -**

Prince: **How long you've used it for.**

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Faruq: **[The internet] used to be really hard. But gradually you get used to it.**

Amir: **I don't find it hard to use the computer, because I got into it quickly. You learn quick because it's a very fun thing to do, to log on to computer and do whatever you want - feel.**

I personally feel more comfortable with a good set of books.

Interestingly, some older teenagers return to books. They are 'more serious about their school work' as they get older, as one respondent from this group of 16-17 year old college students from Essex put it:

Older teens return to the value of books

Marie: **I personally feel more comfortable with a good set of books.**

Abdul: **Doing research, it is easier with books than on the internet – but maybe it's quicker, because there's so much on the internet. What you want to find is really hard to find. With books it's a lot easier. I can't really use the internet for studying.**

Lorie: **I get very frustrated with the internet at times.**

Interviewer: Ok.

Lorie: **But it's good if you want to be doing some research at half eleven at night. That's the time that it comes into its own, because you can't get to a library.**

Mitch: **You don't always find what you're looking for. And when you get to college you're more serious about your work, so you choose the books … Helps you out more in the long run than just going on the internet and getting the first thing you find.**

Both these discussions, however, acknowledge the difficulties of the internet as an information source, pointing up the limits of young people's expertise online.

Critical thinking

Despite their distinctive expertise, young people admit to aspects of internet use which they find problematic. They cannot always find what they are looking for, although they know of different searching strategies. They are overwhelmed by the amount of information and find it difficult to obtain or select what they need.

Too much information

"Well, just every time I try to look for something, I can never find it. It keeps saying – you know – well it keeps coming up with things that are completely irrelevant to the actual thing that you search for. And a load of old rubbish really." (Heather, 17, from Essex)

I'll sometimes type in something, and I'll get pages of, you know … for that search, and it's just, I can never find what I'm looking for. Unless you are willing to spend an hour going through each page. It's ridiculous."
(Hazel, 17, from Essex)

However, it was encouraging to see that the youngest group of respondents, a group of 10-11 year old primary school children, was aware of how to narrow down searches, perhaps a sign for improving searching skills. The girls explained how to find information about the British explorer Sir Francis Drake on Google.

Searching for project information

Ellen: **We type in "Francis Drake", and then you make it smaller and smaller, like narrow it down until you've got what you want.**

Interviewer: How do you do that?

Ellen: **If you type in – if you wanted to find out Francis Drake – his life, you can put "Sir Francis Drake", and it would come up with loads of stuff, and if you wanted to know about a certain part of his life, you would type that in.**

Emma: **"Sir Francis Drake, age when he died", something like that.**

Ellen: **"Sir Francis Drake, when he went in the Armada".**

Holly: **We've been taught to narrow it down.**

Even more important than the efficiency of their searching is their evaluation of the information obtained. Myths about the internet are commonplace, especially among the younger respondents, and in general an awareness of the motives behind websites and a critical attitude towards their trustworthiness is only now developing.[10]

Trust

Children and young people tend to be ignorant of the motives behind the websites they were using and many, it was clear, have not thought about this question. Few are aware of the commercial interests or persuasive strategies at work.

Why do people develop websites?

"Because there's some people that have nothing better to do than make a website that's … about rubbish …" (Jim, 14, from Essex)

"Because someone's interested in what it is. Somebody's just thought this is my interest, and I'm going to share it with the world."
(Steve, 17, from Manchester)

"It's usually companies advertising something." (Stuart, 17, from Manchester)

Perhaps as a consequence of this lack of critical literacy, most tend to trust the information found online – particularly if it is professionally presented and if it neatly fits their requirements. One of the 14-16 year old London schoolboys had a more critical attitude, realising that the source of information is often unknown and cannot be checked. His class mate was convinced that comparing across websites would provide a sufficiently balanced view.

Reliability of online information

Interviewer: Is there something about why all that information - who's putting it all on the internet?

Faruq: **That's why it's not reliable!**

Interviewer: Ah, ok. Go on, Faruq.

Faruq: **It's like you don't know who's doing what, who's website it is, who wants what, who wants you to learn what. So you don't know who's put what information there, but …**

Elkan: **Half of the time though it is.**

Faruq: **It's reliable – but you don't know who's put it, who wants you to gain what from that information.**

Prince: **Why I think it's reliable is because, say you've got two different sites to go, you go to Yahoo, and you search for something, they've got lots of sites to go through. And say you go through all the sites, you get more or less the same information from all the sites.**

The question of media – or internet – literacy, encompassing not just how to find but also how to evaluate sites, is surely crucial if children are to benefit from the educational and informational opportunities provided by the internet (Livingstone, 2003).

Before concluding this section, we note that when children are seen, or see themselves, as experts online, this may not concern information searching at all. Parents appear impressed by the speed and confidence of children's style of internet use, for they click fast and furiously, if not always to great effect. And children themselves are excited by non-educational uses – passing amongst themselves the expertise to find fan sites, download music or set up an email account. Indeed, when they claim to value the internet for its information, they are more likely to mean game cheats, football results or music releases than the educational content adults hope for.

Of the various forms of expertise associated with the internet, one of the unexpected themes young people wished to discuss was hacking – a form of expertise they valued highly.

Alternative expertise - hacking and downloading music

In the older focus groups, although not claiming they could hack themselves, there always seemed to be someone who knew someone who could, supposedly, hack into websites or email accounts. Hacking is not seen as particularly difficult or extraordinary or, indeed, wrong – perhaps because of the ubiquity of downloading and writing DVDs of music and films.

Hacking

Interviewer: Would you know how to get access to someone else's email?

Mitch: **I wouldn't personally, but someone working for the government or someone like that would be able to get into your computer, just like that.**

Mark: **I know how to – I wouldn't do it, just because it's – cause, what's the point?**

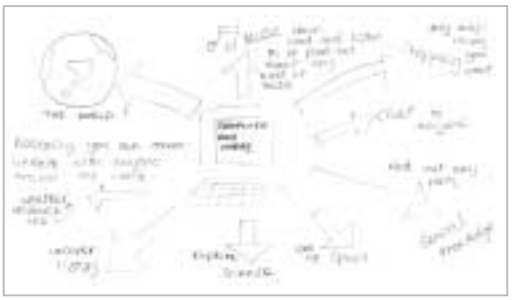
Interviewer: And how would you? Do you mean you know how to get someone else's password out of it?

Mark: **I don't know. I suppose, I could really try and hack into their account if I was really bothered. But I'm really not bothered, it's too much effort.**

Interviewer: Right.

Lorie: **I know a friend who can do it, who's our age, and he can do it. But then, what is he hacking into? If he was hacking into me, there's nothing interesting other than a couple of conversations, researching hotels, medicine sites, there isn't anything interesting. And it's when you start giving your credit card details and stuff – that's when it's – but I don't do that. So it's no real issue.**
(17 year olds, from Essex)

Children's drawings describing the internet



Since downloading music with peer-to-peer file sharing software such as Kazaa has become an everyday activity, the illegality of hacking is, perhaps, blurred by the apparent acceptability of these other, also illegal, activities (Pew, 2003).

Older teenagers, at least, realise that this activity is illegal. In a manner reminiscent of the arguments of the Open Source Movement,[11] they find their own ethical justification for downloading, copying, distributing and buying copied CDs from friends in the huge profits of the music industry compared with their own paltry resources. Like hacking, the difficulties in tracking down the culprits also serve to make this an acceptable, indeed an admirable, part of youth culture and, hence, of young people's expertise.

Downloading music – cheap but illegal?

Nina: **You don't like buy CDs from HMV any more. You just get them off one of your mates who copies CDs.**

Steve: **They get paid enough anyway, them stars.**

Stuart: **A good thing about Kazaa is that it's untraceable because it's from one person's computer to another.**

Steve: **[Napster was closed down] because I think it was based in Florida, they had one computer that was doing it all. And if they took that one down like they did, then it just collapsed. But Kazaa, it's just –**

Stuart: **All different people.**

Steve: **There's no central [server], so it's untraceable.**
(17 year olds, from Manchester)

Notwithstanding their fascination with alternative forms of expertise, we conclude that although they are enthusiastically developing a range of skills for internet use, becoming increasingly sophisticated as they get older, children's so-called expertise is limited in important ways. This is partly a matter of training, partly the responsibility of teachers and parents,[12] but also a matter of interface design (Fasick, 1992; Machill, Neuberger, and Schindler, 2003), for the difficulties of searching should not always be laid at the door of the user. Lastly, much depends on the quality of online experiences: feeling encouraged and confident to explore the internet freely is crucial to getting the most out of it.

You don't like buy CDs from HMV any more. You just get them off one of your mates who copies CDs.

Theme 2: Opportunities for communication, identity and participation

Constant contact

Adults may wish children to go online for educational reasons.[13] Children's own motivation primarily centres on the new opportunities for communication. What changes are underway in social networks as online communication becomes commonplace? The most striking change is the way young people are embracing 'constant connection' – they are, and wish to be, 'always on', continuously in touch with their friends.[14]

Even if or, indeed, precisely because they have already seen them at school that day, in the evening young people want to phone their friends from home, chat via instant messaging or send text messages. Interestingly, despite the image of girls being more enthusiastic about communication than boys, we found boys as likely as girls to express this need to contact their friends.

The 'always on' generation

"Even if you've just seen them at school like, it'll be like you're texting them or talking to them on the phone or on MSN." (Kim, 15, Essex)

"Classes get in the way – you can't talk enough in school."
(Sean, 15, from Essex)

"I email my best friend in the evenings 'cause like, sometimes, she's just like, she's been at my house for tea or something. She goes home and goes straight on the internet, and we'll email each other again."
(Rosie, 13, from Derbyshire)

The content of these conversations may seem mundane or trivial to adult observers, being focused on day-to-day topics, gossip and talk for the sake of talk. But the point is less the content than the contact, the keeping in touch, being in the loop, all of which takes a considerable effort to sustain. Moreover, since young people multi-task – chatting while doing homework or waiting for music to download – the communicative aspect of the internet makes the rest more pleasurable.

Integrating on and offline communication

Online communication is rarely an escape from or an alternative to real life. The popular opposition between online and offline, or virtual and real, communication is inappropriate. Young people are not divided into sociable kids who meet face-to-face and isolated loners who chat to strangers online. Rather, young people use both on and offline communication to sustain their social networks, moving freely among different communication forms (Drotner, 2000; Pew, 2001b). The more they meet offline, the more they also meet online, or so it would seem. Hence, for all but the already-isolated – for whom the explanation lies elsewhere - the internet appears to foster, rather than undermine, existing social contacts (Slater, 2002), connecting children more fully into their local networks.

Old and new friends

'Local' is the key term here because, as the integration of on and offline communication implies, contacts are generally local rather than distant (or 'virtual'), with friends rather than strangers. Access to new communication technologies need not result in a larger or geographically wider social circle.

Particularly, we see little evidence for the 'global village' hyped in earlier discussions of the internet.

However, the internet does permit some broadening of everyday networks, strengthening already-existing relationships which are otherwise hard to maintain – friends from abroad, distant relatives, staying in touch with people who have moved.

Keeping in touch with old friends

"I think mobile phones and the internet are a good way of keeping in contact with friends. For example, I have friends in other countries who use MSN. I can send them an email everyday rather than phoning them up and running up a huge phone bill, or sending them a text message. And it's just a good way of keeping in contact with people." (Lorie, 17, from Essex)

"I'd probably have lost contact with a lot of my friends from my last school without MSN. Can't phone everybody … The really close friends I still phone … I'd much rather see someone than keep in touch via the internet." (John, 17, from Essex)

Some young people told us that they have built up large friendship networks on the internet and report large numbers of contacts on their MSN 'buddy list', mostly friends from school or 'friends of friends', as these 13 year old boys from Derbyshire note:

Expanding networks

Interviewer: So who do you email?

Toby: **Friends.**

Interviewer: From school?

Toby: **Not usually. Sometimes I email cousins and relatives quite far away.**

Interviewer: And on instant messaging, who do you talk to?

Cameron: **I mainly talk to my friends. Some of my friends' friends.**

The question of making new friends online is the subject of some debate among young people themselves. Most say they were not interested in talking to people they did not know on the internet, preferring to communicate with friends as they feel they can relate better to them.

Conversations with strangers as meaningless

"If you're talking to someone on the internet who's a friend, you actually talk to them saying stuff, but feelings and everything are real, and the stuff you're saying means stuff, but if you're talking to someone you haven't met, how do you know if what they're telling you is the truth? You don't really mean some things you say, like, it is a bit fake." (Mark, 17, from Essex)

Children who have chatted to strangers online describe it as 'weird', referring to unknown online contacts as 'dodgy'. They say they 'don't see the point in meeting up with someone they don't know', such as this group of 14-15 year old boys from Essex, who refer to the recent case of a British girl who flew off to France with a man she met online.[15]

No point talking to strangers

Ryan: **I don't see the point of going on chat rooms and starting talking to someone and then flying to France to meet them.**

Sean: **I wouldn't really be bothered –**

Ryan: **No, to meet someone you hadn't seen before.**

Jim: **There's no point going on a chat room to meet my new best friend or something!**

Teens tend to prefer instant messaging to chat rooms because 'you know who you're talking to' – a phrase used over and over in the focus groups. They are clearly aware of adverts and media reports warning children of online dangers.

You don't know who you're talking to

"I use instant messaging because if I didn't have that, I wouldn't go in chat rooms because chat rooms, sort of, you really don't know who you're talking to. Whereas instant messaging – you do know who you are talking to, and you can sort of … you can't give out information that might be important to you." (Cameron, 13, from Derbyshire)

"Because of all these adverts about paedophiles and stuff, so it's just best to stick with people that you know." (Sean, 15, from Essex)

But some children are interested in meeting new people online, enjoying the opportunity to 'pretend to be someone else'.

Meeting new people online

"I've got a couple of people I don't really know on instant messaging but I talk to them anyway … But I don't really tell them the truth – there's no point, I don't even know them." (Jenna, 13, from Derbyshire)

These 14-16 year old boys from London are just at the point of moving on from this kind of chat – they recall the pleasure of 'messing around' in chat rooms, but have now become bored with it.

Becoming bored with chat rooms

Faruq: **Chat rooms aren't the most reliable, and it's dangerous as well.**

Amir: **It is a bit, yeah.**

Faruq: **I know a lot of people go to chat rooms just to have a laugh … Boys and girls go on there, flirting a lot … I used to do that before, I used to go to these chat rooms, but then I realised …**

Elkan: **You grow out of it some time.**

Faruq: **I don't think you could grow out of it.**

Amir: **It's just like you get bored sometimes, you might go on it today, you might go on it tomorrow, depends.**

Faruq: **If you've time, it's like most of the things, most of the time – it depends on what you have to do. If you haven't got nothing to do, you can talk to someone.**

Interviewer: And then you meet people? Or you just kind of tell jokes, mess around, or…

Faruq: **Mess around.**

Amir: **Mess around, yeah. Fake names … Sometimes some people – my friend, they went – I don't know if it's them – they could say 'I'm a girl' and you can start saying 'this is how I look, this is my phone number'. And when you call them, you actually know it's your friend! It hasn't actually happened to me. But I know this happened.**

We discuss the attendant risks of chatting to strangers in the next section. One wonders, however, whether the age and gender of the young people quoted above is significant – are boys more sceptical of strangers, is it younger teens, especially girls, who are more likely to run risks? Certainly it was very noticeable that older teens are turning away from chat rooms, choosing instant messaging instead.

From chat to instant messaging

When interviewing teens three years ago (Livingstone and Bovill, 2001), it was common practice among them to agree, before the end of the school day, to meet later in a certain chat room at a certain time. Notwithstanding the public perception of chat rooms as a place designed for meeting strangers, teens treated chat rooms as places for their personal network to meet up. This illustrates the process of social shaping (McKenzie and Wajcman, 1999), with users creatively reshaping the chat room into something more suited to their needs, for here the demand for a communicative form lead to the subsequent development of the technology - instant messaging. Today, teens meet using instant messaging, leaving chat rooms to the playful games of younger teens.

Communication choices

This activity of adapting the communicative form to one's communicative needs and interests points up a broader theme in the focus groups, namely the complexity of the choices underlying young people's uses of media. While public discourse tends to judge online communication against an ideal of face-to-face communication, young people themselves embrace a wider range of options – face-to-face, writing, email, instant message, chat rooms, telephone, SMS. In other words, rather than accepting the supposed superiority of face-to-face communication, young people evaluate the suitability of different options for different communicative needs according to a range of criteria.

Immediacy

Some factors influencing the choice of a communication technology are practical, as these 17 year old boys from Manchester explain.

Convenience

Interviewer: So when do you phone somebody rather than email or text them?

Stuart: **If you want to speak to them immediately. 'Cause email, they've got to be on the internet, they've got to see it. For emergencies. And for convenience.**

Steve: **Because with an email it takes time. Because you can type it out, and then you'll always see something that's wrong with it. So you want to try and reword it so it makes more sense. But on the phone normally they can get what you mean by your tone and stuff.**

Complexity

The length of the message matters. Text messaging is used for short messages, the telephone and email for long ones.

Length of message

"Emailing, I just do it like if it's not a long bit to say and not a short bit to say … But text messaging, I just ask questions – it's just short questions. And phoning, I just have a long conversation with people, about nothing really." (Beatrice, 13, from Essex)

I know a lot of people go to chat rooms just to have a laugh … Boys and girls go on there, flirting a lot … I used to do that before, I used to go to these chat rooms.

Mobility

The mobile phone enables children and young people to be in contact with their friends from anywhere (Ling, 2000), by comparison with which the fixed location of the desktop computer is an important constraint.

Texting from anywhere

"I think using mobile or text is a bit easier because you can do it while, like while you're in the middle of the supermarket, and then you can arrange to meet someone." (Joe, 13, from Derbyshire)

This mobility confers advantages for parents wishing to supervise their children's activities (Logemann and Feldhaus, 2001).

Mobile phone and parental control

"My mum wants me to have my phone with me all the time because I come to school on the train so if the train's delayed or cancelled, I have to get in contact with my mum. Or if I'm going out shopping, if anything happens, I have to get in contact with my mum or she can get in contact with me if she's going out or something like that." (Rosie, 13, from Derbyshire)

Connecting technologies

Young people use the mobile phone in conjunction with the internet, as this 14 year old boy from Essex explains:

From text to instant message

Ryan: **So you can go on MSN, and if the person's not online, and they've done the phone link thing, you type in the conversation, press enter, and it just sends a text to their phone.**

Interviewer: That's very good, right. And then they can go and get on MSN if they want to.

Ryan: **Yeah, basically if they want to talk to us, yes, they can just go online.**

Cost

Children are very conscious of the financial cost when choosing which communication technology to use. Often having to pay their mobile phone bill themselves, they prefer to use the mobile for sending text messages than for calls. And they prefer instant messaging to texting because it is **'like sending a text to someone but with no money'** (Jim, 14, from Essex).

Costs of instant messaging versus text messaging

Steve: **You get – what is it – thirty pound a month for broadband and you get to use it as much as you want. So if you use it a lot, the cost is like a fraction of a penny.**

Interviewer: Yep. And you're conscious of the cost of sending a text on your phone?

All: **Yes**.

Nina: **Because you don't really see the cost when you're in there, but you know when all your credit's run out on your phone.**
(17 year olds, from Manchester)

Privacy

More personal issues are also at stake when choosing how to communicate with friends. 13 year old Beatrice from Essex was not alone in describing how talking in a private online space enabled friends to be more open with each other, an important factor in girls' friendships. Face-to-face communication, in this context, is too visible and, thus, subject to peer pressure.

Saying what you really think

"When you're like talking to them face-to-face, you're like – you've got other people around you, and they can't tell you what they really think. So like instant messaging, you can." (Beatrice, 13, from Essex)

Again, because of the risk of others overhearing a face-to-face conversation, the 10-11 year old girls from Hertfordshire liked emailing secrets to their friends.

Telling secrets

Interviewer: What do you write to them?

Sally: **Sort of secrets and stuff.**

Interviewer: And why do you write secrets on email and not just tell them when you see them?

Sally: **'Cause they can make their mind up. When they've got people there, they don't always say what – when they've got people there.**

Ellen: **And sometimes if you've got the email address of the person you fancy, write it to them.**

Embarrassment

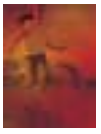
Some, boys particularly, prefer online communication for private conversations as a face-saving device. Here too, face-to-face conversation, far from being ideal, can be risky and difficult for teenagers, as 13 year old Cameron from Derbyshire illustrates.

Awkward situations

Cameron: **I once dumped my old girlfriend by email.**

Interviewer: Really? Why did you do that by email?

Cameron: **Well, it was cowardly really. I couldn't say it face-to-face.**



These 15 year old girls from Essex agree, arguing that the internet creates a protective distance which enables them to think more about what they are going to say and avoid embarrassing situations that would occur on the telephone or face-to-face.

Keeping a protective distance

Milly: **It's like you don't have to answer immediately, it's not like you have to keep the conversation going. You can think about what you want to say … It's not embarrassing. Because like, on the phone, you can hear when someone's voice sounds embarrassed.**

Kim: **You can just tell.**

Milly: **It's really obvious when you're face-to-face. So on the internet you can just say anything, it doesn't really matter. And if they like take it really badly, you just say you're joking.**

Overcoming shyness

13 year old Laura from Essex thinks it is possible to get to know someone who is shy at school better by talking to them on instant messenger.

Getting to know someone better

Because you can get to know people really what they're like, at home, and stuff like that … like if someone was really, really shy at school, they don't talk much, and they a bit liven up at home, they talk to you more, I think. (Laura, 13, from Essex)

Privacy again

Older teenagers, on the other hand, prefer to hold private conversations face-to-face which they think is more secure than online communication. They are concerned about the possibility of someone 'spying' on online conversations, as these 17 year old girls from Essex suggest. The confidence with which they talk about private and personal conversations suggests these girls have moved on from the problems of embarrassment and peer pressure which preoccupy younger teens. Now they are more concerned that their privacy is secure.

Older teens prefer talking face-to-face

Hazel: **If you wanted to have a private conversation, then I'm sure you'd talk to them face-to-face rather than using the internet, because if you know they can be listened to, or someone else can see what you're doing, then I wouldn't have thought that you'd want that to happen. So you'd therefore talk to them, meet up and talk to them face-to-face.**

Stephanie: **Exactly. 'Cause that friend could be with someone anyway. Or they can cut and paste your conversation into someone else's internet conversation. So that is – I don't think anyone would be that silly to discuss their private [life] on MSN.**

Hazel: **I mean, you've got all these advice things, haven't you – I mean, you can talk to Doctor What's-His-Face and psychiatrists, can't you? So I don't know if I'd ever do something like that. Again I'd probably go to talk to them, go to a clinic or whatever, or wherever they are and talk to them, rather than use the internet.**

It's really obvious when you're face-to-face. So on the internet you can just say anything, it doesn't really matter. And if they like take it really badly, you just say you're joking.

Advice

Young people differ among themselves on whether the internet represents a useful way of getting advice on personal problems (such as family or relationship problems, health or sexual matters) via specialist websites or online communities.[16] As with the debate over the value of chatting to strangers, for some young people, especially for girls, seeking advice online is less embarrassing as it can be done anonymously. These two 17 year old girls from Manchester told us that they had used the internet to ask advice on personal problems.

Seeking personal advice online

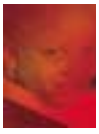
Nina: **If it was something you didn't want people to know about, then you'd probably say it in a chat room, because they don't know you, and you can just forget about it once it's gone.**

Shannon: **They have a website called HealthyPlace.com.**

Interviewer: Right. Tell me about that.

Shannon: **If you have a problem - my friend goes on it, she has loads of problems, and she goes on it, and they talk to her and give her advice.**

Nina: **I think it's good 'cause you don't have to go through the embarrassment afterwards.**



However, most prefer to speak to people they know, such as friends and family, face-to-face, and older teens are concerned whether their online conversations would stay private.

Multiple criterion decision-making

In sum, children and young people relish this new and complex communication environment. They make subtle and deliberate choices according to multiple criteria, some of which concern the medium and some of which concern the age or personality of the child. We still know too little about the implications of online peer networks for identity.[17] Suffice it to say that through their enthusiastic experimentation young people are again pioneers in constructing the emerging perceptions and conventions surrounding different forms of communication.

From communication to participation?

Does online communication transcend interpersonal matters to encourage participation in local or political communities? The internet has been hailed as the technology to bring direct democracy to the masses, enabling citizens to directly participate in politics (Bentivegna, 2002).

Some organisations are now initiating interesting opportunities for public or civic participation of one kind or another. Thus far, experience suggests that young people often value opportunities for participation when offered, although in practice these tend to be restricted in scope and tightly controlled (Coleman, 2003; Sundin, 1999).[18]

Online participation

The young people we interviewed are generally disillusioned about or not interested in the possibility of political participation via the internet. Over and again the conversation flagged when we turned to the idea of connecting to the world of politics via the internet. The same occurred when we discussed local community participation or invited children to discuss their school website. This negative view was expressed with some cynicism by 17 year old Heather from Essex.

Not interested in politics

Interviewer: The other thing people say is that the internet makes things more democratic. Because now you could email your MP, or go on a political chat room…

Heather: **Yeah, you can email him, but is he going to listen?**

For this group of 17 year olds from Manchester, finding a career is more important than getting involved in political matters.

Other things more relevant than politics

Interviewer: Politics is a bad word, is it?

Steve: **Yeah.**

Stuart: **The good thing about the internet is that you can find jobs and –**

Steve: **You can find next to anything that you want.**

Shannon: **And any classes and that what you want to join in.**

This suggests that young people's idea of participation in realms beyond their immediate networks is highly functional. Indeed, when we asked about emailing organisations, government bodies or anyone outside their local contacts, the only answer they could offer concerned contacting universities by email or consulting the web when researching their future studies. Nor did they express much interest in setting up their own personal homepage and creating their own online content, even though some of the older respondents had been taught the basics of web design at school.

While their lack of interest in politics is undeniable and, especially for those approaching 18, a matter of concern, young people are finding other ways to participate - through fandom, expanding friendship networks or even peer-to-peer file sharing networks for downloading music. Such participation is often highly meaningful to young people. Even if it seems to have no direct political consequences, perhaps these are the precursory activities of participants in new social movements?[19]

Participating in fan communities

"I remember, once on the internet, I was in this chat room, and recently a footballer died – Mark Vivian Foe. And then this boy said – I think it was a boy – and he said – he was from Africa, 'Can we have one minute silence – no typing – for Foe'. And everyone – no-one typed for a minute. It was a blank screen for one minute." (Amir, 15, from London)

However, such participation tends to link young people not to a public or civic network but to the world of commerce. This 15 year old girl from London prefers emailing celebrities than politicians.

Emailing celebrities

Padma: **I get in touch with celebrities once in a while, and they send an email back …**

Interviewer: If you email a celebrity, who do you think replies? Do they reply, or is it their secretary?

Padma: **Yeah, sometimes you get personal – sometimes you get a secretary – but sometimes you get personal emails back. They personally get back to you.**

Interviewer: Right, right. Ok. And what kind of things do you say to them?

Padma: **Just compliment them on what it is they do, or ask them for something like a fan t-shirt. But if you're like a regular person, you get the real celebrity answering back to you. But if you're just like a one off, they're like 'oh well'.**

Interviewer: But Padma, you feel you're more likely to get a response by email than if you wrote to somebody?

Padma: **Yeah. I get like a – sometimes, like, two weeks, every two weeks, I get personal mails from celebrities. My favourite celebrities. That's ok!**

Interviewer: Ok, ok. But you don't get in touch with politicians, or …
[LAUGHTER]

Padma: **I'm not really interested in [politics] exactly. They all chat crap, so …**

As with Heather's comment earlier, it is clear that for Padma participation must be two-way: young people will not visit websites if they think no-one is attending to them or that only an official rather than a personal response will be forthcoming.

Theme 3: Dangers of content, contact and commercialism

Use of the internet poses particular threats to children and young people. Consistent with the three categories of online threat identified by Childnet International (Williams, 2002), the research literature thus far has concentrated on exposure to sexual and pornographic content, on the incidence of exploitative and dangerous contacts, and on issues of privacy, advertising and commercialism. The focus groups did not address advertising, branding or online commercialism other than in relation to young people's readiness to trust, rather than critically evaluate, online information (see earlier).[20] This section will concentrate on pornographic content and unsafe contact.

Content

Feilitzen and Carlsson (2000) map the availability of online pornography, finding much that could upset or embarrass children. Whether pornographic websites are experienced as problematic by young people and their families is less clear (Sutter, 2000). Survey estimates of children's exposure to undesirable online sexual material and their engagement in risky behaviours vary widely.[21] Does internet use result in actual harm to children and young people?[22] Thus far it seems that not all risks taken result in worrying incidents and not all worrying incidents result in actual or lasting harm. But there are also sufficient reasons for concern.[23]

Young people commonly claim to have come across pornography online, usually accidentally. They see it as part of the media environment more generally, it also being available through videos, magazines and newspapers.[24] Here gender plays more of a role. While some respondents regard it as unwelcome, especially the younger teenage and mid teen girls, others, especially teenage boys, express curiosity about sexual matters and are not opposed to seeing it. This was freely debated at some length by a group of 14-16 year old boys from London.

Differing opinions

Amir: **It's just what teenagers do, I mean, it's only hormones. Some people deal with it, some people don't. Some people I know they go on it because – some people just have fun.**

Prince: **I don't think there's anything good about watching porn movies or porn sites.**

Amir: **I don't think there's nothing wrong with it.**

Prince: **What I'm saying is, what good is it? If you – I mean – there's nothing wrong – I don't think there's any point in watching porn movies, because it's just, like, people say there's pleasure in it, but I don't think there's no pleasure. I think – I've seen some porn movies, yeah, but I've come to realise there's no point.**

Elkan: **Sometimes I find them funny.**

Amir: **I just find it's a good experience!**

Consequently, they do not think online pornography should be restricted. They do, however, agree that it is more available on than offline.

Restrict online pornography?

Amir: **On MSN, you can get jokes sites and nasty like jokey sites – I mean there's some pictures of Somalian people that look like J-Lo[25] , just like comparisons like that. There was a picture of a black lady who had humungous breasts, they were down to her knees. They were so big! Just little things like that just pop up.**

Interviewer: And do you think they should be stopped?

Several: **No.**

Elkan: **I reckon they should carry on, because –**

Amir: **You get bored with just the same actual thing. Put different things on.**

Faruq: **Everyone's got access to it, some people like, just got different tastes – a little button saying 'if you want to see' –**

Interviewer: Rather than just having it pop up, and there it is. Yeah. But is the internet added – I mean, is there more on the internet, or is this just what you could see if you go into the newsagent?

Prince: **There's more, much more on the internet.**

Elkan: **There's a newspaper that has it – Page 3, on The Sun – it influences kids to –**

Prince: **I reckon there's much more on the internet.**

However, their classmates, a group of 15 year old girls from the same school, are offended and embarrassed by online pornography. One of the girls explained how she accidentally came across pornographic pictures that had been downloaded onto the home computer by her older cousins who live in the same house.

Girls offended by online pornography

"Every time I pass, they've got a computer in the backroom, yeah, so every time I pass them, not really every, every time, but once I passed them, they're watching porn. They download it on the computer – the oldest one, he said he used to download it … You see, they watch it in Windows Media Player, and whenever I go to play music, it will be there. But I change it. But they've got them in their documents." (Tanya, 15 years, from London)

As a group of 17 year olds from Essex argue, pornography is easier to find on the internet, compared to other media such as television or the newsagent.

The internet is like life, only easier

Marie: **To be honest, a lot of those sites you wouldn't find by accident, and if you do, they normally have like a warning page before you enter it.**

Lorie: **The internet is just like life as I see it, but just easier. So if these 13 or 14 year olds want to find stuff, they're going to find it in real life or on the internet.**

John: **It's not accidental on the TV or the newsagents – it's there for a reason. On the internet, you can get it by accident.**

Scott: **I don't think there is realistically any way it can be censored completely. So I think, yeah, you just have to try and avoid it as best as possible.**

For some young people, especially girls, the greater exposure to pornography on than offline is problematic. This is particularly because it is not restricted to leisure contexts, also intruding into educational uses, as this group of 13 year old girls from Derbyshire complain when pointing out that boys go on 'porn' and 'rude' websites.

Just for the boys

Interviewer: Why do boys go on porn?

All: **Because they just like – like fit women.**

Rosie: **Like Geography, we were doing this um, Australia project and obviously there's Kylie Minogue, Holly Valance and Delta Goodrem. All from 'Neighbours'[26] or whatever.**

Interviewer: Yeah, but that's not porn, is it?

Rosie: **No, but – we were getting images, and obviously Holly Valance is a very pretty girl and um – and, one of my friends, he decided – we were looking through the images trying to choose which one we wanted [for our Australia project], and he decided we were going to get the one where Holly Valance – there was Holly Valance and with another girl, and they had hardly any clothes on whatsoever, so they wanted that one straight away.**

Interviewer: So was that at school?

Rosie: **That was in school, yeah.**

Interviewer: There are no blocks? [internet filtering software]

Rosie: **There are blocks, there are blocks.**

Interviewer: And what did your teacher do when he saw that?

Rosie: **Then we didn't print it off in the end.**

The London girls spoke of a similar incident in their school, this highlighting some day to day struggles between teachers and pupils to manage internet use.

Boys downloading pornography at school

Tanya: **Yeah, these boys, they just go onto the internet, they download it, they put it on as screensaver.**

Padma: **I don't know where they get it from.**

Tanya: **It's just sick.**

Nabila: **If you - if you have Hotmail, that's when you get junk mail, loads of it.**

Interviewer: And they put it on the screensaver [or rather, desktop wallpaper] on the computer, in school?

Several: **Yeah.**

Interviewer: And so what do the IT people do?

Nabila: **There was an argument.**

Tanya: **Sometimes they hardly see, but -**

Salimah: **But then [they] told that person to take it off.**

Padma: **But they didn't.**

Salimah: **But they're like 'Yeah, but there's nothing bad about it', and all this stuff. In the end they had to take it off.**

Interviewer: Ok. So you think it's something that the boys are into, but you're not?

Tanya: **It's just disgusting.** [GIGGLES]

Interviewer: Do you think it should be stopped then?

Several: **Yeah.**

Interviewer: Is it – if it's disgusting, does it upset you? Does it make you feel -

Nabila: **I think it's disgusting looking at people revealing themselves.**

On the other hand, other respondents, especially older teenagers, appear more indifferent towards pornography, as this 15 year old girl from Essex explains.

Not such a problem

Milly: **I think there's way too much hype about it. Because I use the internet loads. And you so, so, so rarely come across something that – maybe like a pop-up for a porn site. But that's hardly-**

Interviewer: Ok.

Milly: **Once you're into your teenage years, you've got used to the idea that people have sex. It's not really that scary any more.**

However, although teens may consider that they can protect themselves, all agree that younger children should be protected, for example by setting up internet filtering software, as expressed by these 17 year olds from Essex:

Younger children should be protected

Heather: **No, I definitely don't want to see that. No, it doesn't upset me. I know what's out there so I know it's there and … yeah.**

John: **It doesn't really bother me. I know it's there, and you can just move on to something else you find … It doesn't really matter when you're our age. But I mean, for little kids … maybe the parents should set it up. But when you're like 17 or about – it doesn't really matter. Just ignore it, just move on.**

We return to the theme of parental protection below.

Contact

Most public concern centres on the growing incidence of unwanted or inappropriate sexual contact made to teenagers by adult strangers. The Pew Internet and American Life Project (2001b) found that nearly 60% of 12-17 year olds online had received messages (of any kind) from strangers. NOP's Kids.net survey found that 29% of UK children using the internet would give out their home address and 14% their email address (Wigley and Clarke, 2000). The Chatwise, Streetwise Report (Internet-Crime-Forum, 2000) charted mounting evidence of actual crimes against children, suggesting that incidents of adult sex offenders meeting children online are increasing, the key group at risk being girls aged 13-17.

Chat room dangers

Fortunately, many young people are now getting the message. We have seen that chat rooms are losing popularity in favour of instant messaging. In part, this reflects the success of media awareness campaigns warning children of the risks, as this 13 year old boy from Essex describes:

Paedophiles in chat rooms

Alan: **There's obviously the scare of paedophiles and people like that on chat rooms –**

Interviewer: And how do you know there are paedophiles in chat rooms?

Alan: **Well, it's on the news, and there are ad campaigns against it. It's just a kind of thing that you realise there's probably someone on it who is a paedophile or like a child sex-abuser or someone, and you don't really want to kind of meet one of them or speak to one of them.**

These 10 year olds from Hertfordshire were impressed by Coronation Street's treatment of this issue, although the experience of one of the girls is more personal. She tells of a friend who was attacked by someone she had met in a chat room.

Mediated and personal encounters with danger

Ellen: **Because adults can like turn their voices into younger children, and like they can ask for pictures and stuff and ask to meet you. If you give away your name and address, they could –**

Holly: **Get you involved in drugs and stuff and that sort of thing.**

Interviewer: And how do you know that can happen? Because you've never been in a chat room –

Holly: **I've seen it on a TV programme.**

Ellen: **You can get killed as well.**

Interviewer: What was the TV programme?

Holly: **It was Coronation Street. With – what was she called? David? Sarah? Sarah. She went onto a chat room with her friend and she was meeting this boy, and he pretended to be the boy's dad, but he was actually a boy, and he told her.**

Ellen: **And he kidnapped her.**

Holly: **And like, it just told me that, they could be lying, and they could get you into serious danger or trouble.**

Ellen: **Sometimes people get killed, I've seen it before, when people go on chat rooms. The person's told them to meet them somewhere, and they've hurt them, kidnapped them…**

Sally: **In Eastenders.**

Holly: **I know it's true because it happened to my old friend, but I don't see her now.**

Interviewer: What happened?

Holly: **Because she went into this chat room, and she thought she had this friend, and she thought it was one of her friends, like there was a friend on there that she had met, so she met up with him in the park, and she got beaten up.**

While increased safety awareness is a positive outcome of media publicity, this is associated with considerable parental anxiety. For some, a further outcome is a simple ban on the use of chat rooms, email or specific content.

Internet rules

Holly: **You're not allowed to give your last name to any website.**

Ellen: **At home I'm not allowed to go on chat rooms.**

Holly: **At school you're not allowed to go on any websites like –**

Interviewer: Websites like what?

Ellen: **Like EastEnders websites or stuff like that.**
(10 year old girls, from Hertfordshire)

For young children, restrictive responses are perhaps appropriate, although children's understanding of these responses reveals a confusing mix of reality and myth.

Chat room dangers and myths

"My mum doesn't let me go on chat rooms ... They find out your address and come and rob you and things. That's why I don't go on it."
(Adrian, 10, from Hertfordshire)

"I would say that chat rooms would be dangerous because, like Cameron said before, you don't know who you're talking to. And then if you give your address, then they can come and kidnap you or something. And take you away. It's just, I think it's on the news. I remember someone's got into a chat room and gone off to Paris." (Joe, 13, from Derbyshire)

Assessing the risks

While younger children have been impressed by media stories, older teenagers seek to assess the risks by comparing them with other risks encountered in real life, as pointed out by these 15 year old girls from Manchester.

Risks online versus offline

Claire: **I think there is a little bit of a risk obviously because it's going to be due to all the stuff, but I don't think it's that high at all.**

Kim: **No, not compared to like walking in country lanes at night.**

Interviews with parents confirm that fears of danger to young people on the street are more salient than online threats (Livingstone, 2002b). Given that young people are highly constrained in their freedom offline, to increase constraints online is unfortunate.

Chat rooms safer than real life

"On the internet you feel physically safer because you know no-one can beat you up on the internet and do any physical harm. When you live round my way … it gets a bit rough sometimes , you know, you don't want to go out on the streets that much." (Steve, 17, from Manchester)

"The internet, you can control what's going on, but when you're outside, you can't." (Prince, 16, from London)

Taking risks

Perhaps the perception of the 'comparative safety' of the internet leads some teens to take greater risks than is advisable. In the focus group discussions, we identified several hints as to why safe practices might be ignored on occasion (see also O'Connell, 2002).

First, even among those aware of the risks, young people may gain social status by meeting people on the internet.

It's nice to say I've met someone online

"I've got about five buddies on my thing but you can't really say, oh, this is a young girl, she's got brown hair, blue eyes, 'cause she could be an old – she could be a he and it's an old man but I suppose it's quite nice to just say, oh, I've met someone on the internet." (Rosie, 13, from Derbyshire)

Second, when young people encounter dubious aspects of the internet, they may avoid talking to their parents about it, as this in turn involves the risk of losing their internet access.

Not telling parents

"Talking to them about internet is bad for you and stuff. They might try and think about taking the internet off your computer, which isn't good for us."
(Amir, 15 years, from London)

Third, as this London boy also confesses, when young people get involved in an interesting conversation, they simply forget about the risks.

Forgetting about the risks

Amir: **When you're actually on the chat rooms, you don't think of what's happened to this person, if someone's chatting to you, you're having an interesting conversation.**

Interviewer: Right, right. So then you might forget about some of the risks?

Amir: **Yeah.**

Fourth, as Amir's friend explains, young people may think they are safe in chat rooms because they see themselves as sensible.

Common sense

"I also think that people have got common sense. If you hear on the news because someone got lost because they went to a chat room and chatting to people, I think they'll use their common sense to know they shouldn't do this … And I also think it's the situation some people are in, to just go in chat rooms and stuff – maybe the family's not settled and things like that."
(Prince, 16, from London)

As in other safety or public information campaigns, it seems that it is easier to get the message across than it is to ensure safe practices under all circumstances. In addition to seeking to maintain high levels of safety awareness, public campaigns could become better targeted to counter the specific conditions which lead some children to take risks online.

Parental responses and domestic regulation

In response to the risks, parents are developing rules for managing their children's internet use. Many children report their parents monitoring or restricting them.

Parental worries

"Sometimes my mum might, like when I'm on MSN, she goes 'Hope you're not going to chat rooms' and stuff because she hears loads of stuff. So I just say I'm chatting to my friends and she can see that. So I think she knows I wouldn't go into chat rooms because – it's only weirdos – like in Coronation Street, that one that Sarah Lou went and met a pervert." (Kim, 15, from Essex)

"There's all these scares going about. If you go into a chat room you'll be abducted by a dirty old man. I know it's not necessarily all that but ... It's just that my parents are a bit worried about it, and it is possible."
(Rachel, 13, from Derbyshire)

"On AOL, you can only like go into certain chat rooms. So they've always got hosts and they're watching over. And my mum's always in there watching me as well when I'm in a chat room to check there's no trouble."
(Rosie, 13, from Derbyshire)

Regulation may be triggered by personal experiences. Hazel, 17, describes how her father restricted her and her younger sister's use of instant messaging after the sister was sent a message which contained a link to pornographic material.

Parental restrictions

"My dad, not being funny, but he is a bit like – he doesn't let me go on the internet very often, because we had an incident one day, where my sister – it wasn't to do with me, it was to do with my sister – she had, she was on MSN, and some one sent her something through. And it was actually like – it was like porn – so my dad saw it, and he was like very angry – so he doesn't let us use MSN now. And I think that's one of the issues where I probably don't use it as much now, because basically I'm not allowed. He has restricted what we do on it. If it's for school purposes or for college purposes, that's fine, but the social side of it and downloading the different things – he's a bit anti." (Hazel, 17, from Essex)

A variety of solutions are put into practice. Toby explains how his father has set up different accounts for him and his younger brothers with different levels of protection.

Internet filtering at home

"We have different names to log onto the computer, it's not just one. You can set up your own thing. So my dad's got hardly any [restrictions] on it. I've got, you know, quite a bit. But my brothers, they've blocked out most of the stuff, so they can only go on very limited sites." (Toby, 13, from Derbyshire)

The parents of these 10-11 year old primary school girls have set up parental controls which block 'nasty emails' and stop the girls from accessing chat rooms or making online purchases.

Parental controls

Emma: It restricts the websites that you can go on. And – because my one at home – my uncle set it up for me. And it stops people emailing you like nasty emails, and you can't send like nasty emails back to them. And it deletes their email, so if like really bad people email you, it changes your email for you automatically for you sometimes.

Sally: It also stops you going on websites you're not meant to go on.

Interviewer: And what kinds of websites are those that are blocked?

Ellen: Chat rooms.

Emma: And if you want to go like, if you're being like really silly, and you're going on holiday, and you want to book a holiday sometimes.

Although these girls realise that the filtering system protects them from undesirable content, they have experienced some disadvantages. For example, their particular settings at home would block Google, the search engine they are encouraged to use by their school.

Downsides of internet filtering

Ellen: I used to have Kids AOL, but my dad changed it. You couldn't go on Google, because it wouldn't let you go on it. So my dad changed it, because you couldn't go on anything.

Holly: Sometimes it's silly, because sometimes you want to find out stuff, like find out about mountains [for school projects], sometimes it won't let you. But like, the ones that you shouldn't really be going on, it – it stops you, so it's quite good.

Indeed, we heard many stories of children's frustration with overly restrictive or inefficient filtering, whether installed at home or at school.

Filtering at school

Sean: The school always blocks the sites, blocks the fun sites. Anything to do with games they'll block … That's why we're constantly on the net at home, so we can look at game sites that have been blocked at school, so we can play on them.

Ryan: That's the most annoying thing.

Jim: Filtering – yeah – sometimes, yeah – it filters out what you don't want it to filter, and then it just leaves –

Ryan: Filters are the worst thing ever.
(14-15 year old boys, from Essex)

Age differences in attitudes towards online protection

Older teenagers do not see the need for their age group to be protected, considering themselves old enough to assess the dangers. But they recommend monitoring for children younger than themselves. For example, 17 year old Nina from Manchester thinks the age limit should be 13 or 14.

Age of responsibility?

Interviewer: I'm just wondering, what age you think people should be protected up to?

Nina: **I'd say about – just when they're young, and they don't really know what they're doing. About 14 – 13, 14, about then. Because after that they know what they're doing and all that.**

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. Old enough to take responsibility.

Nina: **Yeah, they've got more sense.**

Interviewer: And how do you think they should be protected?

Nina: **I think they need to know not to go around giving email addresses out and meeting people they don't know.**

Nina has taken on the responsibility of watching while the 13 year old girl she babysits visits chat rooms, especially because she says that the girl's parents are ignorant of their daughter's internet use.

Protecting younger children

"The kid who I babysit, I have to proper watch over her shoulder because she's always like talking about the wrong stuff, like sex and that, to them. I have to watch over to stop her from doing that and giving her phone number out … I just tell her not to do it. Because she's only 13, she shouldn't be talking about the stuff that she's saying on the internet. She gives them like a phone number, and they ring her up – you just have to warn her that she shouldn't be meeting them." (Nina, 17, from Manchester)

Other respondents, especially older teenagers, such as this group of 16-17 year olds from Essex, think that their parents are insufficiently experienced in using computers to install internet monitoring software in order to protect their children. Instead they resort to rather more direct methods.

Parents unable to monitor their children's online use

Mark: **Parents wouldn't be able to do the thinking to get that software.**

Interviewer: Right.

Marie: **My parents wouldn't know where to start.**

Lorie: **I think parents are more inclined to shout at the children and say 'get off the internet, go to bed', rather than spending the money on filtering.**

Mark: **Or if they steal the lead for the internet.**

Interviewer: Yes.

Mark: **That's what my dad did.**

Indeed, as seen by both parents and children, some parents lack confidence in the use of the internet, as illustrated in the discussion of expertise. This impedes the guidance they can offer their children and the protective strategies they can implement. The limitations are not just technical: some parents find it difficult to discuss the reasons for such regulation with their children, although discussion between parents and children of the reasons for internet-related rules at home may be crucial for achieving a workable environment.

Do your parents know?

Interviewer: And is this [pornography] something your parents ever talk to you about?

Several: **No.**

Elkan: **Too embarrassed.**
(14-16 year old boys, from London)

Balancing safety and privacy

Anonymity and playfulness, privacy and deception, have always been vital to childhood: it is ironic that these are both central to what children value about the internet and also what gives rise to parental fears for children's safety. Children and young people do not like their parents and teachers monitoring their internet use, seeing it as an invasion of their privacy. They expect, and indeed receive, more trust and respect as they get older.

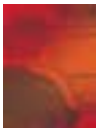
To explain why they object to having their internet use monitored, children use metaphors such as having one's pockets searched, having one's personal space invaded or being stalked – ironic given that parental monitoring is partly aimed at precluding stalking online by strangers. On the other hand, with software named Cybersnoop, for example, or Cybersitter, which 'works by secretly monitoring all computer activity', young people's strongly expressed view that they too have privacy rights should be more clearly heard.[27]

Privacy metaphors

"My parents don't ask me 'ooh, what did you go on?', because I wouldn't like it if I came from school, came home, and they search my pockets. I'd say 'what are you doing – that's personal'. What if I had something I didn't want them to see? Just like I wouldn't search my mum's bedroom."
(Amir, 15, London)

"I think it is like your personal space." (Kim, 15, from Essex)

"It's like tapping your phone calls and things – it's like you're being stalked!"
(Milly, 15, from Essex)



To maintain their privacy, young people have a variety of tactics for evading parental or school monitoring and controls, and some clearly enjoy the challenge of outwitting adults, capitalising on their comparatively greater internet-related expertise. They hide folders on the computer where parents cannot find them, and they minimise or switch between screens when parents are looking over their shoulder.

Strategies to manage privacy

"I hide folders." (Milly, 15, from Essex)

"You can minimise things." (Kim, 15, from Essex)

They are aided by parents' lack of consistency in controlling internet use. Ten year old Ellen from Hertfordshire describes how, by using the adult settings, she evades the restrictions her parents have set up for her on the AOL Kids account:

Finding ways around parental restrictions

Ellen: **Because then if they don't want you to know about certain things, then it'll stop you going on. But then if you try going on your one [account] and it doesn't work, you always know that it will work on the adults' one. So if the adults have passwords that the children don't know, so then, children can't go into the adults' one and find out bits that they don't know, or that they're not allowed to know.**

Interviewer: And do you know the password to go on the adults' one?

Ellen: **I've got my own one, I know my own password, and I know my dad's password.**

Sally: **Do you use your dad's?**

Ellen: **He knows I went on it.**

The group of 14-16 year old London school boys claim that they can always find a way around the school's filter, always find things they want, and they clearly enjoy engaging in this forbidden activity. On their home computers, these boys do not have filtering software because, they say, their parents would not know how to install it.

Ways to get around it

Amir: **The technical things there, the kids nowadays – they just know how to go onto new sites.**

Prince: **This goes back to what you said earlier, like we know the computer, we're the generation of computers.**

Amir: **We know how to go on something else if it isn't there, 'cause we always know how to search for things.**

Interviewer: So it's not that you can break the filter, but you can find a way round it to get –

Amir: **Yeah, to find a way around it. It's not about breaking, it's about – there's always plan B.**

Prince: **There are always other options.**

On occasion, children's comparatively greater expertise in evading the rules is more perceived than real. For example, this group of 17 year olds from Manchester says that their mothers still check the history file, which shows a list of visited websites, but they have – or at least they think they have – found a way around it by accessing sites through a search engine which, they think, will not show up in the history file. At their age, privacy is important for them as a way of gaining independence from their parents.

Escaping parental control

Stuart: **Good thing about the internet at home is you're free to access anything you want.**

Steve: **My mum says, as long as she doesn't get charged on the phone bill on top of the internet, she doesn't care what I go on.**

Interviewer: Does your mum sometimes check what you're doing?

Steve: **She'll check what I'm doing. But most of the time I'm just in chat rooms or doing email.**

Stuart: **Good thing about search engines, they can't actually trace what website you've been on, if you actually learn to search for it.**

Nina: **That's what I do.**

Stuart: **'Cause my mum used to check what websites I've been on, but she doesn't know, so like…**

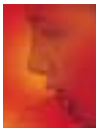
Interviewer: What do you mean? You go to a website through the search engine?

Stuart: **Yeah, you like, um, bring up the Ask Jeeves, shall we say, then you type in the website you want to go on – say like Lycos – you type in Lycos in the actual bar and that brings Lycos up. Do it that way. It's untraceable.**

Nina: **You just like don't want your mum spying on you and knowing everything about you.**

Steve: **Because you want your independence, really, you don't want your mum looking over your shoulder checking what you're doing all the time.**

Rather than pressing for more parental monitoring and control, advice which could encourage children's evasion more than their acquiescence, society must find ways of stimulating more discussion of risks among all parties, including children, together with a clearer negotiation of alternative strategies to minimise harm, if it is to balance children's safety and children's privacy.



Theme 4: Dangers of inequality, exclusion and the digital divide

Access to the internet remains stratified, with significant inequalities across and within households in all nations studied (Rice, 2002). Hence a significant minority of young people lack domestic access to the internet. The 'digital divide' in access is increasingly a divide in the quality of access rather than simply a matter of access to a computer and modem. The existence of a more subtle but potentially more pernicious digital divide in extent and quality of use remains controversial. Some suggest that, given access, disadvantaged groups make equivalent use of ICT, so that equalising access is sufficient. Others suggest that providing domestic access to ICT may increase rather than decrease inequalities in class, gender or ethnicity. Research questions include: for users, which aspects of their domestic, local or school context support internet use? How can quality of use be evaluated? For low or non-users, what are the barriers - access, location, support, networking, motivation, etc - for different groups of children (Facer and Furlong, 2001)? To what extent do children manage to overcome inequalities in access? In what ways does it matter to them to lack access? Can the school redress inequalities at home?

The present report only hints at some directions here, because only 5 of the 55 children who participated in our focus group discussions lacked access to, or were not allowed to use, the internet at home. Particularly, we cannot comment here on the crucial question of socio-demographic inequalities, leaving this to be pursued in the survey.

A new source of exclusion?

For the five children without access, we could hardly pursue their possible sense of exclusion within the focus groups. Still, they said that they missed out on being able to communicate with their friends and felt left out because they could not discuss popular websites at school. However, they reported finding ways to compensate - sending emails during the school lunch hour or in a phone booth or going online at a friend's house. For example, 10 year old Holly from Hertfordshire is the only one among her group of friends without internet access at home.

Feeling left out?

Holly: **We should have time like in our computer lesson if we want to, if we really want to find out something, like, the other kids have been talking about, and like I haven't been, haven't got the internet at home – so if you want to go and see what they're all talking about, and you can go on it then.**

Interviewer: And do the others often talk about things on the internet?

Sally: **And emails.**

Holly: **Especially these three.** [pointing at the other girls in the group]

Sally: **And emails.**

Interviewer: And you haven't seen –

Holly: **When I've been round their houses, sometimes I've seen it.**

Interviewer: So you go on the internet at their house sometimes, do you?

Sally: **Yeah. And we talk about emails and stuff.**

Holly: **They let me read their emails.**

This 17 year old from Manchester, who has a broadband internet connection at home, spoke up for those without internet access. He stressed exclusion from the entertainment value of the internet more than its educational aspects, as learning-related information is available from other sources.

Thoughts on non-users

Steve: **Well, they're missing out on downloading stuff and using chat rooms, but if they just need to do research for something, then I don't see that they're missing out that much.**

Interviewer: Hmm. It's not something you laugh at people for?

Steve: **Yeah. We try and encourage them to get it, but we don't laugh at them if they don't have it. Some people can't afford it, which is just a sad truth.**

Importance of the internet

Interestingly among the majority with access, the internet is regarded with some ambivalence. We asked children how important the internet was to them and how they would feel if it ceased to exist. Despite their huge enthusiasm for the internet, its importance to them remains relative – both relative to other media and other leisure activities. Many children prefer other activities (such as playing sports, meeting friends or going outside) or other media (such as television or games consoles), seeing the internet as something for use 'on rainy days' (Livingstone, 2002b).

The importance of the internet depends on a child's age, among other factors. Whereas younger children have grown up with it, older teenagers remember the times before the internet existed and, perhaps, have a different approach to this technology.

Older teenagers didn't grow up with the internet

"My younger cousins, they're all under the age of eleven – and they're now coming into an age where the internet is all they've ever known. Where we, really, when we were young, we were still doing all the [outdoor] activities, and the internet wasn't really around. So we've got balance. But maybe in five or ten years time that will change." (Lorie, 17, from Essex)

When asked what they would do if the internet disappeared tomorrow, some initial responses were of horror. However, after a little reflection, the major message concerned the convenience of the internet. In other words, while children and young people recognise its usefulness, especially for schoolwork, and say they would miss internet access, they are confident that eventually they would find alternative ways to do the same things, as illustrated by these 17 year olds from Manchester.

If the internet disappeared tomorrow…

Interviewer: Suppose the internet disappeared tomorrow.

Steve: **Oh, Christ!**

Shannon: **Complain to the government.**

Steve: **Find something else to do.**

Nina: **It's good to find stuff out, like – because before I came here, when I was thinking of courses, you could just go on the website to find out about them.**

Steve: **It would be harder to find stuff and keep in touch, and the phone bill would be through the roof.**

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Steve: **It would make life harder because you'd have to go out and hunt for the information at different libraries and things and wait for them to get the books in, and something that would take half an hour or an hour would take two to three weeks.**

For this group of 13 year old girls from Derbyshire losing other technologies, such as satellite television or the mobile phone, would be more 'devastating'.

As long as we still have television and the telephone …

Linda: **Occasionally we get homework on the – like researching stuff on the internet and stuff and it's just – it would make it awkward.**

Rachel: **It wouldn't bother me at first, I don't think. I'd manage to – a couple of weeks, yeah, fine. But when I realised it was gone, it'd probably annoy me a bit knowing that I can't go and –**

Susie: **It's like always really horrible weather up here, and like you get bored of it eventually because you can't go out every day and stuff.**

Rosie: **I do use it a lot but it's kind of like – if you lost the internet, I wouldn't be as bothered as if we'd lost Sky digital. I would be bothered. I wouldn't be as bothered because like if we didn't have Sky, I'd be distraught. Yeah, but if we lost the internet, I'd probably be like, oh no, oh no. I'd be upset for like a couple of days.**

Susie: **You'd live on the phone.**

Rosie: **I'd just live on text messaging. Yeah. Because you can get chat rooms on your phone, so I don't see what's wrong with that.**

Some older teenagers, such as these 16-17 year old girls from Essex, are more critical towards the internet, saying that they would not miss the internet as it does not necessarily improve learning, and the information is also available from alternative sources.

The internet is just an easy way of doing things

Marie: **If we didn't have the internet, we'd get everything we have on the internet somewhere else. And I don't think the internet is the solution to anything. And especially not education because there are too many distractions. Um, and I just think the internet can be an easy way of doing things, but it won't actually change anything like education.**

Lorie: **It doesn't improve, it just gives a different way, faster but maybe not that much necessarily better.**

Other teenagers, such as these 14-15 year old boys from Essex, see the internet as an entertainment medium for downloading music and playing games; yet for them it remains a mere 'trend' or 'novelty'.

The internet is just a novelty

Ryan: **It's just something that everyone has, it's just like a trend. Someone's got it and then everyone's got it.**

Sean: **You get it and you're like 'Oh wow, I've got the internet!' and then after a month – it's a novelty thing, really.**

Clearly the internet is not so much taken for granted that young people cannot contemplate life without it, although this may be changing. Although the internet is highly convenient for schoolwork, it is gaining its most insistent role in everyday life through its impact on communication habits: indeed, staying in touch with their peer group becomes increasingly important as they grow older, form their identities and gain independence from their parents.

In short, the crucial issue concerns the peer group norms. If the internet disappeared tomorrow, young people are confident they would adjust. But given that the internet is widely but not universally available, for those few who lack access, the shift to an online peer culture may well exclude them socially as well as add barriers to their educational performance.

Work in Progress: Next steps

Thus far, the research project UK Children Go Online has explored children and young people's expressed experiences of the internet, mainly at home but also in other locations, particularly at school. A child-centred perspective has proved productive in exploring some key and easily neglected issues – for example, expertise, privacy and peer norms - demonstrating that parents can be poor informants on their own children's online activities.

A child-centred approach also brings out some methodological challenges in respecting children's own voices as they make sense of their lives, including those aspects which they keep private, secret, away from the judgmental glare of adult attention. After all, it is and has always been integral to childhood to generate tactics to live within, or circumvent, the strategies by which adults attempt to guide or constrain children. The internet merely provides a new context within which such negotiations – between regulation and evasion, surveillance and secrecy, normative expectation and creative experimentation – are played out. However, the creativity of children's use of the internet should not be overstated. Youth culture is being reshaped in key respects by today's young generation – and here the pioneering theme is appropriate - but for each individual child the peer norms remain strong. Thus, the scope for creativity or innovation is limited.

On the other hand, as young people go online, integrating the on and offline, the changes have implications far beyond leisure, the traditional focus of media research. When television arrived, the home was conceived as a sanctuary, apart from the demands of work and community. Today the internet is finding its place in a very different kind of home, defined through its connections with, rather than separation from, work, school, community, even globe.[28] Within this, family members live increasingly individualised lifestyles and here too the internet facilitates, blurring boundaries between home and work, public and private, education and entertainment, citizen and consumer. The child sitting and staring at the computer screen is precisely not off in a world of their own, but part of the world where everyone else is too, and this brings dangers as well as opportunities.

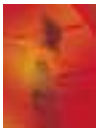
Designing the survey

Before the present analysis is continued, linking issues and findings across the four main themes, a national face-to-face survey of children and young people aged 9-19 will go into the field in January 2004. This will reveal the social, economic and cultural patterning of interests, beliefs and practices identified in this report across different children and young people.[29] Then a second phase of qualitative work will be conducted, and all findings will be analysed and integrated.

Currently there is a lack of independent surveys of UK children's domestic use of the internet. Broad-brush findings which chart access and the basic features of internet use provide an essential starting point but offer little detail, depth or context. For example, BMRB's Youth TGI (2001) showed that the most common uses are studying/homework (73%), email (59%), playing games (38%), chat sites (32%) and hobbies and interests (31%). But which young people are emailing whom? Who makes use of which educational resources? If some lack access, what are they missing out on?

A detailed survey can go beyond the headline findings of commercial and public opinion surveys. But more importantly, the survey will combine the advantages of a large-scale sample with statistical techniques to examine interrelations among the variables, deepening the analysis:

- Frequency and variation. Discovering which aspects of internet use are more or less common is essential in developing both theory and policy. Particularly, reliably establishing the incidence of perhaps rare but risky behaviours demands a sizeable sample. Such a sample can be broken down to advantage: too often children and young people are treated as a homogenous group, masking diversity. A survey permits systematic analysis by age, gender and socio-economic status, family type, location, ethnicity, disability, media at home and history of internet access. It can reveal precisely who is gaining the advantages, running the risks or getting left out in the growing adoption of the internet at home.



• Contingency. A series of relationships among key variables may be hypothesised which only statistical analysis can examine. A simple example is to cross-tabulate types of internet use with location of use to determine which internet-related opportunities and dangers occur in which social contexts. More complexly, previous work suggests but has not established that parents with less experience of the internet are more anxious about their children's use, and that this may lead to more restrictive domestic regulation and even to more cautious – or perhaps more evasive – behaviour on the part of their children. If this is the case and, moreover, if social stratification means that less experienced parents are poorer or less educated, the analysis of this and other contingent or path-dependent relationships might reveal some significant inequalities.

In designing the survey, a number of lessons can be taken forward from the qualitative stage of the research:

• Matters of phrasing include the difficulty in measuring time spent online, given the extent of multitasking both among online applications and between online and offline activities. Other issues of phrasing become evident from the focus groups: online communication is described as 'talking to' or 'messaging' someone; communication with strangers is described as 'people you don't know' or 'when you don't really know who you are talking to'; online pornography is described as 'porn' or 'rude websites' or as showing 'people with hardly any clothes on'. Caution is required in addressing distinctions important to policy debates but less familiar to children (e.g. commercial versus publicly provided sites or even, for younger children, the distinction between using computers and using the internet/being online).

• Topics to address include issues important to children: their privacy online, their fascination with hacking, their pleasure in naughtiness, cheats or evasion, their subtle comparisons of the strengths and disadvantages of different communication channels. Also, fast-moving trends will be addressed, for example the apparent shift from chat rooms to instant messaging, the recent and apparently commonplace downloading of music from such sites as Kazaa, and the take-up of mobile access.

• Interpreting findings requires caution in celebrating internet-based opportunities. For example many children have made a website in school but they may regard this more as a chore than an empowering occasion for creativity and participation. Also one should expect a complex diversity of barriers to use and some equally complex consequences of non-use or exclusion.

• The focus groups reveal a considerable familiarity, among those 14+, with pornographic images, but a lack of a consensual vocabulary to discriminate among types of images. It is important to note the importance of distinguishing unwelcome images from those deliberately sought out. Spontaneous discussions of paedophiles and 'weirdos' online suggests their mention in a survey may be less intrusive than feared. However, there are also widespread myths regarding the technological means of monitoring, regulating or intruding upon internet uses – whether by other children, parents, public or commercial bodies – which may confuse answers to questions on domestic regulation.

Addressing these considerations will, it is hoped, result in a richer and more insightful survey than might otherwise have been produced.

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Technical Appendix on the Qualitative Research

The school sample

One primary, three secondary and two post-16 schools were selected to represent a range in respect of three characteristics (see Table 1):[30]

- geographical location (rural, town and city settings in the north and south of England)
- social grade of the catchment area (middle-class and working-class)
- achievement level of the school

Fourteen group interviews of around one hour were held with mostly same-sex groups[31] of approximately four children each (a total of 55 children). Each school provided two groups (usually one with boys and one with girls) of the same age from the same class, apart from school D which provided two groups of boys and two groups of girls. The five age groups interviewed were 10-11, 12-13, 14-15, 16-17 and 17-19 years. The teachers were asked to select the children at random (every fourth or fifth girl or boy from the register). The children were all asked for their written consent to participate in the group discussions. For children under the age of 16, written parental consent was sought in addition.

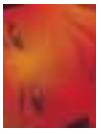
School A is a Church of England voluntary controlled primary school for 3-11 year olds. Serving a rural area, it is smaller than most primary schools. About one in five pupils are of non-white UK heritage, a proportion of these coming from traveller families. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is above national average. Key stage 2 SATS results are above average: English 81%, Maths 88%, Science 100%.

School B is a small Roman Catholic voluntary-aided mixed comprehensive school for pupils aged 11-16 years. All pupils have Christian backgrounds although not all are from Roman Catholic families. Almost all pupils speak English as their first language and are of European origin. The percentage eligible for free school meals is below the national average, and ability levels are above average with 71% of the pupils gaining five or more GCSEs in 2002.

School C is an inner city Church of England secondary school for pupils between the ages of 11 and 18. Although co-educational, there are almost twice as many boys as girls. The school is situated in a mixed area of residential and commercial use. Nine in ten pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds and the majority lives in homes where English is not the first language (the main languages spoken

Table 1: School sample[32]

School	Type	Size	Area	Location	Social grade	Achievement[33]	Age interviewed
A	Primary	97	Rural	Hertfordshire	Mixed	Above average	10-11
B	Secondary	369	Town/ rural	Derbyshire	Middle class	Above average	12-13
C	Secondary	928	City	London	Working class	Above average	14-16
D	Secondary	1148	Town	Essex	Mixed	Above average	13 14-15
E	Post-16	2010	Town	Essex	Middle class	Slightly above average	16-17
F	Post-16	2911	City	Greater Manchester	Working class	Below average	17-19



are Bengali, Somali, Turkish and Arabic). Pupil achievement has long been considerably below the national average, but the school has recently raised the level at a much faster rate than the national trend, with 71% gaining five or more GCSEs in 2002. The percentage eligible for free school meals is well above the national average.

School D is a mixed 11-16 comprehensive and has specialist status as a 'Mathematics and Computing College' with online and ICT based curriculum resources being integrated into all subjects. The student body is predominantly white and speaks English as a first language. A wide range of backgrounds are represented amongst the pupils, although the proportion of those coming from advantaged socio-economic households is high. The percentage eligible for free school meals is in line with the national average. 65% gained five or more GCSEs in 2002.

School E is a sixth form college and has been awarded Beacon status for achieving excellent inspection results (average A-level points score of 295). The number of students progressing to Higher Education is high and increasing. The school draws a significant minority of students from outside the area. The student body is predominantly white, reflecting the ethnic profile of the local area. The local economy has experienced an upturn over recent years, and unemployment is low.

School F is a large general further education college serving the city of Manchester and Greater Manchester. Manchester's population is relatively young and ethnically diverse, but it is one of the most deprived in England. Manchester is England's third most disadvantaged local authority area. The unemployment rate is around double the national average. Educational participation and performance by young people in the area are very low. The average A-level points score of the pupils at school F is lower than the national average at 123.3.[34]

The family sample

Each family was visited by one of the report authors (see Table 2). Each visit consisted of an interview with the child (approx. 90 minutes) and an interview with one or both parents (approx. 30 minutes) where the child could also be present. During the child interview, the respondent was asked to go online on the home computer and show the researcher what he or she normally does on the internet. The parent interview was held either before or after the child interview, usually taking place in the living room or kitchen. The children were all asked for their written consent to participate. Written consent was also obtained from the parents.

Outline of the discussion guides: Schools

Detailed interview guides were prepared for both the school groups and home-based interviews. These were not followed verbatim in any interview, as the priority was for the discussion to develop naturally, following the children's lead and exploring the topics of most interest to them. Given the broad age range of the children the study focuses on, three different guides were prepared for the school group interviews, each using age-appropriate materials and introducing age-appropriate topics for discussion.

For 15-19 year olds, a series of topics were covered. Some of them were introduced using illustrative materials such as a newspaper advert or article, a print-out of a website or an email. Topics included: internet literacy/expertise; use of different types of communication technologies; participation in global and local human networks with the help of the internet; downloading of files, e.g. music or games; undesirable online content (spam, advertising, pornography); internet safety awareness and rules for using the internet; internet monitoring and filtering software; privacy online and offline; internet non-use and exclusion; and the role of the internet in education.

For 12-14-year olds, sets of coloured cards displaying different media and communication technologies were used to investigate the role of the internet in young people's lives in context with other media. The first set of cards, displaying different communication technologies (email, instant messaging, chat, SMS, mobile phone, landline telephone, fax machine, face-to-face conversation, letter writing), was used to explore which types the children would use to contact who under which circumstances. The second set of cards showed different types of media technologies (internet, computer, printer, CD-rom, video games console, gameboy, TV, digital TV, video recorder, camcorder, satellite, radio, stereo, walkman, discman, books, comics, magazines, newspapers; the mobile phone was included here as well). The cards were used to make maps of technologies which children felt 'went together' and to act as a focus for discussion (which were exciting/boring media, modern/old-fashioned, the media parents approved/disapproved of, the media they would miss most, etc).

For 9-11-year olds, the technique of mind mapping was utilised (Mavers, Somekh, and Restorick, 2002). The children were asked to explain what the

Table 2: In-home interview sample to date (Ongoing research)

Family	Age of child	Gender	Area	Location	Social grade	Family type
1 'Ted'	18	Male	Town	Surrey	Middle class	Couple
2 'Anisah'	15	Female	City	London	Working class	Couple
3 'Megan'	12	Female	Suburb	Essex	Working class	Couple

internet is to a Martian by drawing and/or writing on a large sheet of paper as a group. Next to the picture of a Martian, the sheet of paper showed speech bubbles with the following questions: "What is the internet?"; "What can you do with it?"; "Where can you use it?". Further questions were then asked, and the children's drawings and writings were used to initiate a group discussion: "What's the best thing about it?"; "What's the worst thing about it?"; "What's dangerous about it?"; "What are the rules for using it?"

Each interview was carried out by one of the report authors (apart from the groups in School F where both authors were present), audio-taped and fully transcribed.

Outline of the discussion guides: Home-based interviews

The observational and interview session with the child focussed on topics which had emerged during the last visit by Livingstone and Bovill (2001) and how these had changed or developed over time. Specific topics included how the children's general interests had developed and/or changed; how the children's relationship with their parents and siblings had changed; if and how the children's internet literacy had grown; if and how their use of the internet had changed (time spent online and activities); if the surroundings and conditions for going online had changed (e.g. computer in different room of the house, broadband access).

Further, the session focussed on central themes of the research, i.e. internet safety awareness; use of different communication technologies; experiences with undesirable content (spam, advertising, sexual); parental rules for internet use, filtering and monitoring software, and privacy issues. The interview with parents addressed: ownership of media; own use of the internet in relation to other media; view of their child's internet use; attitudes towards the internet, worries and rules.

Each interview was carried out by one of the report authors, audio-taped and fully transcribed, and notes were taken during the observation of the child's online activities.

Endnotes

[1] Families and the Internet, a BT-funded research project conducted in 1999-2001, comprised a series of visits to thirty families combining participant observation and in-depth interviewing (Livingstone and Bovill, 2001). The present project is conducting follow-up interviews with ten of these families (see Technical Appendix). Some illustrations in the report were produced as part of this project.

[2] The proportion of young people using the internet (anywhere) increases with age, from 42% at Key Stage 1 (5-7 years), to 84% in Key Stage 2 (7-11 years), 94% in Key Stage 3 (11-14 years), 97% at Key Stage 4 (14-16 years) and 96% among post -16s.

[3] The names of all children appearing in this report have been changed to preserve anonymity.

[4] Hudson (1984) claims that during adolescence, girls face an inner conflict of whether to behave according to cultural norms of femininity or whether to rebel against them.

[5] The expressions sending a text/ text message/ texting are used as synonyms for sending an SMS from a mobile phone.

[6] Throughout this report we summarise the main themes and trends as discussed by our respondents. However, one should be cautious in generalising claims regarding the beliefs or activities of 'many' or 'most' children until these can be confirmed by the survey.

[7] Microsoft MSN – one of the instant message service providers

[8] Some of the quotes and dialogues in this report have been edited to improve readability and reduce redundancy.

[9] Intriguingly, little direct evidence supports the view that the internet benefits children's education (although see BECTa, 2003; Loveless and Ellen, 2001).

[10] As the first author has argued (Livingstone, 2003), a sophisticated analysis of internet use in relation to media literacy is required. This should include the competence to seek out, evaluate, share and produce knowledge as well as technical skills. In the UK, media literacy is the responsibility of the new communications regulator: "OFCOM will also be a 'reach out' regulator that embraces consumer protection through the promotion of effective competition and choice, whilst being informed by modern citizenship" (Stephen Carter, CEO of OFCOM; Hermes Database, 5/3/2003). OFCOM's Content Board will promote media literacy (www.ofcom.org.uk, July 2003), ensuring that, as Lord Dubs, Chairman of the Broadcasting Standards Commission put it, "the user is able to comprehend the choices available and evaluate them" (Financial Times, 21/1/2003). Thus, "OFCOM must give parents the information and tools to control what their children access on the internet" (Ibid.).

[11] http://www.opensource.org/

[12] Devolving responsibility to parents as a solution to the challenge of internet content regulation raises several concerns: there are inequalities in parents' skills, so that relying on them risks reproducing social disadvantage. Parents may not take on this responsibility, providing little supervision of children's internet use or they may impose outdated learning styles on children (Papert, 1996). Others worry that this responsibility will overburden mothers, introducing new problems as it resolves others (Bird and Jorgenson, 2003). While undoubtedly parents have always played a key role in regulating the media environment of their children, and while none denies their moral responsibility here, many feel ill-equipped and insufficiently supported (Livingstone, 2001).

[13] To some extent, children do, of course. There were several references in the focus groups to educational sites such as the BBC's Bitesize revision site for SATS and GCSE (www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize) – certainly regarded as both highly popular and comprehensive (The Times Educational Supplement, 14/4/2000).

[14] Their desire to be constantly connected cannot be denied, but some are concerned that this results in a highly normative culture which constrains as much as it enables (Taylor and Harper,2002), perhaps placing young people under surveillance at the cost of freedom and privacy (Schofield Clark, 2003).

[15] One high profile case at the time, spontaneously discussed by the focus groups, was that of a 12-year-old girl from Greater Manchester who went missing for four days after flying to France with a 31-year-old former US marine. The pair met in an internet chat room, he thinking that she was 19. They had emailed for up to a year, then exchanged letters and possibly phone calls before meeting. Following an international police hunt, they were found in Germany where he was arrested (BBC Online News, 14th-18th July 2003).

[16] Borzekowski and Rickert (2001) note the absence of figures on whether adolescents visit the health sites targeted at them although their small survey suggests such use to be fairly common.

[17] Inspired by Turkle's (1995) analysis of a 'culture of simulation', research is examining whether and how children use computers as a safe and private place to experiment with themes of sexuality, politics and selfhood. Some see children (and, indeed, adults) using new online communication to reproduce prior social norms and conventions (Slater, 2002). Others argue that young people's online communication uses playful language to innovate in identity and language (Danet, 2001). Perhaps the truth lies in between, with such activities being innovative at the level of the culture but normative in establishing and imposing conventions which constrain the contributions of individuals.

[18] The internationally endorsed Children's Television Charter asserts children's rights to self-expression, creativity and participation, in effect to cultural citizenship through television. If applied to the internet, perhaps a vision of online cultural citizenship could emerge, as suggested by the Center for Media Education (2000)?

[19] In reviewing explanations for young people's lack of political participation, Kimberlee (2002) suggests a generational explanation. Far from being apathetic or interested only in alternative politics, young people are following an altered trajectory in the transition from child to adult. As traditional structures of work as well as traditional values and expectations are lost, cues to participation and citizenship are no longer salient to young people. Prout (2000: 304) offers a complementary analysis, stressing that 'despite the recognition of children as persons in their own right, public policy and practice is marked by an intensification of control, regulation and surveillance around children', this impeding rather than facilitating the ability of organisations to encourage children's participation.

[20] See Turow (2000), Montgomery (2001), Center for Media Education (2000), Livingstone (2001).

[21] As Thornburgh and Lin (2002) note, the empirical research base on the impact of sexually explicit material on children is not extensive due to ethical and legal considerations, the conservatism of university review boards and a lack of research funding. A Canadian survey of parents suggests 1 in 5 children have found undesirable sexual material online (Media Awareness Network, 2000). An American survey found one in three teens have seen pornography online (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2000) while another found 25% of 10-17 year olds had unwanted exposure to sexual pictures on the internet (Mitchell, Finkelhor, and Wolak, 2003). Kids.net found up to a quarter of UK 7-16 year olds may have been upset by online materials, rarely reporting this to an adult (Wigley and Clarke, 2000).

[22] In approaching this question it would be wise to learn from the lengthy but inconclusive search for television's harmful effects (Seiter, 1999).

[23] Evaluating availability, exposure and harm is impeded because little attention has been paid to the definition of pornography: drawing an analogy with print, it would be helpful to distinguish 'top shelf' material, material restricted to sex shops, and illegal material. In the focus groups we took our lead from the respondents in identifying pornography.

[24] Online pornography was investigated explicitly in the older age groups only (ages 14+).

[25] J-Lo – the actress and singer Jennifer Lopez.

[26] Neighbours – Australian television series.

[27] Indeed, few filtering programmes flag up the value of discussing such monitoring with children (Childsafe being one exception that displays an optimal 'Acceptable Use' policy to communicate parental rules to the child), leaving one to presume that unobtrusive monitoring, conveying little trust in the child, is generally deemed crucial (www.cybersitter.com).

[28] The sample of 1500 children and young people will be divided into approximately 1000 who use the internet fairly or very often (these will be asked a detailed series of questions) and 500 who use it infrequently or never (these will be asked a briefer series of questions). A written survey questionnaire will be left for parents to complete.

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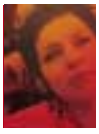
[30] The report authors had been in contact with the schools during previous research projects.

[31] Three groups were mixed-sex, i.e. one in school F and both in school E.

[32] Information about schools is taken from the most recent OFSTED inspection report and the school website.

[33] Ability levels were determined according to how the school had performed in relation to National Average Performance levels cited in the 2002 school league tables. At that time the percentage of children in British primary schools gaining level 4 or better was as follows: English: 75%, Maths: 73%, Science: 86%. For secondary schools, 51.6% gained 5 or more GCSEs; the average points score for students taking 2 or more General (GCE) and/or Vocational (VCE) A levels was 254.5.

[34] Source: www.dfes.gov.uk.



UK Children Go Online: Listening to young people's experiences

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A research report from the project, "UK Children Go Online"
http://www.children-go-online.net
October 2003 (Reprinted February 2004)

www.children-go-online.net

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October 2003

UK Children Go Online

Surveying the experiences of young people and their parents

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July 2004

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Executive summary

The research project

UK Children Go Online (UKCGO) aims to offer a rigorous and timely investigation of 9-19 year olds' use of the internet. The project balances an assessment of online risks and opportunities in order to contribute to developing academic debates and policy frameworks for children and young people's internet use.

The research was funded by an Economic and Social Research Council grant under the 'e-Society' Programme, with co-funding from AOL, BSC, Childnet-International, Citizens Online and ITC.

This report presents key findings from a major national, in-home, face to face survey, lasting some 40 minutes, of 1,511 9-19 year olds and 906 parents of the 9-17 year olds, using Random Location sampling across the UK (see Annex). It complements the project's recent qualitative report on young people's experiences of the internet.

The fieldwork, conducted via multi-media computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI) with children and a paper questionnaire to their parents, took place between 12 January and 7 March 2004. In this report of findings from the UKCGO survey, all percentages have been weighted in accordance with population statistics.

Key findings on access and inequalities

Internet access and use is widespread among UK children and young people, being considerably higher than among adults and among the highest in Europe. However, significant inequalities persist especially in home access. Continuing changes in the nature and quality of access indicate fast-rising standards and expectations.

Among all 9-19 year olds:

- **Home access is growing:** Three quarters (75%) have accessed the internet from a computer at home. Currently, 74% have internet access via a computer, games console or digital television while one quarter of 9-19 year olds (23%) have never accessed the internet on a computer from home, and 29% currently lack such access (see p. 9).
- **School access is near universal:** 92% have accessed the internet at school, and one quarter (24%) have access at school but not at home. However, two thirds (64%) have also used the internet elsewhere (see p. 9).
- **Socio-economic differences are sizeable:** 88% of middle class but only 61% of working class children have accessed the internet at home; 86% of children in areas of low deprivation in England have used the internet on a computer at home compared with 66% in areas of high deprivation (see p. 10).
- **Homes with children lead in gaining internet access:** They are also now acquiring multiple computers plus broadband access to the internet – 36% have more than one computer at home, and 24% live in a household with broadband access (see p. 12).
- **Access platforms are diversifying:** 87% have a computer at home (71% with internet access), 62% have digital television (17% with internet access), 82% have a games console (8% with internet access), and 81% have their own mobile phone (38% with internet access) (see p. 13).
- **Many computers in private rooms:** One fifth (19%) have internet access in their bedroom – 22% of boys versus 15% of girls, 21% middle class versus 16% working class, 10% of 9-11 year olds versus 26% of 16-17 year olds. Fewer than half the computers online at home are located in a public room, and four fifths (79%) of those with home access report mostly using the internet alone (see p. 14).

Key findings on the nature of internet use

Most young people use the internet frequently though often for moderate amounts of time. They use the internet for a wide range of purposes, not all of which are socially approved.

- **Most are daily or weekly users:** 9-19 year olds are mainly divided between daily users (41%) and weekly users (43%). Only 13% are occasional users, and just 3% count as non-users (see p. 18).
- **Most online for less than an hour:** One fifth (19%) of 9-19 year olds spend about ten minutes per day online, half spend between about half an hour (25%) and one hour (23%) online, and a further fifth go online for between one (14%) and three hours (6%) each day. One in 20 (5%) spend more than three hours online on an average day (see p. 19).
- **More time spent watching TV or with the family:** Time spent online is still less than time spent watching television or with the family, but it is similar to that spent doing homework and playing computer games and greater than time spent on the phone or reading (see p. 20).
- **Most use it for searching and homework:** Among the 84% of 9-19 year olds who use the internet daily or weekly, 90% use it to do work for school or college, 94% use it to get information for other things, 72% use it to send and receive emails, 70% to play games online, 55% to send and receive instant messages, 45% to download music and 21% to use chat rooms. Further, 44% look for information on careers and further education, 40% look for products or shop online, and 26% read the news (see p. 21).
- **Some use it for less-approved activities**: Among 12-19 year olds who go online daily or weekly, 21% admit to having copied something from the internet for a school

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project and handed it in as their own, 8% claim to have hacked into someone else's website or email, 5% have visited an online dating site, and 4% have sent a message to make someone feel uncomfortable or threatened (see p. 23).

One in six (16%) 9-19 year olds make low levels or even no use of the Internet, and even among more frequent users, use is often narrow.

- **Non-use not just a matter of lack of interest:** Access and expertise remain significant issues – 47% of occasional and non-users say that they lack access, 25% are not interested, 15% say they don't know how to use the internet, and 14% lack the time to use it (see p. 24).
- **Even frequent users make narrow use of the web:** Among those who go online at least once a week, half concentrate their use on fewer than five different websites (see p. 23).

Key findings on education, learning and literacy

- **Many have not received lessons on how to use the internet:** Despite the stress laid on ICT in education policy, nearly one third (30%) of pupils report having received no lessons at all on using the internet, although most have been taught something – 23% report having received 'a lot' of lessons, 28% 'some' and 19% 'just one or two' (see p. 26).
- **Skills gap between parents and children:** Children usually consider themselves more expert than their parents – 28% of parents who use the internet describe themselves as beginners compared with only 7% of children who go online daily or weekly, and only 12% of parents consider themselves advanced compared with 32% of children. While most parents and children are confident in their searching skills, among parents only 1 in 3 know how to set up an email account, and only a fifth or fewer are able to set up a filter, remove a virus, download music or fix a problem (see p. 27).
- **Children lack key skills in evaluating online content:** Four in ten pupils aged 9-19 trust most of the information on the internet, half trust some of it, and only 1 in 10 are sceptical about much information online. Only 33% of 9-19 year olds who go online at least once a week say that they have been told how to judge the reliability of online information, and among parents of 9-17 year olds, only 41% are confident that their child has learned how to judge the reliability of online information (see p. 28).

Thus, there is considerable scope for increasing the internet-related skills and literacy of both children and their parents. Many children are using the internet without skills in critical evaluation, and many parents lack the skills to guide and support their children's internet use.

Key findings on pornography online

Coming into contact with pornography is, the UKCGO survey shows, a commonplace but often unwelcome experience for children and young people.

Among 9-19 year olds who go online at least once a week:

- **More than half have seen pornography online:** Nearly six in ten (57%) have come into contact with online pornography. However, only 16% of parents think that their child has seen pornography on the internet (see p. 29).
- **Most porn is viewed unintentionally:** 38% have seen a pornographic pop-up advert while doing something else, 36% have accidentally found themselves on a pornographic website when looking for something else, 25% have received pornographic junk mail by email or instant messaging, 10% have visited a pornographic website on purpose, 9% have been sent pornography from someone they know, and 2% have been sent pornography from someone they met online (see p. 29).
- **More porn on the internet than in other media:** Among teens (12-19 years), 68% claim to have seen pornography on the internet, 20% saying 'many times'. Moreover, 53% of parents consider (and children agree) that the internet is more likely to expose children to pornography than are television, video or magazines (see p. 31).
- **Mixed responses to online porn:** When young people encounter pornography on the internet, half claim not to be bothered by it, but a significant minority do not like it, and one quarter of 9-15 year olds who have seen porn say they were disgusted. Half of those who encounter online pornography leave the site as quickly as they can, while the others say they look at it, tell a friend or parent, click on the links or return to it later (see p. 31).
- **Too young to have seen it:** Interestingly, nearly half (45%) of 18-19 year old internet users who have seen any pornography (online or offline) now think they were too young to see it when they first did (see p. 32).

Key findings on communication and participation

Rather than seeing face to face communication as automatically superior, young people evaluate the different forms of communication available to them according to distinct communicative needs. The mobile phone is fast overtaking the desktop computer as a prioritised means of communication.

Among 9-19 year olds who use the internet at least once a week:

- **The mobile phone is the preferred method of communication:** Whether for passing time, making arrangements, getting advice, gossiping or flirting, the phone and text messaging are preferred over emailing or instant messaging (IM) (see p. 33).

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- **Most online communication is with local friends:** Contact with people that children have not met face to face, on the other hand, occurs mainly among the 21% who visit chat rooms (see p. 33).
- **Talking online is less satisfying but has its advantages:** A third (33%) of email, IM and chat users think that talking to people on the internet is at least as satisfying as talking to them in real life, and a quarter of children and young people identify significant advantages to online communication in terms of privacy, confidence and intimacy. Further, a quarter of 12-19 year olds who use the internet at least weekly say they go online to get advice (see p. 35).
- **Not all use is receptive but, rather, interactive:** 44% have completed a quiz online, 25% have sent an email or text message to a website, 22% have voted for something online, 17% have sent pictures or stories to a website, 17% have contributed to a message board, and 8% have filled in a form. Most active of all, 34% have set up their own website. Further, 9% have offered advice to others while 8% have signed a petition (see p. 36).
- **Some are interested in civic issues:** 55% of 12-19 year olds who use the internet at least weekly have sought out sites concerned with political or civic issues, although two fifths are not interested. However, only a minority have responded to or contributed to these sites in any way (see p. 37).

Key findings on the risks of online communication

Online communication is not always a positive experience for children and young people, and the benefits must be balanced against the problems.

- **Parents underestimate children's negative experiences:** One third of 9-19 year olds who go online at least once a week report having received unwanted sexual (31%) or nasty comments (33%) via email, chat, instant message or text message. Parents substantially underestimate their children's negative experiences online and so appear unaware of their children's potential need for guidance. Only 7% of parents think that their child has received sexual comments, and only 4% think that their child has been bullied online (see p. 38).
- **Children divulge personal information online:** Most parents whose child has home access to the internet (86%) do not allow their children to give out personal information online (though only 49% of children acknowledge this). Moreover, nearly half (46%) of 9-19 year olds who go online at least once a week say that they have given out personal information, such as their full name, age, email address, phone number, hobbies or name of their school, to someone that they met on the internet. By contrast, only 5% of parents think their child has given out such information (see p. 39).
- **Children engage in identity play:** Two fifths (40%) of 9-19 year olds who use the internet at least weekly say that they have pretended about themselves online – using a different name, changing their age or appearance etc. And though they often know the rules, a minority admits to forgetting about safety guidelines online (see p. 38).
- **Some have attended face to face meetings:** One third (30%) of 9-19 year olds who go online at least once a week have made an online acquaintance, and one in 12 (8%) say they have met face to face with someone whom they first met on the internet. However, the majority of these young people tell someone they are going to the meeting, take a friend with them, meet someone of their own age and, they say, have a good time (see p. 40).

Key findings on parents' and children's views of the internet

Parents' view of the internet is ambivalent – much more so than for other media in the home. They are concerned that it may lead children to become isolated from others, expose children to sexual and/or violent images, displace more worthwhile activities and risk their privacy. On the other hand, 73% believe that the internet can help their child do better at school and help them learn worthwhile things.

Despite their considerable enthusiasm for the internet, children, like their parents, are sensitive to media anxieties. While awareness of risks is important, widespread anxiety may also contribute to restrictions on young people's use of the internet, undermining exploration, expression and creativity.

- **Children worry about the internet:** Three quarters of 9-19 year olds (74%) are aware of some internet safety campaign or have heard or read a news story that made them think the internet can be dangerous; 48% of daily and weekly users worry about 'being contacted by dangerous people', 44% worry about 'getting a virus', and 38% worry about 'others finding out things about you' (see p. 43).
- **Confusion about filtering:** In homes with internet access, 35% of children say that filtering software has been installed on their computer, and 46% of parents claim this. However, 23% of parents say they don't know if a filter is installed, and only 15% of parents who have used the internet say that they know how to install a filter (see p. 44).

Executive summary

Key findings on regulating the internet at home

In regulating their children's internet use, parents face several challenges, not least that they often lack the expertise to do so, especially compared with their children.

Overall, the UKCGO survey finds that children perceive a higher incidence of risky problematic experiences online than do their parents. It also finds that parents perceive a higher degree of domestic regulation than do their children. This suggests that parents tend to assume that rules are not needed when they are and/or that rules are being followed when they are not.

- **Confusion about parental guidance:** Most parents whose child has home access to the internet claim that they directly share in and/or support their child on the internet, though their children are less likely to say that this occurs. Parents also claim to monitor their child's internet use indirectly or discreetly, though again children appear less aware of this. However, one in ten (10%) say they do not know what their child does on the internet, and a fifth (18%) say they do not know how to help their child use the internet safely – suggesting a clear need to improve and extend the reach of awareness and internet literacy initiatives (see p. 46).

Since computers are often located in private rather than public rooms, and since children may seek privacy online, even evading parental monitoring, parents' attempts at regulation are not easy to implement.

- **Children don't want restrictions:** Two thirds (69%) of 9-17 year olds who go online at least once a week say that they mind their parents restricting or monitoring their internet use in various ways (see p. 46).
- **Children protect their privacy from parents:** Moreover, two thirds of 12-19 year old home internet users have taken some action to protect their privacy online – 38% have deleted emails so no one else could read them, 38% have minimised a window when someone else came into the room, 17% have deleted the history file, 17% have deleted unwanted cookies, 12% have hidden or mislabelled files to keep them private and 12% have used someone else's password without their permission (see p. 46).

A parental wish list

Notwithstanding pressures to rely on parents to regulate their children's access to and use of the internet, it is worth noting that parents themselves favour a multi-stakeholder approach (see p. 48):

- **Stricter regulation:** 85% want to see tougher laws on online pornography, with 59% wanting stricter regulation of online services.
- **More education:** In support of media and internet literacy, 75% want to see more and better teaching and guidance in schools while 67% want more and better information and advice for parents.
- **Better content:** Parents also hope for a more stimulating and rewarding online experience for children and young people, with 64% wanting more sites developed specifically for children.
- **Improved technology:** Lastly, 66% want improved filtering software, 54% improved parental controls and 51% improved monitoring software.

However, one cannot simply recommend greater control over or monitoring of children by parents. From children's point of view, some key benefits of the internet depend on maintaining some privacy and freedom from their parents, making them less favourable particularly to intrusive or secret forms of parental regulation.

Managing, guiding and regulating children's internet use is, therefore, a delicate and challenging task and one that will surely most effectively be pursued with children's cooperation. Such cooperation need not be impossible. While children are often confident of their online skills, they are also aware of many ways in which they are confused, uncertain or lacking in skills, and their desire to combat these is genuine.

Balancing opportunities and dangers

It might be supposed that children who go online more often become more savvy and so able to avoid the risks while optimising the benefits. Expert children can, it is often hoped, be left to their own devices while attention is given to those not yet or not much online who, because they lack experience and expertise, run greater risks than those who 'know what they are doing'.

- **High users – more benefits but also more risks:** The UKCGO survey finds that those who use the internet more make a broader use of it, and, more significantly, frequent users both take up more of the opportunities of the internet and are also exposed to greater risks. Compared with weekly users, daily users of the internet are more likely to use the internet for making webpages, for political participation, for exam revision and for interactive engagement. However, they are also more likely to have encountered pornography and violent or hateful material online, to have met online 'friends' offline and to have revealed personal information online.
- **Low users – fewer risks but also fewer benefits:** The UKCGO survey also finds that those who make less use of the internet both face fewer risks but also benefit from fewer opportunities. Hence, simply restricting children's access to the internet represents a poor strategy for minimising the risks they face, given the other costs of reduced use.

Executive summary

A new divide

No longer are children and young people only or even mainly divided by those with and without access, though 'access' is a moving target in terms of its speed, location, quality and support, and inequalities in access persist.

Children and young people are divided into those for whom the internet is an increasingly rich, diverse, engaging and stimulating resource of growing importance in their lives, and those for whom it remains a narrow, unengaging if occasionally useful resource of rather less significance.

Hence, a new divide is opening up, one centred on the quality of use. The UKCGO survey finds that middle class children, children with internet access at home, children with broadband access and children whose parents use the internet more often are more likely to be daily users and so to experience the internet as a rich, if risky, medium than are less privileged children.

Conclusion

- **Is the glass half full or half empty:** Much public attention is focused on the risks children are encountering when using the internet, and rightly so. Some may read this report and consider the glass half full, finding more education and participation and less pornographic or chat room risk than they had feared. Others may read this report and consider the glass half empty, finding fewer benefits and greater incidence of dangers than they would hope for. Much depends on one's prior expectations.
- **Evidence-based policy:** It is hoped that the present findings provide a clear and careful picture of the nature and extent of these risks, as well as an account of the attempts that parents and children are making to reduce or address these risks. In our view, the risks do not merit a moral panic, and nor do they warrant seriously restricting children's internet use. But they are nonetheless widespread, they are experienced by many children as worrying or problematic, and they do warrant serious attention and intervention by government, educators, industry and parents.
- **Internet not yet used to full potential:** The UKCGO survey reveals a plethora of ways in which children and young people are taking steps towards deepening and diversifying their internet use, many of them gaining in sophistication, motivation and skills as they do so. But it has also identified many children not yet taking up the potential of the internet. These young people worry about the risks, visit only a few sites, fail to upload and maintain personal websites and treat sites more as ready-made sources of entertainment or information than as opportunities for critical engagement, user-generated content production or active participation. How this potential can be better realised remains a key challenge for the coming decade.
- **A balanced approach to regulation:** In sum, this report suggests that a balanced approach to regulation is vital if society is to steer a course between the twin risks of exposing children to danger or harm and of undermining children's opportunities to participate, enjoy and express themselves fully. Focussing on either dangers or opportunities, without recognising the consequences of particular policies or provision for the other, is likely to be problematic, undermining either children's rights or their safety.

Project overview

The internet generation

Many households, especially those with children, now have domestic internet access although, significantly, some do not. The ways in which the internet is rapidly becoming embedded in everyday life is attracting widespread attention, raising questions about access and inequalities, about the nature and quality of use, about the implications for children's social and educational development and, ultimately, about the balance between the risks and opportunities posed by the internet for children and their families.

Children and young people are regarded with ambivalence, being seen both as 'the digital generation', pioneers in developing online competencies, yet also vulnerable and potentially at risk. Early research has shown that parents hope to improve their children's educational prospects but are concerned about online dangers.[1] Further, parents are unsure how to guide their children towards creative or valuable sites. Although children are enthusiastically using the internet, proudly labelling themselves 'the internet generation', they too vary in confidence and competence when faced with the challenge of getting the best from the internet while also avoiding the problems it brings.

Commercial interests seeking to expand the child and youth market increasingly centre on the development of targeted online contents and services. In the public sector, there are hopes that the internet may stimulate young people's political engagement, community values and educational prospects. The opportunities are considerable, though to a great extent still untapped at present. But media attention – and hence public concern – more often focuses on the potential risks and dangers, leading to discussions of how to regulate or restrict young people's internet access and use. In policy terms, society must strike a balance between two risks – the failure to minimise the dangers and also the failure to maximise the opportunities.[2]

UK Children Go Online (UKCGO)

The research project *UK Children Go Online* (UKCGO) is conducting a rigorous investigation of 9-19 year olds' use of the internet, comparing girls and boys of different ages, backgrounds etc, in order to ask how the internet may be transforming – or may itself be shaped by – family life, peer networks and learning, formal and informal. It combines qualitative interviews and observations with a major national survey of children (both users and non-users) and their parents.[3]

In our first project report, we presented qualitative research findings, drawing on a series of focus groups and individual interviews with children conducted during summer 2003.[4] This second report presents an overview of findings from the national face to face survey of children and parents, conducted during spring 2004. The UKCGO final report, due in spring 2005, will present a detailed analysis and integrated findings from the project overall.

Aims and approach

Research aims

An informed and grounded understanding of the nature and extent of internet access and use is crucial in order to counter the present climate of speculation, even of media panics, regarding the supposedly dramatic consequences of mass internet adoption, particularly for children and young people.

Facts, figures and even anecdotal observations about children's internet use are accompanied by heated debate over their significance. The project aims to balance an assessment of two areas of risk with two areas of opportunity in order to contribute to developing academic and policy frameworks regarding children and young people's internet use. The four areas are as follows:

1 Access, inequalities and the digital divide

2 Undesirable forms of content and contact

3 Education, informal learning and literacy

4 Communication, identity and participation

Continuities and change

In responding to the growing body of empirical research, some commentators stress historical continuities, being sceptical of utopian and dystopian claims for a technology-led future and critically questioning whether and in what ways everyday life may be undergoing a radical change. After all, the historical lesson of once-new media is one of gradual diversification or repositioning of media rather than the wholesale displacement or transformation of previous ways of life. This approach leads us to examine the contexts of media use – in terms of the family and childhood, leisure and lifestyles, youth culture and consumer culture, work and education, and social values – all of which are simultaneously undergoing gradual change in a manner that intersects with, and shapes the conditions of, internet use.[5]

By contrast, other commentators postulate more radical change, seeing the internet as a facilitator of larger social, cultural, political and psychological transformation, whether towards the network society, the post-modern condition or a dystopian nightmare.[6] This position extrapolates from early indications of the innovative nature of internet content and use to advance some imaginative visions of the future, particularly stressing the blurring or reconfiguration of those once-significant boundaries between entertainment and education, work and leisure, public and private, local and global, and producer and consumer. It adds a sense of urgency to the debate, for an intelligent anticipation of future developments will aid the timely formulation of internet-related policy, products and practices, just as a misreading of the early signs may misguide or confuse matters.

A child-centred approach

UK Children Go Online seeks to steer a course between these polarised approaches by charting empirically the unfolding relation between continuity and change. It is guided not only by prior analyses of trends in internet content, services and use but also by a 'child-centred' focus that regards children as active and interpretative (though not necessarily highly sophisticated) agents who appropriate and shape the meanings and consequences of the 'new' through a series of established and novel social semiotic practices.

Whether information and communication technologies are incorporated into the ongoing stream of social life or whether they reorient or open up alternative trajectories, the new media depend on the beliefs and actions of their users to activate particular trajectories over others and to give them meaning and value in daily life. Thus, we seek an account of how children themselves play a role – through their imaginative responses, their creative play, their micro-practices of daily life – in establishing the emerging uses and significance of the internet.[7]

Methodology

Research with children

Despite the growing number of surveys conducted on adult populations, particularly in Europe and North America, few independently-conducted surveys directly ask children (rather than adults speaking for children) about their internet use.[8] This may be because research with children places some distinctive requirements on the research process, particularly in relation to informed consent, the formulation of survey questions and research ethics.[9]

However, since children are widely seen to be 'ahead' of adults in their internet expertise, and since they are often motivated to conduct their internet use away from the eyes of concerned adults, the reliability of findings obtained by asking adults to report on the activities of children must be questioned.[10] Most research conducted directly with children tends to be small-scale, qualitative work.[11]

Hence, a large-scale, in-depth, national survey conducted with children face to face in UK homes, together with a survey of their parents, is timely.

Learning from qualitative findings

In our first project report, the above four areas of opportunities and dangers were explored through focus group interviews and family visits. In terms of the opportunities, this research revealed that children and young people are generally enthusiastic and creative adopters of the internet – especially for communication, entertainment and education – and they make subtle comparisons of the strengths and disadvantages of different media available to them. It also showed that they are particularly proud of their expertise in using the internet, perceiving their 'media literacy' to be greater than that of many adults. However, in terms of critical and productive literacy, the research identified some limitations on their skills.

The interviews also revealed that children are concerned about their online privacy in relation to parents (though not commercial organisations), valuing the internet for the opportunities it offers for exploration in social relationships, for advice-seeking and for private experimentation with identity. However, the creativity of children's use of the internet should not be overstated, both because young people are attracted to highly branded commercial online environments and because the normative pressures of the peer culture are strong.

In terms of the dangers of content and contact, the interviews contained some lively discussions of when 'strangers' became 'people you know', albeit only online. However, while many young teens go through a phase of playful communication with unknown others, most online communication takes place with local and, less often, distant friends that young people also know face to face. Instant messenger applications are particularly favoured for this, with email less popular and chat rooms apparently declining in use. The interviews also included some discussions of pornography, with young people less in agreement here – boys were more interested and tolerant than girls, with girls more ambivalent and, at times, disgusted. Views among young people on how access to such content should be regulated also differed.

Designing quantitative research

Though often insightful in suggesting themes or trends, qualitative research is best complemented by quantitative research in order to judge the scale and significance of the findings. In order to take the above analysis forward, a national face to face survey of children and young people aged 9-19 was conducted to examine the social, economic and cultural patterning of internet-related interests, beliefs and practices among children and young people.[12]

Discovering which aspects of internet use are more or less common is essential in developing both theory and policy. Particularly, a reliable assessment of the incidence of comparatively rare but risky behaviours demands a sizeable sample. *UK Children Go Online* surveyed 1,511 children aged 9-19 and 906 of their parents. Such a sample can be broken down to advantage, for too often children and young people are treated as a homogeneous group, masking diversity. A large survey permits systematic analysis of findings according to a range of demographic and other factors, thereby revealing precisely who is gaining the advantages, running the risks or getting left out in the growing adoption of the internet at home.

As a note of caution, in presenting the survey findings we are acutely aware that 'answers' to questions of internet use are inevitably provisional because both the technology and its social contexts of use are changing. Moreover, any answers are inevitably diverse because, however unified the medium may be (and of course it is not), families are far from homogenous. In presenting the findings from the *UK Children Go Online* project, we compare our findings with those from such other surveys with children that have been conducted in order to relate the present findings to others and so identify trends over recent years.[13]

The administration and sampling procedures used for the UKCGO survey are outlined in the Annex to this report. All percentages reported here derive from the UKGCO survey unless otherwise specified and have been weighted in accordance with population statistics, as described in the Annex. Actual numbers/sample sizes (N's) are reported unweighted.[14]

Access, inequalities and the digital divide

The process of internet take-up

Access to new technologies is usefully analysed in terms of the diffusion of innovation in which a model is proposed for the typical acquisition path for each new medium from the early adopters to mass ownership.[15] Once the mass market has been reached, one would expect some displacement of activities (eg from television viewing to time spent online, from face to face to online communication) or effects on the meanings of familiar activities (eg television viewing becomes a family activity again while the internet is used for more individualised pursuits).[16]

Mass market adoption, arguably, is a prerequisite for the significant levels of investment in online contents and services required to expand the range of uses and further attract users to the internet. Hence, as internet access grows, one would expect the services offered, and so the nature of use, to change. Already, most daily activities can be pursued online – information, education, civic participation, commerce, relationships, entertainment – and more people are adjusting their daily practices so as to accommodate these opportunities.

Growing access to the internet

> *'In 2000 the Prime Minister set a target for internet access for all who want it by 2005, underlining the Government's commitment to ensuring that the opportunities of the digital age are extended to all. The target recognizes that, unless tackled, digital exclusion may reinforce rather than address broader social inequalities.'* (Office of the e-Envoy, 2004, p. 5)

In strikingly few years, children have rapidly gained access to the internet at both school and home, strongly supported by Government policy and industry initiatives. Indeed, young people's lives are increasingly mediated by information and communication technologies – at home, at school and in the community. For many adults, these technologies are also transforming the workplace.[17]

Internet access at home

According to the Office of National Statistics, by February 2004 58% of UK adults (aged 16+) had used the internet (up from 54% in 2003 and 49% in 2002).[18] Overall, some 12.1 million UK households (49%) had access to the internet at home in the last quarter of 2003.[19]

Government figures do not differentiate between households with and without children. However, analyses of the diffusion of new information and communication technologies have long shown that households with children tend to be in the vanguard of the adoption process. This suggests that such families will have greater access than UK household figures overall.[20] Yet it is also the case that some children live in the poorest households in the UK, suggesting that they may be left behind on the wrong side of the digital divide.

The *UK Children Go Online* survey finds support for both these outcomes:

- Three quarters of all 9-19 year olds (75%) have accessed the internet from a computer at home.[21] This figure is considerably higher than that for the adult population (49%, ONS 2004). Overall, 71% of 9-19 year olds currently have internet access at home via a computer, and 74% have access via either a computer, games console or digital television.[22]

- On the other hand, one quarter of 9-19 year olds (23%) have never accessed the internet on a computer from home (and 29% cannot or do not currently do so). If domestic internet access is reaching a plateau, a substantial minority of the population may remain on the wrong side of the digital divide.

Internet access at school

Children and young people do not only access the internet at home, and for this age group, school is the most widespread location of use. After all:

> *'A key strand of the Government's education strategy is to stimulate and support the use of information and communications technology (ICT) in teaching and learning as a means of raising educational standards. The cornerstone of the strategy is the ICT in Schools Programme, which supports the Government's vision for delivering higher standards of education and increasing employability through the use of ICT.'* (Becta, 2002, p. 4)

For children especially, schools are crucial to redressing the digital divide, for they have the potential to equalise the effects of inequalities in resources at home.

- The UKCGO survey finds that while 75% of 9-19 year olds have accessed the internet from a computer at home, almost all children and young people (92%) have accessed it at school.

- However, while access at home and elsewhere is rapidly increasing, there remains one quarter of the youth population (24%) that has access at school but not at home. This figure has not reduced significantly in recent years, making provision through school an important opportunity for redressing inequalities.[23]

Internet access elsewhere

Young people also use the internet in a range of locations other than at home and school.

- Two-thirds (64%) of 9-19 year olds have also used the internet elsewhere. This includes 48% in someone else's house, 31% in a public library, 17% via a mobile phone, 9% in an internet café, 7% at a parent's work place, 6% via a games console, 4% via digital TV and 4% at their own work place.

The figures are similar for parents of the children surveyed, although parents are more likely than children to use the

Access, inequalities and the digital divide

internet in a public library and children more likely than parents to use it in someone else's house.

- Of all parents who have ever used the internet (N=692, 78%), 82% have used it at home and 51% at work, these being the most common locations of use. However, 31% have used the internet in someone else's house, 19% in a public library, 13% via a mobile phone, 8% through a digital television, 7% in an internet café, 7% via a games console and 1% at university/college.

Sources of inequality

In diffusion theory terms, the market is approaching saturation. Access in schools is now widespread (at 92%), and 98% of children have accessed the internet in one place or another.[24] In homes, the late majority stage has been reached, with 23% 9-19 year olds not having used the internet at home. To term this group 'laggards', however, is to ignore the problem of both cost and expertise for the families without access at home, for, if we consider those with and without home access, the key factor is clearly socio-economic (see Figure 1).

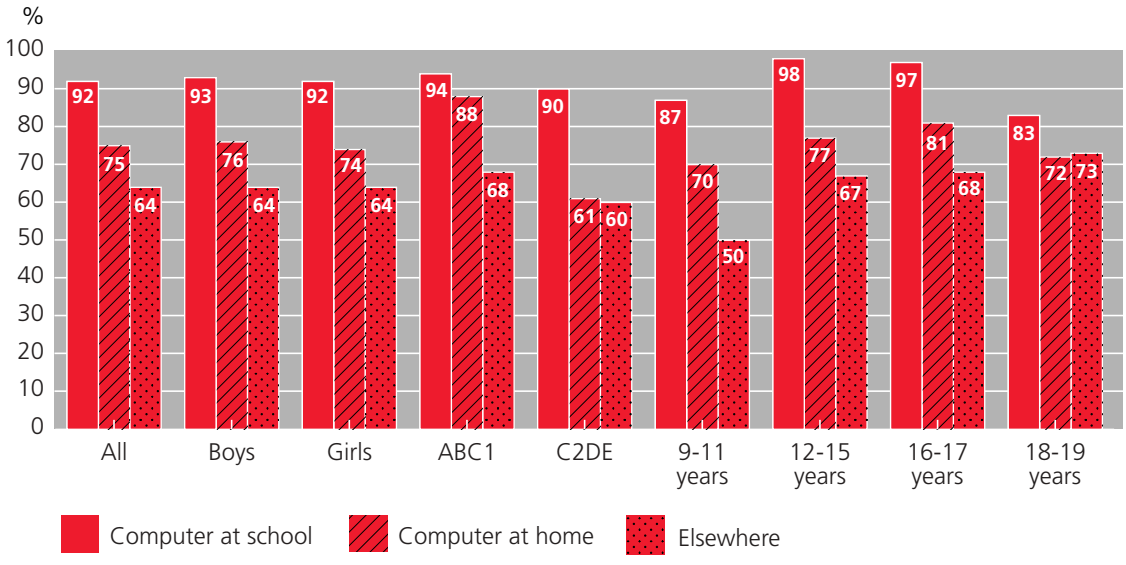
- While differences in accessing the internet at school and elsewhere by socio-economic status are marginal, differences in access at home are sizeable: 88% of middle class but only 61% of working class children have accessed the internet at home.[25]
- The relative privilege of ABC1 over C2DE children is also evident in relation to use of the internet other than at home or school, with 68% of middle class children using the internet elsewhere compared with 60% of working class children.
- The age of the children also matters. Access at school is greater for teens than for either the youngest (87% of 9-11 year olds) or oldest group (83% of 18-19 year olds). Figures for access at home show a parallel age trend to that for access in school, being greater for the teenagers than for the children or young adults.[26] Use of the internet elsewhere (ie other than on a computer at home or school) becomes more common as children grow into their teens.
- Interestingly, gender makes little difference to access in any location. It could be that for many of the girls surveyed there were also boys in the household for whom internet access is acquired. However, the findings for use of the internet suggest instead that parents are not inclined to discriminate significantly against girls but, rather, provide access for both sons and daughters.

Relying on school for access

In Figure 2 we combine data on whether children have ever used the internet in certain locations with whether they currently have access in that location. 'Home (any)' here means they have access to the internet via computer, digital television or games console. 'School, not home' means they have used the internet at school but have never had access at home. 'Other location only' means they have used the internet but not at home or school. 'Non-users' do not use the internet and have no access at home.[27]

- 74% of 9-19 year olds currently have access to the internet at home via either computer, digital television or games console.
- 13% of middle class children and 35% of working class children have access to the internet at school but not at home, thereby relying mainly on their school for access.
- Only 2% of 9-19 year olds lack access to the internet in any location.

Figure 1: Which of these have you ever used to access the internet? By demographics



Base: All 9-19 year olds (N=1,511)

Access, inequalities and the digital divide

In short, the importance of socio-economic status in domestic access suggests that, as for other new technologies, the innovators and early adopters of the internet tend to be the already-privileged in society while those slow to gain access tend to be the already-disadvantaged.

Regional differences

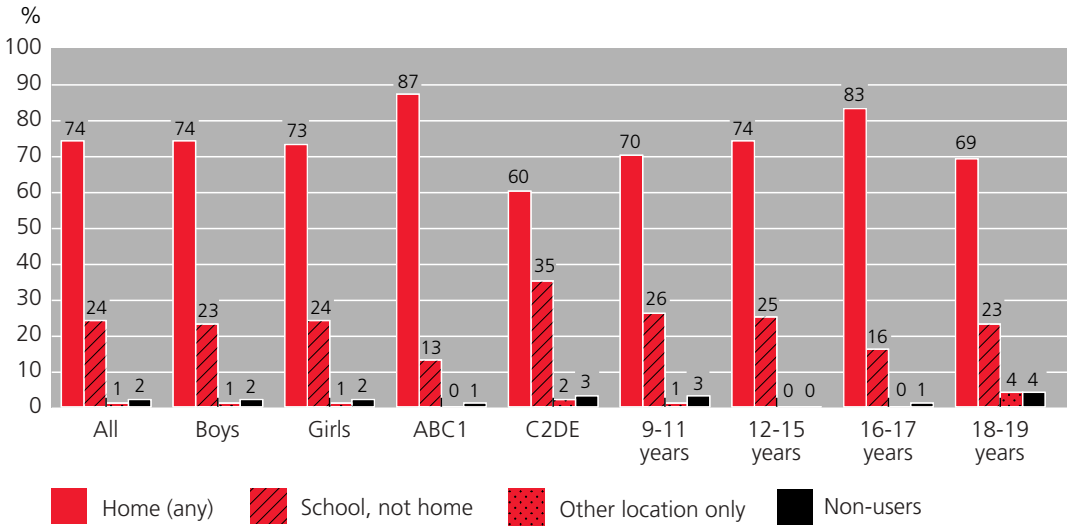
If we examine differences across the UK, some variation becomes apparent in access both at home and at school (see Figure 3):

- Internet access at home is comparatively lower in the North, Yorkshire and Humberside, Wales and Scotland, and access at school is lower in East Anglia and Wales.

The UKCGO survey found that access to the internet is lower in areas of high deprivation.[28]

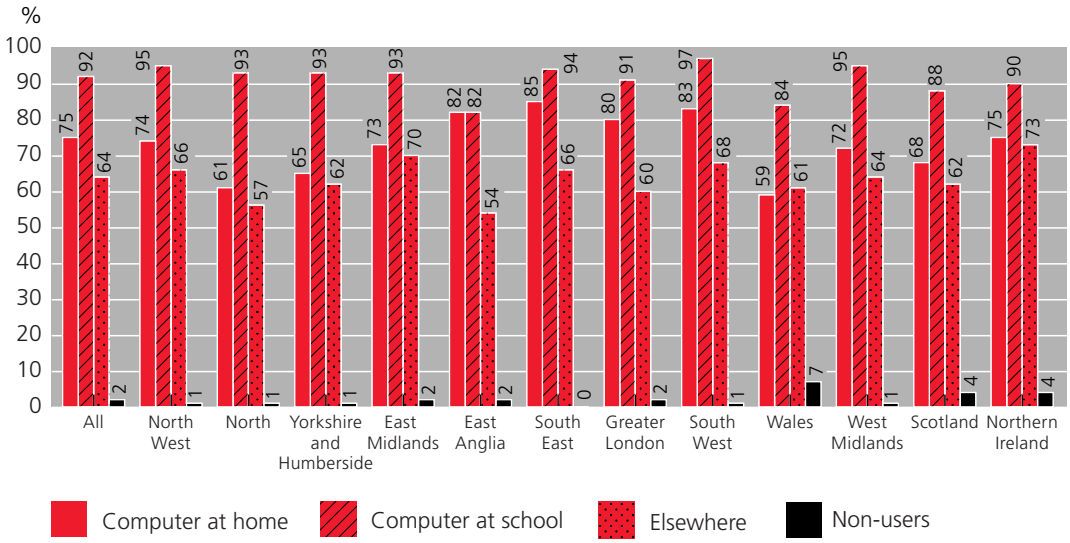
- Some 86% of children and young people in areas of low deprivation in England (N=1,233) have used the internet on a computer at home, compared with only 66% in areas of high deprivation (and 83% for medium deprivation).
- This difference is balanced out at school where 93% in areas of high deprivation have used the internet, a figure only marginally below the 95% for areas of low deprivation (and 92% for medium deprivation).

Figure 2: Comparing sources of access to the internet by demographics



Base: All 9-19 year olds (N=1,511)

Figure 3: Where ever used internet by region



Base: All 9-19 year olds (N=1,511)

Access, inequalities and the digital divide

Ethnicity

Ethnic background does not appear to play a large role in determining internet access.[29]

- 75% children and young people from a white background and 72% from a non-white background have used the internet on a computer at home, and 92% of white and 90% of non-white children have used it at school.

Inequalities in range and speed of access

Gaining internet access at home is no simple matter as many parents have discovered. Crucially, it should not be thought of as a one-off act of acquisition of a computer/modem/ISP. Rather, as our qualitative research showed, families are grappling with a continuous flow of demands and expectations. Technology must be researched, chosen, bought, installed, upgraded, added to, fixed, re-installed etc, – if 'internet access' is to be sustained and kept up to date.

In a pattern familiar from most previous media, whereby a medium is acquired first for the family and then subsequently multiple versions are bought to satisfy the individualised preferences and taste of individuals, we are now witnessing homes with more than one computer and, increasingly, more than one source of internet access, as well as different speeds of access.[30]

Multiple computers

How far have the cascading demands within the home resulted in the multiplication of computers in households with children?

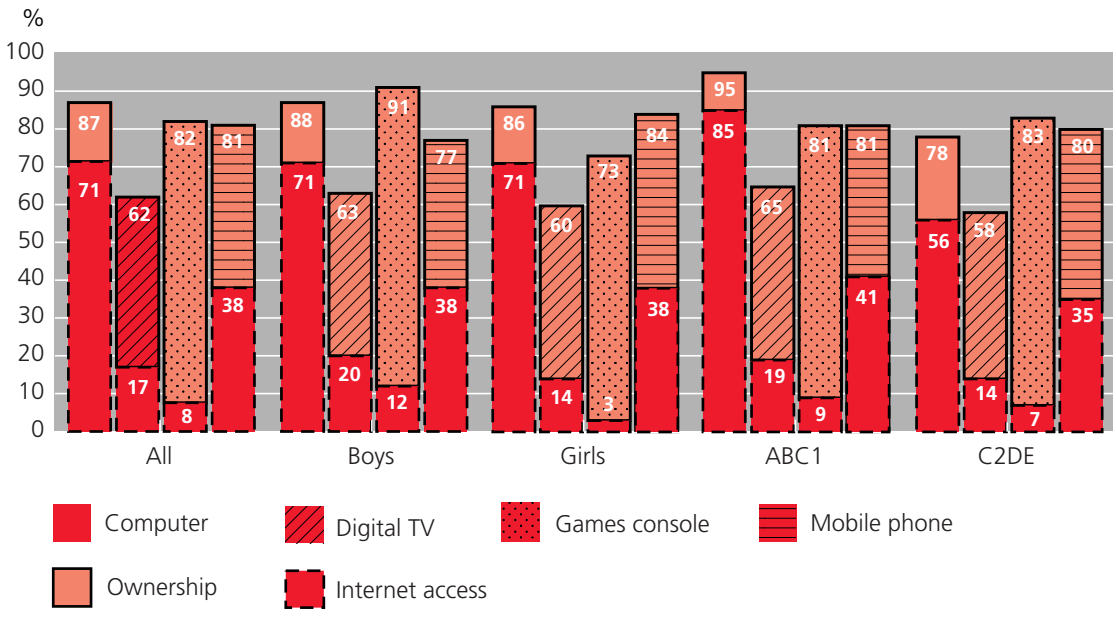
- Some 36% of 9-19 year olds have more than one computer at home. Of those who have a computer at home, 59% have one, 26% have two, 9% have three, 4% have four, and 1% have five, with an average of 1.6 computers.
- Again, gender and age differences are marginal, but socio-economic status matters – middle class homes with computers average 1.9 per household while working class homes with computers average 1.3 computers per household.
- Furthermore, 52% of all 9-19 year olds have one computer with internet access, 12% have two, 4% have three and 2% more than three.[31]

The shift to broadband

The latest decision facing many families is whether to acquire broadband or not:

- Overall, 24% of 9-19 year olds live in a household with broadband access to the internet, again showing that households with children are 'ahead' of those without.[32]
- 33% of those children and young people with internet access at home have a broadband connection while 41% pay a monthly subscription fee and 20% pay for connection by the minute. Of those with broadband, age and gender differences are marginal.[33]

Figure 4a: Whether have technologies at home and whether these have internet access by gender and socio-economic background



Base: All 9-19 year olds (N=1,511)

Access, inequalities and the digital divide

- However, there are larger differences in relation to socio-economic background with 38% of ABC1 and 26% of C2DE children with home access to the internet using a broadband connection. This is unsurprising, given the comparatively greater cost of a broadband connection, but it marks one of the various and subtle ways in which socio-economic status perpetuates the digital divide even among those with internet access at home.[34]

Diversifying access platforms

Further complicating matters, until recently internet access meant access via a personal computer. But today, forms of access are also diversifying. As yet it is unclear whether these different platforms matter for the nature or quality of internet use, though since the costs involved, expertise required and social contexts of use all differ, one would indeed predict differential consequences according to the platform.

It would seem that we are witnessing a step-wise phenomenon in which families first acquire a television set, computer, games console, mobile phone, then they acquire multiples of at least some of these, and then they acquire internet access on one or more of each (see Figures 4a and b).

- 87% of children aged 9-19 have a computer at home, 62% have digital television, 82% have a games console and 81% have their own mobile phone.[35]

- Games consoles are more common among boys than girls; mobile phones are more common among teenagers than children; computers especially, and to a lesser degree digital television, are more common in middle class than working class households.

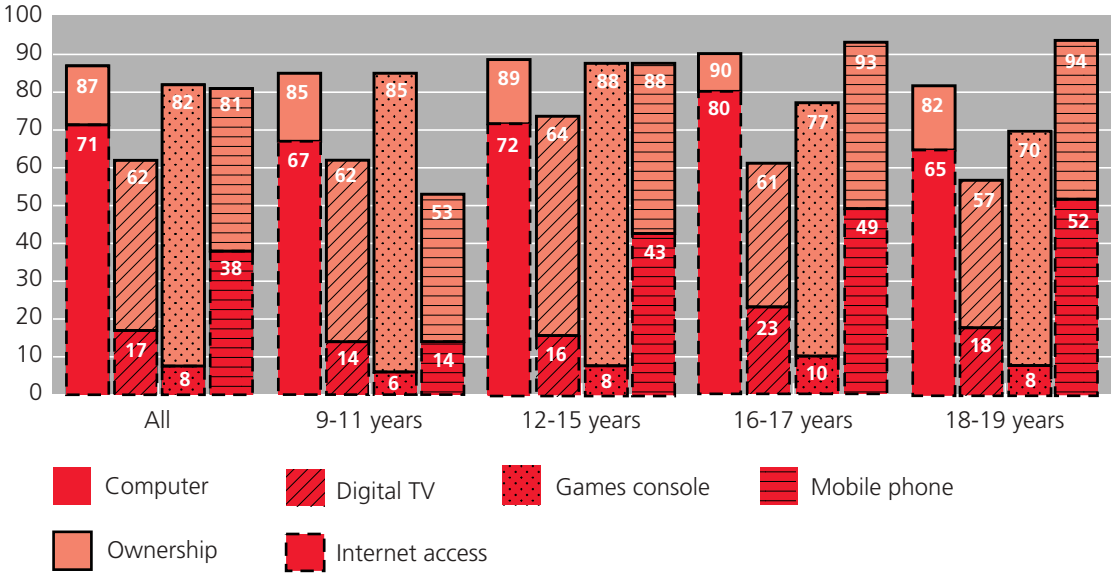
Although it is possible to gain internet access on each of these technologies, it is clear that the computer is the favoured platform for internet access, followed by the mobile phone. However, digital television should not be neglected since nearly a fifth of young people can access the internet in this way.

- Thus, 71% of 9-19 year olds can currently access the internet at home through a computer, 17% through a digital television set, 8% through a games console and 38% via their mobile phone.[36]

- If we include all the ways in which a child can access the internet at home, home access rises to 74%.

- Also interesting is the fact that, while more middle class homes access the internet via the computer (85% compared with 56% of working class homes), working class homes (35%) are almost as likely to provide internet access via a child's mobile phone as are middle class homes (41%). Internet-enabled mobile phones jump in ownership for the 12-15 year olds.

Figure 4b: Whether have technologies at home and whether these have internet access by age



Base: All 9-19 year olds (N=1,511)

Access, inequalities and the digital divide

Media-rich bedrooms

Unlike for television, whose rightful place initially was clearly in the living room but which has since migrated into an increasing number of rooms in the house, the computer has not fitted easily into UK homes. Each family has a story to tell, explaining why it has been put in one or another room and, very often, how it has been moved around the house – stories which reveal domestic practices, individual preferences, family conflicts, questions of aesthetics and décor and practicalities of space and telephone wires.

One key trend is that, as media goods in the home multiply in both number and range, children are being provided with increasingly media-rich bedrooms.[37] Interviews with parents reveal that the decision to put a television, games console or computer in a child's bedroom is not taken lightly. Nor is provisioning a media-rich bedroom simply a matter of money, for often it is lower socio-economic status households, including some of those with comparatively few media goods elsewhere in the home, that invest in personalised media for children.[38]

Over and above financial and spatial considerations, this decision involves a weighing up of family preferences for communal or individualised leisure, a judgment regarding children's maturity and good sense, as well as an assessment of parental ideals regarding 'family life'. In short, this is a moral as well as a material decision and one that is often a source of conflict within the household.

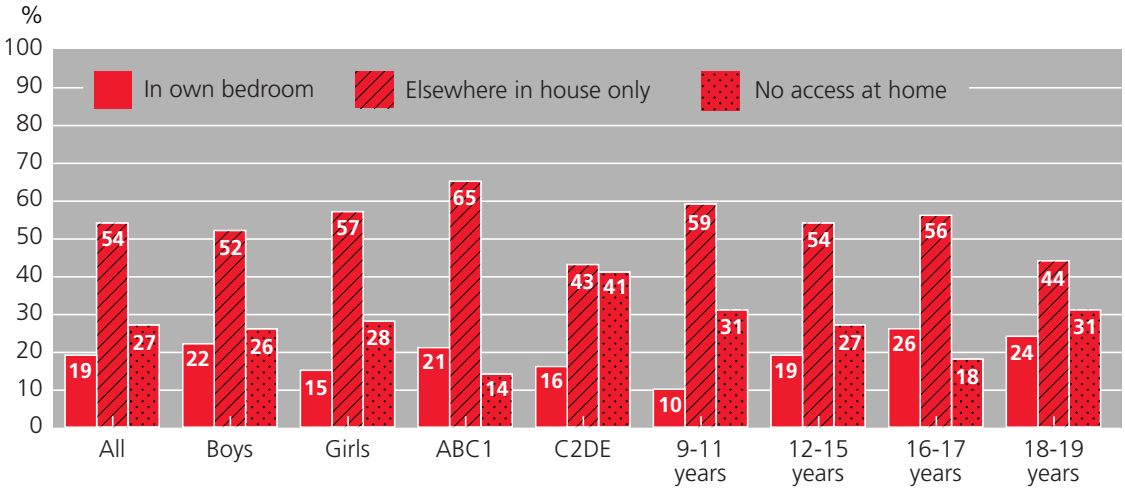
The internet in children's bedrooms

The UKCGO survey shows that the location of an internet connection varies according to the platform with most variability for internet via a computer.

- Among 9-19 year olds with at least one computer online at home (71%), most often a computer is located in the living room (41%), in 31% of homes in the study, in 22% in the child's bedroom, in 12% in a sibling's bedroom, in 10% in the parent's bedroom, in 7% of homes a computer moves around (eg laptop), in 6% it is in the hall or landing and in 1% in another bedroom.
- Fewer than half the computers online at home are, therefore, located in a public or living room.
- For those who access the internet through a digital television set (17%), location varies little, for 96% have put it in the living room, 4% in the parents' bedroom and only 2% in the child's bedroom.
- By contrast, for the few who access the internet via a games console (8%), this access is most likely to be located in a child's bedroom (60%), 27% placing it in the living room, 18% in the sibling's bedroom, 3% in the parents' bedroom and for 3% in the study.

The internet, more than any previous medium, brings the outside world – with its opportunities and its dangers – into the home, raising concerns for many parents about children's private or unsupervised use of the internet and so making the location of the point of access critical in managing a range of risks relating to both contact with strangers and inappropriate or unwelcome content.

Figure 5: Access to the internet in child's own bedroom by demographics



Base: All 9-19 year olds (N=1,511)

Access, inequalities and the digital divide

Government advice to parents is to 'locate the computer in a public area of [the] home, rather than hidden away in a bedroom'.[39] Yet, as our focus groups with children showed, children and young people themselves are keen to use the internet to have control over the conditions and context of their internet use, essentially to manage their own privacy online as well as offline.

Looking across platforms, Figure 5 shows the overall availability of internet access in children's bedrooms.

- In all, 19% of 9-19 year olds have internet access in their bedroom.
- This figure is higher for boys (22%) than girls (15%), a subtle but not insignificant way in which gender differences are marked in the home.
- Middle class children are also more likely to have their own internet access in their bedroom (21% compared with 16% of working class children).
- Predictably, personal access to the internet in the bedroom rises with age from only 10% of the 9-11 year olds to 24% of the 18-19 year olds and 26% of the 16-17 year olds.[40]

Overview of internet access among children and young people

Access at home is widely regarded as a key measure of diffusion. It suggests voluntary take-up and broad-ranging use by the population (by contrast with the required and, possibly, narrow use of the internet at work or school). It is a crucial measure to consider for children because, although nearly all have access at school, use is often relatively restricted there. As it becomes ever more taken for granted that people do have access to the internet, the costs of exclusion from home internet may also rise, particularly if use at home differs from or is more flexible than use at school or elsewhere.

In other words, if it is at home that children are most free to experiment with the medium as our focus groups suggest, then it is here that they may gain most in confidence and expertise, making inequalities in home use of continuing significance. Yet, parental concerns that the medium is used 'well' and that risks are minimised results in some restrictions on children's online activities, this perhaps contributing to their use of the internet in other locations.

- These figures for internet access in different locations represent a substantial rise in just a few years. Compared with 2002, access at home has risen from 56% to 75%, access at school has risen from 71% to 92%. In 2001, the comparable figures were 45% for home access and 56% for school access, and access elsewhere has risen from 19% in 2002 to 64% in 2004.[41]
- Overall, the UKCGO survey finds that 98% of 9-19 year olds have accessed the internet in one location or another. Becta figures for previous years again confirm the rapidity of the increase in access, from 73% in 2001 and 84% in 2002.

Taking the most obvious measure of access, the *UK Children Go Online* survey shows that children – more than adults – nearly all have access to the internet. Only 1% of pupils aged 9-17 lack any kind of access to the internet, and only 3% of 9-19 year olds say that they never use the internet, a figure that contrasts with 22% of the parents of 9-17 year olds. When the *Young People New Media*[42] survey asked children about the internet in 1997, only 19% of 6-17 year olds had used the internet, marking a dramatic change in just seven years.

However, as we have seen, this near-universal access among children remains stratified in key respects – in terms of home access especially, gender, age and socio-economic inequalities persist.

The nature and quality of access is constantly changing. Increasing expectations, developing technologies and changing social norms result in a continual process of upgrading and extending the form of internet access in the home. Current trends towards multiple computers, towards broadband access and towards access in the child's bedroom are all altering the communication ecology of the home. Yet, while access is no longer exclusively computer-based, the computer is at present still the main platform for access to most online contents and services.

The nature and quality of internet use

What are children and young people doing online?

How much time do they spend using the internet and for what purposes? Are they, indeed, the pioneers of the digital age?

Considerable policy attention has addressed the digital divide, seeking to identify, and remove, the barriers to internet access and use in order to reduce inequalities.[43] With rising access to the internet, especially for school children, the debate has moved from early concerns with material access to the technology to the trickier question of symbolic access – the practical skills and subtle competencies which facilitate confident internet use, the lack of which crucially hinders new and inexpert users, limiting the richness of their use if not excluding them altogether. The UK Government frames this shift as one from basic to advanced levels of use thus:

> *'Encouraging remaining non-users onto the first rung of the internet ladder will remain an important challenge to guide policy in the next few years. However, for individuals to fully realise the benefits of the internet we must help them move up the ladder – to move from basic activities such as e-mail and browsing to more advanced uses such as e-learning and transactional activities like buying, banking and accessing government services.'* (Office of the e-Envoy, 2004, p. 11)

However, identifying the ways that children and young people use the internet is not as straightforward as identifying whether they have access. The quality of use and the skills required to maximise the benefits of internet use may be measured in a variety of ways – frequency of use, time spent online, kinds of uses, expertise in use, specific skills online, attitudes towards internet use and so forth.

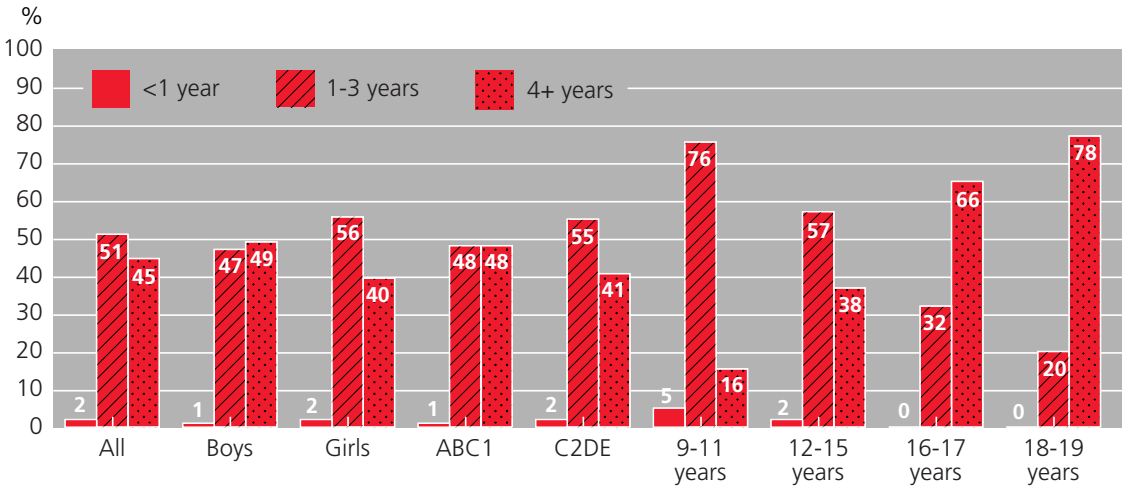
We employ a range of measures, below, to examine the nature and quality of children and young people's use of the internet.

Length of experience of using the internet

Even if most children now have access to the internet, when they first gained access reveals inequalities whose consequences may be long-lasting in terms of experience, confidence and expertise.

- Among 9-19 year olds who currently have home access to the internet (74%), the largest proportion (30%) first got the internet at home at least four years prior to being surveyed; some 16% got it 3-4 years ago, 19% 2-3 years ago, 18% 1-2 years ago, 5% 6-12 months ago, 6% 1-6 months ago and 2% less than one month ago.

Figure 6: Number of years using the internet by demographics



Base: 9-19 year olds who use the internet at least once a week (N=1,257)

The nature and quality of internet use

In consequence, few children and young people with home internet access are very recent users as one would expect for a medium that has now reached, if not saturated, the mass market.

- As Figure 6 shows, around half of 9-19 year olds who go online at least once a week have been using the internet for between one and three years, with the other half having used it for more than four years. Boys are slightly more long-time users than girls, middle-class children more than working class children and older teens more than younger children.
- On average, those who use the internet at least once per week were between 10 and 11 years old when they first started using it.

We explore below whether length of time using the internet has any implications for expertise and range of uses.

Life without the internet

Perhaps surprisingly, even though the internet has become a fairly familiar technology, it is not as thoroughly embedded in children's lives as are some other media.

- When asked which one item they would miss the most if it disappeared tomorrow, 31% of children and young people name television; 28% would miss their mobile phone most, 14% their games console, 10% the internet, 9% the computer and 7% books.
- Those who chose the internet (N=145) as their 'miss most' medium were more likely to be boys, 12-15 year olds and from ABC1 backgrounds.

This greater preference for television (31%), when asked to choose one medium, is not just a matter of television being more familiar since that more recent arrival, the mobile phone, has also become more necessary to young people's daily lives than the internet. Given the struggles that our qualitative research reveals many children and their families to encounter in trying to use the internet, we suggest that the very complexity – often, the frustrations – of the internet accounts for its low ranking as a 'miss most' medium. Although increasingly, most children do consider it an essential tool for homework.

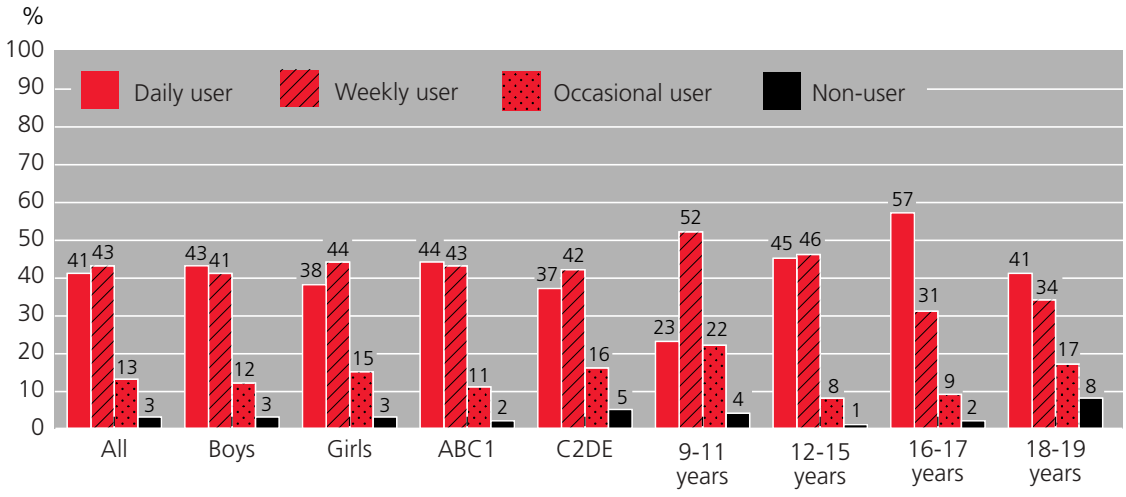
When the *Young People, New Media* project asked the same question of 6-17 year olds in 1997, 45% named television, 8% chose the games console, 5% the computer and 4% books; at that time, too few had a mobile phone or internet access to choose these media. Comparing this with the UKCGO survey suggests a decline in television's popularity in favour of the phone, the computer, the games console and the internet over the past seven years.

Frequency of internet use

Also unlike television, music and the mobile phone, for many children, the internet is not always a daily medium. We divided 9-19 year olds into four user categories (see Figure 7a):

- Daily users who use the internet at least once a day
- Weekly users who use the internet at least once a week but less than once a day
- Occasional users who use the internet less often than once a week
- Non-users who never use the internet

Figure 7a: Frequency of internet use by demographics



Base: All 9-19 year olds (N=1,511)

The nature and quality of internet use

Most children and young people make either daily or weekly use of the internet:

- 9-19 year olds are mainly divided between daily users (41%) and weekly users (43%); only 13% are occasional users, and just 3% count as non-users. If we compare these figures with data from 2002, it seems that the proportion of children who are daily users has risen.[44]
- There is a small tendency for more boys (43%) than girls (38%) to be daily users, and a similarly small difference in relation to socio-economic status. Middle class children (44%) are more likely to be daily users than working class children (37%), and the latter group contains more non-users (5%) than the middle class group (2%).
- The age differences in frequency of use are more marked: 9-11 year olds are most likely to be weekly users (52%), though one fifth of them (22%) are occasional users; 12-15 year olds are divided between daily users (45%) and weekly users (46%) while 16-17 year olds are most likely to be daily users (57%).
- The 18-19 year olds are rather more divided, for, while 41% are daily users, they also contain the highest proportion of both occasional users (17%) and non-users (8%). This suggests that this oldest group – not all of whom are in school or college – contains either some 'internet drop-outs' or some for whom the internet arrived too late.[45]
- There are almost as many daily users among parents of 9-17 year olds (N=906) as among children aged 9-19 – 39% of parents. The remaining parents are divided evenly between weekly users (21%), occasional users (18%) and non-users (22%). Thus, there are considerably more non-users among parents than among children.

In the UKCGO survey, detailed questions about use were asked of the 84% of 9-19 year olds who use the internet at least weekly (ie daily plus weekly users) while questions seeking to understand low or non-use were asked of the remaining fifth of the age group.

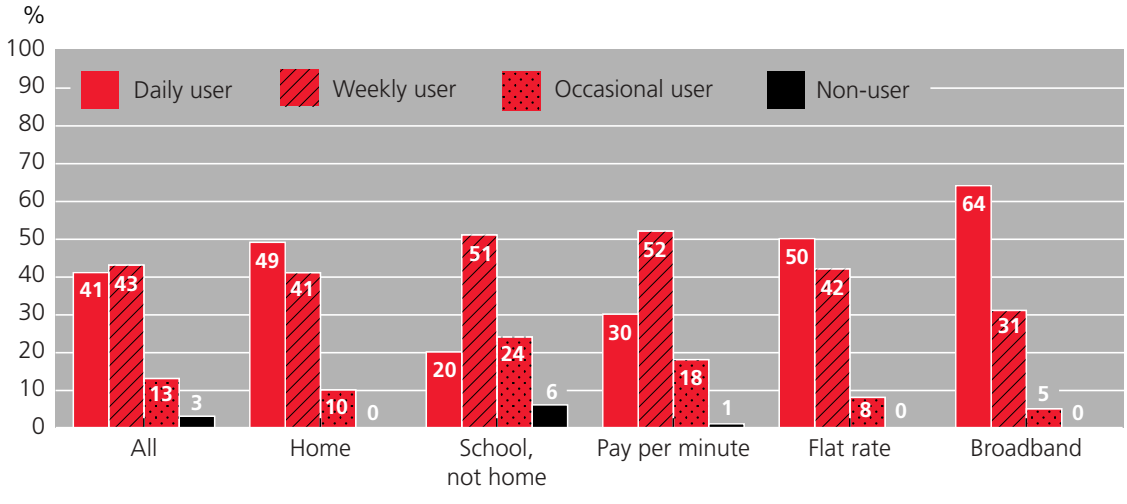
Relating frequency and location of use

There is a clear association between frequency of use and both location and mode of access (see Figure 7b).

While cautioning that no assumption can be made regarding the direction of causality here, we observe that:

- Those with home access are more likely to be daily users while those with school access only are more likely to be weekly users.
- Those who pay for access by the minute are more likely to be weekly users, flat rate access is divided between daily and weekly users, and those with broadband are most likely to be daily users.

Figure 7b: Frequency of internet use by type of access



Base: All 9-19 year olds (N=1,511)

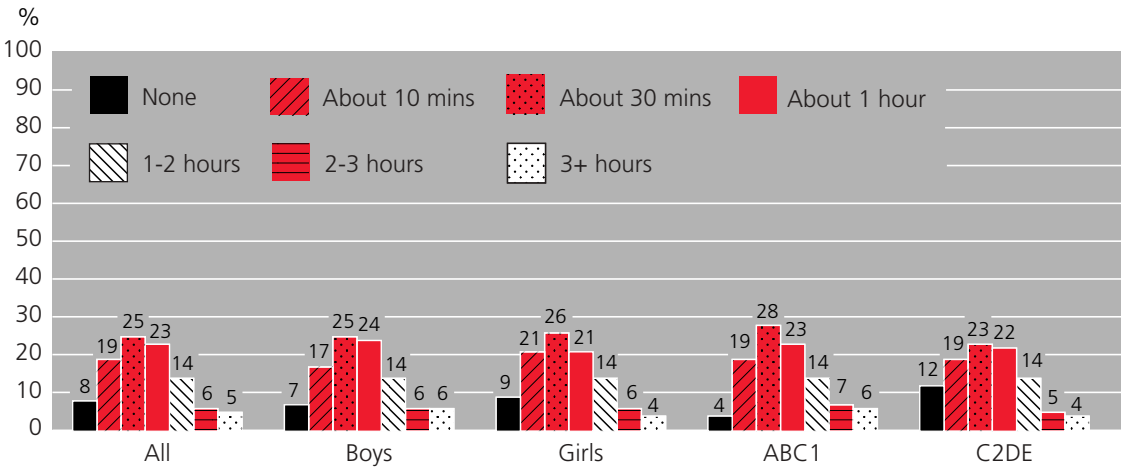
The nature and quality of internet use

Time spent online

How much time are children and young people spending online? Measuring time use is never easy for adults or children. We asked children to estimate the time they spent on a typical weekday and a typical weekend day and then produced a composite score for internet use on a typical day, as reported in Figures 8a and b.

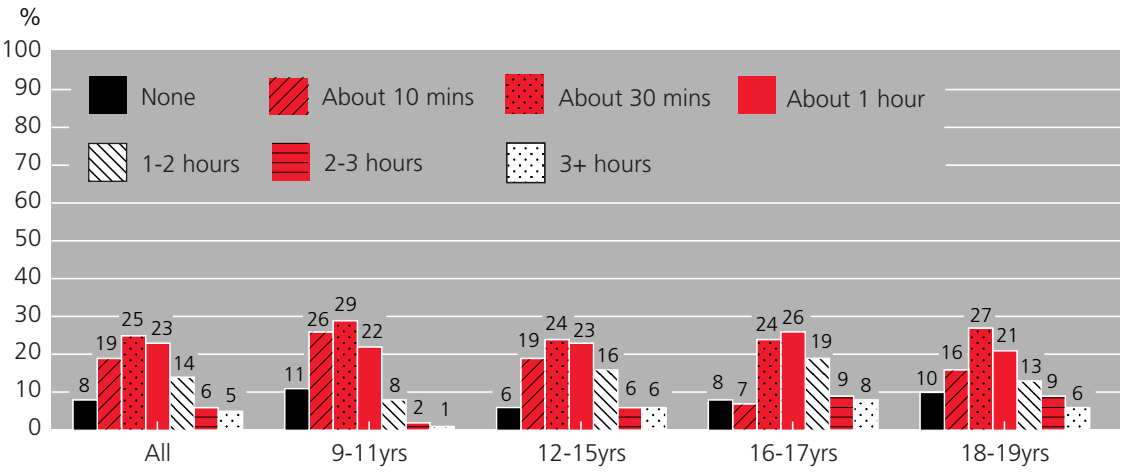
- One fifth (19%) of 9-19 year olds spend about 10 minutes per day online, half spend between about half an hour (25%) and one hour (23%) online, and a further fifth go online for between one (14%) and three hours (6%) each day. Only one in 20 (5%) spend more than three hours on the internet on an average day.
- Any gender differences in time spent online are marginal,[46] as are class differences, though age differences are more marked. The youngest age group (26% of 9-11 year olds) are very light users, spending about 10 minutes per day on the internet.
- Among the older age groups, a sizeable proportion spends several hours online each day. Indeed, half of 12-15 year olds go online for one hour or more, as do two thirds of 16-17 year olds. Among 18-19 year olds, this decreases again to one half who spend one or more hours on the internet each day. Among 9-11 year olds, however, it is only one third who spend this long.

Figure 8a: Time spent online on an average day by gender and socio-economic background



Base: All 9-19 year olds (N=1,511)

Figure 8b: Time spent online on an average day by age



Base: All 9-19 year olds (N=1,511)

The nature and quality of internet use

Relating frequency of use and time online

Frequency of use is, not surprisingly, associated with time spent. Among those who go online daily, six in ten (57%) spend between one and three hours online per day, and one in ten spend longer than three hours per day. By contrast, among those who go online once a week, 28% spend between one and three hours online on a typical day, and only 1% spend longer than three hours per day.

These amounts of time can be compared with time spent on other activities by children in order to gauge the relative importance of the internet (see Figure 9).

It seems that time spent online is less than time spent watching television or with the family, similar to that spent doing homework and playing computer games and greater than time spent on the phone or reading.

Social context of use

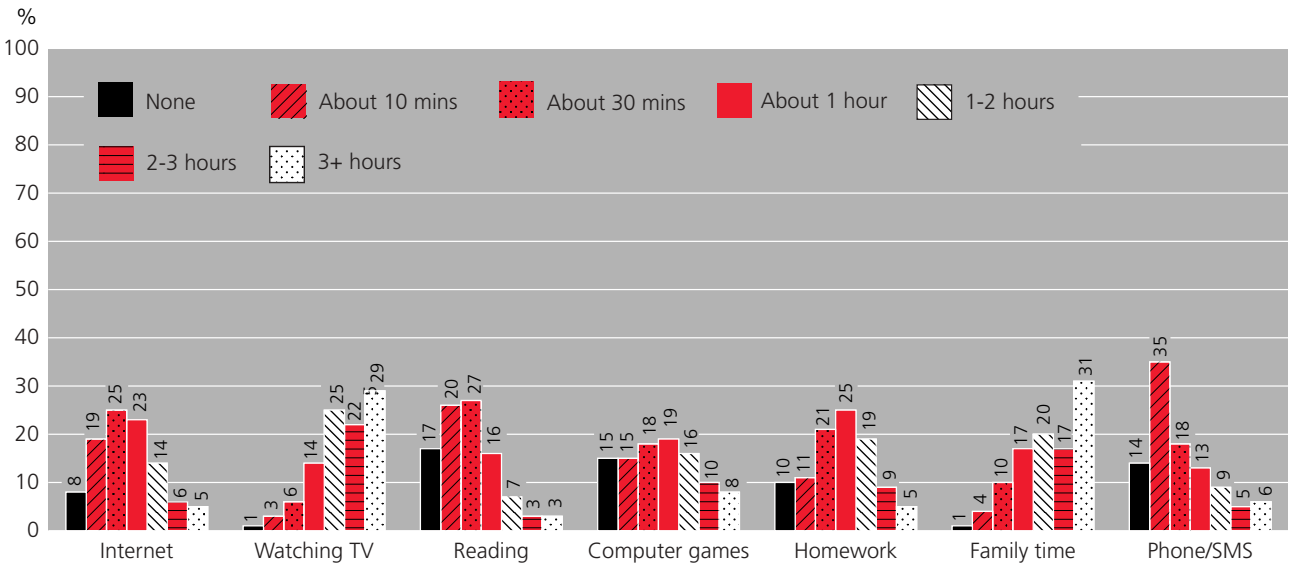
We have seen that, more often than not, the computer is located in a private rather than a public room in the home. However, the nature of the room does not dictate the context of use. Several friends may gather in front of the screen in a bedroom; a teen may wait till the family is out before using the internet in the living room.

The UKCGO survey shows that, unlike television, but like books and often music, the internet is generally used alone.

- Four fifths (79%) of children and young people with home access to the internet report mostly using the internet on their own.
- A further 5% report mostly using it with a sibling, 5% with their mother, 5% with their father and 4% with one or several friends.

Hence, even though the internet may be located in a public space (eg living room), it appears to be a personal medium in terms of the experience of using it.

Figure 9: Amount of leisure time spent on activities on an average day



Base: All 9-19 year olds (N=1,511)

The nature and quality of internet use

Varieties of use

When they go online, what do children and young people use the internet for?

In our observational studies,[47] we found that some children go online once a week or less, for perhaps half an hour, visit the same two or three familiar sites linked to favourite television programmes or sports teams, conduct a quick search to help their homework and save themselves a trip to the library, perhaps play a simple game or see if they have an email from a relative living abroad.

For other children or, more often, teenagers, the internet has rapidly become something very different, occupying considerable amounts of time, opening up new communities for immersive game-playing, a source of expertise and self-development, perhaps a place where they can take some risks in experimenting with relationships or escape from the difficulties of their offline lives.

Thus, we witnessed a fair proportion of children for whom the internet is an occasional convenience but by no means bringing about a grand transformation in their daily lives while for others it is becoming of much greater importance. Within the family, however, each or any of these children might be considered 'the internet expert' by their parents or siblings, and each or any might run some risks of encountering inappropriate material.

Main uses of the internet

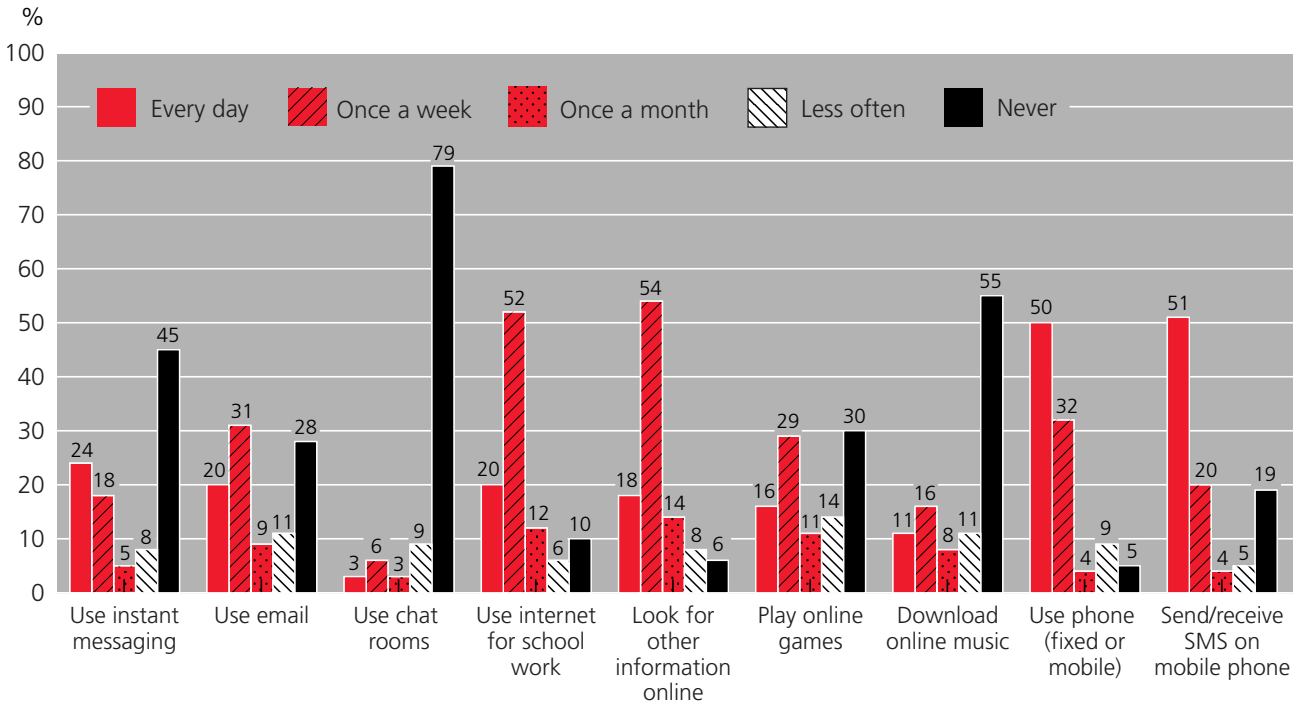
How far are these observations supported and extended by the *UK Children Go Online* survey? We asked those who go online at least once a week (84% of all 9-19 year olds) what they do on the internet (see Figure 10). Overall:

- 90% use it to do work for school or college
- 94% use it to get information for other things
- 72% use it to send and receive emails
- 70% to play games online
- 55% to send and receive instant messages
- 45% to download music
- 21% to use chat rooms

Among parents who have ever used the internet, the range of uses is as follows:

- Email (78%), searching (not for work) (75%), work (50%), events (45%), music (21%), games (19%), instant messaging (15%) and chat (6%).

Figure 10: How often do you...?



Base: 9-19 year olds who use the internet at least once a week (N=1,257)

The nature and quality of internet use

Comparing children and parents, it would seem that both prioritise the internet as an information medium, though 'information' must be interpreted very broadly. Both children and their parents use the internet for searching for non-work related topics, though children are more likely also to use the internet as a work/education-related medium. For children, compared with their parents, the internet is also more multifaceted, being used not only for information but also to a greater extent for games, music and communication.

The frequency with which these activities are engaged in varies, as shown in Figure 10, where, for comparison, we have included also the frequency with which children use the telephone and send and receive text messages.

- Communication uses tend to be more frequent than others – instant messaging and, especially, the phone and SMS[48] tend to be used daily, with email and chat used less frequently. Searching for information, whether school work or other things is more likely to be a weekly activity, as are playing games and downloading music.

Main types of website visited

Given the popularity of searching online, we also asked those who go online at least once a week which kinds of websites they visit (see Figure 11).

- Following the widespread use of search engines, the most commonly visited sites are those for music, games, hobbies and revision, though a wide range of sites are visited in all.

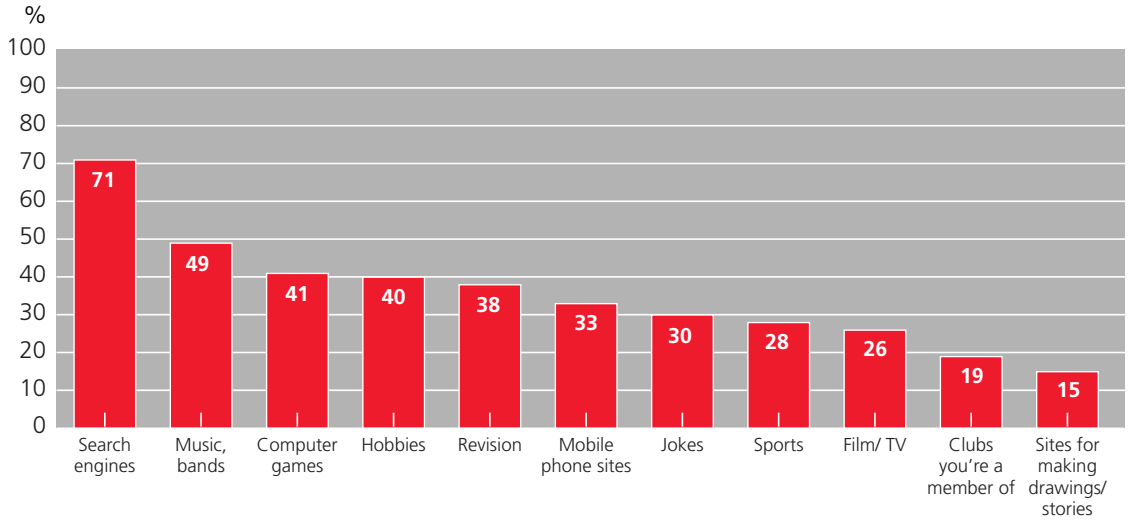
However, the internet can be used for many more activities than these. 12-19 year olds who go online at least once a week (N=975) were asked about a range of further activities. They also report using the internet as follows:

- 44% use it to look for information on careers and further education
- 44% to look for events listings
- 40% to look for products or shop online
- 35% to do something that someone else has asked them to do
- 30% to watch or download video clips
- 26% to read the news
- 23% to look for information on computers, programming or web design
- 17% to use message boards
- 14% to access other people's personal homepages
- 13% to plan a trip

Less-approved uses of the internet

Not all uses of the internet are approved by society, and we tried to reflect this in the UKCGO survey by asking, in the 'private' self-completion section of the survey (see Annex), about a range of less-approved activities. After all, children and young people can be, on occasion, naughty or deceitful, this being arguably intrinsic to childhood (and some adults may also recognise these online activities).

Figure 11: Which of the following sites do you visit on the internet nowadays? (Multiple response)



Base: 9-19 year olds who use the internet at least once a week (N=1,257)

The nature and quality of internet use

Among 12-19 year olds who go online at least once a week, we found that:

- 21% have copied something for a school project and handed it in as their own
- 8% have hacked into someone else's website or email
- 5% have visited an online dating site
- 4% have sent a message to make someone feel uncomfortable or threatened
- 2% have gambled for money online

Two thirds (67%) claim to have done none of these, a figure which may or may not reflect their activities accurately. Since, in our qualitative work we found some hints of a pleasurable defiance in relation to both hacking and the illegal downloading of music, it may be that young people regard online activities through a different moral lens to that conventionally used for the same activities offline.

Narrow use of the web

Although this suggests that across the population as a whole the internet is a highly diversified medium, each individual may use the internet in just a few ways (see Figure 12).

- Among those who go online at least once a week, half concentrate their use on fewer than five different websites.
- Frequency of use is associated with range of use, with those who use the internet daily being more likely to visit more sites than those who use it once a week. Indeed, among daily users, one third had visited more than ten sites in the previous week.

Relating frequency and range of use

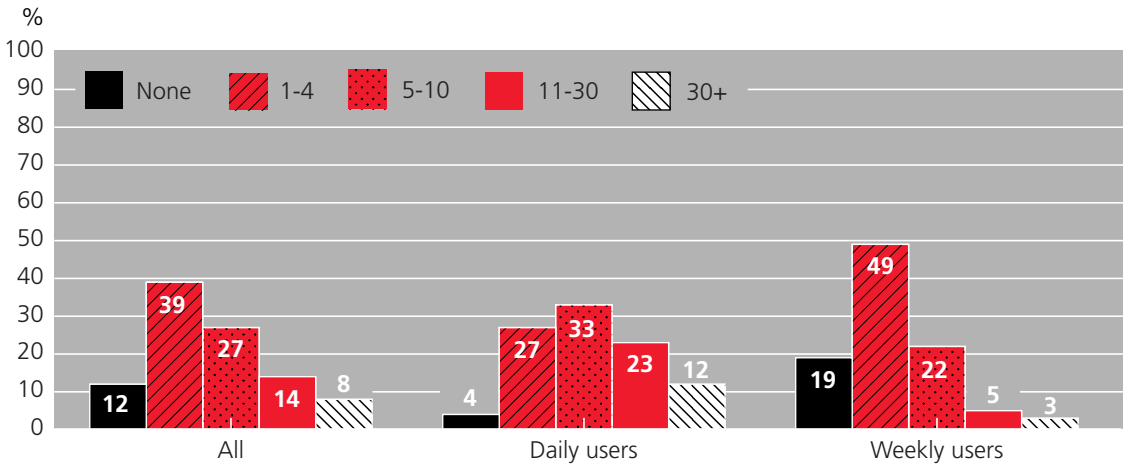
If we compare those who use the internet every day with those who use it about once a week, it is apparent that the former make a much broader use of the internet (see Figure 13). In short, more use appears to mean a greater range of uses.

Overview of children and young people's internet use

In sum, the internet is used in a range of ways by children and young people.

- As an information medium to support school work, the internet has rapidly become central in children's lives: 60% of 9-19 year olds in full time education regard the internet as the most useful tool for getting information for homework (compared with 21% who say books, 11% who say parents, 3% who say CD-Rom, 2% friends and 1% television).
- Interestingly, the youngest (29% of 9-11 year olds) and the oldest groups (31% of 18-19 year olds) are more likely to choose books than the other groups (15% of 12-15 year olds and 21% of 16-17 year olds). These groups are least likely to have access to and use the internet. Compared to this, parents (N=906) think that books are most likely to help their child do better at school (82%), followed by the internet (73%), the computer (40%) and television or video (22%).[49]
- As a communication medium, the internet represents a significant addition to the existing array of means by which young people communicate with others, with both email (72%) and instant message (55%) being popular, though chat rooms are less used (21%). Online communication is, nonetheless, less widely used than the

Figure 12: Number of websites visited in the last week by frequency of internet use



Base: 9-19 year olds who use the internet at least once a week (N=1,257)

The nature and quality of internet use

phone (fixed or mobile). Even among those who use the internet at least once a week, 95% use the telephone, and 81% send and receive text messages (see Figure 13).

- As an entertainment medium, internet use remains significantly below the amount of time spent watching television. On an average school day, 47% of 9-19 year olds watch for between one and three hours and a further 29% watch television for over three hours.
- By comparison, going online takes place for much shorter periods of time: 48% of 9-19 year olds spend between 30 and 60 minutes on the internet and a further 25% more than one hour. However, such use is often more active or interactive than television viewing, with games playing, downloading music and following up fan interests through online searching all being popular activities.

Low and non-users

How likely is it that the remaining 25% of children and young people will gain internet access at home, and how important is it that they do so? Might some drop out of current levels of access and use? Does it matter that a very small percentage (3%) has never used the internet and that 13% are occasional users? Are these merely the 'laggards' in an inexorable process of universal access, or is there, rather, a digital 'underclass'? The Government suggests that access to the internet is no longer a problem in the UK:

> *'Opportunities to physically access the internet are now available to all, whether at home or at work, in the community or through the possibilities afforded by new mobile technologies and [digital television].'* (Office of the e-Envoy, 2004, p. 5)

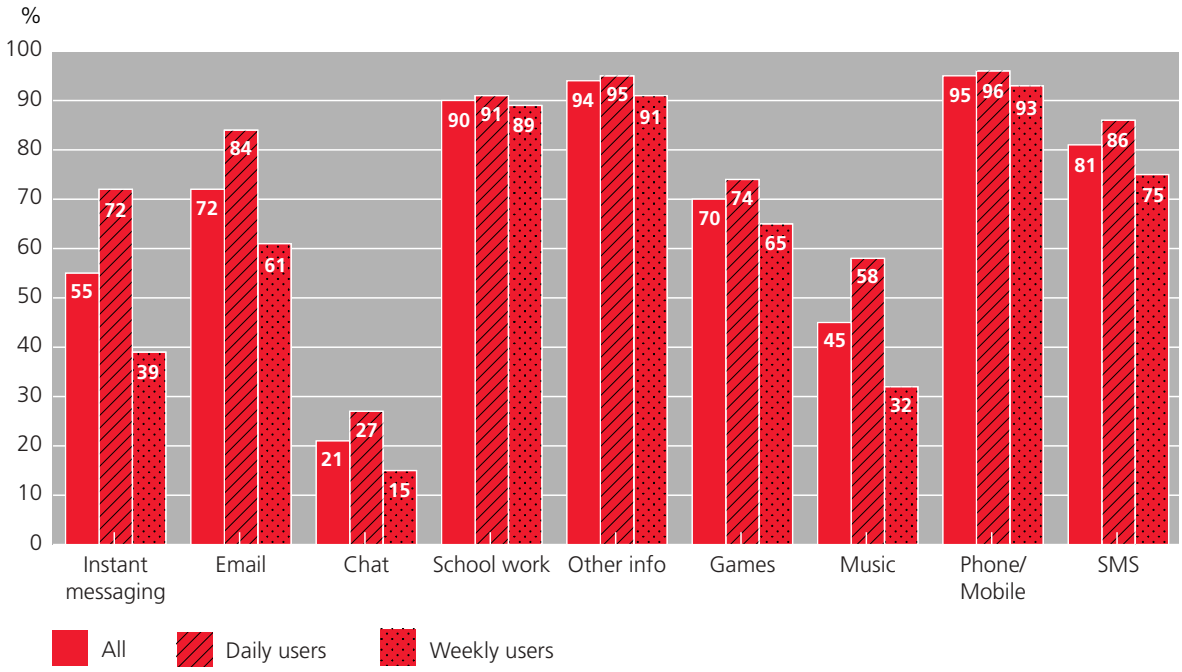
Similarly, commenting on the 41% of the adult population (14+) in the UK who do not use the internet, the Oxford Internet Survey suggests that there are no remaining barriers of fear or anxiety about technology. Rather:

> *'People who don't use the Internet don't see how it will help them in their everyday affairs […]. Among the two-fifths who do not use the Internet, half are informed but indifferent […]. [Only] one in seven are excluded because they do not know anyone who could […] get on the Internet on their behalf, and this group divides equally into those who are anti-technology and those who are apathetic.'* (OxIS, 2003)

However, social exclusion is a multi-determined phenomenon, and people's stated 'choices' require careful unpacking (see Figure 14).[50]

- The UKCGO survey concurs that there seem to be few negative attitudes towards computers among non-users.
- However, the findings suggest that access and expertise remain significant issues, and that non-use cannot simply be explained by lack of interest.
- Many of the parents who are not online say they themselves lack knowledge or expertise (38%), as well as lacking access (34%), though one third (32%) also state that they are not interested in going online. While lack of time remains a barrier for some (17%), few claim costs, attitudes, safety or other impediments to going online.

Figure 13: Online activities and use of phone/SMS by frequency of internet use



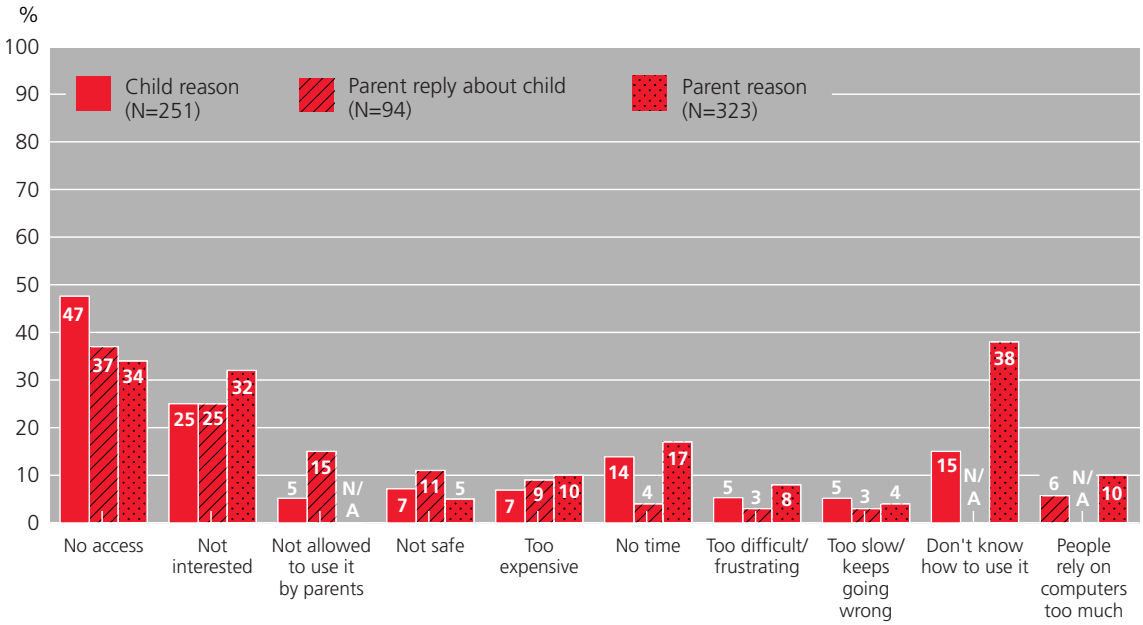
Base: 9-19 year olds who use the internet at least once a week (N=1,257)

The nature and quality of internet use

- Commenting on the non-use or low use of their children, parents claim that lack of access is the main reason (37%), with lack of interest as the second most important reason (25%). Some do not allow their children to use the internet for reasons of safety, cost or other factors.
- Children themselves explain their own low or non-use primarily in terms of a lack of access (47%), with only 25% saying that they are not interested in using the internet. Some 15% say they don't know how to use it, this being the reason why they don't use it at all or more, 14% lack the time to use it, and a few find it too expensive or unsafe.

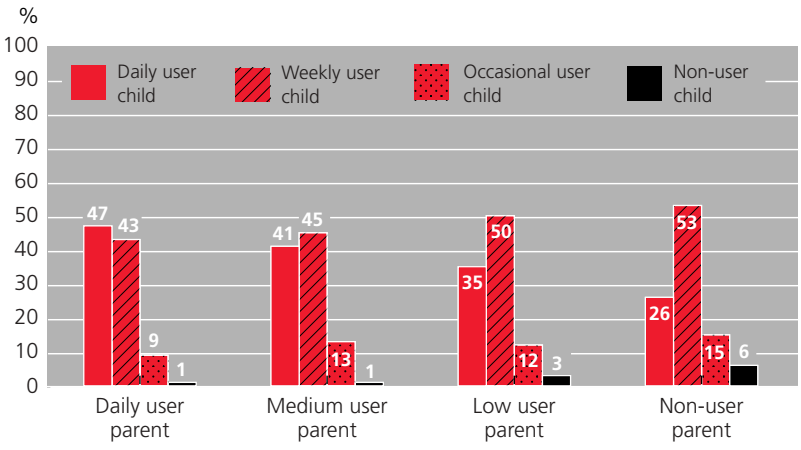
Parents' own levels of internet use makes a difference to their children, it seems. As Figure 15 shows, in relation to internet use as in many other domains of socialisation, children's practices tend to follow those of their parents. Parents who make daily or weekly use of the internet are more likely to have children who go online often. Parents who are occasional or non-users are less likely to have children who go online daily.

Figure 14: Reasons given for occasional/non-use of the internet (Multiple response)



Base: 9-19 year old occasional and non-users (N=251); Parents of 9-17 year old occasional and non-users (N=94); Occasional and non user parents of 9-17 year olds (N=323)

Figure 15: Child frequency of internet use by parent frequency of internet use



Base: All parents of 9-17 year olds (N=906) and their children (N=906)

Education, informal learning and literacy

The UK Government's recent report, 'UK Online',[51] proposes that the traditional requirement that all children be taught literacy and numeracy in school should be expanded to include ICT skills in recognition of the growing importance of such skills, including internet skills, to young people's education and future employment:

> *'Nowhere is the importance of sophisticated ICT skills clearer than in the recent DfES White Paper '21st Century Skills, Realising Our Potential'. It makes a commitment to help adults gain ICT skills as a third skill for life alongside literacy and numeracy. DfES' aim is to enable all adults to have the ICT skills they need to learn effectively online, become active citizens in the information age and, with 62% of adults stating that ICT skills are essential to their current or future job, contribute productively to the economy.'* (Office of the e-Envoy, 2004, p. 11)

This is, therefore, a good moment to note the baseline in terms of both education and expertise among children and young people.[52]

Learning how to use the internet

In our qualitative work, we found that children often prefer to learn how to use the internet informally by playing around with the medium and working things out for themselves. This resonates with a long-standing debate within education circles about the benefits of experimentation and free play compared with more structured teaching.[53]

While it is too early to determine whether in terms of measurable outcomes internet literacy is best gained through formal or informal learning, and notwithstanding children's avowed preference for informal learning, the advantage of formal learning is that a clear curriculum can be designed and delivered in an age-appropriate manner.

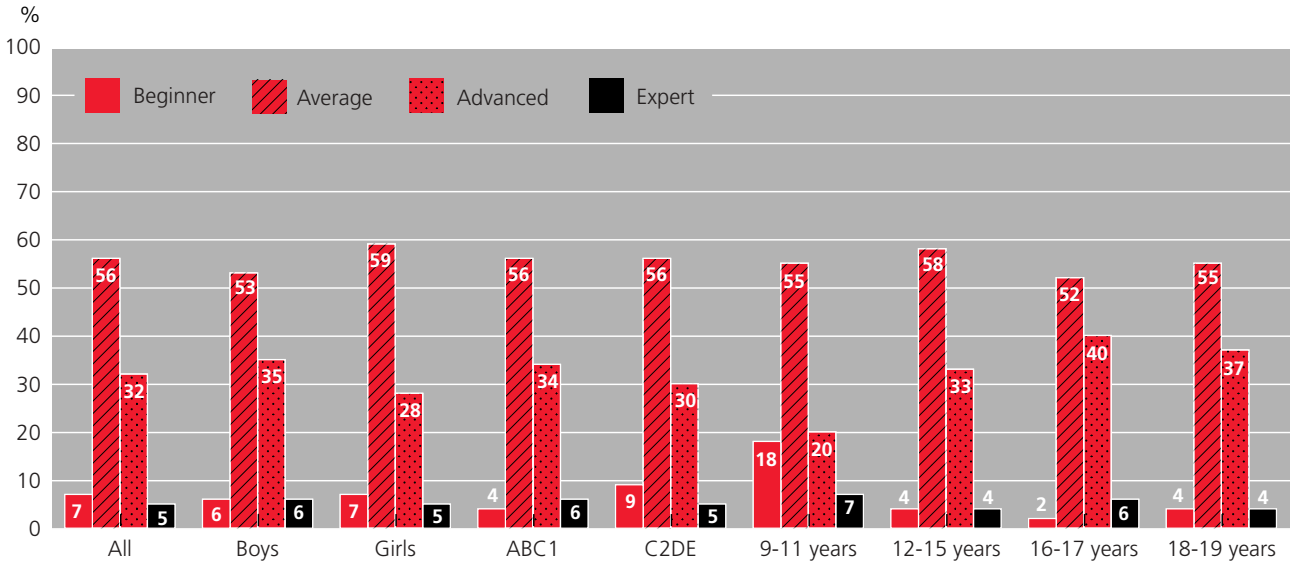
Ideally, this would include a balance between opportunities and safety information, including a range of 'internet literacy' or 'media literacy' skills, such as effective searching, the critical evaluation of websites, production, as well as reception of online content.[54] Is this happening in schools at present?

- Of those in full time education (N=1,326), the majority of children and young people have received lessons on how to use the internet, 23% reporting they have received 'a lot', 28% 'some' and 19% 'just one or two'.
- However, nearly one third (30%) reported having received no lessons at all on using the internet.
- It might be expected that these children have lessons yet to come in the curriculum, but in fact, it is teenagers who are more likely than the younger children not to have been taught how to use the internet. Only 19% of 9-11 year olds say they have had no lessons in how to use the internet, compared with 26% of 12-15 year olds, 45% of 16-17 year olds and 51% of 18-19 year olds in full time education.
- Not surprisingly, 69% of non-users claim to have received no lessons, yet 36% of daily users also report receiving no lessons in internet use. While the former group risk digital exclusion, the latter group risk the dangers of ill-informed use.

Online expertise and self-efficacy

It is difficult to measure objective levels of online expertise Which skills matter, and what is their purpose?. However, research suggests that the perception of oneself as more or less expert online matters as much if not more than actual levels of expertise. Such internet self-efficacy or internet confidence, it is argued, has consequences for internet use.[55]

Figure 16a: How good are you at using the internet? By demographics



Base: 9-19 year olds who use the internet at least once a week (N=1,257)

Education, informal learning and literacy

- Perhaps unsurprisingly, most children (56%) who use the internet at least weekly consider themselves 'average' in terms of their online skills, though one third (32%) consider themselves 'advanced' (see Figure 16a).
- Slightly more boys (35%) than girls (28%) consider themselves 'advanced', suggesting greater levels of confidence and, perhaps, skill among boys. The age differences are more strongly marked, with judgements of one's own skill rising sharply with age. Those who claim either beginner or expert status vary little by demographic variables.

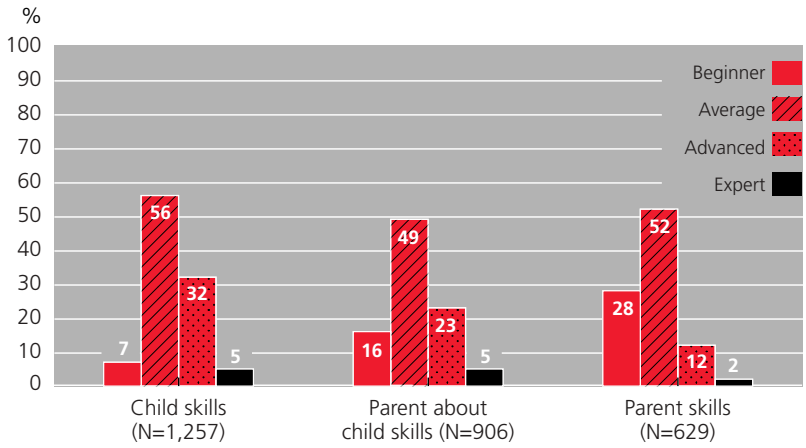
Relating parental and child expertise online

Parents are more modest about their own skills on the internet than are children. Moreover, parents are a little more sceptical about their children's skill level than are children themselves (see Figure 16b).

- 28% of parents who use the internet describe themselves as beginners – compared with only 7% of children who go online at least once a week. Half (52%) of parents consider their skills average, and only 12% consider themselves advanced – compared with 32% of children.
- Even though parents agree that children are more advanced than they are and that fewer of them are beginners, they still consider more children to be beginners and fewer to be advanced than do the children themselves.

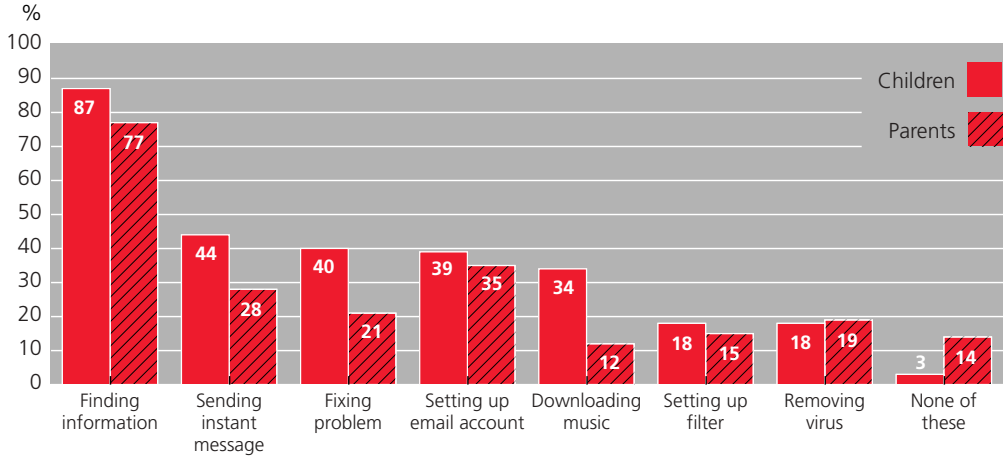
This apparent skills gap between less-expert parents and more-expert children poses an interesting challenge to parents' ability to guide their children's internet use, a point we return to later.

Figure 16b: How good are you at using the internet? / How would you judge your child's skills in using the internet?



Base: 9-19 year olds who use the internet at least once a week (N=1,257); All parents of 9-17 year olds (N=906); Parents who have ever used the internet (N=629)

Figure 17: Which of the following are you good at? (Multiple response)



Base: 9-19 year olds who use the internet at least once a week (N=1,257); Parents who have ever used the internet (N=629)

Education, informal learning and literacy

Developing skills online

What kinds of skills have children in mind when they describe themselves as good at using the internet? The UKCGO survey compares the skills of parents who ever use the internet with the skills of children who use the internet at least once a week (see Figure 17).

- Finding information is the key skill associated with internet use and one in which both children (87%) and parents (77%) are confident.
- In finding information, as in most other online activities, children claim a higher level of competence than their parents. This is most apparent in relation to sending an instant message, something that 44% of children but only 28% of parents feel able to do, in fixing a problem (40% of children, 21% of parents) and downloading music (34% of children, 12% of parents).
- Only one third of children and parents feel able to set up an email account, and less than a fifth are able to set up a filter or remove a virus.
- Since also only a fifth of parents feel able to fix a problem if it arises, it is evident that levels of confidence and competence in managing the home internet environment are fairly – and perhaps problematically – low.

Trust and critical literacy

Given the enormous variation in nature and quality of information available online, a crucial skill that all users must acquire is that of determining the quality and worth of the information they find. Unlike for print media, where considerable quality thresholds, gate-keeping checks and editorial standards are imposed, children must determine this for themselves when using the internet.

Hence, critical literacy is a vital part of ICT and media literacy skills, with trust emerging as a central issue in navigating the online environment. Most children and young people we interviewed in the focus groups appeared to be ignorant of the motives behind the websites they were using, and many, it was clear, had not thought about this question at all. Only a few were aware of the commercial interests or strategies at stake.[56] Indeed, our qualitative work provided a range of examples in which children were unclear or confused about when online information is trustworthy and how to discriminate between different kinds of sites – which could be commercially-motivated, politically-biased or simply of poor quality.

This confusion over trust is confirmed by the UKCGO survey.

- Of all 9-19 year olds currently in full time education (N=1,326), half think that some of the information on the internet can be trusted (49%), 38% trust most of it, 9% trust 'not much of it', and 1% trust none of it.

The 4 in 10 children who trust most online content indicates, at the very least, the scale of the challenge for media or internet literacy programmes. However, if many other children and young people are neither as wholly innocent or as naively trusting as often supposed, they may yet be ignorant. In other words, for the 49% who think some of the information can be trusted, how do they make such a discrimination and is it well-founded? A sceptical attitude is of little value unless one is equipped with some means to act upon this scepticism, discriminating between the trustworthy and the problematic.

- Only 33% of 9-19 year olds who go online at least once a week say that they have been told how to judge the reliability of online information.
- Among the parents of 9-17 year olds, only 41% are confident that their child has learned how to judge the reliability of online information.

Since two thirds of children who go online at least once a week claim to have received no advice or teaching on judging online information, the introduction of some guidance for all is an obvious and urgent first step (especially as many parents also struggle with these discriminations, making it difficult for them to advise their children). Going beyond this, to ensure that all children become competent and informed in weighing the value of the vast range of online resources is a vital if longer-term priority for the education system.

Pornography online

A cause for concern?

One of the main causes for concern in relation to children's use of the internet is that it provides access to pornography. In the often heated debates over online pornography, too little attention has been paid to the definition of pornography, often failing to distinguish images which are upsetting to some from those which are of the kind whose availability is controlled or restricted in traditional media (television, magazines, video) and, in turn, from those which are illegal. This makes estimating the amount and availability of online pornography difficult.[57]

Previous surveys have suggested cause for concern. A Canadian survey of parents[58] suggested that 1 in 5 children have found undesirable sexual material online. The American Kaiser Family Foundation survey[59] found that one in three teens have seen pornography online and that children are more likely than adults to trust online information. In the UK, the Kids.net survey[60] found that in 2000, up to a quarter of children aged 7-16 may have been upset by online materials and that few reported this to an adult.

In 2003, the European SAFT survey found that between a quarter and a third of 9-16 year olds across five European countries had been accidentally exposed to violent, offensive, sexual or pornographic content within the previous year. Specifically, 12% of young people had accidentally ended up on a pornographic website (20% of 13-16 year olds, 19% of boys) and 9% on purpose (16% of 13-16 year olds, 16% of boys). While girls aged 9-12 were mostly upset by it and wished they had never seen it, boys aged 13-16 said they did not think too much about it or thought it was funny.

How do the UKCGO findings fit into this international picture? It turns out that the incidence of accidental exposure to such online content is considerably higher for children and young people in the UK, as outlined below.

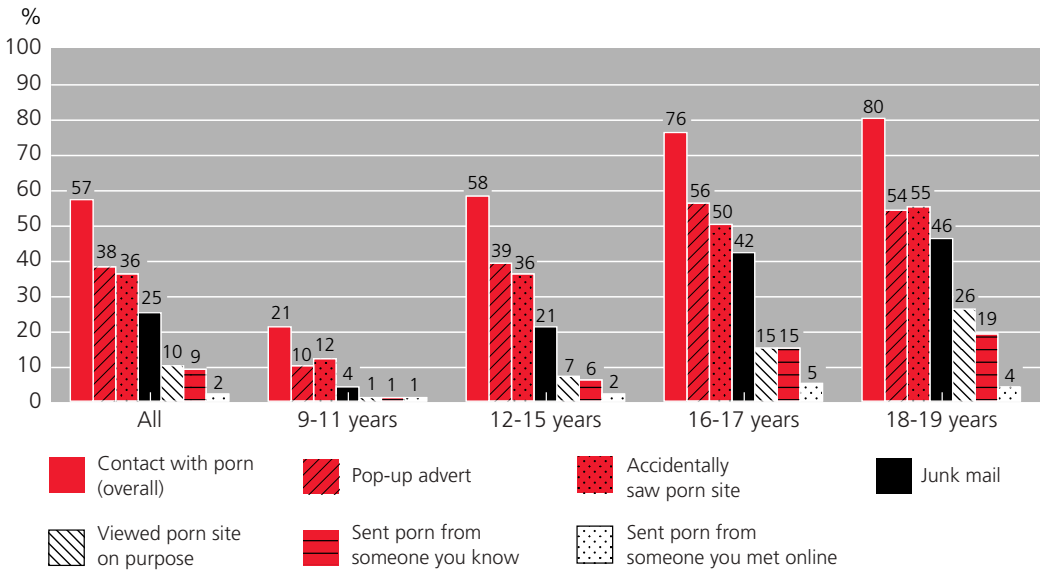
Contact with pornography on the internet

The UKCGO survey asked 9-19 year olds who use the internet at least weekly whether they have come into contact with pornography online,[61] and if so, how (see Figure 18). We have called this 'coming into contact with pornography' because not all of these children describe themselves as having 'seen' pornography, and, as we show below, a fair proportion recognise a message as containing pornography but do not open or look at it.

For reasons of research ethics, all questions about pornography were asked in the private, self-completion section of the survey. Furthermore, follow up or more detailed questions were only asked of those children who indicated in the initial question that they had indeed encountered pornography online.

- 57% of 9-19 year olds who go online at least once a week have come into contact with online pornography
- 38% have seen a pornographic pop-up advert while doing something else
- 36% have accidentally found themselves on a pornographic website when looking for something else
- 25% have received pornographic junk mail by email or instant messaging
- 10% have visited a pornographic website on purpose
- 9% have been sent pornography from someone they know
- 2% have been sent pornography from someone they met online

Figure 18: Have seen pornography on the internet by age (Multiple response)



Base: 9-19 year olds who use the internet at least once a week (N=1,257)

Pornography online

Coming into contact with pornography is, it seems, commonplace for children and, especially, teenagers. In our focus groups, children and young people held some lively debates over whether this was welcome and why, for many, it was not. Annoyance and disgust seemed to be more frequent reactions than being upset, and girls had especially negative reactions to being sent it, or shown it, by boys they knew (for example, having it displayed on computers at school).

The age differences are marked. Only 21% of 9-11 year olds who use the internet at least once a week have come into contact with porn. This rises sharply to 58% of 12-15 year olds, 76% of 16-17 year olds and 80% of 18-19 year olds. The relative frequency of these different sources of contact does not alter, however, with age. Rather, each form of contact becomes more common as children become teenagers.

Possible harms

Does this exposure to pornography matter? While illegal content is addressed by the criminal justice system and the Internet Watch Foundation, content which is legal but which may be harmful to children or offensive to both adults and children is subject to considerable controversy.[62]

For the most part, encountering pornography is unintentional. Whether teens stumble upon it when searching for information or when they receive a pop-up advert while doing something else, pornographic images appear to interrupt an ordinary activity – this surprising interruption doubtless making it all the more unwelcome.

However, 10% of internet users between 9 and 19 have sought out pornography on the internet on purpose, this being only 1% of the 9-11 year olds but 26% of the 18-19 year olds and only 3% of girls but 17% of boys aged 9-19. A substantial minority of the older teens also circulate pornography among themselves or those they meet online. Again, more boys than girls do this: 14% of 9-19 year old boys have been sent pornography from someone they know but only 3% of girls.

In evaluating these data, we face several challenges. Determining both harm and offence is difficult in terms of empirical measurement, especially when asking children how they feel about or react to such situations. Determining what weight to accord such evidence, when balanced against such other considerations as freedom of expression and choice, key actor responsibility and children's rights, is also difficult in moral terms. Lastly, determining what action to take or what regulation to implement is difficult in policy and practical terms. We shall return to the issue of regulation in the home later.

Comparing pornography online and offline

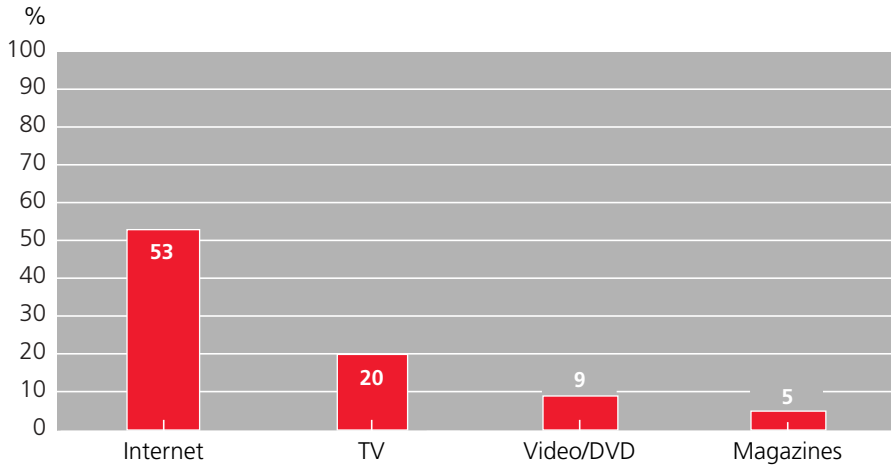
What is striking is that parents consider that the internet has made children's exposure to pornography much more likely (see Figure 19). We asked them to compare media for how likely it was that their child will come across explicit or pornographic material.

- 53% of parents consider that the internet is likely to expose their child to pornography, a figure far higher than for any other medium, including not only television (20%) but also those traditionally associated with pornography – video and magazines.

Children tell a similar story. We asked the 12-19 year olds how often they have seen pornography in different media (see Figure 20):

- 68% of all 12-19 year olds claim to have seen pornography on the internet, 20% saying 'many times'.[63]
- This is a much higher figure than the 52% who have seen pornography on television, 46% in magazines and 30% on video.

Figure 19: Where, if at all, is your child most likely to come across sexually explicit or pornographic material?



Base: All parents of 9-17 year olds (N=906)

Pornography online

Responses to viewing online pornography

One way to discover the possible consequences of online pornography is to ask children themselves. So, how do children and young people say they feel when they encounter pornography online? Of those internet users who go online at least weekly and who have come into contact with porn on the internet (57%, N=720):

- 54% say they did not think too much about it
- 14% didn't like it
- 20% thought it was disgusting
- 8% wished they had never seen it
- 7% thought it was interesting
- 7% enjoyed it

In short, half of those who see pornography online claim not to be bothered by it, and a small minority even positively like seeing it. However, a significant minority did not like it, one fifth claiming to have been disgusted.[64]

- Girls and younger children were more likely to say this: 22% of girls said they didn't like it (8% of boys), and 35% thought it was disgusting (10% of boys).
- 18% of 9-15 year olds didn't like encountering pornography online compared with 8-9% of 16-19 year olds, and 25-28% of 9-15 year olds thought it was disgusting compared with12-16% of 16-19 year olds.

There might be reasons why children claim not to be bothered by pornography when in fact they are bothered. There might be reasons why children claim to be bothered when they were not. Wanting to be 'cool' would account for the former source of error, and so one might be sceptical that as many as 54% claim not to think too much about encountering online pornography. On the other hand, it is even less likely that children would exaggerate their concern in a survey suggesting, therefore, that the disgusted one quarter of 9-15 year olds (one fifth of 9-19 year olds) represents something of an underestimate of the population about which one might be concerned and for which policy initiatives may be required.

Actions on seeing online pornography

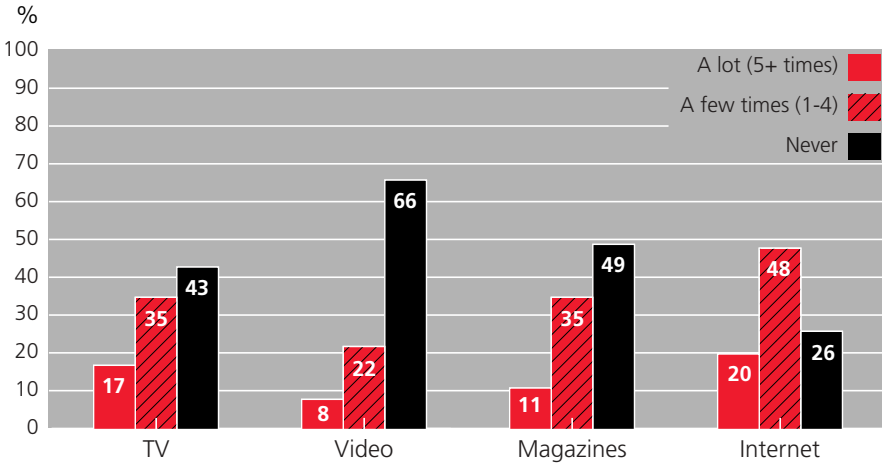
Parents are advised to make themselves accessible to their children should something online upset them or make them uncomfortable, and most parents would hope to do this. We asked children and young people what they would do under these circumstances (see Figure 21).

- Three fifths of all 9-17 year olds (61%) say that they would tell their parents if something on the internet made them feel uncomfortable. However, this average masks striking differences in age and gender, with girls and younger children being more likely to tell their parents.

What, then, do children actually do when they see pornographic material? Of those users who have been on a pornographic website (40% of those who use the internet at least weekly):

- 56% said that they left the site immediately without looking at it
- 31% looked at it first and then left
- 7% told a friend about it
- 7% clicked on some links to see what else was there
- 6% told a parent or teacher
- 5% went back to it another time
- 3% sent the website address to a friend[65]

Figure 20: Overall, how many times have you seen porn on TV / video / in magazines / on the internet?



Base: All 12-19 year olds for TV, video and magazines (N=1,131); All 12-19 year olds who have come into contact with online pornography for internet (N=839)

Pornography online

Half of the children and young people who encounter online pornography leave as quickly as they can, it seems, while the other half are likely to take a look at it or act upon it in some way.

Similarly, we asked internet users who have received pornographic junk mail, including pop-up adverts (45% of those who go online at least weekly), what they did next, with similar results:

- 65% said that they deleted it immediately without opening
- 12% opened and looked at it
- 9% told a friend
- 8% told a parent or teacher
- 7% clicked on some of the links to see what else was there

While recognising that half of those who have encountered pornography do not think too much about it and so could not be described as feeling uncomfortable, the other half did not report such a casual response. It may give some cause for concern that only 8% said they told a parent or teacher what they had found.

Reflecting on early experiences of pornography

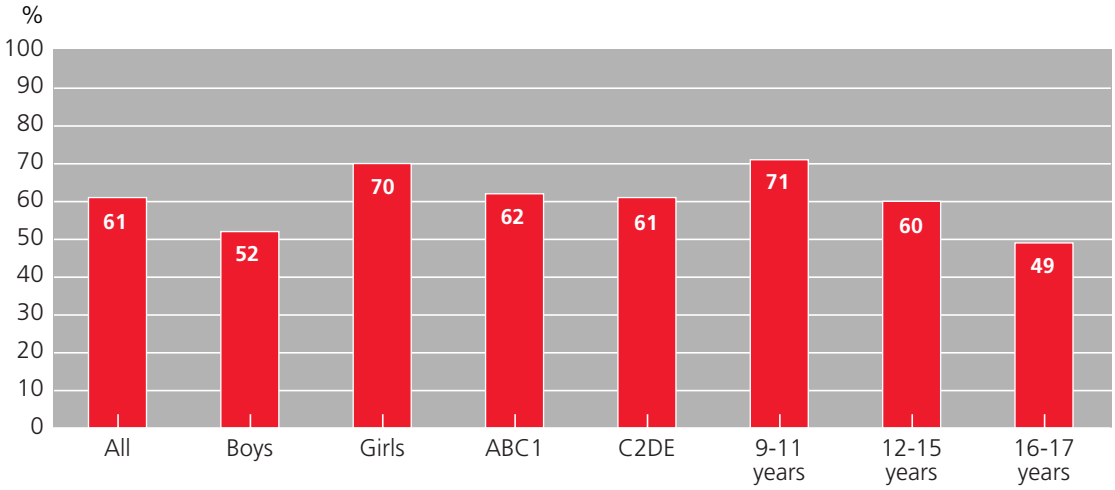
Lastly, we invited young adults to reflect on their encounters with pornography, reasoning that, although younger children may be embarrassed in answering or consider it 'uncool' to express concern, older teens who had come across sexually explicit material in one form or another might be more realistic in telling us whether it matters that children encounter pornography.

We asked 18-19 year olds who use the internet at least weekly and who have seen pornography anywhere (70% of 18-19 year olds who use the internet at least once a week) to 'think back to when you first saw porn':

- Nearly half (45%) thought they had been too young to see it when they did
- 42% thought they were about the right age
- Only 13% thought it would have been all right if they had seen it before then

Since nearly half of those who have seen pornography think they encountered it when they were too young, and since we have seen above that few children tell their parents when they do encounter pornography, this provides a pointer to the scale of the problem. However, it remains difficult, especially in a survey, to gauge the extent or seriousness of any consequences of exposure to pornography as a child.

Figure 21: I would tell my parent(s) if something on the internet makes me uncomfortable by demographics



Base: 9-17 year olds who use the internet at least once a week (N=1,071)

Communication, identity and participation

A diversifying communication environment

The choices underlying young people's uses of the media are highly complex, as shown by the focus groups preceding the UKCGO survey. Public discourse tends to judge online communication against a ideal of face to face communication. However, rather than accepting the supposed superiority of face to face communication, young people evaluate the different options as superior for different communicative needs.

Hence young people themselves consider a wider range of options – face to face, writing, email, instant message, chat rooms, telephone, SMS – and they judge them according to a range of criteria (such as cost, privacy, wanting closeness or deliberately keeping a protective distance to avoid embarrassment).

From desktop to mobile communication

The UKCGO survey shows that the mobile phone is already overtaking the desktop computer as a prioritised means of communication (see Figure 22). The mobile phone enables children and young people to be in contact with their friends from anywhere, by comparison with which the still-fixed location of the desktop computer and internet connection is an important constraint.[66]

- Across all activities – passing time, making arrangements, getting advice, gossiping and flirting – the phone (both fixed and mobile) and text messaging score higher than emailing or instant messaging.

Local and distant contacts

These communication technologies are mostly used to contact friends that live locally but also, though to a lesser extent, friends living further away (see Figure 23).

- The phone and text messaging are particularly preferred, it seems, as means of getting in touch with friends nearby while email and instant message are used for friends whether nearby or further away.

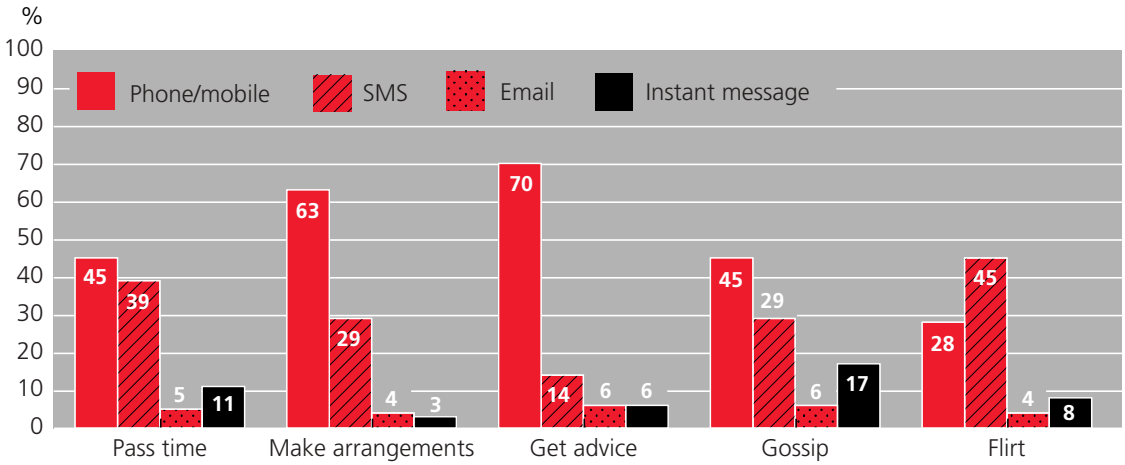
'Local' is the key term here, for, as the integration of on and offline communication implies, it appears that most contacts are local rather than distant (or 'virtual'), not strangers. This is especially the case for the telephone and text messaging and least the case for online chat.

- The number of chat room users is small compared with other online activities (21% of 9-19 year olds who use the internet at least once a week), but it is mainly here that contact takes place with people that children have not met face to face.

Hence, young people are using both on and offline communication to sustain their social networks, moving freely between different communication forms.[67] It seems that access to new communication technologies does not necessarily result in a larger and/or geographically more wide-spread social circle.

However, the internet does permit some broadening of everyday networks, strengthening already-existing relationships which are otherwise hard to maintain – friends from abroad, distant relatives, staying in touch with people who have moved and adding local contacts within the peer group whom they may not have previously got to 'know'. As young people add these 'friends of friends' to their buddy or address lists, it may be that online and mobile communication is resulting in a transformation of young people's networks.[68]

Figure 22: If you want to get in touch with a friend who wasn't with you in order to ..., which one of these methods would you use?



Base: All 12-19 year olds (N=975)

Communication, identity and participation

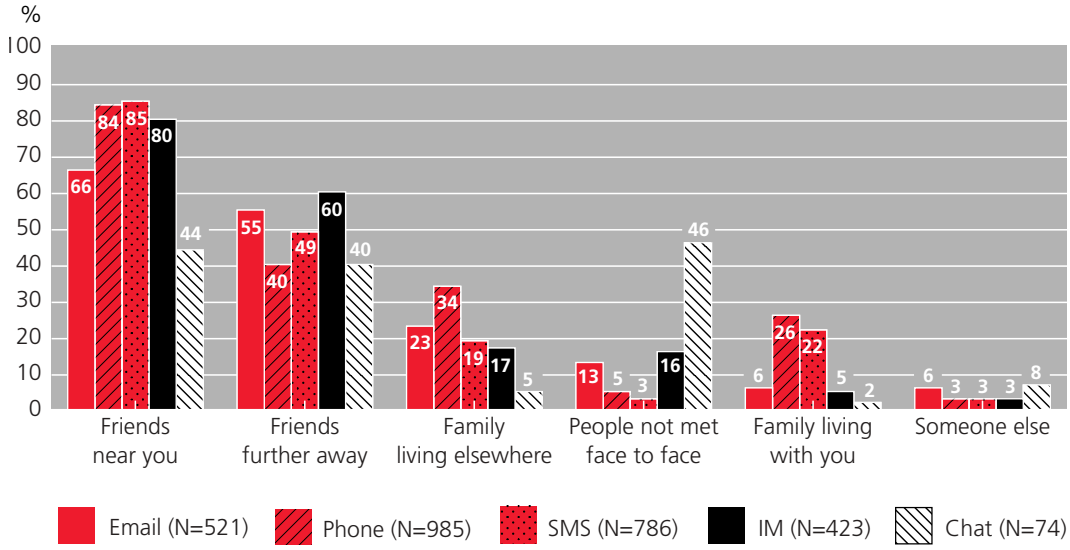
Benefits of online communication

Why might some young people choose to communicate with others – friends, family or other people – online instead of face to face? Figure 24 shows some of the views that those 9-19 year olds who use chat, email or instant messaging (IM) hold about online communication.

- Half (53%) of email, IM and chat users agree that talking to people on the internet is less satisfying than in real life; a third think it is at least as satisfying.
- For some, there are advantages of communicating online: 25% think that it is easier to keep things private online, 25% feel more confident talking on the internet, 22% find it easier to talk about personal things online and, as we also found in the focus groups, some (17%) enjoy being rude or silly online.

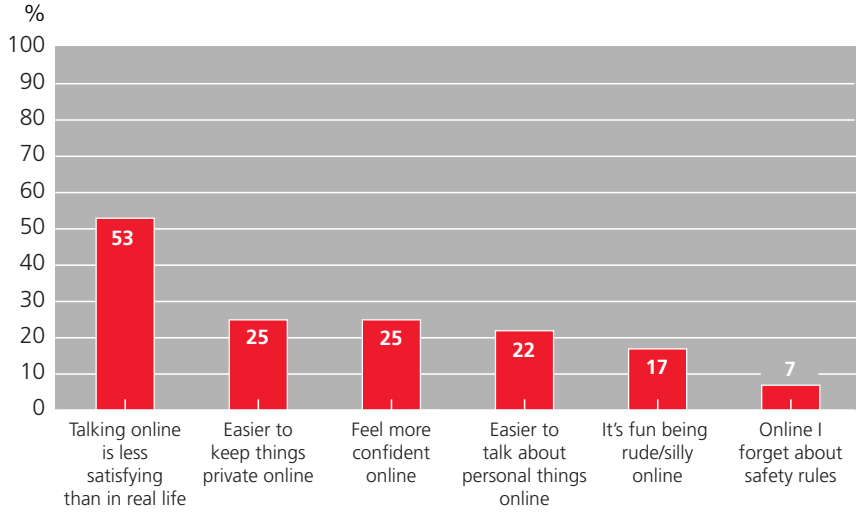
In sum, approximately one quarter of children and young people identify some significant advantages to online communication in terms of privacy, confidence and intimacy. For these young people, online communication affords them some opportunities that they may not find offline in face to face communication.

Figure 23: Types of people contacted by communication method



Base: 9-19 year olds who use email, phone, SMS, IM and/or chat at least once a week and have been in touch with people by email, phone, SMS, IM and/or chat in the last week

Figure 24: Here are some things people say about the internet compared to real life face to face. Which ones do you agree with? (Multiple response)



Base: 9-19 year old chat, email and/or IM users (N=983)

Communication, identity and participation

Seeking advice online

Given these perceived benefits of online communication, not only for sustaining contact with people one already knows but also for feeling more confident or talking about personal things online, a variety of organisations have sought to provide reliable and confidential online advice for children and young people.

In the focus groups with children, we found that young people differ among themselves in whether the internet represents a useful way of getting advice on personal problems (such as family, relationships, health or sexual matters) via specialist websites or online communities. For some, seeking advice online is less embarrassing as it can be done anonymously. However, most children said that they preferred to speak face to face to people they knew, such as friends and family, and older respondents particularly were not convinced that online conversations would stay private.

- In the UKCGO survey, a quarter of 12-19 year olds who use the internet at least weekly (25%) reported going online to get advice (see Figure 25).
- Online advice-seeking was slightly higher among the older age groups (29% of 16-17 year olds and 32% of 18-19 year olds) and among boys (26%) than girls (23%). Girls rely more heavily on teenage magazines with their well known problem pages (29%), an option that barely exists for boys (9%).

12-19 year olds who go online at least once a week and who use the internet to get advice (25%) mostly look for advice related to:

- school or work (65%)
- health (31%)
- alcohol, drugs or smoking (24%)
- relationships (23%)
- sex, contraception or pregnancy (22%)
- money (14%)
- family problems (13%)
- 'coming out' or being gay (2%)

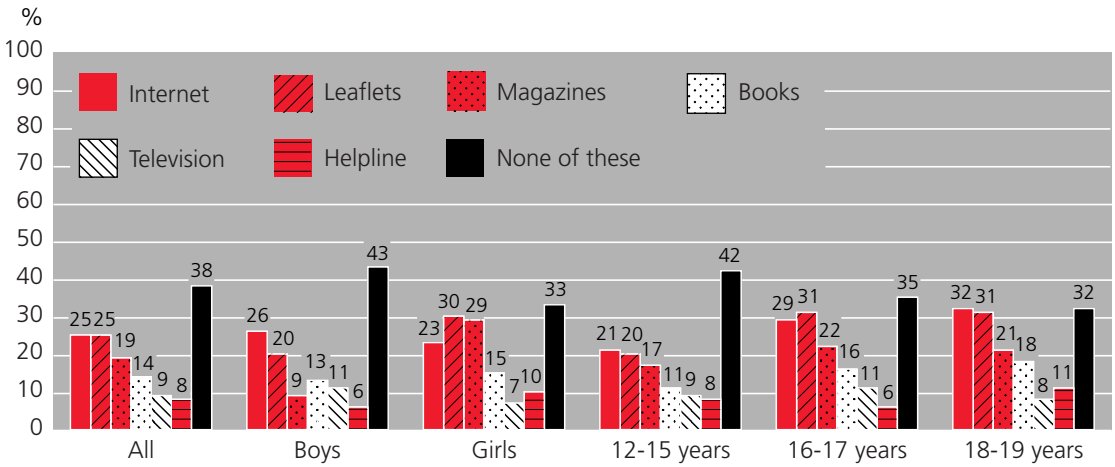
On the other hand, those who do not go online to get advice (75%) mostly say that they prefer to talk to someone they know (67%), 25% prefer to talk face to face, 17% do not think the advice would be reliable, another 17% think the wrong people might get personal information about them, 9% think that someone might see or find out what they said, and 7% think the other person or advice website would not understand their situation.

Participation online

When would we say that online communication encompasses not only private, personal or peer-to-peer communication but also public, community-oriented or civic participation? What activities might young people pursue, and to what extent, for the judgement to be made that the internet is facilitating public participation? What would be a socially desirable or even optimal level of engagement?

Undoubtedly, the internet has been hailed as the technology to bring direct participatory democracy to the masses, enabling citizens to become actively engaged in the political process.[69] A variety of organisations are now initiating innovative and interesting opportunities for public or civic participation of one kind or another. Some research suggests that young people value opportunities for participation when offered, although in practice these tend to be restricted in scope and tightly controlled.[70]

Figure 25: If you want some personal information or advice on things like relationships, family problems, sex, health, drugs etc, which if any of these do you use? By demographics (Multiple response)



Base: 12-19 year olds who use the internet at least once a week (N=975)

Communication, identity and participation

The young people we interviewed in the focus groups were, however, rather disillusioned about or uninterested in the possibility of political participation via the internet. Over and again the conversation flagged when we turned from communicating with friends to the idea of communicating in order to connect to the world of politics via the internet.

In the UKCGO survey, we pursued the question of participation in two ways. First, since the internet is notable particularly for its interactive potential, we asked about the ways in which children and young people used it as an interactive medium. Second, we asked specifically about political or civic uses, defined broadly.

Interactivity

Email, chat and instant messaging are socially interactive media, meaning that users engage peer-to-peer, co-constructing the communicative encounter and, thereby, potentially reconfiguring social networks and relationships. However, interactivity also encompasses textual interactivity (between user and documents via hypertext, the world wide web).[71] This represents a shift in use from the reception of ready-made, often professional, information and entertainment contents (as with non-interactive broadcasting) to an active involvement, even co-construction, of online contents.

We have already seen (Figure 10) that 70% of those who go online at least once a week go online to play games (interactivity between the user and a technical system, the game, as well as, for some games, a form of social interactivity), and a similar proportion communicate online. But information uses – including browsing educational and entertainment sites – are near-universal. Does this simply mean the passive uptake of online contents, parallelling the days of terrestrial broadcasting, or do children and young people actively contribute to such sites?

The UKCGO survey asked 9-19 year olds who use the internet at least once a week (N=1,257) whether they have made use of interactive elements of websites (see Figure 26).

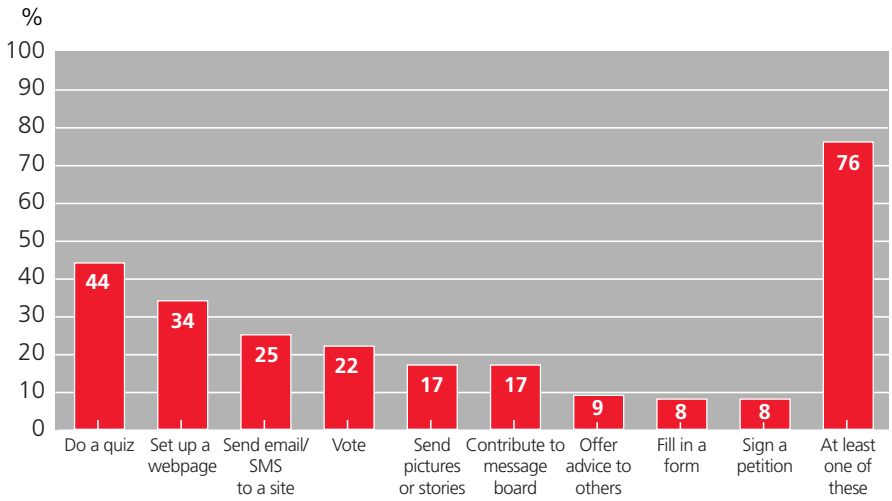
- 44% have completed a quiz online, 25% have sent an email or text message to a website, and 22% have voted for something online – all forms of engagement regularly invited by many websites seeking to engage and attract users.
- Less common among young people, we also find that 17% have sent pictures or stories to a website, 17% have contributed to a message board and 8% have filled in a form.
- Most active of all, 34% of these young internet users have set up their own website. And most civic-minded of all, perhaps, 9% have offered advice to others while 8% have signed a petition.

In sum, over two thirds altogether (76%) report at least one form of interactive engagement with a website, suggesting a high level of interest and motivation among children and young people to be active online and perhaps helping to explain the growing attraction of the internet over television for this generation.

Civic and political interest

Is this interactive engagement with the internet best characterised as an engagement with peer-produced or, most likely, commercially-produced contents, or does it also indicate a willingness to engage in a public or civic sense with wider societal and democratic processes? Given the commonplace observation that young people are apathetic and politically disengaged, the UKCGO survey asked also about a range of sites that young people might visit and interact with, though without explicitly using the term 'political participation'(see Figure 27).[72]

Figure 26: Here are some things people do on websites. Do you ever do any of these things? (Multiple response)



Base: 9-19 year olds who use the internet at least once a week (N=1,257)

Communication, identity and participation

- When it comes to actively seeking out information about political, environmental, human rights or other participatory issues, two fifths (42%) of 12-19 year olds who go online at least once a week have not visited relevant websites.

- The other half (55%) who have sought out such information said that they visited sites for charities (27%), environmental issues (22%), the Government (21%) and human rights (18%), with 14% visiting sites concerned with directly improving young people's educational or working conditions.

What do they do when they visit sites like these? We asked those 12-19 year old internet users who have visited such sites whether they had made a contribution on such sites during their visit. The majority replied that they had just 'checked out' the website (64%). Some of them had sent an email (18%), voted for something or signed a petition (12%) or joined a chat room (5%). Political and civic sites are, in short, more a source of information than an opportunity to become engaged for all but a minority.

What about those who have never visited political or civic sites (42%)? Most (83%) say that they are not interested in these kinds of issues. Other reasons include thinking that these sites are not intended for young people (6%), that they themselves are too young to find out about the issues covered (4%), that they do not trust or respect political organisations (4%) or do not know how to find these sites (2%).

If we take young people's words at face value, their lack of online political participation would appear to be due to a general lack of interest rather than to more specific problems – of website design, or trust, of searching – with politics as represented online. This is not to say that better designed websites could not succeed in drawing young people into political participation, but at present this is certainly not occurring, at least for half of all teenagers.

This lack of interest is confirmed when we asked if young people discuss such political or civic issues peer-to-peer on the internet. More than half (56%) of email, IM and chat users aged 12-19 (N=828) say they never talk about these issues with anyone by email, IM or chat. However, 14% have done so once or twice, 24% sometimes and 4% often.

Risks of online communication

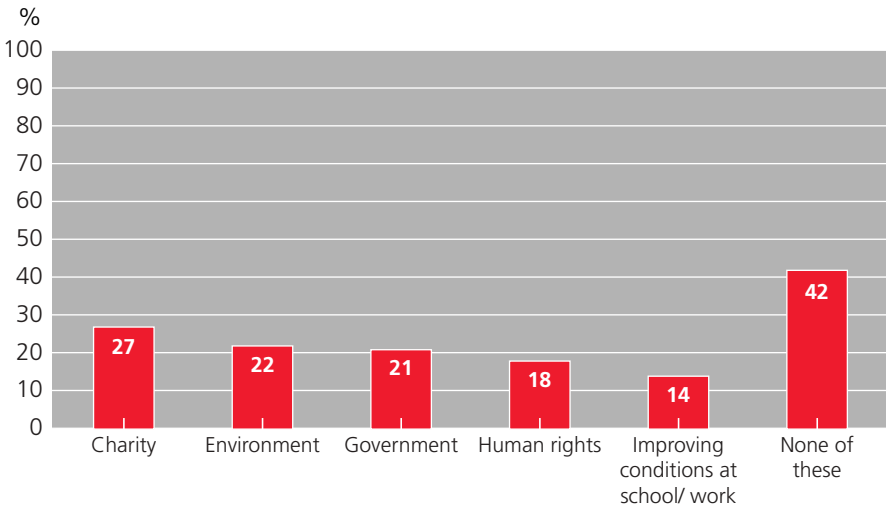
Online communication is not, however, always a positive experience for children and young people, and the benefits discussed above must be balanced against the problems that arise when communicating on the internet (see Figure 28).

- One third of 9-19 year olds who go online at least once a week report having received unwanted sexual (31%) or nasty comments (33%) on the internet (email, chat, IM) or in a text message on their mobile phone.

- As we shall see later, parents substantially underestimate their children's negative experiences online and so appear unaware of their children's potential need for guidance.

Yet, perhaps because of the considerable media attention devoted to giving out personal information, to chat rooms and, especially, to stranger danger, the routine unpleasantness of some online communication appears relatively neglected in public discussion of the risks of the internet for children. We return to the gap between parental knowledge and children's experiences later.

Figure 27: Have you ever visited websites about…? (Multiple response)



Base: 12-19 year olds who use the internet at least once a week (N=975)

Communication, identity and participation

Playing with identity

Given the advantages that children and young people experience with online communication – in terms of intimacy, personal discussion, confidence etc, and given the playfulness – even silliness – that is inherent to childhood, there have been concerns that children will pretend about their identity online and perhaps reveal aspects of their identity that might be exploited online.

The potential consequences of pretending on the internet are unclear, though some risks exist. The UKCGO survey finds that pretending about who you are is commonplace among children and, especially, teenagers (Figure 29). This suggests that in designing safety advice – which often assumes a rather serious approach to the internet – it is crucial to recognise the desire to play, to mess around, with this medium.

- Some 40% of 9-19 year olds who use the internet at least weekly say that they have pretended online.
- 27% have used a different name, 22% have pretended about their age, 10% about their appearance, 9% about doing things that they never do in real life, 5% have used a different sex, 1% a different ethnicity and 4% state that they have pretended in other ways.

Giving out personal information

Nonetheless, the safety advice not to give out personal details to other people they meet online seems to have gained a fair familiarity amongst young people, but there remains considerable scope for improved safety practices (see Figure 30).

- Half (49%) of those who go online at least once a week say that they have never provided information, such as their full name, age, email address, phone number, hobbies or name of their school, to anyone that they met on the internet.

Figure 28: Have you ever received unwelcome sexual comments from someone in any of the following ways? / Has someone ever said nasty or hurtful things to you in any of the following ways?

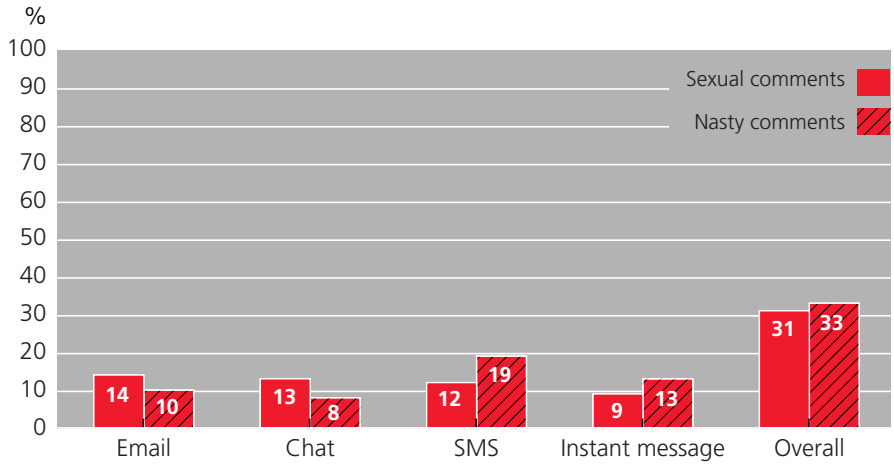
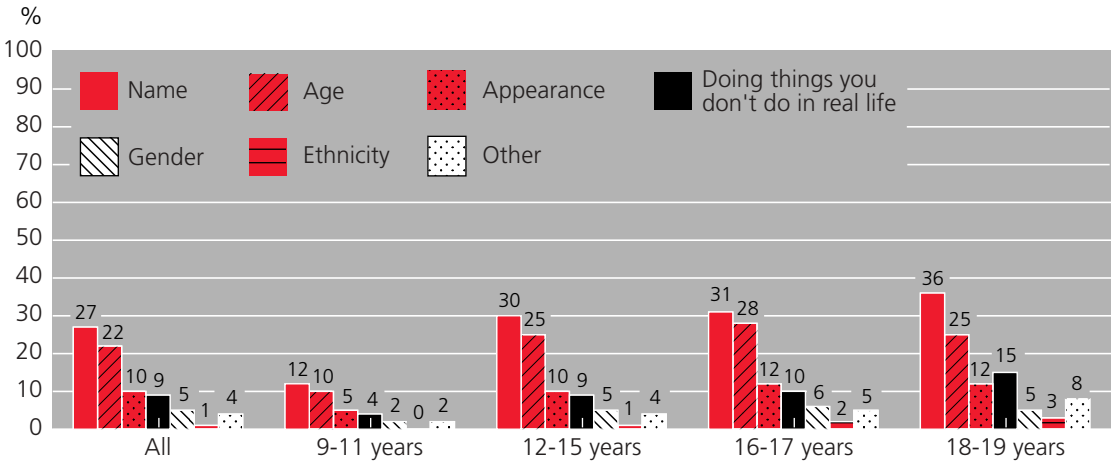


Figure 29: When you are on the internet, have you ever pretended about yourself? By demographics (Multiple response)



Base: 9-19 year olds who use the internet at least once a week (N=1,257)

Communication, identity and participation

- Half, however, have provided at least some of this information online, including their name, email, school, phone number etc.

Interestingly, their actual practice appears a little more sensible than their intentions. For, when asked whether they would give out personal information so as to win a prize in a competition, only a quarter of those who go online at least once a week (27%) said they would not provide this information (see Figure 30). Three quarters, therefore, say they would provide at least some of this information, though only half of them have done so thus far.

Chat rooms

Only a minority (9% of all 9-19 year olds) use chat rooms at least once a week. This figure is likely to represent a reduction on the year or two preceding the survey, both because of Microsoft's recent closure if its chat rooms and also because the advent of instant messaging has meant that many (55% of 9-19 year olds who use the internet at least once a week) now use this form of communication instead.

Of those 9% who do use chat rooms at least once a week, 57% report using chat rooms for teens, 27% chat rooms for everyone, 20% chat rooms for kids and 7% chat rooms for adults only. Since only chat rooms intended for children are likely to be moderated, a sizeable proportion of these young people appear to be visiting unmoderated chat rooms.

While 19% of chat room users say that they don't know whether the chat rooms they use are monitored, some 39% of the above chat room users state that all of the chat rooms they use are monitored, 26% say that some are monitored and 15% do not use monitored chat rooms.

Young people recognise that chat rooms offer benefits and risks:

- When asked about their opinion on chat rooms, 64% of the chat room users agree that it is hard to know if people are telling the truth in a chat room.
- However, they identify several positives: 58% enjoy talking to new people in chat rooms, 36% think it is fun that no one knows who they are in a chat room, and 14% agree that chat rooms give them a chance to express their thoughts and feelings.

Of those 9-19 year olds who use the internet at least weekly and who do not use chat rooms, one quarter (26%) used to visit chat rooms but have now stopped.

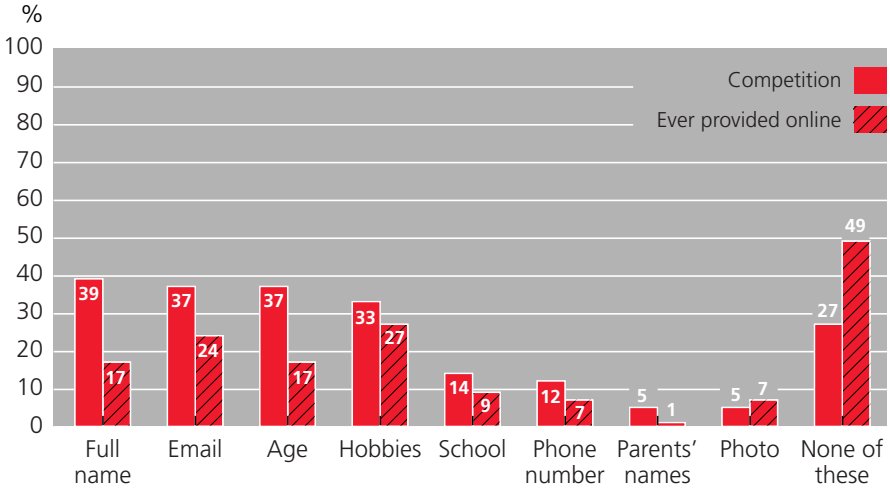
- When asked why they stopped using chat rooms, 24% of the former chatters state that they found chat rooms were a waste of time or boring, 23% didn't like not knowing who they were talking to, 15% preferred instant messaging or email, 10% did not have enough time for it, 9% said their parents had stopped them going into chat rooms, 9% didn't feel safe using them and a further 6% reported that the chat room had closed.

Meeting online contacts face to face

Considerable public concern has centred on the small but worrying risks associated with meeting strangers face to face following online contact. The UKCGO survey investigated how frequent such meetings are through the private section of the questionnaire (see Figure 31).

- One third of 9-19 year olds who go online at least once a week (30%) have made an online acquaintance, ie someone they only talk to online.

Figure 30: Imagine you were entering a competition, what information about yourself would you give to be able to win a prize on the internet? / While on the internet what information have you ever given to another person that you have not met face to face? (Multiple response)



Base: 9-19 year olds who use the internet at least once a week (N=1,257)

Communication, identity and participation

- One in twelve (8%) say they have met up with someone face to face who they first met on the internet.

A survey among primary school children in England by the Cyberspace Research Unit[73] found that 3% of 8-11 year olds had attended a meeting. The European SAFT survey of older children (9-16 year olds) reported that 14% had attended such a meeting. Comparing our UK figure of 8% for 9-19 year olds with these two earlier findings suggests that, while such meetings occur more among older than younger children, they may be less common in the UK than in some other European countries.

From the UKCGO survey it emerges that these meetings were mostly enjoyable get-togethers between young people of similar age. In many cases the child had told someone else about the meeting and took another person with them. Of those who attended face to face meetings (N=106):

- The majority said that the other person was about the same age as them (65%). In 23% of cases, the other person was a bit older, in 3% much older and in a further 3% younger.
- Two thirds (63%) stated that the meeting was suggested by both parties, in 12% of cases by the child and in 5% by the other person.
- Only 5% did not tell anyone they were going to the meeting. The majority (74%) told a friend of the same age, 45% told a parent, 14% a sibling and 7% another adult.
- Of those who told someone about the meeting (N=95), the majority did not attend the meeting on their own. Some 67% said they brought a friend, 11% a parent, 3% another adult and 3% a sibling.

We also asked them how the meeting went and what happened afterwards:

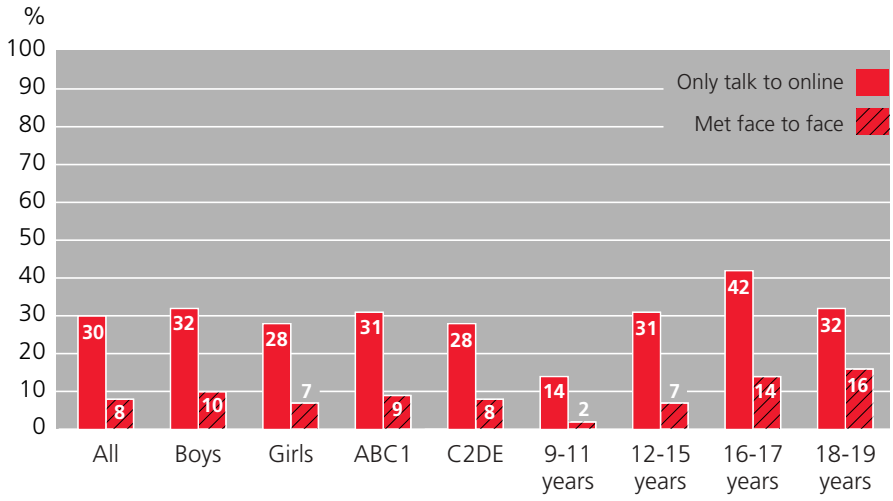
- Most (58%) replied that they had a good time, a third (33%) said that the meeting was 'okay, but nothing special', 6% stated that the other person turned out to be different from what they had expected, 5% didn't meet after all, and only 1% (one person) said they did not enjoy the meeting.
- After the meeting, only 9% did not tell anyone about the meeting: 80% told a friend of the same age as themselves, 37% told a parent, 16% a sibling, 7% another adult and 3% someone else.

Again, these findings are broadly in agreement with other surveys. In both the European SAFT survey and in the study by the Cyberspace Research Unit, the majority, if not all, of children who had been to a face to face meeting reported having had 'a really good time'. Arguably, the safety campaigns have been successful. While one third of those who go online at least once a week have made friends online, only a few go onto arrange a face to face meeting, and nearly all of those tell someone they are going, take a friend with them, meet someone of their own age and have a good time.[74] However, it might be a cause for concern that few children tell an adult (ie a parent) about a meeting or take an adult with them who would be better qualified to intervene in a potentially dangerous situation.

Furthermore, as Figure 24 shows, 7% of those who go online at least once a week confess to forgetting about the safety rules when communicating online.

In seeking to ensure their safety in online communication, it also seems that knowing in theory about the safety rules may not always translate into safe practices online. Since this 7% is more likely to be an under- than an over-estimate, safety awareness guidance must continue to be carefully targeted.

Figure 31: Do you know someone that you only talk to online using email, IM or chat? / Have you ever met anyone face to face that you first met on the internet? By demographics



Base: 9-19 year olds who use the internet at least once a week (N=1,257)

Regulating the internet at home

The regulatory challenge

Thus far, we have identified some benefits and some risks associated with young people's internet use. The emerging story is neither as positive as perhaps parents hope when first investing in the internet at home but nor as worrying as the media panics would have us believe.

The key challenge for parents and for policy makers is achieving a balance so that children feel empowered to make the most of the internet while minimising or avoiding the associated risks. In seeking this balance, it would clearly be undesirable (though understandable) if the anxieties associated with the internet led to such significant restrictions in children's use of the medium as to undermine their exploration of its potential.

A further balance to be struck, much discussed among policy-makers and industry, is how far regulation should be the responsibility of parents and how far it should be managed by hardware, content and service providers or by the state (whether through government regulation, self-regulation or education/awareness/literacy programmes).

In seeking to inform these deliberations, a detailed empirical account of emerging domestic practices of regulation is vital. Hence, in this final section, we consider the UKCGO findings in relation to parent and child attitudes, practices and values, focusing on use of the internet at home.

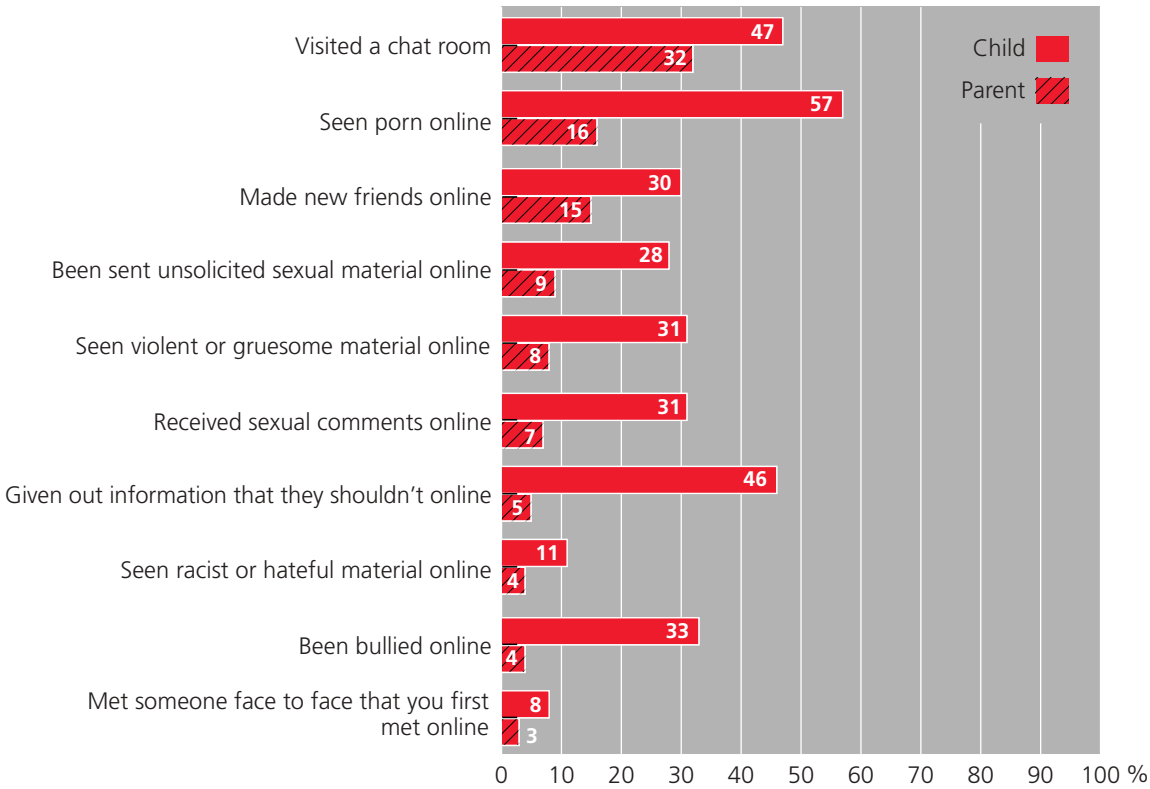
Differing perceptions of the problem

Regulatory practices, whether at home or elsewhere, are based on an implicit or explicit assessment of the problem to be addressed. When it comes to knowing what their children have done online, the UKCGO survey finds that parents make a very different assessment of their children's internet experiences compared with that of their children.

Strikingly, children report considerably higher levels of problematic online experiences than do their parents (although we cannot know, on the basis of a survey, whether parents and children are applying different criteria to the definition of 'pornography' or 'bullying', for example). Figure 32 shows both what children and young people who go online at least once a week and what parents of 9-17 year olds say has happened online.[75]

- The largest differences can be found in relation to having come across pornography online (57% of children claim to have seen, this but only 16% of parents say this has happened to their child) and giving out personal information on the internet (46% of children have done this, but only 5% of parents appear aware of it).

Figure 32: Have you / has your child done these things on the internet? (Multiple response)



Base: All 9-19 year olds who use the internet at least once a week (N=1,257); Parents of 9-17 year olds (N=906)

Regulating the internet at home

- Further differences are apparent in relation to online bullying (this has happened to 33% of children, but only 4% of parents know this) and being sent sexual comments on the internet (31% of children say this, but only 7% of parents know).

- The smallest differences occur relation to having seen racist material on the internet (11% of children claim to have seen it, 4% of parents know of this) and going to face to face meetings with an online acquaintance (8% of children have done this, 3% of parents are aware of it).[76]

The regulatory challenge, as perceived by parents, does not therefore match the challenge that one would draw out of children's own accounts. Given this assessment of their children's practices, together with their understanding of the risks, how then do parents seek to regulate their children's use of the internet?

Children's and parents' accounts of regulation

Having seen the discrepancies between parents and children in assessing the occurrence of problematic incidents, whom should one ask about these often implicit or subtle domestic practices? Domestic regulation occurs in the privacy of the home, it is not always welcomed, or even recognised, by children, yet it is not always practiced as preached by parents, thereby rendering questionable the accounts of both children and parents. In the UKCGO survey, we asked both parents and children about, firstly, the rules of internet use (Figure 33) and, secondly, the practices of internet use (Figure 35).

Figure 33 reveals, by implication, the internet uses that parents consider to be worthwhile or, more likely, safe and so less in need of restrictive regulation (games, email, instant messaging) and those that they consider unsafe and so give a higher priority to regulating (shopping, privacy, chat, some forms of interactivity). Children perceive their internet use to be much less rule-bound, but the overall pattern is similar.

Clearly, there is a discrepancy between what children say they are not allowed to do online and what parents forbid them (see Figure 33). Among children who use the internet at least weekly and among parents with children who live at home:

- 86% of parents do not allow their children to give out personal information online, but only 49% of children say this is the case – a 37% difference.[77]

- There is a similarly large difference between parents and children when it comes to filling out forms or doing quizzes online: 20% of children claim they mustn't do this compared with 57% of parents who do not allow it.

- Just over half of the children say they are not allowed to buy anything online (54%). However, three quarters of parents say they mustn't do this (77%).

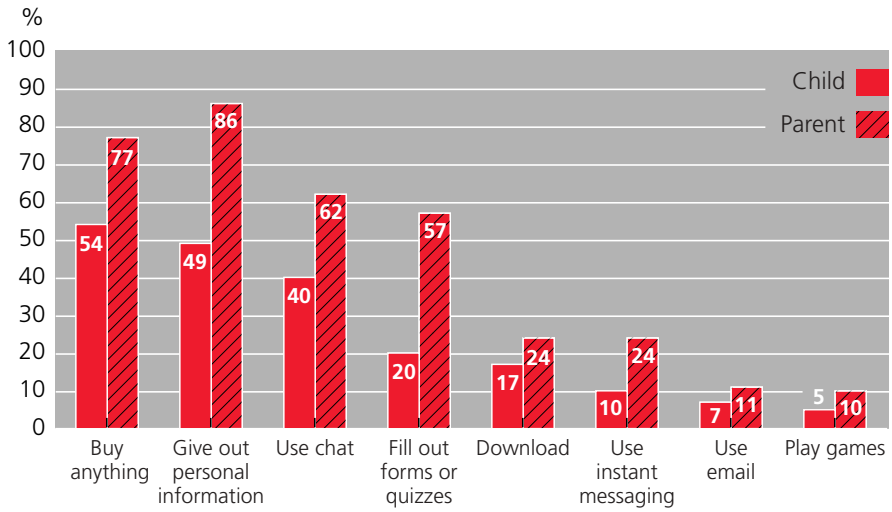
- 62% of parents forbid their children to use chat rooms, but only 40% of children say this is the case.[78]

- Younger children are generally allowed to do less by their parents, as confirmed by both children's and parents' accounts. The largest differences between children and parents relates to giving out personal information online (35% of 16-17 year olds, 76% of parents of 16-17 year olds) and filling out forms or quizzes (20% of 12-15 year olds, 62% of parents of 12-15 year olds).

Interpreting the gap between children's and parents' accounts of 'the rules'

Evidently, asking parents and children the same question does not produce the same answer, for the above findings show some substantial discrepancies between parents' and children's perceptions of domestic regulation of the internet. Arguably, the truth lies somewhere in between.

Figure 33: Are there any things which you are (your child is) not allowed to do on the internet...? (Multiple response)



Base: 9-19 year olds who use the internet at least once a week (N=1,257);
Parents of 9-17 year olds whose child has home internet access (N=677)

Regulating the internet at home

More subtly, however, we may posit differences in the interpretation of rules, especially since rules at home are often implicit and they may not be rigidly adhered to, depending on circumstances. It is possible, for example, that parents report the 'general' or 'official' rule of the household, which still holds even while exceptions are made, while children reflect on actual circumstances and will not report a 'rule' if it is occasionally broken.

For example, 86% of parents say that children must not give out personal information compared with 49% of children (see Figure 33). Yet, as Figure 32 shows, while only 5% of parents think that their child has given out personal information that they shouldn't, 46% of young internet users say that they have done this (and 49% say that they have never given out personal information; see Figure 30). Similarly, more children than parents say that they (the child) have visited a chat room (see Figure 32), and more parents than children say that chat rooms are not allowed (see Figure 33).

In effect, parents and children each appear to be consistent in themselves, but they differ from the other. While parents may accurately report the rule they believe that they operate in their home, a rule which tallies with their assessment of their children's internet use, children appear to follow their own, rather different, understanding of the rules.

Overall, children perceive a higher incidence of risky problematic experiences online than do their parents while parents perceive a higher degree of domestic regulation than do their children. Since parents appear to claim a greater degree of domestic control than they achieve and than – from their children's reports – appear to be warranted, it may be that parents are more complacent than is wise, assuming rules are being followed when they are not or assuming that rules are not needed when they are. A greater degree of understanding between parents and children would seem to be called for.

Children's concerns about the internet

It would be inappropriate to conclude that, while parents attempt to institute domestic rules to manage the internet, children themselves have no concerns and simply wish to use the internet freely. Rather, they too are aware of public discussion, media panics and word-of-mouth difficulties.

Particularly, the various public campaigns regarding online stranger danger would seem to have been successful. We asked 9-19 year olds who use the internet at least once a week which of a range of things, if any, they worry about when they use the internet.

- 48% worry about 'being contacted by dangerous people' (57% of girls, 40% of boys)
- 44% worry about 'getting a virus' (49% of boys, 38% of girls)
- 38% worry about 'others finding out things about you'
- 20% worry about 'seeing things that upset you' (25% of girls,16% of boys)
- 14% worry about spending too much time online
- Only 13% worry about none of these things

Moreover, three quarters of 9-19 year olds (74%) are aware of some internet safety campaign or have heard or read a news story that made them think the internet can be dangerous. In an open-ended question in the survey, we asked children to describe a recent campaign or news story they had come across.

- One fifth (18%) referred spontaneously to the danger of paedophiles, 13% to chat room dangers, 9% to people getting into dangerous situations after having met someone online, 8% to the Government's 'think U know' campaign,[79] 6% to recent abduction stories, 6% to stranger danger online in general, 6% to the advice not to give out personal details online, 5% to viruses, hacking, spam and credit card fraud and 4% to the danger associated with people pretending to be someone else in chat rooms.

Hence, children understand the responsibilities of their parents in monitoring their internet use, even though they may doubt or, sometimes, resent their abilities or motives in doing so. As for their parents, for children also the internet is seen as a worrying, as well as an exciting, technology. The challenge is how to manage this technology within the home.

Parental regulation in practice

Rules are one thing, practice is often different. What do children and parents say are the regulatory practices as implemented in their homes in relation to the internet? In regulating their children's internet use in particular, parents face several challenges:

- First, as we have seen, many computers are located in private rather than public spaces at home, making all forms of regulation more difficult and more intrusive than they would be otherwise.
- Second, many parents lack the expertise, especially by comparison with their children, to intervene in or mediate their child's internet use – whether technically (eg by installing a filter) or socially (by discussing contents or services with their child).
- Third, as our qualitative work showed, children relish the opportunities the internet affords them – for identity play, relationships, exploration and communication – and may not wish to share this experience with their parents.

How are UK parents responding to these challenges?

Regulating the internet at home

Technical solutions

One much promoted way for parents to reduce the risks to their children on the internet is to install a filter. Further, some companies offer monitoring software so parents can check on their children's use of the internet afterwards. Qualitative work suggests that both parents and children are confused about the options available and about how to install and use such software. As Figure 34 shows:

- One third (35%) of children say that filtering software has been installed on their computer, and 23% say that monitoring software has been installed. A further 13% believe that some such software is installed but don't know what it is. Only one third (31%) believe that their computer has no such software installed.
- One might expect increased use of filtering by age, but the figures do not support this. They do show, however, that, as children get older, they become more sure that (or when) there is no filtering or monitoring of their internet use. These figures show no differences by gender or social class.
- Of those children who use the internet at least weekly and have internet filtering or monitoring software installed on their home computer, 38% say that pornographic sites are blocked or filtered on their computer, followed by junk mail (25%), adverts (18%), chat rooms (17%), email (8%) and instant messaging (5%).
- Parents report slightly higher figures on filtering and monitoring (see Figure 34). For all parents whose child has internet access, 46% say that the computer their child uses has filtering software, and 30% claim monitoring software while 23% say they don't know. These figures are higher for younger than for older children: 55% of 9-11 but only 37% of 16-17 year olds have filtering software, according to their parents.
- For all parents whose child has home internet access, 46% say that pornographic sites are blocked or filtered, followed by junk mail (29%), chat rooms (23%), adverts (17%), instant messaging (8%) and email (7%).[80] These figures too are similar or higher than the levels of filtering claimed by children.

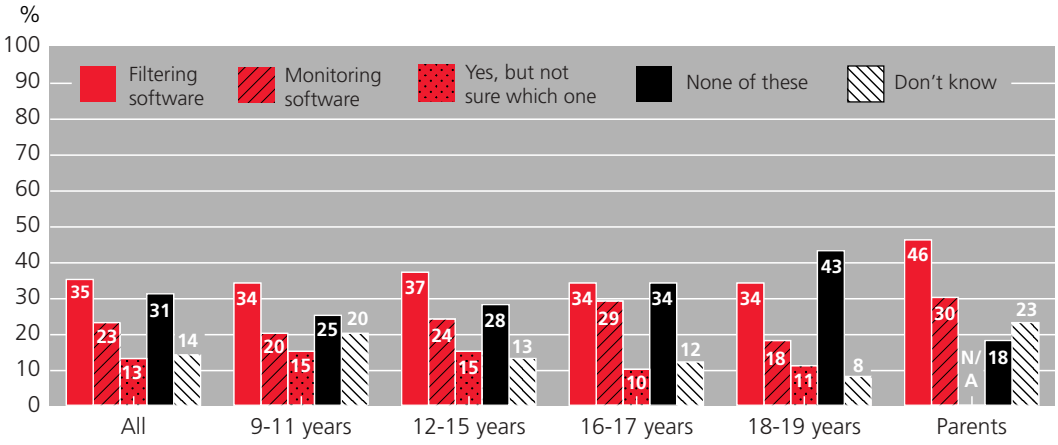
It appears either that the use of filtering and blocking on domestic computers is fairly widespread or that there is a misplaced optimism among both parents and children regarding the safety precautions on these computers. Only 17% of parents said none of these contents were blocked or filtered, and 20% said they did not know if these contents were blocked on their child's computer, this hinting at a considerable level of ignorance regarding security measures on domestic computers.

Indeed, recalling the earlier findings in Figure 17, only 15% of parents who have used the internet say that they know how to install a filter. It is possible that the parent who completed our survey (more often mothers) is not the parent who installed the filter on the child's computer. But the scale of the discrepancy between the 15% of parents who say they can install a filter and the 46% who say that one is installed gives grounds for scepticism.[81] If scepticism is appropriate, there may be a level of complacency among parents which should be addressed through awareness campaigns and skills training.

Social solutions

In addition to, or instead of, technical approaches to regulation, parents may regulate their children's internet use through social strategies. Research on parental regulation or mediation of children and young people's media use in general finds that parents regulate media use in a number of ways.[82] They may try to influence their child's reactions to the media through discussion (often labelled 'evaluative guidance') or by simply sharing media time with the child (labelled 'unfocused guidance'). More straightforwardly they may seek to control access to media, for example, by restricting time spent (labelled 'restrictive guidance').

Figure 34: Does your computer at home have any of these? By age (Multiple response)



Base: 9-19 year olds who have internet access at home (N=1,088); Parents of 9-17 year olds whose child has home internet access (N=677)

Regulating the internet at home

The UKCGO survey reveals a range of emerging practices of internet regulation at home (see Figure 35). According to young people (we asked 9-17 year olds who use the internet at home at least once a week and who live with their parents):

- Restrictive guidance is a little more common than evaluative or conversational forms of guidance: 42% of the children say that they have to follow rules about for how long and 35% about when they can go online. Parents are in agreement with their children here, for 43% of parents claim to have set up rules for how much time their child can spend on the internet.
- According to one third of children, their parents play a direct social role in supporting their internet use – by helping (32%), suggesting websites for the child to visit (32%) and generally sharing in the experience of using the internet by sitting at the computer with the child (31%). However, up to two thirds do not.
- One third of 9-17 year olds also note a variety of indirect monitoring activities, saying that their parents know what they (the child) are doing online (31%), how to check what sites they have visited (30%) and that 15% of parents know how to access their child's email.
- However, only a fifth say that their parents stay in the same room (22%) or keep an eye on the screen (17%) when they are online, and few parents, they say, actually check up on their emails (4%) or history (9%).

Parents give a somewhat different account of the social context of children's internet use, however (see Figure 35).

- Parents are most likely to claim a direct role in sharing and supporting their child on the internet: 81% say they ask what the child is doing on the internet (compared with only 25% of children); 57% say they help the child online (compared with 32% of children); 32% claim to sit with the child when online (and here children agree – 31%).
- Parents also stress an indirect social monitoring role: 63% say they keep an eye on the screen (compared with 17% of children); 50% say they stay in the same room when the child is online (compared with 22% of children).
- Parents less often claim technical monitoring, though they do this far more than children realise, it seems: 41% of parents say they check the computer later to see what the child has been doing (compared with only 9% of children), and 25% claim to check their children's emails (only 4% of children seem aware of this).

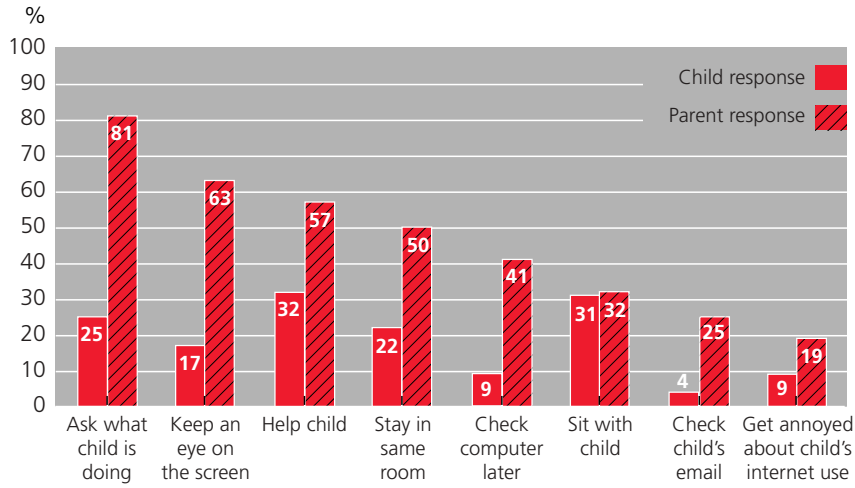
Challenges to parental regulation

At least two serious difficulties undermine parents' attempts to regulate their children's internet use. The first is that, while parents have the responsibility to ensure their children's safety, they must also manage their children's growing independence and rights to privacy, something that children themselves feel strongly about.[83] The second is that, as we saw earlier, parents and children agree that children are more often more expert than their parents on the internet, making it difficult for parents to regulate their children's use. Hence, the more the regulatory burden is devolved to parents, the greater the difficulty, and potential conflict, within the family in balancing safety and privacy online. As Figure 35 also shows, 19% of parents and 9% of children acknowledge that the internet occasions conflict or annoyance between parents and children.

Privacy online

Online privacy is commonly discussed in relation to invasions of privacy from commercial organisations online. However, children are more concerned about maintaining their privacy from people that they know – unsurprising given the nature of at least some of their online communication. There is an irony, therefore, that parents are often advised to check up on children's internet use in order to ensure their safety when children may consider this intrusive.

Figure 35: What parents do when child is using the internet (Multiple response)



Base: 9-17 year who live with parent(s) and use the internet at least once a week (N=1,060); Parents of 9-17 year olds whose child has home internet access (N=677)

Regulating the internet at home

Many of the children and young people we spoke to in the focus groups did not like their parents and teachers monitoring their internet use and saw it as an invasion of their privacy, expecting more trust and respect as they get older. To explain their right for privacy and why they therefore object to having their internet use monitored by their parents, many children used metaphors such as having one's pockets searched, having one's personal space invaded or being stalked.

- Asked which of a list of activities they mind (or would mind) their parents doing, two-thirds (69%) of 9-17 year olds who use the internet at least once a week say that they mind their parents restricting or monitoring their internet use in various ways: 42% mind their parents checking their email, 28% mind them blocking websites, 30% mind them checking their internet use without their knowledge and 15% with their knowledge.

Protecting one's privacy

In the UKCGO survey, 12-19 year olds with home access who use the internet at least weekly (N=991) were asked if they had taken any actions to protect their privacy online and offline. While some 35% of them say they have not done this, two thirds have taken some action to protect their privacy online – both from outsiders and, more often, from those they know.

- 38% report having deleted emails so no one else could read them
- 38% have minimised a window when someone else came into the room
- 17% have deleted the history file
- 17% have deleted unwanted cookies
- 12% have hidden or mislabelled files to keep them private
- 12% have used someone else's password without their permission

Hence, to maintain their privacy, young people may seek ways of evading parental or school monitoring and controls, and some of them clearly enjoy the challenge of outwitting the adults, capitalising on their comparatively greater expertise in relation to the internet. Indeed, we would identify a kind of game – a tactical dance, perhaps – in which it seems that the more adults check up on children, the more they seek ways of evading such checks.

Who is the internet expert at home?

Key to deliberations over who should regulate children's access to the internet is the question of expertise. Who can regulate children's access to the internet? The UKCGO survey sought to throw some light on the supposed reverse generation gap by which children are held to know more than their parents about the internet.

Parents and children are not entirely in agreement about who is the expert at home:

- Children who go online at least once a week claim that they are better at using the internet than their parents: 46% say they are the expert in their home while 33% think their parents know more.
- However, parents claim rather more expertise for themselves: 41% think they or the other parent know most about the internet in their home while 37% admit that their child is better.
- In terms of advising parents how to support their children's internet use, one should also note that nearly a third (29%) of the parents who are beginners on the internet have children who consider themselves advanced or expert users.

We also asked those parents whose child has internet access at home if they (or the other parent) understood the internet well enough to help their child get most out of it:

- 79% claim that they (or the other parent) knows what their child does online
- 71% claim to know how to help their child to use the internet safely
- 66% claim to know how to check which websites their child has visited
- 64% claim to know how to help their child get the best out of the internet
- 55% claim to know how to access their child's email account
- Only 15% of parents who have ever used the internet claim that they personally know how to install a filter

Confidence among parents, it seems, is fairly high. However, one in ten say they do not know what their child does on the internet, and a fifth say they do not know how to help their child use the internet safely. Put this way around, there is a clear task ahead to improve and extend the reach of awareness and literacy guidance to help parents.

Parents are also fairly, but not wholly, confident of their children's online skills:

- 72% are confident that their child remembers the safety advice when online. One quarter, therefore, is not confident of this.
- 72% are confident that their child would tell them if something online made him/her uncomfortable.
- 60% are confident that their child knows how to protect his/her privacy.
- 58% are confident that their child knows what to do if something made them uncomfortable online. Two fifth, therefore, are not confident of this.
- 41% are confident that their child has learned how to judge the reliability of information online. Parents are least confident of their children's critical media literacy, it seems, especially compared with safety issues.

Conclusions: Looking ahead

Is the internet good for children?

It remains a difficult judgment whether one considers using the internet intrinsically a 'good thing' so that not using it means one is socially excluded and using it should be encouraged and facilitated. Perhaps those not using the internet much are spending their time in other valuable, even better, ways. Such judgments require evaluations of social change over time in relation to multiple aspects of daily life, and empirical research may never provide an uncontroversial 'answer'.

However, it is clear that children and parents, together with government and industry, are all focused on a future in which the internet will play an ever-greater role. Consequently, it must be a priority to ensure that internet use is equitable, beneficial and not harmful. This report has sought to identify a variety of ways in which internet use does, indeed, match up to these three values and the ways in which it does not.

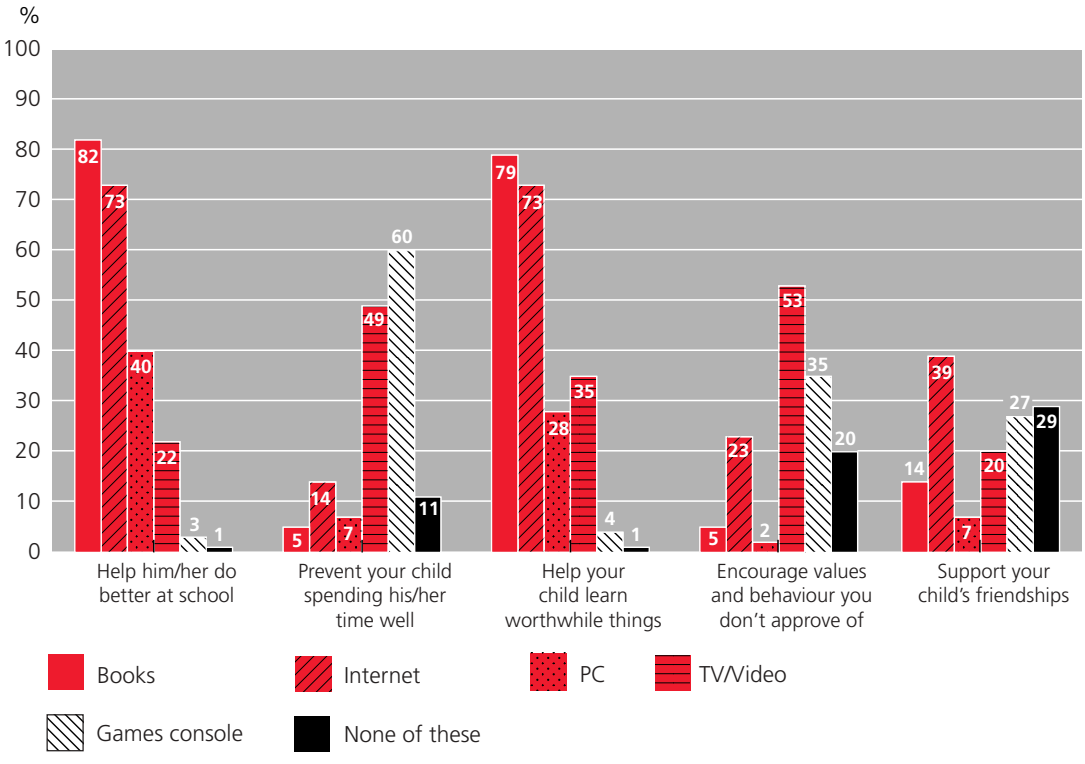
Our present purpose is to produce much-needed and rigorous empirical data to inform, in such a way as benefits children and young people, the future development of online contents and services, of regulatory developments and of the conditions within which children and young people access and make use of the internet in their everyday lives. We end with an assessment of the balance of opportunities and dangers thus far in the diffusion and appropriation of this new medium.

Parental ambivalence about the internet

Since the internet is still a recent arrival in a complex multimedia environment, we asked parents to set the internet in context by comparing the risks and benefits of several different media (see Figure 36). We also asked them to make an overall judgement about which of these different media benefit their child overall and which of these media worry them in relation to their child.

- Parents are strongly in agreement with government policy to embed ICT in the curriculum, believing that the internet can help children's formal and informal education: 73% believe both that the internet can help their child do better at school and help them learn worthwhile things.
- By comparison with books, however, parents are rather more ambivalent about the internet. They believe that books are even more helpful for children in supporting their educational progress and learning, and they have few, if any, worries about books.
- By contrast, 14% worry that the internet can prevent their child spending their time well, and 23% worry that the internet encourages values and behaviours that they do not approve of, though, unlike books, they consider that the internet can support their child's friendships, thus offering a social advantage.

Figure 36: Thinking about your child, which of these do you think is most likely to…? (Multiple response)



Base: All parents of 9-17 year olds (N=906)

Conclusions: Looking ahead

- This ambivalence about the internet is not mirrored by a similar ambivalence about the computer which is regarded only positively, if moderately so. In other words, it is the world that the internet provides a connection to, not the technology *per se*, that both enthuses and worries parents.
- Television is seen by parents in more negative terms: 49% believe it prevents their child spending their time well, and 35% believe it encourages values and behaviours that they don't approve of. However, some ambivalence is evident here also: 35% think their child can learn worthwhile things from television, and 22% think it can help them do better at school.
- By contrast, the games console is regarded in far more negative terms – wasting children's time (60%), encouraging unwelcome values and behaviours (35%) and offering no educational benefits, its only benefit being social (27%). It may be that all new media generate an ambivalent response. However, it seems plausible that the very breadth of activities and services provided by the internet is what creates the present ambivalence among parents. If all aspects of society are online, for good and for bad, the internet can hardly fail but be regarded with ambivalence.

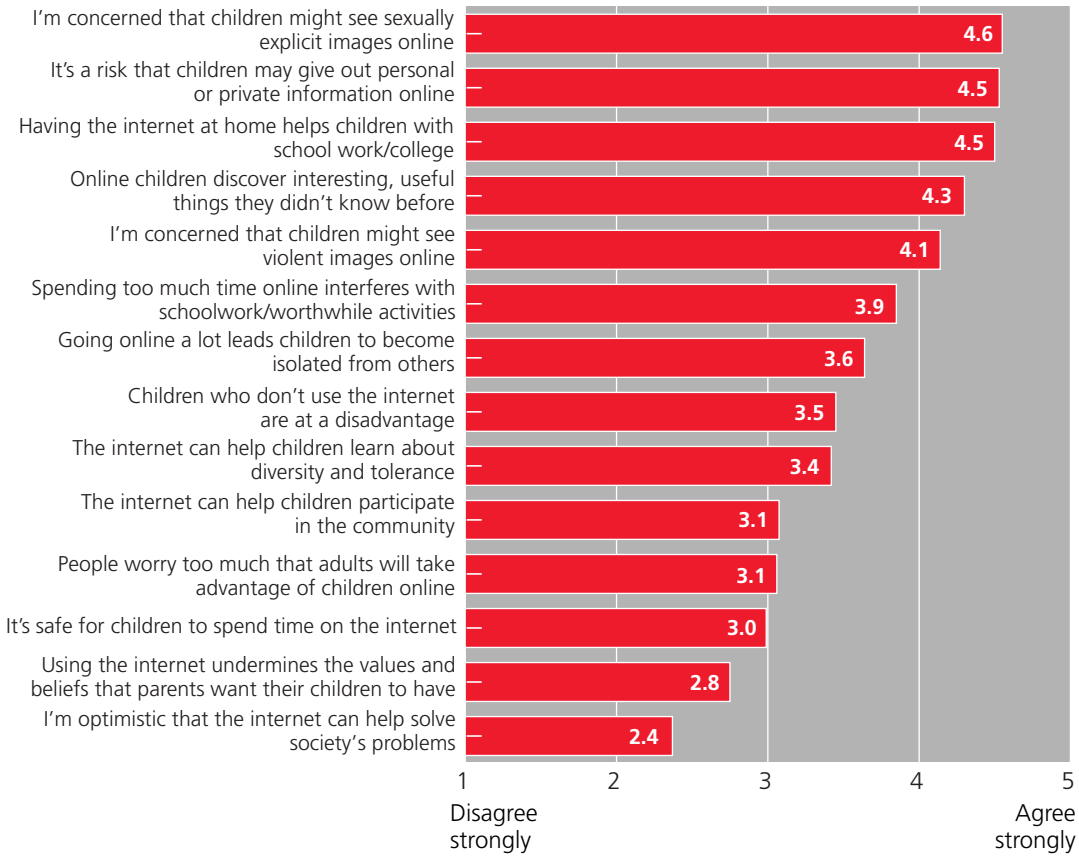
This poses an unprecedented challenge for parents, for perhaps never before have they sought to introduce into their homes a medium that both offers such great benefits that they can hardly miss out and yet risks such great dangers that they can hardly give it house room. While in the early days, some ambivalence also attached to television,[84] the opportunities and risks here are far more polarised, and the challenge to parents' ability to manage something so technologically-demanding only adds to their burden.

Conflicting values associated with the internet

This ambivalence about the internet is reflected in the diverse attitudes and values which parents attach to the internet, and, in this regard, they reflect wider cultural, media, and political discourses surrounding the internet (see Figure 37).

- It seems that parents' greatest concerns about the internet are that it may lead children to become isolated from others, expose children to sexual and/or violent images, displace more worthwhile activities and risk their privacy.
- On the other hand, parents also recognise that the internet can help children with their school work and provides an opportunity to discover interesting and useful things. It can also help them to become more tolerant and understanding, and those who lack access may be at a disadvantage.

Figure 37: Parents' attitudes towards the internet



Base: All parents of 9-17 year olds (N=906)

Conclusions: Looking ahead

Parental views on the regulation of children's internet use

In finding a way forward that facilitates their child's internet use while avoiding the risks, parents have some clear views on how they can be better supported (see Figure 38).

Parents' first preference is for a more regulated communication environment:

- An overwhelming 85% want to see tougher laws on online pornography, with 59% wanting stricter regulation of online services.

Secondly, they want more institutional support as they and their children become increasingly media – or internet – literate:

- 75% want to see more and better teaching and guidance in schools (ie for their children) while 67% want more and better information and advice for parents.

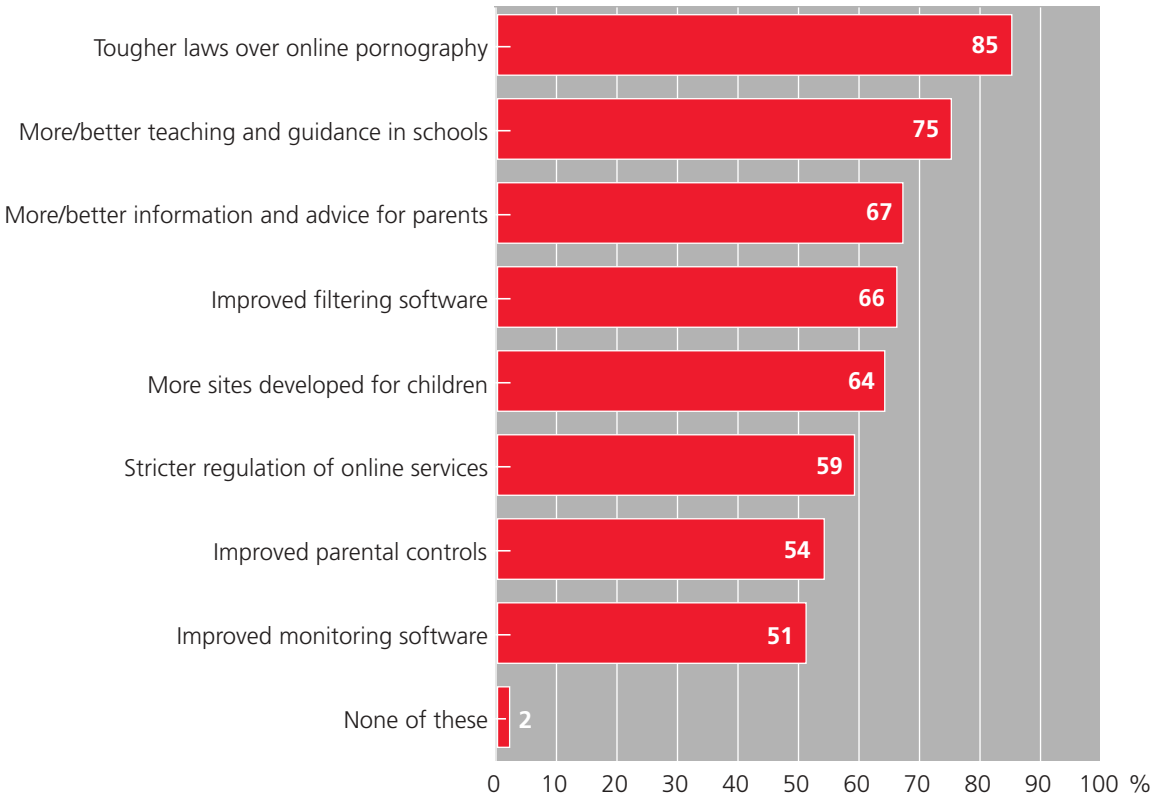
Thirdly, parents would welcome more sites being developed specifically for children (64%), thereby facilitating a more stimulating and rewarding online experience for children and young people.

Fourthly, they would welcome improved technical solutions to online risks (improved filtering software 66%, improved parental controls 54%, improved monitoring software 51%).

There are no easy answers to the question of whose responsibility it should be to guide children through the opportunities and dangers online. These views from parents would support a balanced and multi-stakeholder approach, neither devolving all internet regulation for children to their parents nor relying wholly on state or commercial solutions. Involving multiple stakeholders allows for maximum flexibility and, hence, better regulation.

For parents who wish to manage their children's online access, improved technical solutions might be the answer. For parents who lack confidence or expertise to do this, improved guidance for children in schools would be helpful. Schools encourage children to go online but, having encouraged this, appear reluctant to guide them in non-educational uses or locations. Simply to reduce national or international regulation/self-regulation of the online environment shifts the burden to parents' shoulders, and yet, as this report has shown, this is proving to be difficult, often ineffective, sometimes intrusive and certainly confusing for UK families.

Figure 38: Which of these would help you to make sure that your child uses the internet effectively and safely? (Multiple response)



Base: All parents of 9-17 year olds (N=906)

Conclusions: Looking ahead

Balancing opportunities and dangers

It might be supposed that children who go online more often become more savvy and so able to avoid the risks while optimising the benefits. 'Expert' children can, it is often hoped, be left to their own devices while attention is given to those not yet or not much online who, because they lack experience and expertise, run greater risks than those who 'know what they are doing'. Against this easy supposition, however, the UKCGO survey finds that frequent users both take up more of the opportunities of the internet and are also exposed to greater risks.

Further, it might be supposed that restricting children's access to the internet would effectively minimise the risks they face without other costs. However, such restrictions also reduce their online opportunities, for the UKCGO survey also finds that those who make less use of the internet not only face fewer risks but also take up fewer opportunities.

- Most simply, those who use the internet more make a broader use of it. While half of 9-19 year olds visited fewer than five websites in the previous week, this is the case for only one third of the daily users but for two thirds of the weekly users. Moreover, one third of daily users (35%) but only 8% of weekly users have visited more than 10 sites in the past week. Daily users are also more confident in their online skills, with twice as many as weekly users saying that they know how to set up an email account, send an instant message, download a music file, set up a filter or get rid of a virus.

Crucially, this broader and more confident use brings both benefits and dangers, as a comparison of daily and weekly internet users reveals.

- More use suggests more benefits. Daily users compared with weekly users make more frequent use of instant messaging and email, and they more often play games online and download music. Indeed, daily users are more likely to engage in nearly all the activities we asked about in the survey, suggesting a more wide-ranging engagement with the internet and the resources it provides – including more use of exam revision sites, hobby sites, etc. For example, while 25% of 12-19 year old internet users have used the internet for advice, this is the case for 31% of daily users but only 18% of weekly users. Of the 34% who have set up their own webpage, this holds for 40% of daily but only 28% of weekly users, and the daily users are also more successful in getting their site online and in updating it. Daily users are also more likely to interact with websites – voting, sending email to sites, offering advice or contributing pictures or messages, and they are more likely to have visited political or civic sites.

- More use also brings more risks. While 38% of 9-19 year olds who use the internet at least once a week have seen pornographic pop-ups, this breaks down into 48% of daily users and 29% of weekly users. Similarly, overall 36% have ended up accidentally on a pornographic website – this is 43% of daily users and 30% of weekly users. The same picture holds for the 22% who have ended up accidentally on a site with violent or gruesome pictures (27% daily, 17% weekly users) and for the 9% who have ended up accidentally on a site that is hostile or hateful to a group of people (12% daily, 6% weekly users). While 8% have met offline someone that they first met online, this is the case for 12% of the daily users and only 5% of the weekly users, and this is not surprising since 42% of the daily users, compared with 18% of the weekly users, know someone that they only talk to online. Lastly, while 49% have never revealed personal information online, this is claimed by 57% of the weekly users but only 40% of the daily users.

Consequently, far from becoming unnecessary, the task of guiding children in their online use becomes more subtle, complex and demanding as they make more use of the internet.

Balancing parents' and children's experiences

Strikingly, the UKCGO survey has identified a significant gap between parents' and children's experiences of the internet. Parents, it appears, underestimate the risks their children are experiencing online. Children, it appears, underestimate the regulatory practices their parents are attempting to implement. Parental anxieties, we might conclude, tend towards being both ill-informed and ineffective in supporting regulation. Children's enthusiasm for the new medium is resulting in some risky behaviours. Taken together, these findings suggest a rather low level of understanding between parents and children, impeding an effective regulation of children's internet use within the home.

However, one cannot simply recommend greater monitoring of children by parents. From children's point of view, some key benefits of the internet depend on maintaining some privacy and freedom from their parents, making them less favourable particularly to intrusive or hidden forms of parental regulation. Moreover, the internet must be perceived by children as an exciting and free space for play and experimentation if they are to become capable and creative actors in this new environment. It is inherent to childhood that, if children feel themselves monitored, taught or evaluated, their enthusiasm fades.

At present, children are in many ways confident of their new online skills. But these should not be overestimated, for children are also aware of many ways in which they are confused, uncertain or lacking in skills, this resulting perhaps in a relatively narrow or problematically risky online experience. As the locations and forms of use all multiply, some children are becoming adept at finding ways to do what they want to do online while others are getting lost.

Managing, guiding and regulating children's use is, therefore, an increasingly challenging task and one that will surely most effectively be pursued with their cooperation. On the other hand, if they are to be both empowered and safe in this new information and communication environment, media literacy or internet skills guidance might be as sensibly directed towards their parents as to children so as to enhance parental skills and understanding of their children's activities as well as to benefit parents themselves.

Conclusions: Looking ahead

A new divide?

Moreover, a new divide is opening up, one centred on the quality of use. No longer are children and young people only or even mainly divided by those with and without access, though, as argued earlier, 'access' is a moving target in terms of its speed, location, quality and support, and so inequalities in access persist. But also, children and young people are divided into those for whom the internet is an increasingly rich, diverse, engaging and stimulating resource of growing importance in their lives, and those for whom it remains a narrow, unengaging if occasionally useful resource of rather less significance. In debating whether and how much this matters, two questions are paramount.

- First, is the opportunity to use the internet in a rich rather than a narrow way equally or unequally distributed? The UKCGO survey suggests significant inequalities, for it finds that socio-economic status discriminates daily from weekly users. Middle class children, children with internet access at home, children with broadband access and children whose parents use the internet more often are all more likely to be daily users and, therefore, are more likely to experience the internet as a rich, if risky, medium than are less privileged children.

- Second, do those who lack online opportunities enjoy compensatory opportunities elsewhere? This is not so easy to resolve without surveying many contextual factors in children's lives. Children tend to be reluctant to describe themselves directly as 'missing out'. Parents of daily users tend to agree that children who lack internet access are at a disadvantage, but parents of low or non-users are less likely to think this.[85] In short, both children and parents have reasons not to express concern. On the other hand, as social, economic and political online resources develop and, arguably, become prioritised over offline resources, the nature of exclusion will become more subtle but no less significant. Furthermore, since it is 'the usual suspects' who enjoy greater online access – households with more economic, educational and cultural advantages – it is likely that children in these homes will benefit from comparatively greater resources of many kinds, both online and offline.

Last words

Much public attention is focused on the risks children are encountering when using the internet, and rightly so. Some may read this report and consider the glass half full, finding more evidence of education and participation, for example, and less occurrence of pornographic or chat room risk than they had feared. Others may read this report and consider the glass half empty, finding fewer benefits and greater incidence of dangers than they would hope for. Much depends on one's prior expectations. It is hoped that the present findings provide a clear and careful picture of the nature and extent of these risks, as well as an account of the attempts that parents and children are making to reduce or address these risks. In our view, the risks do not merit a moral panic, and nor do they warrant seriously restricting children's internet use. But they are nonetheless widespread, they are experienced by many children as worrying or problematic, and they do warrant serious attention and intervention by government, educators, industry and parents.

Perhaps the best way of both optimising opportunities and minimising risks might be to steer children and young people towards inviting, useful, exciting, participatory and creative sites online.[86] To be sure, in terms of the opportunities afforded by the internet, the UKCGO survey reveals a plethora of ways in which children and young people are taking steps towards deepening and diversifying their internet use, many of them gaining in sophistication, motivation and skills as they do so. However, it has also identified many children not yet taking up the potential of the internet. These young people worry about the risks, visit only a few sites, fail to upload and maintain personal websites and treat sites more as ready-made sources of entertainment or information than as opportunities for critical engagement, user-generated content production or active participation.

Notwithstanding the rapid diffusion of the internet through UK society, we have yet to hold a sustained public debate on the nature of the opportunities of internet use for children and young people. It has been suggested here that such opportunities should include not only access to a variety of pre-packaged, highly commercialised entertainment and information content but should also engage children creatively, support their social and personal development and facilitate their active and critical participation in social and political forums. How all this can be achieved, particularly given the diversity among children themselves – in terms of age, gender, background, interests and expertise – remains a key challenge for all concerned with the provision of contents and services mediated by the internet.

There are also many questions remaining for research, particularly in identifying the consequences of the risks of internet use – the nature of possible harms from exposure to pornography when young, the degree to which privacy or personal information is being exploited, the best way in which safety messages can be sustained and made effective, etc. Indeed, throughout this report many points have been addressed that invite further consideration, more research and new initiatives in provision or regulation.

We end by reiterating that a balanced approach is vital if society is to steer a course between the twin risks of exposing children to danger or harm and of undermining children's opportunities to participate, enjoy and express themselves fully. Focussing on either dangers or opportunities, without recognising the consequences of particular policies or provision for the other, can only be problematic, undermining either children's rights or their safety. No simple answers can be forthcoming in managing this complex, multifaceted and constantly-changing technology, but it is hoped that the present findings contribute to informing further developments that will shape the use of the internet at home.

Annex: Survey administration and sampling procedures

In order to investigate 9-19 year olds' use of the internet, BMRB International was commissioned to conduct a survey across the UK among 9-19 year olds and parents of those aged 9-17.

Young people aged 9-19

The sample was drawn by means of Random Location sampling, providing a high-quality sample of young people within the target age groups.[87] Fieldwork was spread across 188 sampling points across the UK, and to increase fieldwork efficiency, areas were chosen which had a higher than average prevalence of 9-19 year olds.

The target was to provide 1,500 interviews. A screening interview was conducted on the doorstep to ensure that the young people were of the correct age, and interviewers worked to quotas by sex and age to ensure the required number of interviews in each sub-category.

Where a young person was aged 17 or younger and not living independently, written permission was sought from a parent or guardian. Parents were told the content of the interview and were asked to complete and sign a form to show that they were happy for their child to be interviewed.

In total, 1,511 interviews were achieved among 9-19 year olds. The table below shows the number of interviews conducted in each sub-category.

Table 1: Interviews with young people

	Girls	Boys	Total
Aged 9-12	241	314	555
Aged 13-16	268	301	569
Aged 17-19	159	227	386
Total	**668**	**842**	**1,511**

Parents of 9-17 year olds

If the young person being interviewed was aged 9-17, we asked the adult in the household (preferably the parent or main carer) to complete a paper questionnaire. In order to obtain a maximum response rate, we encouraged respondents to complete the questionnaire while the young person was being interviewed. This enabled the interviewer to take the completed questionnaire away with them rather than leaving it with the respondent to send it back to BMRB in their own time. Where there was a mother and a father in the household, interviewers were briefed to ask the father to complete the survey to ensure that as many fathers as possible took part in the research. Usually, males have a lower response rate.

In total, 1,077 parents out of 1,259 eligible parents of children aged 9-17 agreed to complete a questionnaire, and 906 paper questionnaires were received. The response rate was 72% overall, which is very high.

Fieldwork

Fieldwork was conducted by BMRB's fully trained interviewers, working under supervision. (In Northern Ireland, the interviews were conducted by Millward Brown Northern Ireland.) Interviews were conducted face to face and in-home, with the young people's questionnaires being administered face to face by interviewers using multi-media computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI).

Both questionnaires were piloted prior to the main fieldwork taking place. The pilot took place in London with interviewers being accompanied by BMRB research executives and members of the LSE research team.

The most sensitive questions in the young people's questionnaire, specifically those relating to viewing pornographic and hate websites and meeting people through the internet, were contained in a self-completion section in the questionnaire, which ensured that these questions were answered in privacy. The interviewer showed the respondent how to use the computer and completed a small number of practice questions with them. The respondent was then left to read the questions on their own and key in their own answers. At the end of the self-completion section, the respondent was asked to give the computer back to the interviewer who finished the interview in the normal way.

The average length of the young people's questionnaire was around 40 minutes. The parent's questionnaire was eight A4 sides long and took around 15 minutes to complete. Copies of both questionnaires can be found on the project website, www.children-go-online.net.

All fieldwork took place between 12 January and 7 March 2004.

Annex: Survey administration and sampling procedures

Weighting procedures

Rim weighting was applied to the data to correct for minor imbalances between the sample profile achieved and the known sample profile. Data from the young people's survey were weighted to data in BMRB's TGI (Target Group Index) and Youth TGI surveys. The weighting efficiency was 91%, and the effective sample size was 1,375.

As the sample frame was designed to be representative of the population of young people aged 9-19 years, the parents' data had the same weighting applied that was employed on the young people's data. For those parents who had a child aged 9-17 years and who had completed a questionnaire, the identical weight that had been applied to their child's data was used. This approach allowed for cross-comparisons between the children's and parents' data sets. Further, this weighting approach would ensure a high weighting efficiency and, therefore, a high effective sample size. The weighting efficiency was 91%, and the effective sample size was 824.

Reporting of findings

In the present report, findings are presented for the population as a whole (ie weighted sample) or stratified by age, gender and/or social grade. The social grade classification used is outlined in the table below and was obtained by questions put to parents at the end of each child's CAPI interview.

Table 2: Actual and target sample sizes

Demographic variable	Categories	Actual %	Target %
Sex	Male	56	51
	Female	44	49
Age	9-12 years	37	37
	13-16 years	38	37
	17-19 years	26	26
Social Grade	AB	17	26
	C1	28	26
	C2	27	21
	DE	28	27

Table 3: Social grade classification

Grade	Social Status	Occupation of Chief Income Earner
A	Upper middle class	Higher managerial administrative or professional occupations. Top level civil servants. Retired people previously graded A with a pension from their job and widows/widowers if they are receiving a pension from their late spouse's job.
B	Middle class	Intermediate managerial administrative or professional people. Senior officers in local government and civil service. Retired people previously graded B with a pension from their job and widows/widowers if they are receiving a pension from their late spouse's job.
C1	Lower middle class	Supervisory or clerical and junior managerial administrative or professional occupations. Retired people previously graded C1 with a pension from their job and widows/widowers if they are receiving a pension from their late spouse's job.
C2	Skilled working class	Skilled manual workers. Retired people previously graded C2 with a pension from their job and widows/widowers if they are receiving a pension from their late spouse's job.
D	Working class	Semi and unskilled manual workers. Retired people previously graded D with a pension from their job and widows/widowers if they are receiving a pension from their late spouse's job.
E	Those at lowest levels of subsistence	All those entirely dependent on the State long term through sickness unemployment old age or other reasons. Casual workers and those without a regular income.

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Endnotes

1 See Buckingham (2002); Livingstone (2002).

2 See Livingstone (2001).

3 The project develops an earlier project in which the first author conducted participant observation in thirty families (Livingstone and Bovill, 2001), and it extends the work of the second author on young people's construction of personal homepages (Bober, 2002; 2003).

4 See Livingstone and Bober (2003). For full details of the research and related publications, see www.children-go-online.net.

5 See Bolter and Grusin (1999); Marvin (1988); Winston (1996).

6 See Kellner (2002); Poster (2001); Turkle (1995).

7 See Buckingham (2002); James, Jenks and Prout (1998); Seiter (1999).

8 Many market research surveys have been conducted, but these tend to offer only broad-brush findings, charting changes in access and the basic features of internet use but offering little by way of detail, depth or context. For example, BMRB's Youth TGI survey (2001) showed that the most common uses are studying/homework (73%), email (59%), playing games (38%), chat sites (32%) and hobbies and interests (31%). But these leaves open many questions: Which young people are emailing whom? Who makes use of which educational resources? If some lack access, what are they missing out on?

9 See Greig and Taylor (1999); Livingstone and Lemish (2001). The research ethics policy for *UK Children Go Online* can be found on the project website, www.children-go-online.net.

10 See Livingstone and Bober (2003).

11 As reviewed in Livingstone (2003a).

12 In designing the survey, the qualitative stage of the research offered some guidance in matters of phrasing – including the difficulty in measuring time spent online, everyday terms from online communication (described as 'talking to' or 'texting' someone), for communication with strangers (described as 'people you don't know' or 'when you don't really know who you are talking to') and online pornography (described as 'porn' or 'rude websites' or as showing 'people with hardly any clothes on'). The focus groups offered guidance in approaching ethically-difficult topics. For example, spontaneous discussion in the groups of paedophiles, 'paedos' and 'weirdos' online suggested that their mention in a survey would be less intrusive than initially feared. The groups also included mention of the many myths regarding the technological means of monitoring, regulating or intruding upon internet uses (whether by other children, parents, public or commercial bodies), suggesting possible confusions in answers to survey questions on domestic regulation.

13 See Becta (2001/2002); Wigley and Clarke (2000); O'Connell (2002); O'Connell et al (2004); OxIS (2003); Pew (2001a; 2001b); SAFT (2003).

14 Total percentages do not necessarily add up to 100% due to missing data or because some respondents did not wish to answer.

15 In his now-classic theory of the diffusion of innovation, Rogers (1995) constructed a standard S-shaped diffusion curve by which to classify individuals into five categories: innovators (the first 2.5% of the population to acquire the new technology); early adopters (14%); early majority (34%); late majority (34%); and laggards (16%). Each of these groups is characterised according to the point in the diffusion curve at which individuals acquire a particular new technology.

16 Bolter and Grusin (1999) term this process 'remediation', with the new arrival altering the relations of use among the already-established activities in the media environment and, typically, resulting in increased specialisation in the uses of older media.

17 The measurement of internet access and use is no simple matter, and different survey instruments take different approaches. For example, asking if one has 'ever used' the internet generates higher usage figures than questions concerning 'regular' use or 'use in the past month'. 'Ever used' may include respondents who previously used the internet but have since stopped. 'Have internet access at home' may include respondents who have the technology but never use it. Note that Becta (2002) asks, 'Do you use the Internet on a regular basis at home, at school or elsewhere?', and the Oxford Internet Survey (2003) asks, 'Does this household have access to the internet?'.

18 See ONS (2004). These quarterly statistics on internet access and use draw from the national 'Expenditure and Food Survey' of individuals aged 16+. Similarly, the Oxford Internet Survey (OxIS, 2003) found that 59% of Britons aged 14+ used the internet in Spring 2003. The internet was accessed mostly from home (89%) but also at work (28%), school or college (13%), a friend's house (10%), via mobile access (6%), at libraries (5%) and internet cafés (3%). The highest user group was found to be 14-22 year olds in full time education – 98% of this group were internet users at the time of the survey. (Face to face interviews with a nationally representative random sample of 2,000 individuals aged 14+ were carried out in May/June 2003).

19 ONS data on recent trends in UK household access to the internet are as follows: 9% in 1998, 18% in 1999, 32% in 2000, 39% in 2001, 44% in 2002 and 48% in 2003 (ONS, 2003).

20 See Livingstone (2002).

21 Not all 18-19 year olds are in school or college: for those who are not studying, the question included the option 'computer at own work place'.

Endnotes

22 Not all those who have ever used the internet at home currently have internet access at home, therefore. Of those 9-19 year olds who do not currently use the internet (4%, N=54), 43% say there was a time when they used to use the internet, and of those, 81% (N=24) say they no longer use it because they haven't got access anymore.

23 Comparing UKCGO figures with those from Becta, their 2001 and 2002 surveys both found 26% of children aged 5-18 who had access at school but not at home. Becta conducted two government-funded in-depth surveys with home-based interviews of a nationally representative sample of 5-18 year olds and their parents in relation to ICT use at home and school. Wave 1 (Autumn 2001) included 1,750 and Wave 2 (Autumn 2002) 2,073 interviews (with one child and their parent per household) as well as interviews with parents of 3-4 year olds. Note, however, that this sample is a little younger than the 9-19 year olds sampled for UKCGO.

24 Internet use for UK children is considerably higher than for many other countries in Europe. A recent Eurobarometer survey found that the European average for 12-15 year olds is 73% and for 16-17 year olds is 83% (Eurobarometer, 2004). The greater access to the internet identified here for UK 9-19 year olds exceeds EU figures for both home and for school access.

25 Socio-economic status of the household was measured as described in the Annex. Throughout this report 'middle class' refers to ABC1 households and 'working class' refers to C2DE households.

26 Our qualitative research shows clearly that parents are strongly motivated to acquire computer and internet access at home to support their children's education and employment prospects, and this is evident in the figures for access at home (Livingstone and Bober, 2003).

27 To be precise, definitions are based on combinations of variables as follows:

'Home (any)' = currently has computer/laptop, digital TV or games console at home with internet access.

'School, not home' = has accessed the internet at school, has never accessed the internet on computer / digital TV / games console at home and does not currently have computer with internet access at home.

'Other location only' = no access to the internet at either home or school but has used elsewhere, ie has never accessed the internet on computer / digital TV / games console at home, nor on computer at school and does not have computer with internet at home.

'Non-users' = has no access to the internet at home or school and has never used the internet before.

28 The 'Index of Multiple Deprivation' for England 2004 combines seven domains of deprivation: income deprivation, employment deprivation, health deprivation and disability, education, skills and training deprivation, barriers to housing and services, living environment deprivation and crime (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, www.odpm.gov.uk, 2004).

29 The sample sizes of different minority groups were too small to break down these figures further (1,333 respondents were of white background, 91 Asian, 35 black, 4 Chinese and 39 of mixed ethnic background.)

30 Caron and Caronia (2001) term the escalation of expectations regarding updates and add-ons to the computer at home a 'cascade' in demands upon parents, while Livingstone (2002) and Flichy (2002) chart the history of different media – telephone, radio, television, hifi and now computer – which began as shared household possessions but multiplied in the home to become personalised media.

31 Hence, of those children with one or more computers at home, 60% have access on one computer while 22% have internet access on more than one computer (14% on two, 5% on three and 3% on more than three).

32 The Oxford Internet Survey found that in 2003, 11% of British households had broadband, and 24% were planning to go broadband within the following year (OxIS, 2003).

33 Some 33% of boys and 34% of girls with an internet connection at home have broadband access, as do 32% of 9-11 year olds, 31% of 12-15 year olds, 38% of 16-17 year olds and 33% of 18-19 year olds who have the internet at home.

34 See also Pew (2004, p. 4): 'Among people who are relatively well off economically, close to half have home broadband connections.'

35 These figures are broadly comparable with those obtained by Becta's survey of 5-18 year olds in 2002. This survey found that 81% had a computer at home, 92% had a mobile phone, 77% had a games console, though only 21% had a WAP/3G phone at home.

36 Note that though new mobile phones come with WAP, they might only have been used once or a few times to access the internet. Furthermore, WAP and digital television do not yet provide the same experience using the internet as does the computer, providing only limited access to online content.

37 See Livingstone and Bovill (2001).

38 The *Young People New Media* survey conducted among UK 6-17 year olds in 1997 found that 63% of children had a television set in their bedroom – 54% of ABC1 and 71% of C2DE households (Livingstone and Bovill, 1999).

39 www.thamesvalley.police.uk/crime-reduction/internet-crime6.htm

Endnotes

40 In a recent European comparison (SAFT, 2003), 30% of children were found to have a computer in their own bedroom. This was highest in Denmark (40%) and lowest in Ireland (16%), with Norway (27%), Sweden (33%) and Iceland (34%) in between. The computer was located in a public room as follows: Ireland 58%, Denmark 47%, Norway 44%, Iceland 41%, Sweden 20%. These data do not distinguish between computers with and without internet access. In this survey, 4,700 children aged 9-16 and 3,200 parents in the above countries completed a school-based self-completion questionnaire (children) and telephone interviews (parents) between December 2002 and March 2003.

41 Comparison data for 2001 and 2002 come from the British Educational and Technology Agency (Becta, 2001; 2002).

42 Livingstone and Bovill (1999).

43 See Warschauer (2003); Norris (2001); Rice (2002).

44 Among 11-18 year olds, Becta (2002) found that 27% were daily users, 47% were weekly users (once or twice a week), 17% were occasional users (once a month or less), and 9% were non-users.

45 See Selwyn (2003); Wyatt et al (2002).

46 Findings from the *World Internet Project* suggest that gender differences are projected to disappear among the next generation, at least in terms of access and time spent online (Dutton, 2004).

47 See Livingstone and Bovill (2001).

48 SMS – short messaging service via the mobile phone; also text messaging.

49 Note that children were asked to choose the single most helpful tool, whereas parents were asked to choose all in the list that help their child.

50 This figure shows children's reasons for non and occasional use by combining the reasons provided by children who no longer use the internet but used to (N=24), children who have never used the internet (N=29), children who no longer use it as often as they did before (N=89) and children who have always been occasional users (N=109). Among children, the reason 'don't know how to use it' was only asked of 9-19 year olds who had never used the internet (N=29), and the reasons 'people rely on computers too much' was not asked of children who used to use the internet. The figure also shows why the parent says that their child does not use/has low levels of internet usage (N=94) and parents' reasons for their own low or non use (N=323).

51 See Office of the e-Envoy (2004).

52 See also Pew (2001a).

53 See Kellner (2002); Livingstone (2002).

54 Media literacy can be defined as the ability to access, analyse, evaluate and create messages across a variety of media and contexts (Livingstone, 2003b).

55 See Eastin and La Rose (2000); Torkzadeh and Van Dyke (2001; 2002).

56 See also Montgomery and Pasnik (1996); Turow (2001).

57 At least one study mapping online pornography identified much that is upsetting or embarrassing for children (Feilitzen and Carlsson (2000); although see Sutter (2000) for some questions about whether inappropriately sexual or pornographic websites are experienced as problematic for young people and their families).

58 A telephone survey was conducted in March 2002, involving 1,081 parents with children aged 6-16 who owned PCs (see Media Awareness Network, 2000).

59 The research involved a telephone survey of 1,506 adults and 625 children aged 10-17 conducted in February 2000 (see Kaiser Family Foundation (2000).

60 A UK marketing survey of 2,019 7-16 year old internet users carried out by NOP in June 2000 (see Wigley and Clarke, 2000).

61 This was defined in the survey, with the younger respondents in mind, as 'stuff meant for adults, for example nude people, rude and sexy pictures'.

62 The current role of the Internet Watch Foundation is to 'foster trust and confidence in the internet among current and future internet users by operating a hotline to enable the public to report instances of potential child abuse images, criminally obscene and criminally racist material found anywhere in the world on the internet, for example via websites, newsgroups, mobiles or other on-line services [… and to] assist law enforcement in the fight against criminal content on the internet' (www.iwf.org.uk). See also the EC's initiatives regarding the protection of minors on the internet: The European Parliament and the Council of Europe recommend 'action to enable minors to make responsible use of on-line audiovisual and information services, notably by improving the level of awareness among parents, educators and teachers of the potential of the new services and of the means whereby they may be made safe for minors, in particular through media literacy or media education programmes [and, furthermore,] action to facilitate, where appropriate and necessary, identification of, and access to, quality content and services for minors, including through the provision of means of access in educational establishments and public places' (European Commission, 2004).

Endnotes

63 Note that this figure is higher than the 57% of weekly internet users who claim to have had contact with pornography, not so much because occasional users are included here but because 9-11 year olds are excluded.

64 Since respondents were permitted multiple responses to this question, these percentages do not simply add up to 100%.

65 Again, multiple responses were permitted.

66 See Ling (2000).

67 See Drotner (2000); Pew (2001b).

68 See Drotner (2000); Ling (2000), Livingstone and Bober (2003).

69 See Bentivegna (2002).

70 See Coleman (2003); Sundin (1999).

71 See Dutton (1999) on reconfiguring social relations; see McMillan (2002) on varieties of interactivity.

72 See Barnhurst (1998); Kimblerlee (2002); Montgomery et al (2004).

73 A school-based survey of 330 8-11 year olds in England (see O'Connell et al, 2004).

74 Still, among our sample of 1,511 children, one child did not have a good time, and, while we know no more about this instance, one cannot be sanguine about such a report. Nor can we be sure that other children surveyed were truthful in reporting a positive experience.

75 The percentage of children who say they have visited a chat room includes both current and past users.

76 However, the discrepancies are of a similar order. It is simply that these are less common occurrences and so the figures are smaller.

77 Here UK parents seem more restrictive than the European average of 49% not allowing their children give out personal information (for 0-17 year olds) (Eurobarometer, 2004).

78 Here UK parents also seem more restrictive than the European average, where only 32% of parents ban chat rooms (for 0-17 year olds) (Eurobarometer, 2004).

79 This campaign combines television advertising, pop-up adverts and a website with online games to inform children of the dangers of using chat rooms and also gives safety advice to parents (see www.thinkuknow.co.uk).

80 These figures from the parent survey could be higher than those from the children's survey because the parents were answering for all child users, including occasional users, while the children's survey asked only those who used the internet at least once a week.

81 We cannot be sure, and it is not easy to pursue in a survey, exactly what parents and children think is meant by 'filtering' or 'monitoring', and our qualitative work suggests some confusion about the technical options available.

82 See Abelman (1985); Austin (1993); Bybee et al (1982); Lin and Atkin (1989); Livingstone (2002); Van der Voort et al (1992).

83 See Livingstone (in press).

84 See Oswell (2002); Spigel (1992). The shifting view of television, now the internet is present in most people's homes, provides an example of remediation (Bolter and Grusin, 1999). Once also regarded with ambivalence as ushering both opportunities and dangers into the home, television appears now to be regarded rather more negatively, and in less polarised terms, while it is the internet that attracts both our greatest hopes for and deepest fears of society.

85 Asked whether children who lack internet access are at a disadvantage, parents of daily users score 3.7 (where 5=agree and 1=disagree), while parents of low or non users score 3.0 and 2.8 respectively.

86 See www.childnetacademy.org

87 The sampling technique used in this survey is a tightly controlled form of random location sampling which aims to eliminate the more unsatisfactory features of quota sampling without incurring the cost and other penalties involved in conducting surveys according to strict probability methods. Crucially, the interviewers are given very little choice in the selection of respondents. Respondents are drawn from a small set of homogenous streets selected with probability proportional to population after stratification by their ACORN characteristics and region. Quotas are set in terms of characteristics which are known to have a bearing on individuals' probabilities of being at home and so available for interview. Rules are given which govern the distribution spacing and timing of interviews. The sample of areas takes as its universe all enumeration districts (groups of on average 150 households) in Great Britain. Enumeration districts are stratified thus: (i) Standard Region; (ii) Within Standard Region – by Acorn type; (iii) Within Standard Region by County and ITV Region. Thus, the design is single stage using direct selection of appropriate Enumeration Districts rather than taking streets at random from larger units, such as wards or parishes.

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A research report from the UK Children Go Online project
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July 2004

Acknowledgments

This research was funded by an Economic and Social Research Council grant (RES-335-25-0008) as part of the 'e-Society' Programme, with co-funding from AOL, BSC, Childnet-International, Citizens Online and ITC.

The researchers thank the project's Advisory Panel for their support: Camille de Stempel, Karin Sieger and Simon Kinnersley (AOL), Andrea Millwood Hargrave (BSC and ITC), Nigel Williams, Stephen Carrick-Davies and Mary Louise Morris (Childnet-International), John Fisher (Citizens Online) and John Carr (NCH and CHIS).

They also thank the project's Children's Panel for their discussions and guidance which informed the design and interpretation of the survey. Lastly, thanks to Bridget Williams, Susan Kay and Taj Sohal from BMRB and to Ellen Helsper and Peter Lunt for their contribution to the preparation of this report.

AOL
broadcasting standards commission
ITC
NCH the children's charity
Citizens Online
Childnet International

UK Children Go Online

Final report of key project findings

Authors

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April 2005

E·S·R·C ECONOMIC & SOCIAL RESEARCH COUNCIL

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A word from the 'UK Children Go Online' advisory panel

We hope that these findings are of value to policy developments and academic knowledge as work in this field continues to move forward.

Sonia Livingstone, Professor of Social Psychology and Principal Investigator
Magdalena Bober, Postdoctoral Research Officer

'Professor Livingstone's findings are showing up valuable insight into this most tricky area of the internet, namely the safety of children and the role of parents in their use of the internet.'

(Professor Leonard Waverman of London Business School, former Director of the ESRC e-Society programme)

'UK Children Go Online offers the Internet industry, policymakers and children's organisations crucial insight into the nature of children's internet use and their parents' view of what they do online. It is clear that there is still significant progress to be made in ensuring that families make the most of the advice and tools available to them for reducing online risks. We must continue to act upon the findings of this in-depth research to ensure a safer experience for younger internet users.'

(Camille de Stempel, Director of Policy, AOL UK, and co-sponsor of UK Children Go Online)

'This is a milestone study. Its size, its scope and its authorship give it a unique authority. It confirms some things that we already knew or suspected, and it provides many rich details which greatly expand our knowledge of children's use of the internet. The gap between what children are actually doing and what their parents think they are doing is a lot larger than many people would have imagined. It is a gap we must try to close.'

(John Carr, Internet Adviser to the children's charity NCH and adviser to UK Children Go Online)

'Much has been said in the media recently by adults about the impact of the internet on children. For the first time, this important piece of research reveals the thoughts and feelings of young people themselves. It is vitally important we listen to them as we shape the future of our new digital society.'

(John Fisher, CEO of Citizens Online and co-sponsor of UK Children Go Online)

'This is the largest body of academic research on children's use of technology ever to happen in the UK. It is an enormous achievement to get children to reveal their thoughts, fears and preferences honestly, in a way that it has only been possible to do anecdotally before. The report demonstrates the urgent need for more internet literacy within education since too many young people do not apply critical thinking skills to online content.'

(Stephen Carrick-Davies, CEO of Childnet International and co-sponsor of UK Children Go Online)

'This project gives us illuminating, much-needed insights into the attitudes and behaviours of young people. Of particular value is how it unpicks the balance between the opportunities and risks that young people experience online.'

(Robin Blake, Manager of Media Literacy, Ofcom, and co sponsor of UK Children Go Online)

@society AOL broadcasting standards commission ITC Independent Television Commission PUTTING VIEWERS FIRST NCH the children's charity CitizensOnline Childnet International Ofcom OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

Executive summary

UK Children Go Online (UKCGO) aims to offer a rigorous and timely investigation of 9-19 year olds' use of the internet. The project balances an assessment of online risks and opportunities in order to contribute to developing academic debates and policy frameworks for children and young people's internet use.

This report presents the main project findings and recommendations. These are based on a national UK survey conducted face to face with 1,511 children and young people aged 9-19, together with a survey administered to 906 of their parents, and a series of focus group interviews and observations focusing on children's use of the internet. The findings and recommendations are summarised below.

Access to the internet

- **Home access is growing:** 75% of 9-19 year olds have accessed the internet from a computer at home.
- **School access is near universal:** 92% have accessed the internet at school.
- **Homes with children lead in gaining internet access:** 36% have more than one computer at home, and 24% live in a household with broadband access.
- **Access platforms are diversifying:** 71% have a computer, 38% a mobile phone, 17% a digital television and 8% a games console, all with internet access.
- **Socio-economic differences are sizeable:** 88% of middle class but only 61% of working class children have accessed the internet at home.
- **Many computers in private rooms:** 19% have internet access in their bedroom.

The nature of internet use

- **Most are daily or weekly users:** 9-19 year olds are mainly divided between daily users (41%) and weekly users (43%).
- **Most online for less than an hour:** 19% spend about ten minutes per day online and 48% between half an hour and one hour.
- **Most use it for searching and homework:** 90% of 9-19 year olds who go online daily or weekly use the internet to do work for school or college and 94% use it to get information for other things.
- **Some use it for less-approved activities:** Among 12-19 year olds who go online daily or weekly, 21% admit to having copied something from the internet for a school project and handed it in as their own.

Inequalities and the digital divide

- **A continuum in quality of use:** 16% of 9-19 year olds make low levels or even no use of the internet.
- **Enablers of internet use:** Middle class teenagers, those with home access and those who have spent more years online tend to use the internet more often, spend more time online per day and, consequently, have greater online skills.
- **Lack of interest is only part of the story:** 47% of occasional and non-users say that they lack access, 25% are not interested, 15% say they don't know how to use the internet, and 14% lack the time to use it.
- **Parents' experience of the internet matters:** Daily and weekly users have parents who also use the internet more often and are more expert.
- **The internet is not yet used to its full potential:** Many children and young people are not yet taking up the full potential of the internet, for example visiting a narrow range of sites or not interacting with sites.
- **In/exclusion depends on quality of use:** A new divide is opening up between those for whom the internet is an increasingly rich, diverse, engaging and stimulating resource and those for whom it remains a narrow, unengaging, if occasionally useful, resource of rather less significance.

Education, learning and literacy

- **Many have not received lessons:** 30% of pupils aged 9-19 report having received no lessons at all on using the internet.
- **Skills gap between parents and children:** Only 16% of weekly and daily user parents consider themselves advanced compared with 32% of children.
- **Children lack key skills in evaluating online content:** 38% of pupils aged 9-19 trust most of the information on the internet, and only 33% of 9-19 year olds daily and weekly users have been taught how to judge the reliability of online information.

Communication

- **The mobile phone is the preferred method of communication:** Whether for passing time, making arrangements, getting advice, gossiping or flirting, the phone and text messaging are preferred over emailing or instant messaging.
- **Most online communication is with local friends:** Being in constant contact with friends is highly valued, and there is little interest contacting strangers, though some have contacted people that they have not met face to face, this being mainly among the 21% who visit chat rooms.
- **Talking online is less satisfying:** 53% of email, IM and chat users think that talking to people on the internet is less satisfying than talking to them in real life.
- **Some seek advice online:** 25% of 12-19 year old daily and weekly users say they go online to get advice.

Executive summary

Participation

- **Producing as well as receiving content:** 44% 9-19 year old weekly users have completed a quiz online, 25% have sent an email or text message to a website, 22% have voted for something online, and 17% have sent pictures or stories to a website.
- **Some are interested in civic issues:** 54% of 12-19 year olds who use the internet at least weekly have sought out sites concerned with political or civic issues.
- **Age, gender and social grade make a difference:** Girls, older and middle class teens visit a broader range of civic and political sites.

The risks of undesirable content

- **More than half have seen pornography online:** 57% of 9-19 year old daily and weekly users have come into contact with online porn.
- **Most porn is viewed unintentionally:** 38% have seen a pornographic pop-up advert while doing something else, 36% have accidentally found themselves on a porn site when looking for something else, and 25% have received pornographic junk mail.
- **More porn on the internet than in other media:** Moreover, 53% of parents consider (and children agree) that the internet is more likely to expose children to pornography than are television, video or magazines.
- **Mixed responses to online porn:** When young people encounter pornography on the internet, 54% claim not to be bothered by it, but a significant minority (14%) do not like it.
- **Too young to have seen it:** 45% of 18-19 year old internet users who have seen any pornography (on or offline) think they were too young to have seen it when they first did.
- **Other areas of concern:** 22% of 9-19 year old daily and weekly users have accidentally ended up on a site with violent or gruesome pictures and 9% on a site that is hostile or hateful to a group of people.
- **The most risky medium?** Both parents and children regard the internet as riskier than other media in terms of a range of content and contact risks.

The risks of online communication

- **Parents underestimate children's negative experiences:** One third of 9-19 year old daily and weekly users have received unwanted sexual (31%) or nasty comments (33%) online or by text message, though only 7% of parents are aware that their child has received sexual comments and only 4% that their child has been bullied online.
- **Children divulge personal information online:** 46% say that they have given out personal information to someone that they met online.
- **Children engage in identity play:** 40% say that they have pretended about themselves online.
- **Some have attended face to face meetings:** 30% have made an online acquaintance, and 8% say they have met face to face with someone whom they first met online.

Regulating the internet at home

- **Parents seek to manage their children's internet use:** Most parents whose child has home access to the internet claim that they directly share in and/or support their child on the internet, though their children are less likely to say that this occurs.
- **Parents face some difficult challenges:** 18% of parents say they don't know how to help their child use the internet safely.
- **Confusion about filtering:** In homes with internet access, 35% of children say that filtering software has been installed on their computer while 46% of parents claim this.
- **Children don't want restrictions:** 69% of 9-17 year old daily and weekly users say they mind their parents restricting or monitoring their internet use.
- **Children protect their privacy from parents:** 63% of 12-19 year old home internet users have taken some action to hide their online activities from their parents.
- **Mind the gap:** There are considerable gaps in understanding between parents and children (in internet expertise, in awareness of risks and in acknowledgement of domestic regulation implemented) which impede an effective regulation of children's internet use within the home.

Balancing opportunities and risks

- **More skilled young people do not avoid the risks:** Not only do the most skilled young people fail to avoid online risks, but their risky encounters increase with increased use – thought these young people are more likely to be able to deal with the risks.
- **Opportunities and risks go hand in hand:** There is a strong, positive association between opportunities and risks – the more children and young people experience the one, the more they also experience the other, and vice versa.
- **Internet literacy is crucial:** Increasing internet skills is vital since it seems that children and young people's level of online skills has a direct influence on the breadth of online opportunities and risks they experience.

Executive summary

A parental wish list

- **Stricter regulation:** 85% of parents want to see tougher laws on online pornography, with 59% wanting stricter regulation of online services.
- **More education:** 75% want to see more and better teaching and guidance in schools while 67% want more and better information and advice for parents.
- **Better content:** 64% want more sites developed specifically for children.
- **Improved technology:** 66% want improved filtering software, 54% improved parental controls and 51% improved monitoring software.

A last word from young people

Qualitative interviews with children help to identify a number of ways in which they wish their internet use enhanced – by better quality content addressing their interests, by truly interactive sites that offer responses to their contributions, by more guidance on content creation, improved protection from unwanted content and attention paid to their privacy needs, including from their parents.

Summary of future research priorities

We offer a series of key proprieties for future research in the area of children and young people's uses of new technologies:

- Keep up with technological and market developments in relation to access
- Track shifting and diversifying contexts of use
- Conduct an audit of online content aimed at children and young people
- Critically examine causes and consequences of exclusion
- Examine (and explore measurement of) future developments of online literacy
- Examine the nature and quality of new social networks in online communication
- Investigate best practice for participatory websites for children and young people
- Explore how to facilitate online creativity
- Carefully examine the extent and nature of actual harms associated with online risks
- Investigate how to best target safety messages at different audiences
- Assess the external threats to children's online privacy
- Explore strategies and effectiveness of parental regulation
- Continue tracking the balance of opportunities and risks

Summary of policy recommendations

It is hoped that the present findings provide a clear and careful picture of the nature and extent of online risks especially, as well as an account of the concerted attempts that parents and children are making to reduce or address these risks.

In our view, the risks do not merit a moral panic, and nor do they warrant seriously restricting children's internet use because this would be to deny them the many benefits of the internet. Indeed, there are real costs to lacking internet access or sufficient skills to use it.

However, the risks are nonetheless widespread, they are experienced by many children as worrying or problematic, and they do warrant serious attention and intervention by government, educators, industry and parents.

We offer a series of key recommendations to policy makers, internet service providers, teachers, parents and children:

- Recognise the complexity of 'access' when designing information and advice campaigns
- Direct children and young people towards valuable content
- Address the changing conditions of digital exclusion
- Improve levels of internet literacy
- Develop critical evaluation skills
- Develop online advice resources with the help of young people
- Facilitate the shift from just receiving to also creating content
- Rethink online participation from 'having your say' to 'being listened to'
- Continue efforts to prevent exposure to undesirable content
- Maintain internet safety awareness
- Encourage parental sharing in children's internet use
- Respect children's online privacy in the home
- Take care not to reduce young people's online opportunities
- Target guidance and regulation more carefully at different groups of children
- Design websites which encourage internet literacy
- Develop more and better child and youth portals

Overview of the 'UK Children Go Online' project

The 'internet generation'

Many UK households, especially those with children, now have access to the internet although, importantly, some do not. The growing significance of the internet in our lives raises many questions for social scientists, policy makers and the public – about access and inequalities, the nature and quality of use, the implications for education, family life and social relationships and the balance between online risks and opportunities.

As public discussion moves beyond the initial hyperbole of high hopes or moral panics about the potential of the internet, a fascinating picture is emerging of the diverse ways in which people are using this new technology. While providing only moderate support for claims of social changes associated with the internet, the emerging picture reveals the desires and pressures that influence how we are fitting the internet into our lives.

The growing research literature sets the scene for a shift from asking questions of access and diffusion to asking questions about use, especially about the depth and quality of internet use. And we need to know more about the ways in which this new technology is socially shaped and socially embedded within the meanings and practices of everyday life. As many studies make clear, it is important to pay careful attention to context and diversity when characterising 'internet use' among 'the public'.

The present report contributes to this emerging picture with a new and substantial body of findings on the ways in which children, young people and their parents are accessing and using the internet. Young people are often called 'the internet generation'. They are the first generation to grow up with the internet, being more likely to have domestic internet access than households without children. Indeed, today's youngest generation proudly proclaims itself to be the experts online. Moreover, it seems that many of their parents and teachers struggle to keep up, let alone to inform and guide children and young people's internet use.

So, how are children and young people accessing and using the internet? How do families differ in their responses to the internet? What does the internet mean to them? And most important, can we shed some light on the consequences of widespread internet use?

Research aims

An informed account of the nature of children and young people's internet access and use is crucial in order to counter the anxieties and confusion stimulated by media panics over the supposedly dramatic consequences of mass internet adoption. A clear, empirically sound assessment of current uses, skills and concerns is also essential if, in practice, the potential benefits of the internet are to be realised for the present and coming generations.

The research project *UK Children Go Online* (UKCGO) has conducted a thorough investigation of 9-19 year olds' use of the internet between 2003 and 2005. We have worked with girls and boys of different ages and socio-economic backgrounds across the UK in order to ask how the internet may be transforming – or may itself be shaped by – family life, peer networks and education.

The project combined qualitative interviews and observations with a major national in-home survey of children, young people and their parents (see below).[1] The aims were to:

1. Provide detailed, systematic survey data that documents the extent and nature of understandings, practices and contexts of internet use among 9-19 year olds.

2. Provide in-depth qualitative data that reveals children and young people's own perspectives on the emerging place of the internet in their lives.

3. Target original empirical research on key policy-relevant domains, integrating academic theory and research with new findings and analysis.

The research questions, and linked policy questions, are summarised in Table 1.

Policy focus

Across a range of policy domains, there is a sense of urgency in the debates, for an intelligent anticipation of future developments will aid the timely formulation of internet-related policy, products and practices, just as a misreading of the early signs may misguide or confuse matters. Hence, we hope the range of empirical findings summarised in this report makes a constructive contribution, providing much needed data derived from children and young people themselves on a nationwide basis.

The four areas prioritised in our research questions map onto distinct, but linked, areas of current policy development (see Table 1), each being central to the concerns of a range of stakeholders across the public and private sectors. Additionally, since the inception of the project, 'media literacy' or, specifically, 'internet literacy' has come to the fore in policy discussions. Defined broadly by Ofcom as 'the ability to access, understand and create communications in a variety of forms',[2] this theme intersects with each of our research questions. Particularly, internet literacy provides a framework for examining the emerging balance between online opportunities and risks.

In seeking to advance this and related agendas, we note that in policy debates, children and young people are regarded with some ambivalence, being seen both as 'the digital generation', pioneers in developing online competencies, yet also vulnerable, potentially at risk, and so requiring special protective measures. This report offers some support for both

Overview of the 'UK Children Go Online' project

Table 1: Research and policy questions

Four areas	Research questions	Policy-relevant questions
Access, inequalities and the digital divide	To what extent is internet access and use unequal? What are the key barriers to use? Is there a digital divide or continuum of digital in/exclusion for children and young people?	How should persistent inequalities in internet access and use be addressed? Does the internet introduce new forms of in/exclusion?
Undesirable forms of content and contact	What is the incidence of upsetting, worrying or intrusive experiences online? What risky practices do children and young people engage in? How successful are parents' and others' attempts at improving online safety?	Are internet safety messages received and implemented by children and parents? What areas of risk require further initiatives?
Education, informal learning and literacy	Are children as expert online as they seem and in what ways? How is children's online learning being supported and by whom? What kinds of new internet or media literacy (eg skills, trust, breadth of use) is being developed?	Is the link between educational policy and domestic internet use effective? Are there further issues that schools could address?
Communication, identity and participation	How far are online opportunities for self-expression, creativity and communication being taken up and by whom? Does this open up new possibilities for advice-seeking, participation or privacy?	Are the desired benefits of the internet forthcoming and widespread? What further efforts are required to broaden and deepen internet use?

views, thereby inviting a balanced approach to policy that acknowledges children's skills and pleasures as well as their needs and their limitations.

The report also points up the very real challenges faced by parents in attempting to make sense of this often-difficult new technology so as to manage their children's use of it. Hence, we argue that multiple stakeholders – educators, industry, consumer groups, content providers and regulators – must share the responsibility with parents in balancing the twin imperatives of maximising online opportunities and minimising online risks.[3]

Research context and design

In designing the *UK Children Go Online* project, we built on a fast-growing research literature conducted in the UK and beyond by researchers across the social sciences.[4] From this, it was clear that, although parents have been primarily motivated to provide internet access for their children for educational reasons, to 'keep up' or 'get ahead', children are themselves far more motivated by the entertainment and communication possibilities offered by the internet.

These and other findings provided us with an important steer towards a child-centred approach to research, for a key message is that adults and children often understand the internet very differently. Hence, one should be wary of inviting parents to speak for children for, as this report shows, they offer divergent accounts of online opportunities and risks and, interestingly, of domestic rules and regulations for internet use.

A child-centred approach invites children's own understandings of their daily lives. It regards children as active, motivated and imaginative (though not necessarily sophisticated) agents who shape the meanings and consequences of the 'new' through the lens of their established social practices. Whether information and communication technologies are incorporated into the ongoing stream of social life or whether they reorient or open up alternative trajectories, the perspective of their users plays a key role in mediating just how this occurs and with what consequences.[5]

However, the research also sought to recognise the subtle and not so subtle constraints which frame the choices and possibilities in children's lives. Through all phases of the research, we sought to work with children from diverse backgrounds in terms of socio-economic status, ethnicity, family status, geographic region, and so forth. The survey permitted a statistical analysis of the interrelations among the dimensions of internet use measured, in addition to the straightforward presentation of headline statistics. In reporting the research findings, conducted between 2003-05, we caution that 'answers' to questions of internet use are inevitably provisional because both the technology and its social contexts of use continue to change.

Overview of research methods and presentation of key findings

Research methods

Concretely, the UKCGO research design consisted of three phases from April 2003 to April 2005. (For methodological details on the survey and focus group samples, see the Appendix.)

1. **Qualitative research:** 14 focus group interviews with 9-19 year olds around the UK (summer 2003), nine family visits and in-home observations (2003-04), a children's online panel.

2. **Quantitative research:** A major national, in-home, 40 minute face to face survey of 1,511 9-19 year olds and 906 parents of the 9-17 year olds, using Random Location sampling across the UK, permitting generalisation to the UK population. The fieldwork was conducted via multi-media computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI) with children, and included a 'private' self-completion section for sensitive areas of questioning, plus a paper questionnaire completed by their parents. This was carried out between 12 January and 7 March 2004 by BMRB International.

3. **Qualitative research:** A follow-up on findings from the survey with 13 focus group interviews and observations in autumn 2004, together with a reconvening of the children's online panel.

Research with children, especially regarding aspects of their private lives, requires careful ethical considerations.[6] The project's ethics policy is available at www.children-go-online.net

Presentation of key findings

The main body of this report presents a summary of key findings from the project overall. In doing so, it integrates findings from a series of project reports. These contain more detailed analysis of children and their families in terms of age, gender, socio-economic status and other factors. This report then concludes by offering a series of policy recommendations and by identifying priorities for future research.

Related project reports: These are freely available at www.children-go-online.net (also see the Appendix).

- Report 1 – UK Children Go Online: Listening to young people's experiences, October 2003 (qualitative research, drawing on focus groups and individual interviews with children)
- Report 2 – UK Children Go Online: Surveying the experiences of young people and their parents, July 2004 (an overview of the key findings from the UKCGO survey)
- Report 3 – Active Participation or Just More Information? Young people's take up of opportunities to act and interact on the internet, October 2004 (findings for young people's interaction with websites and their civic/political participation on the internet, based on the UKCGO survey)
- Report 4 – Internet Literacy among Children and Young People: Findings from the UK Children Go Online project, February 2005 (findings focusing on young people's internet literacy and its relation to the take up of online opportunities and risks, based on the UKCGO survey)
- Report 5 – Inequalities and the Digital Divide in Children and Young People's Internet Use: Findings from the UK Children Go Online project, April 2005 (findings in relation to internet access, low users and the digital divide, based on the UKCGO survey)
- Report 6 – UK Children Go Online: Final report of key project findings, April 2005 (a summary of integrated project findings with main conclusions and policy recommendations)

Comparison with other surveys: As befits a global medium, the research effort to understand children's internet use is ongoing in many countries. Where appropriate, and while recognising that surveys vary in sampling and procedures, this report compares findings from the UK Children Go Online project to the following surveys (see Appendix for full details):

- Becta (2002). Young People and ICT 2002 (UK)
- Cyberspace Research Unit (2004). Emerging Trends amongst Primary School Children's Use of the Internet (UK)
- Eurobarometer (2004). Illegal and Harmful Content on the Internet (EU)
- Internet Advisory Board (2004). The Use of New Media by Children (Ireland)
- Ofcom (2004). The Communications Market 2004 (UK)
- Office for National Statistics (2004). Internet Access (UK)
- Oxford Internet Survey (2003). The Social Dynamics of the Internet (UK)
- Pew (2005). Protecting Teens Online (USA)
- Pew (2001). Teenage Life Online (USA)
- SAFT (2003). What do SAFT kids do online? (Northern Europe)
- USC Annenberg School Center for the Digital Future (2004). The Digital Future Report (USA)

Key findings on access to the internet

'My younger cousins, they're all under the age of eleven – and they're now coming into an age where the internet is all they've ever known. Where we, really, when we were young, we were still doing all the [outdoor] activities, and the internet wasn't really around. So we've got balance. But maybe in five or ten years time, that will change.' (Lorie, 17, from Essex)

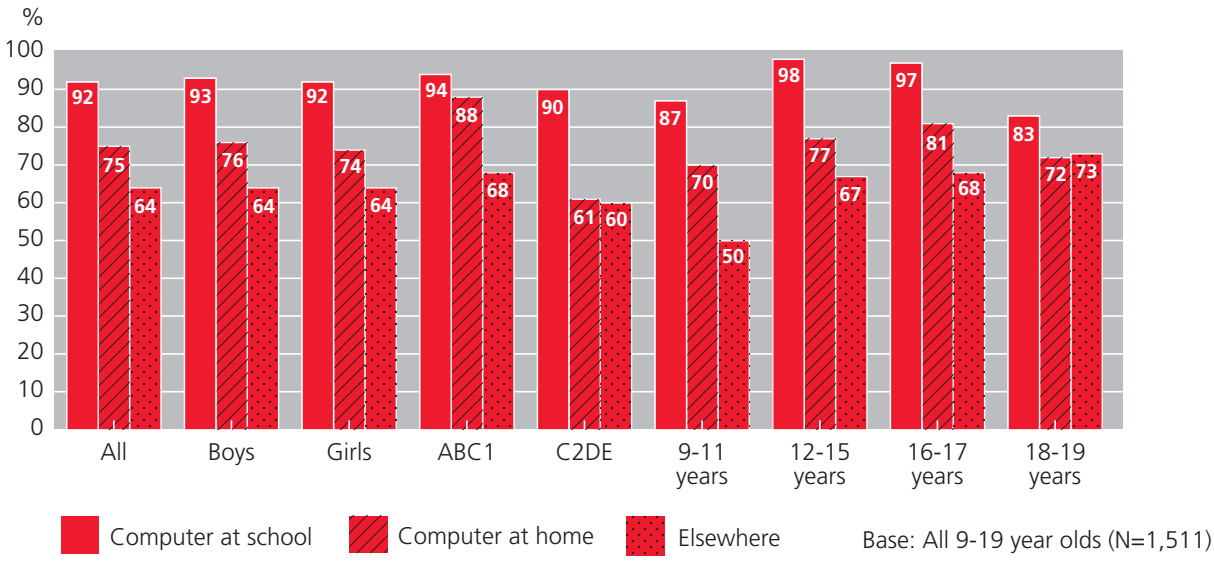
'If we didn't have the internet, we'd get everything we have on the internet somewhere else. And I don't think the internet is the solution to anything. And especially not education because there are too many distractions… I just think the internet can be an easy way of doing things.' (Marie, 16, from Essex)[7]

As the extent, nature and quality of internet access changes rapidly, the project asked which children have access to the internet, in which locations and using which delivery platforms. The results show that internet access and use is widespread among UK children and young people, being considerably higher than among adults and among the highest in Europe. However, significant inequalities persist especially in home access. Continuing changes in the nature and quality of access indicate fast-rising standards and expectations.[8]

Among all 9-19 year olds:

- **Home access is growing:** Three quarters (75%) have accessed the internet from a computer at home (see Figure 1). Currently, 74% have internet access via a computer, games console or digital television while one quarter of 9-19 year olds (23%) have never accessed the internet on a computer from home, and 29% currently lack such access.
- **School access is near universal:** 92% have accessed the internet at school (see Figure 1), and one quarter (24%) rely on this, having access at school but not at home. Two thirds (64%) have also used the internet elsewhere (someone else's house, public library etc).
- **Homes with children lead in gaining internet access:** Children and young people are now acquiring multiple computers plus broadband access to the internet: 36% have more than one computer at home, and 24% live in a household with broadband access.
- **Access platforms are diversifying:** 87% have a computer at home (71% with internet access), 62% have digital television (17% with internet access), 82% have a games console (8% with internet access), and 81% have their own mobile phone (38% with internet access, but this does not necessarily mean use). Further, those with internet access at home are also more likely to have these other technologies at home.
- **Socio-economic differences are sizeable:** 88% of middle class but only 61% of working class children have accessed the internet at home; 86% of children in areas of low deprivation in England have used the internet on a computer at home compared with 66% in areas of high deprivation.[9] The number of access points to the internet is also greater for children from middle class homes than from working class homes.
- **Many computers in private rooms, including bedrooms:** One fifth (19%) have internet access in their bedroom – 22% of boys versus 15% of girls, 21% middle class versus 16% working class, 10% of 9-11 year olds versus 26% of 16-17 year olds. Fewer than half the computers online at home are located in a public room, and four fifths (79%) of those with home access report mostly using the internet alone.

Figure 1: Which of these have you ever used to access the internet? By demographics



Key findings on access to the internet

Children lead in internet access. According to the **Office for National Statistics**, only 58% of UK adults (aged 16+) had used the internet by February 2004 (up from 54% in 2003 and 49% in 2002).

Similarly, the **Oxford Internet Survey** found most internet users among 14-22 year olds in full time education: 98% of UK individuals aged 14+ were internet users in Spring 2003, compared with 67% of people of working age up to 55 years and 22% of those retired (over 55). Most users accessed the internet from home (89%) but also at work (28%), school or college (13%), a friend's house (10%), via mobile access (6%), at libraries (5%) and internet cafés (3%).

Internet use for UK children is considerably higher than in many other countries in Europe. A 2003 **Eurobarometer** survey found that the European average for 12-15 year olds is 73% and for 16-17 year olds is 83%, with 34% using the internet at home and 31% at school.

While in the UK access at school is higher than at home, in the US 85% of 12-19 year olds had access at home and only 63% at school in 2003 according to the **Digital Future** survey, and 87% of 12-17 year olds were internet users in 2004 according to **Pew**.

Access figures have increased dramatically over the past few years. In 1997, the **Young People New Media** survey found that 53% of 6-17 year olds in the UK had a PC at home, 7% with internet access, and 19% had used the internet anywhere then.

In 2002, 58% of 5-18 year olds in the UK had access at home, 72% at school, and 84% had accessed the internet somewhere, according to **Becta**.

The **Internet Advisory Board** quotes 2004 figures for Ireland as high as 98% for use at home and as low as 33% for use at school among 10-14 year olds.

For ownership of new technologies, the UKCGO figures are broadly comparable with those obtained by **Becta's** UK survey of 5-18 year olds in 2002: 81% had a computer at home, 92% had a mobile phone, 77% had a games console, though only 21% had a WAP/3G phone.

(Full details of these surveys can be found in the Appendix.)

Priorities for future research

Keep up with technological and market developments in relation to access: Although teenagers increasingly have access to an internet-enabled mobile phone, few access the internet other than from a computer at present. Clearly, research on access and inequalities must keep pace with technological and market developments. How are patterns of access to the internet changing, and what difference does it make that young people can access the internet in different ways and from different locations, including from mobile devices?

Policy recommendations

Recognise the complexity of 'access' when designing information and advice campaigns: As children and young people access the internet in different places (home, school, elsewhere), including different locations within the home (public room, bedroom), it is crucial to recognise that these different contexts vary in their possibilities for adult supervision and filtering, use with peers or in private, speed of connection etc. Such variation must be recognised when designing information campaigns and advice to parents. As mobile devices become internet-enabled, the complexity of 'access' will increase, as will inequalities across socio-economic groups. While targeting the disadvantaged becomes more complex, the complexity of access also opens up new routes to draw in those who are digitally excluded.

More on this issue can be found in Report 2 – UK Children Go Online: Surveying the experiences of young people and their parents, July 2004.

Key findings on the nature of internet use

'I use it for like homework, emailing my cousin in Australia and keeping in touch with my friend in Cornwall.' ***(Linda, 13, from Derbyshire)***

'The best thing about the internet is downloading music, things like that, and MSN.'
(Ryan, 14, from Essex)

Prince: 'Because you get lots of information on the internet and things that in school, like, you are told to bring into your own words. It's really difficult to turn the information into your own words. It's definitely why people find it frustrating.'
Amir: 'And they get tempted to copy it... Copy and paste.'
(14-16 year old boys from London)

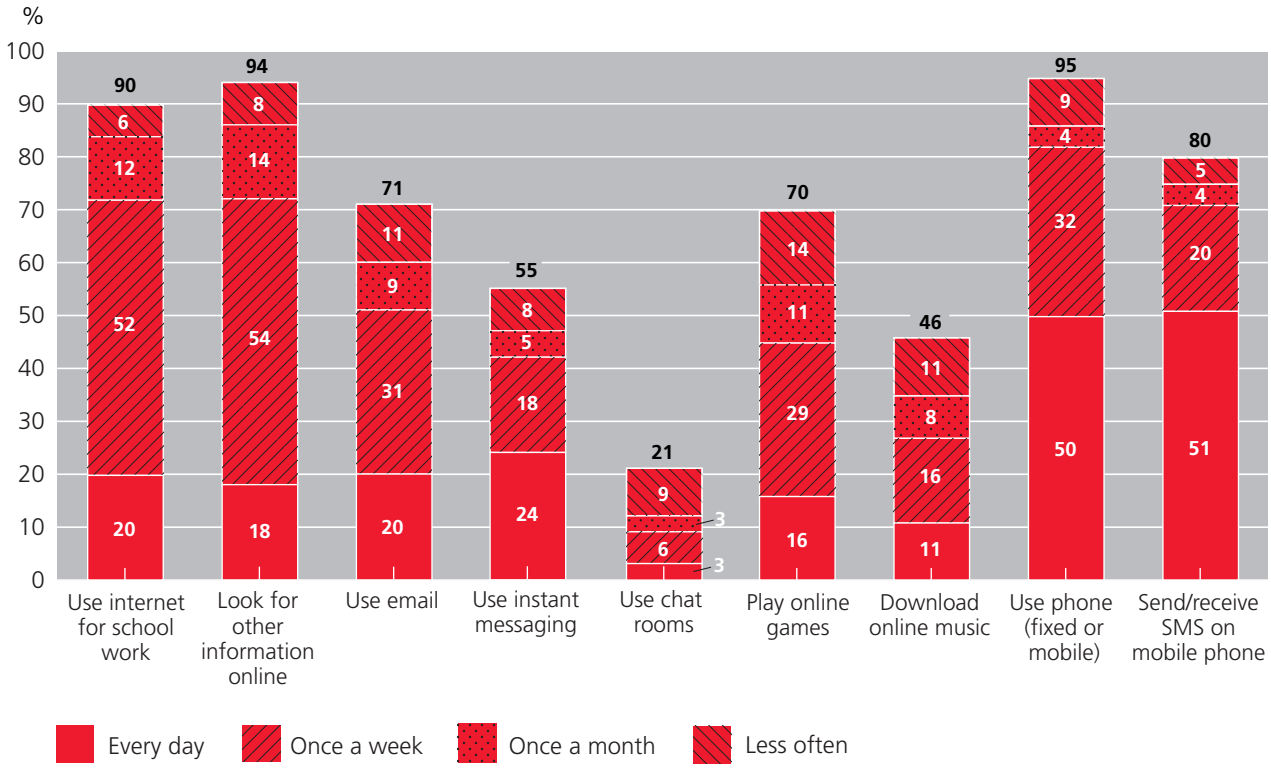
Nina: 'You don't like buy CDs from HMV anymore. You just get them off the internet or off one of your mates who copies CDs.'
Steve: 'They get paid enough anyway, them stars.'
(17 year olds from Manchester)

Now that access is commonplace, if not universal, attention is turning to charting the ways in which people use the internet. The research asked about 'internet use' in three ways – the frequency and amount of use, the location and social context of use and the nature of contents and services accessed. Drawing these together, we sought to chart young people's growing breadth and sophistication of internet use.[10]

Most young people use the internet frequently though often for moderate amounts of time, and half have been online for over four years. They go online for a wide range of purposes, not all of which are socially approved.

- **Most are daily or weekly users:** 9-19 year olds are mainly divided between daily users (41%) and weekly users (43%). Only 13% are occasional users, and just 3% count as non-users (compared with 22% of their parents).
- **Most online for less than an hour:** One fifth (19%) of 9-19 year olds spend about ten minutes per day online, half spend between about half an hour (25%) and one hour (23%) online, and a further fifth go online for between one (14%) and three hours (6%) each day. One in 20 (5%) spend more than three hours online on an average day.
- **More time spent watching TV or with the family:** Time spent online is still less than time spent watching television or with the family, but it is similar to that spent doing homework and playing computer games and

Figure 2: How often do you...?



Base: 9-19 year olds who use the internet at least once a week (N=1,257)

Key findings on the nature of internet use

Other surveys found more weekly users but similar preferences in online activities as the UKCGO survey.

In 2002, **Becta** found that 27% of 11-18 year olds in the UK were daily users, 47% were weekly users (once or twice a week), 17% were occasional users (once a month or less), and 9% were non-users.

The 2004 **Internet Advisory Board** survey shows only 23% of 10-14 year olds in Ireland using the internet daily and 62% weekly, with 74% going online for school projects, 59% for homework and 30% to play games.

In a European comparison in 2003 (**SAFT**), 66% of 9-16 year old boys used the internet to play games and 49% to download music, while the most popular activities for girls were email (58%) and using the internet for homework (43%). In Norway, Sweden and Ireland, 60% found downloading music acceptable, but only 4% thought the same about hacking.

In the US, 12-17 year old daily users used the internet mainly for email (99%) and instant messaging (74%) in 2000 (**Pew**). A further 73% had downloaded music, and 62% had used chat rooms. In 2003, 84% of 12-19 year old internet users went online to send/receive emails, 69% for instant messaging and 51% to play games (**Digital Future** survey).

(Full details of these surveys can be found in the Appendix.)

greater than time spent on the phone or reading. Yet when asked which medium they would most miss if it disappeared tomorrow, only 10% name the internet.

- **Most use it for searching and homework:** Among the 84% of 9-19 year olds who use the internet daily or weekly, 90% use it to do work for school or college, and 94% use it to get information for other things. Regarding communication, 71% use it to send and receive emails and 55% to send and receive instant messages but only 21% to use chat rooms. Regarding entertainment uses, 70% go online to play games and 46% to download music (see Figure 2). Further, 44% look for information on careers and further education, 40% look for products or shop online, and 26% read the news. However the internet is used less frequently than the phone (95%) or text messaging (80%).
- **Some use it for less-approved activities:** Among 12-19 year olds who go online daily or weekly, 21% admit to having copied something from the internet for a school project and handed it in as their own, 8% claim to have hacked into someone else's website or email, 5% have visited an online dating site, 4% have sent a message to make someone feel uncomfortable or threatened, and 2% admit to having gambled online.

Priorities for future research

Track shifting and diversifying contexts of use: It is vital that research continues to track the institutional and social influences on children's internet use. For example, do uses at home affect or undermine educational uses, and are educational uses increasing pressure on parents? How does the peer group act to promote or critique commercial contents? Are community locations of use important to young people and, if so, how should these be evaluated? Particularly, can internet access help compensate for disadvantages in the home, school or community?

Conduct an audit of online content aimed at children and young people: What is the range of online resources available to, and used by, children and young people? How far are these designed for children and young people or the general population, how many carry advertising/sponsorship, how hard is it to find the best sources? Where are the key gaps in content, recurrent problems of design or biases in take up and use? What are the implications for children and young people's searching skills and learning needs?

Policy recommendations

Direct children and young people towards valuable content: If such a research audit of online contents and uses were conducted, this could inform content provision in both commercial and public sectors. Some excellent resources are underused – better signposting and linking could direct children to these sites. Less satisfactory resources may be overused in the absence of high quality alternatives. More and more diverse content provision would be beneficial here.

More on this issue can be found in Report 2 – UK Children Go Online: Surveying the experiences of young people and their parents, July 2004.

Key findings on inequalities and the digital divide

'Some people can't afford it, which is just a sad truth.'
(Steve, 17, from Manchester)

'We should have time in our computer lesson if we want to find out something, like, the other kids have been talking about … I haven't got the internet at home. So if you want to go and see what they're all talking about, you can go on it then.' (Holly, 10, from Hertfordshire)

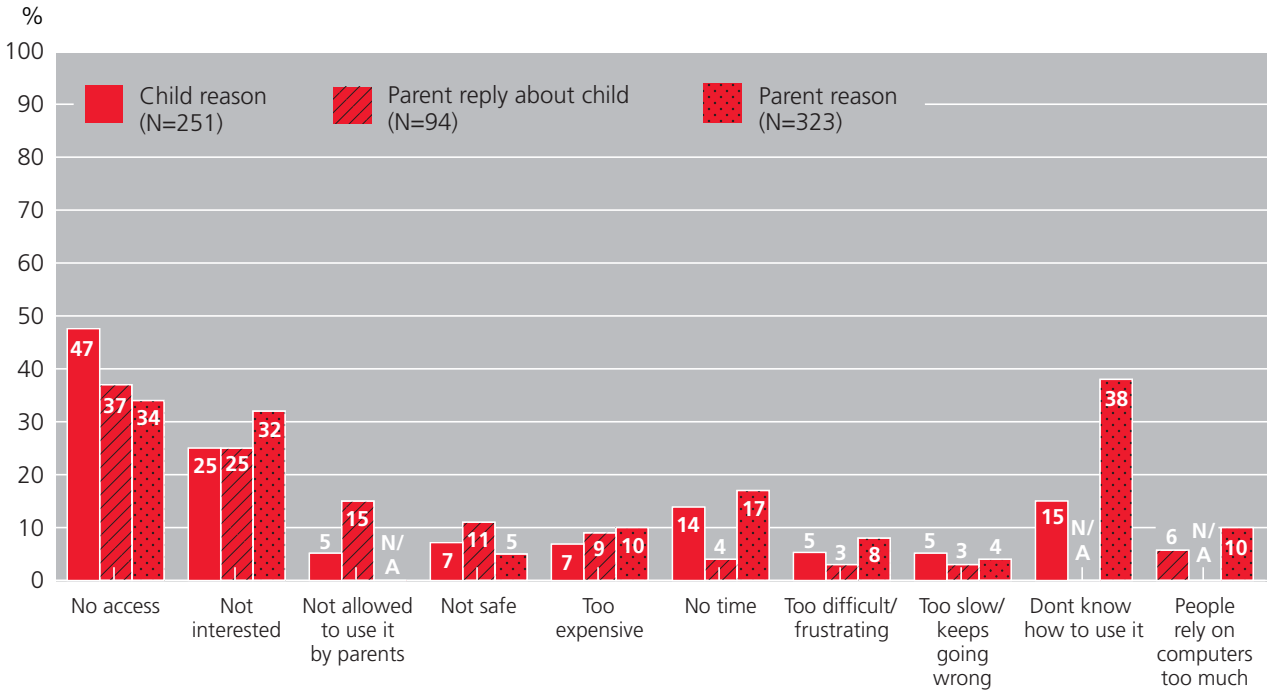
Given the considerable concerns over the digital divide, the research examined the extent and sources of inequalities in internet access and use. What are the key barriers to use? Is there a digital divide, or continuum of digital in/exclusion for children and young people?

Unlike for the adult population, very few children and young people are wholly excluded as 98% have used the internet at some time. But inequalities remain. A few children and young people have not used the internet. A minority use it only infrequently. And, even among frequent users, many make only narrow use of the internet. Lastly, there are some drop-outs as users cease to use or have access to the internet.

For children and young people, therefore, the digital divide has become a continuum of digital inclusion and exclusion, with the locus of inequality shifting from technology access (haves and have-nots) to quality of use (as assessed by time use, skills and range of online activities).[11]

- **A continuum in quality of use:** One in six (16%) 9-19 year olds make low levels or even no use of the Internet, and even among more frequent users, use is often narrow. For example, among those who go online at least once a week, half (51%) concentrate their use on fewer than five different websites.
- **Socio-economic status continues to matter:** Those of higher socio-economic status have more and better internet access than those from lower status homes. They are also more likely to have a broadband connection and access the internet from a greater number of locations. Further, middle class teenagers, those with home access and those who have spent more years online tend to use the internet more often, spend more time online per day and, consequently, have greater online skills and self-efficacy.[12]
- **Other enablers of internet use:** The oldest (18-19 years) and the youngest (9-11 years) age groups, and children and young people living in the North of England, are more at risk of exclusion. Further, children and young people with a disability are slightly more likely to be low users of the internet (14% of occasional and non-users have a disability vs 9% of daily and weekly users). These factors all result in some young people benefiting from a wider breadth of online opportunities than others.
- **Lack of interest is only part of the story:** Access and expertise remain significant barriers – 47% of occasional and non-users say that they lack access, 25% are not interested, 15% say they don't know how to use the internet, and 14% lack the time to use it (see Figure 3). For those that have no access or have lost it, this is the main reason for not using the internet (or not using it more frequently). For those that have access and don't use the internet, the main reasons are lack

Figure 3: Reasons given for occasional/non-use of the internet (Multiple response)



Base: 9-19 year old occasional and non-users (N=251); Parents of 9-17 year old occasional and non-users (N=94); Occasional and non user parents of 9-17 year olds (N=323)

Key findings on inequalities and the digital divide

In the European **SAFT** 2003 survey, 3% of 9-16 year olds said they never used the internet, a similar proportion to those identified in the UKCGO survey.

In the US similarly, 97% of 12-18 year olds were internet users in 2003 (compared with 76% for the whole US population) according to the **Digital Future** survey. Main reasons for non-use (among the young and adult population) included lack of access (40% of non-users and 43% of drop-outs say this), followed by a lack of interest (24% of non-users, 7% of drop-outs) and not knowing how to use it (18% of non-users). The survey also found that the longer people had been online, the less television they watched. According to the **Pew** 2004 survey, of the 13% of 12-17 year old Americans not using the internet, about one in ten said that safety issues, bad experiences or parental restrictions keep them from going online.

According to **Ofcom**, over a third of the UK adult population did not use the internet in 2003. This was mainly due to lack of interest although some stated costs as a barrier: 37% of those without internet access at home saw no need for having the internet, 19% weren't interested in the content, 13% weren't interested in new technology, and 15% thought that PCs and another 15% that internet usage costs were too expensive.

(Full details of these surveys can be found in the Appendix.)

of interest, not having enough time and restrictions by parents. Daily and weekly internet users also spend more time on activities, such as doing homework, playing computer games, talking on the phone, going out and seeing friends, whereas occasional and non-users spend more time watching television.

- **Parents' experience of the internet matters:** Daily and weekly users have parents who also use the internet more often and are more expert. These parents consider their children more advanced in using the internet and trust them more to know what they are doing online. By comparison with the parents of low and non-users, they also consider the media generally – and the internet in particular – as more beneficial for their children.

- **Ethnic minorities not more excluded:** Children and young people from an Asian or mixed race background are more likely to be daily online users than other ethnic groups. Children and young people from the black community are more likely to use the internet only on a weekly basis. However, those from a white background are equally divided between daily and weekly users, and they also include the largest percentage of occasional and non-users. There are no significant differences between children and young people who speak English as a first or subsequent language.

Priorities for future research

Critically examine causes and consequences of exclusion: Although most children and young people are now internet users, a few are not, a few drop out, and a sizeable minority use the internet only occasionally. What are the causes and consequences, and how are the trends changing? What does their avowed 'lack of interest' mean? Will non or low access continue to be socio-economically stratified? Targeted research is needed to examine minority groups in more depth – by ethnicity, disability, and so forth.

Policy recommendation

Address the changing conditions of digital exclusion: Despite basic internet access becoming more widespread, a few children remain digitally excluded, and rather more use the internet only occasionally. Further, even among frequent users, many make narrow use of the internet, therefore not benefiting from the many online opportunities. While in part this is a matter of choice, for the internet is not an 'unqualified good', the clear association between socio-economic status and indicators of access and use suggests that the social and economic sources of exclusion require concerted attention if the benefits of the internet are to be fairly spread.

More on this issue can be found in Report 5 – Inequalities and the Digital Divide in Children and Young People's Internet Use: Findings from the UK Children Go Online project, April 2005, and Report 2 – UK Children Go Online: Surveying the experiences of young people and their parents, July 2004.

Key findings on education, learning and literacy

'My dad hasn't even got a clue. Can't even work the mouse... So I have to go on the internet for him.'
(Nina, 17, from Manchester)

'I'm probably the expert in my house, but not that big because my dad's... starting to catch up with me.'
(Steve, 17, from Manchester)

'I don't find it hard to use a computer because I got into it quickly. You learn quick because it's a very fun thing to do.' ***(Amir, 15, from London)***

'Doing research, it's easier with books than on the internet... There's so much on the internet – what you want to find is really hard to find.'
(Abdul, 17, from Essex)

'It's like you don't know who's doing what, whose website it is, who wants what, who wants you to learn what. So you don't know who's put what information there.' ***(Faruq, 15, from London)***

The research asked whether children are as expert online as they seem and in what ways. Also, how is children's online learning being supported and by whom? What kinds of new internet or media literacy (eg skills, trust, breadth of use) is being developed?

There are clear signs that the internet is becoming central to the learning experience, with 90% of 9-19 year old weekly users going online for school work and with 60% of pupils regarding the internet as the most useful tool for getting information for homework. Children and young people are also gaining in internet literacy, but such gains are both uneven and unequal.[13]

- **Many have not received lessons on how to use the internet:** Despite the stress laid on ICT in education policy, nearly one third (30%) of pupils report having received no lessons at all on using the internet, although most have been taught something: 23% report having received 'a lot' of lessons, 28% 'some' and 19% 'just one or two'.

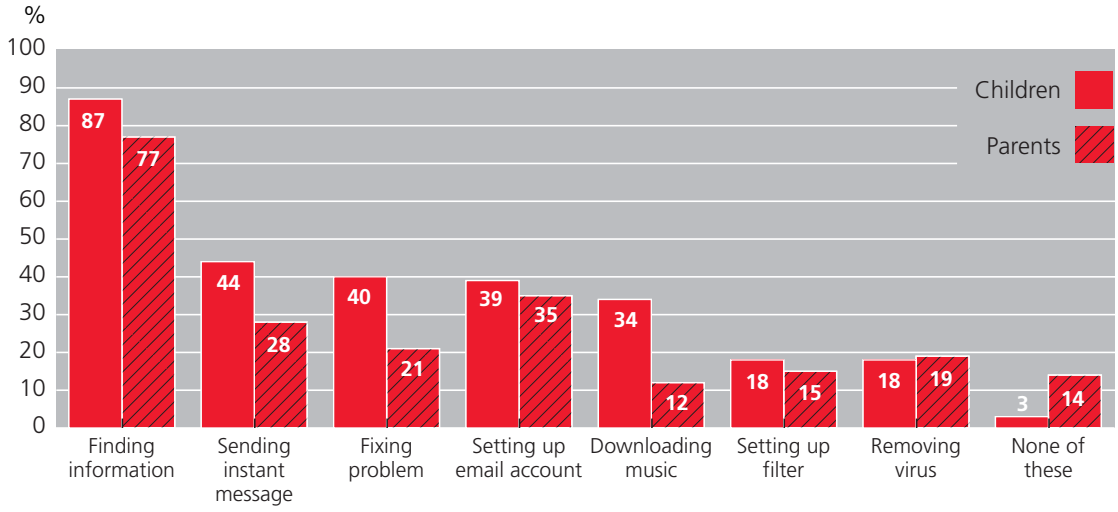
- **Skills gap between parents and children:** Children usually consider themselves more expert than their parents, gaining in social status within the family as a result. Among daily or weekly internet users, 19% of parents describe themselves as beginners compared with only 7% of children, and only 16% of parents consider themselves advanced compared with 32% of children. While most parents and children are confident in their searching skills, among parents only one in three (35%) know how to set up an email account, and only a fifth or fewer are able to set up a filter (15%), remove a virus (19%), download music (12%) or fix a problem (21%) (see Figure 4).

- **Children lack key skills in evaluating online content:** Four in ten (38%) pupils aged 9-19 trust most of the information on the internet, half (49%) trust some of it, and only one in ten (10%) are sceptical about much information online. Only 33% of 9-19 year olds who go online at least once a week say that they have been told how to judge the reliability of online information, and among parents of 9-17 year olds, only 41% are confident that their child has learned how to judge the reliability of online information.

- **Beginners are more distrustful of the internet:** Young people who rate themselves as beginners in using the internet lack critical skills and are more distrustful towards internet content than those who call themselves experts. It seems that expert users are more skilled in finding their way to material they feel they can trust, for example by checking information across several sites.

Thus, there is considerable scope for increasing the internet related skills and literacy of both children and their parents. Many children are using the internet without skills in critical

Figure 4: Which of the following are you good at? (Multiple response)



Base: 9-19 year olds who use the internet at least once a week (N=1,257); Parents who have ever used the internet (N=629)

Key findings on education, learning and literacy

According to **Becta** in 2002, among 5-18 year olds boys were more likely than girls to say they have advanced skills (11% of boys in Key Stage 1, 31% in Key Stage 2 vs 9% of girls in Key Stage 1, 24% in Key Stage 2).[14] Girls were more likely to think of themselves as intermediate. Similar to UKCGO findings, 76% of those who were aware of safety issues had received some form of guidance.

However, primary school children are unlikely to have received lessons on online safety. The **Cyberspace Research Unit** found that only 2% of 8-11 year olds had such training in 2003.

In the US, the 2002 **Pew** survey shows that 11-19 year olds had fewer years of online experience than their parents: 21% of children had used the internet for three or more years compared with 28% of parents. However, similar to UKCGO findings, children claim to know more about the internet than parents: 64% said they knew more, 32% said parents knew more. According to the 2003 **Digital Future** survey, 40% of 12-19 year olds thought that the information on the internet is somewhat reliable.

As in the UKCGO survey, the **Oxford Internet Survey** also found that users are more trusting of online content than non-users. Among UK adults in 2003, 7% of broadband users and 7% of narrowband users thought that the information on the internet was unreliable, compared with 13% of past users and 16% of non-users.

(Full details of these surveys can be found in the Appendix.)

evaluation, and many parents lack the skills to guide and support their children's internet use.

Priorities for future research

Examine (and explore measurement of) future developments of online literacy: It is important to examine how children and young people's critical literacy skills develop as they become experienced in a greater range of types of online content. How do they make decisions of trust and reliability, which are the greater challenges (poor quality content, race hate material, politically biased content, commercially-motivated content), and what are the costs and consequences of lack of literacy? Do distinctions learned in relation to broadcast or print media serve them here? How is trust more generally (eg of institutions, other media) related to online trust? None of these questions are easy to address empirically, necessitating attention also to methodology and measurement issues.

Policy recommendations

Improve levels of internet literacy: Some pupils are missing out on internet training, or missing out on some safety messages, and many lack key online skills, notably searching skills. A continuing programme of internet literacy initiatives, covering use in school, home and elsewhere, is vital. Moreover, although adults tend to rely on self-teaching, local 'experts' and work place experience, for children and young people it is teachers and parents who are the primary supports for learning. Given the skills gap between children and parents, schools represent, potentially, the fairest and most appropriate location for such literacy training. This raises key issues of teacher training and curriculum content.

Develop critical evaluation skills: Although it is important to value children and young people's expertise, their internet literacy requires further support and development. This must include and go beyond technical and searching skills to encompass a critical awareness of the quality, purpose and reliability of websites. This is partly a matter of educational curricula and partly a question of legibility and transparency in website design. The youngest and oldest pupils especially lack guidance on online safety, searching and reliability of websites. And, since internet-literate parents have internet-literate children, literacy initiatives should be targeted also at parents.

More on this issue can be found in Report 4 – Internet Literacy among Children and Young People: Findings from the UK Children Go Online project, February 2005, and Report 2 – UK Children Go Online: Surveying the experiences of young people and their parents, July 2004.

Key findings on communication

'Even if you've just seen them at school like, it'll be like you're texting them or talking to them on the phone or on MSN.' ***(Kim, 15, from Essex)***

'I once dumped my old girlfriend by email... Well, it was cowardly really. I couldn't say it face-to-face.' ***(Cameron, 13, from Derbyshire)***

'I have friends in other countries who use MSN. I can send them an email every day rather than phoning them up and running up a huge phone bill.' ***(Lorie, 17, from Essex)***

'If you're talking to someone on the internet who's a friend, you actually talk to them saying stuff, but feelings and everything are real... but if you're talking to someone you haven't met, how do you know if what they're telling you is the truth?' ***(Mark, 17, from Essex)***

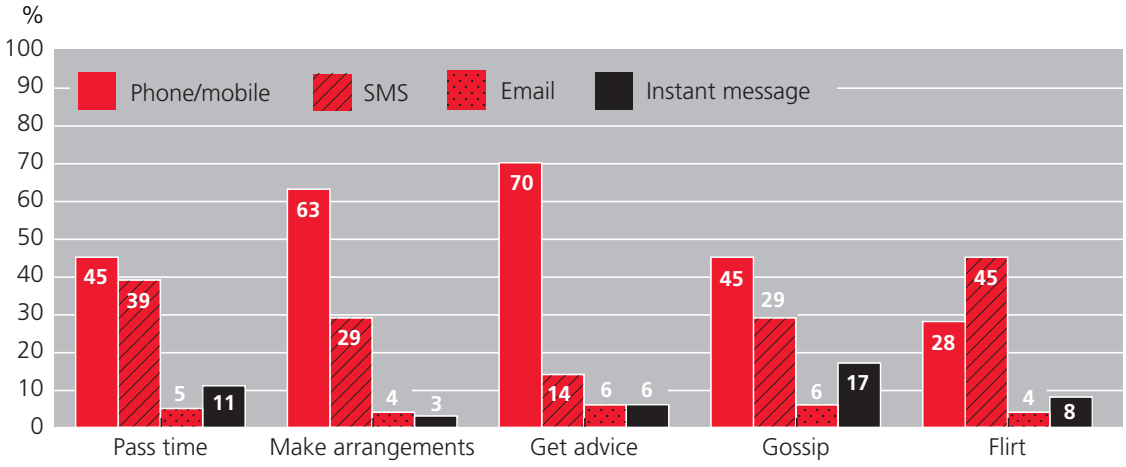
'I have had a very close relationship with a young lady over the internet for about a year.' ***(Oliver, 17, from Kent)***

Key questions concern how far online opportunities for communication are being taken up and by which young people. Does this open up new possibilities for advice-seeking or privacy? The research showed that enthusiasm for online communication and, especially, mobile communication, is considerable. Significantly, rather than seeing face to face communication as automatically superior, as do many adults, young people instead evaluate the different forms of communication available to them according to distinct communicative needs.

Among 9-19 year olds who use the internet at least once a week:

- **The mobile phone is the preferred method of communication:** Whether for passing time, making arrangements, getting advice, gossiping or flirting, the phone and text messaging are preferred over emailing or instant messaging (IM), and email or instant messaging are now much preferred to chat rooms (see Figure 5).[15]
- **Most online communication is with local friends:** While the conversational content is often mundane, being in constant contact with friends is highly valued, thus fostering offline relationships and broadening social circles by permitting cost-free contact with friends and relatives living further away and through the construction of extensive buddy lists of 'friends of friends'.
- **Little interest in contacting strangers:** While online communication is little used as an escape from real life, and many are wary about talking to strangers online, some do contact people that they have not met face to face, this being mainly among the 21% who visit chat rooms. Generally, however, chatting to unknown others around the world has little appeal.
- **Talking online is less satisfying but has its advantages:** Half (53%) of email, IM and chat users think that talking to people on the internet is less satisfying as talking to them in real life. A quarter of children and young people identify significant advantages to online communication in terms of privacy (25%), confidence (25%) and intimacy (22%).
- **Teens seeking advice online:** A quarter (25%) of 12-19 year olds who use the internet at least weekly say they go online to get advice, this being more common among older teens and, interestingly, boys. However, some worry about the reliability and privacy of online advice-seeking.

Figure 5: If you want to get in touch with a friend who wasn't with you in order to ..., which one of these methods would you use?



Base: All 12-19 year olds (N=975)

Key findings on communication

In the US, 45% of 12-19 year olds said their online use had increased communication with their family (40% said it did not) according to the **Digital Future** survey in 2003. 54% thought it had increased the number of people they stay in touch with. However, the majority agreed that time spent with family (84%) and friends (80%) had remained the same.

According to **Pew** in 2000, 64% of 12-17 US teens thought that the internet keeps them from spending time with their family, 48% said they use it to improve relationships with friends, and 32% thought it helps make new friends. Further, 37% had used instant messaging to say something they wouldn't have said in person, and 18% had looked for sensitive information and advice online.

(Full details of these surveys can be found in the Appendix.)

Priorities for future research

Examine the nature and quality of new social networks in online communication: There is a growing body of research examining the implications of diverse forms of communication for children and young people's social networks and social identity. As technologies develop (eg the shift from chatrooms to instant messaging, the growth of mobile communications), and as social practices evolve (peer norms, parenting rules etc), research must continue to examine these implications. Key issues concern changes in the composition of peer networks as 'friends of friends' and 'buddy lists' act to expand these networks in new ways.

Policy recommendations

Develop online advice resources with the help of young people: The intimacy and privacy afforded by mobile and online communication, much valued by young people, justifies efforts to provide personal advice online. Since at present, one quarter of teens – especially boys – go online for advice, it is likely that there are as yet untapped needs here, and provision should be expanded. Our qualitative research suggests this could valuably be developed in cooperation with young people themselves.

More on this can be found in Report 2 – UK Children Go Online: Surveying the experiences of young people and their parents, July 2004.

Key findings on participation

'I'm not in the least bit interested in politics and think it extremely boring.' (Oliver, 17, from Kent)

'At the end of the day, you're going to look at what you're interested in. And if you haven't got an interest in politics, you're not going to get one from having the internet.' (Lorie, 17, from Essex)

'Young people's opinions are not at all valued, especially not by politicians.' (Anne, 15, from Essex)

'You can email your MP, but is he going to listen?' (Hazel, 17, from Essex)

'I get personal mails from celebrities. My favourite celebrities. That's ok! ... I'm not really interested in [politics] exactly. They all chat crap, so...' (Padma, 15, from London)

'I really don't understand how people could have said that they aren't interested in politics! What about the 'Don't attack Iraq' rallies and marches? There was a massive under-18 turn out!' (Milly, 15, from Essex)

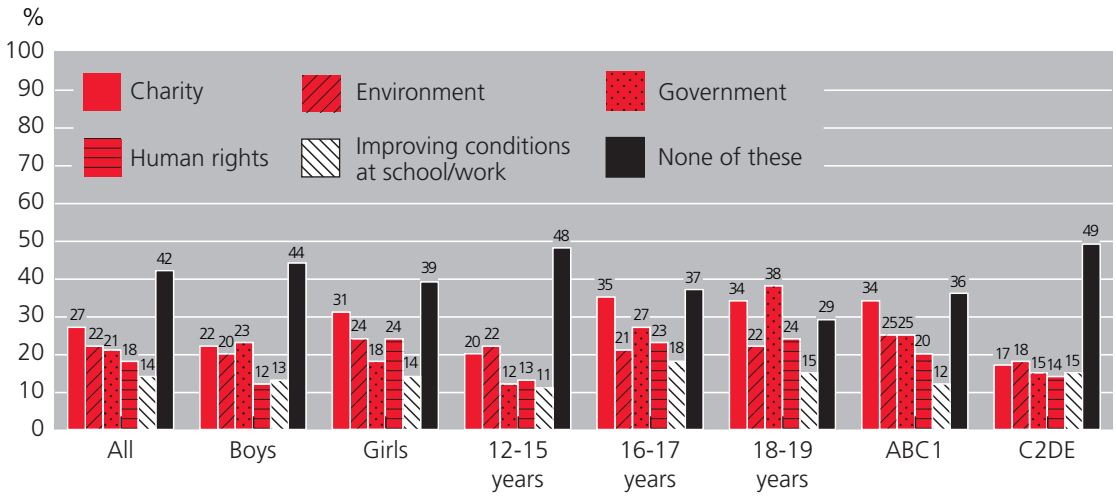
'There's a Greenpeace website which had a petition about like global warming and stuff and we should do something about it. And I signed that just because it's easy, and you might as well put your name down.' (Poppy, 16, from London)

Key questions addressed here are: how far are online opportunities for self-expression, creativity and participation being taken up and by which young people? Further, does interacting with websites or creating content and contributing to online communities encourage young people to become more engaged specifically in civic and political issues online?[16]

The research identified only modest ways in which the internet encourages creativity, interactivity and civic participation. More evident were the ways in which traditional factors – age, gender and social background – play a part in how much children are (or more significantly are not) using the internet to interact with online content, voice their opinions on the internet or take part in civic and political activities.

- **Producing as well as receiving content:** 44% of 9-19 year old weekly users have completed a quiz online, 25% have sent an email or text message to a website, 22% have voted for something online, 17% have sent pictures or stories to a website, 17% have contributed to a message board, and 8% have filled in a form. Most active of all, 34% have set up their own website, though not all have managed to maintain this online.[17] Further, 9% have offered advice to others while 8% have signed a petition.
- **Some are interested in civic issues:** 54% of 12-19 year olds who use the internet at least weekly have sought out sites concerned with political or civic issues, although two fifths (42%) are not interested (see Figure 6). However, only one in three (35%) of those who have visited such sites responded or contributed to them in any way.[18]
- **Age, gender and social grade make a difference:** Girls, older and middle class teens visit a broader range of civic and political sites. For example, 31% of girls have visited a charity site compared with 22% of boys, 35% of 16-19 year olds compared with 20% of 12-15 year olds and twice as many middle class (34%) as working class teens (17%).
- **Participation is short-lived:** These levels of participation suggest that young people are enthusiastic about interacting with the internet but that they do not follow through. For example, they take up only a few opportunities to interact, produce content or visit civic sites. Particularly striking is the finding that there is only a weak relation between responding to interactive opportunities (eg on entertainment sites) and participating in civic activities online. Further, the survey

Figure 6: Have you ever visited websites about…? By demographics (Multiple response)



Base: 12-19 year olds who use the internet at least once a week (N=975)

Key findings on participation

According to a 2002 survey by the **University of Salford**, young people are far more likely to participate online than take part in more traditional forms of politics. While only 10% of 15-24 year olds in the UK took part in any form of political activity offline, three times as many did something political on the internet.

In the US, 40% of 12-17 year olds visited websites of clubs, and 38% said they go online to express their opinion according to **Pew** in 2000. In 2003, the **Digital Future** survey found that 12% of 12-19 year olds used message boards.

(Full details of these surveys can be found in the Appendix.)

results suggest that increased expertise online leads to more interaction but not more civic interests.

- **Disengaged youth 'on the wrong side' of the digital divide:** Looking closely at the different ways young people participate, we found a group of young online users who are most disengaged and neither interact with websites nor visit civic and political sites. These young people find themselves 'on the wrong side' of the digital divide – less likely to have home access and made up of lower, less experienced and less expert internet users.

Priorities for future research

Investigate best practice for participatory websites for children and young people: Here, questions include – what are the best practice lessons of participatory websites for children, and how are the most activist or political young people using the internet? What lies behind many children's lack of apparent interest in politics, and how can the internet stimulate this? Is the internet important here, or are other media or non-media means of communication still paramount?

Explore how to facilitate online creativity: Possibly by learning from initiatives in relation to other media, research should examine in what ways children are being creative online and, especially, how this can be further facilitated. What kinds of texts do they produce or co-produce, what kinds of communities are they creating, what are the emerging aesthetic, design and social features of these creations, and in what ways, if at all, do they challenge adult expectations or values? Does creativity facilitate other dimensions of internet literacy?

Policy recommendations

Facilitate the shift from just receiving to creating content: Since few children and young people seem as yet to be sufficiently inspired or informed to create and, crucially, maintain their own internet content, the challenge remains to provide them with accessible and stimulating opportunities for content creation. This might be targeted at the younger children, for the 9-11 year olds greatly enjoy creative activities and are keen to make online content but feel they lack the skills. The challenge to educators remains to present online content creation in an interesting and meaningful way since the danger exists that it will be perceived as just 'another boring school project' by students. Some of the schools we visited for this project have successfully put this into practice in the form of after-school 'web clubs', giving the students a further incentive to gain and develop such skills by entering web design competitions for schools and young people.

Rethink online participation from 'having your say' to 'being listened to': Children and young people's cynicism or lack of interest in civic or political participation online poses a challenge to policy makers especially. Many young people are cynical towards the offer to have their say as they feel their contributions are not taken seriously and they are not listened to. Since many have 'tested the water' but taken few steps beyond this, the task is to encourage more exploration and contribution from them. Possible strategies include designing links from popular to civic sites (especially since the former are often designed to be 'sticky'), improving the 'dull' appearance of civic and political sites especially behind the home page and, most important, developing a more genuinely interactive environment in which young people's contributions are directly responded to in such a way that their efforts at participation can be sustained and experienced as rewarding.

More on this issue can be found in Report 3 – Active Participation or Just More Information? Young people's take up of opportunities to act and interact on the internet, October 2004, and Report 2 – UK Children Go Online: Surveying the experiences of young people and their parents, July 2004.

Key findings on the risks of undesirable content

'Yeah, these boys, they just go onto the internet, they download it [porn], they put it on as screensaver… It's just disgusting.' *(Tanya, 15, from London)*

'The internet is just like life as I see it, but just easier. So if these 13 or 14 year olds want to find stuff, they're going to find it in real life or on the internet.' *(Lorie, 17, from Essex)*

'Once you're into your teenage years, you've got used to the idea that people have sex. It's not really that scary any more.' *(Milly, 15, from Essex)*

'I don't think there is realistically any way it [porn] can be censored completely. So I think, yeah, you just have to try and avoid it as best as possible.' *(Scott, 17, from Essex)*

'It's just what teenagers do, I mean, it's only hormones. Some people deal with it, some people don't. Some people I know, they go on it because – some people just have fun... I just find it's a good experience!' *(Amir, 15, from London)*

'I think [spam] is evil. I don't know where they find my email from, but every day I'll get all this stuff about starting your own business, getting a degree.' *(Amir, 15, from London)*

'My mum kept getting sent viruses, you know, where it says like they're pretending to know you, so you open it, and it gives your computer a virus.' *(Nina, 17, from Manchester)*

'What annoys me is when you get into something like 'Open this website, it's a good website'… You open it, it's something highly illegal.' *(Stuart, 17, from Manchester)*

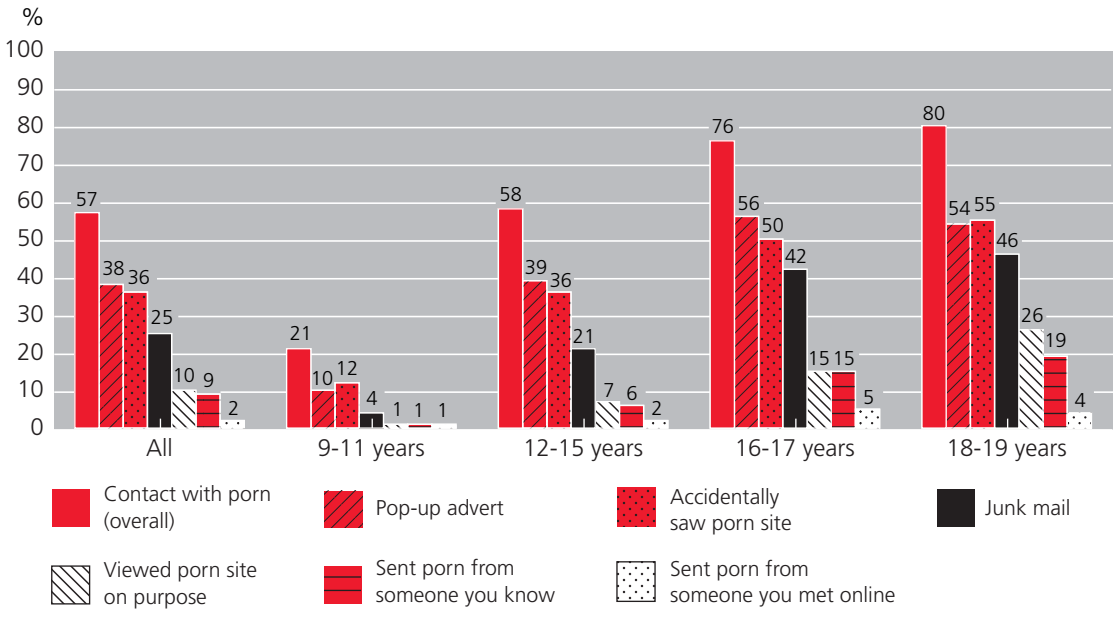
Recognising public concern over the inappropriateness of some internet contents for children and young people, the research sought to examine exposure to several kinds of unwanted or inappropriate content (pornography, spam, advertising and violent/racist content). These questions, as for those concerning online contacts, were asked in the private, self-completion section of the survey.

Taking a lead from discussions with children and parents, the research focused mainly on online pornography.[19] Recognising that exposure to porn could be deliberate or accidental, the research pursued the incidence, responses to and consequences of such exposure. Coming into contact with pornography is, the UKCGO survey shows, a commonplace but often unwelcome experience for children and young people.[20]

Among 9-19 year olds who go online at least once a week:

- **More than half have seen pornography online:** Nearly six in ten (57%) have come into contact with online pornography. However, only 16% of parents think that their child has seen pornography on the internet.
- **Most porn is viewed unintentionally:** 38% have seen a pornographic pop-up advert while doing something else, 36% have accidentally found themselves on a pornographic website when looking for something else, 25% have received pornographic junk mail by email or instant messaging, 10% have visited a pornographic website on

Figure 7: Have seen pornography on the internet by age (Multiple response)



Base: 9-19 year olds who use the internet at least once a week (N=1,257)

Key findings on the risks of undesirable content

Previous surveys have suggested cause for concern. A Canadian survey of parents by the **Media Awareness Network** suggested in 2000 that one in five children had found undesirable sexual material online. The American **Kaiser Family Foundation** 2000 survey found that one in three 10-17 year olds had seen pornography online, and 12% of 12-19 year olds admitted to looking at sexual content in the US 2003 **Digital Future** survey.

In the UK, the **Kids.net** survey found that in 2000, up to a quarter of children aged 7-16 may had been upset by online content and that few reported this to an adult.

According the **Cyberspace Research Unit** in 2003, 5% of 8-11 year olds in the UK admitted to accessing porn sites often, 22% sometimes, and 73% said they never did this.

In 2003, the European **SAFT** survey found that between a quarter and a third of 9-16 year olds had accidentally seen violent, offensive, sexual or pornographic content in the previous year: 12% had accidentally ended up on a pornographic website (20% of 13-16 year olds, 19% of boys), though 9% had visited such sites on purpose (16% of 13-16 year olds, 16% of boys). While girls aged 9-12 were mostly upset by it and wished they had never seen it, boys aged 13-16 said they did not think too much about it or thought it was funny.

(Full details of these surveys can be found in the Appendix.)

purpose, 9% have been sent pornography from someone they know, and 2% have been sent pornography from someone they met online (see Figure 7).

- **More porn on the internet than in other media:** Among teens (12-19 years), 68% claim to have seen pornography on the internet, 20% saying 'many times'. Moreover, 53% of parents consider (and children agree) that the internet is more likely to expose children to pornography than are television, video or magazines.

- **Mixed responses to online porn:** When young people encounter pornography on the internet, half (54%) claim not to be bothered by it, but a significant minority (14%) do not like it, and one quarter (28%) of 9-15 year olds who have seen porn say they were disgusted. Half (56%) of those who encounter online pornography leave the site as quickly as they can while the others say they look at it (31%), tell a friend (7%), parent or teacher (6%), click on the links (7%) or return to it later (5%).

- **Too young to have seen it:** Interestingly, nearly half (45%) of 18-19 year old internet users who have seen any pornography (online or offline) now think they were too young to have seen it when they first did.

- **Other unwanted content:** 44% worry about 'getting a virus', though only one in five of children and parents say they know how to remove it from their computer. Further, 22% have accidentally ended up on a site with violent or gruesome pictures (12% on purpose) and 9% on a site that is hostile or hateful to a group of people (2% on purpose). This is more common among frequent internet users.

- **Some are not bothered, some are disgusted:** As with online porn, most of those who have seen violent or hateful content claim not to think about it too much (48%), but a significant minority is disgusted (27%) or didn't like it (16%). When encountering such material almost half look the site and then leave (46%) while others leave immediately (37%), tell a friend (13%), click on some of the links (9%) or return to the site later (9%).

- **Age matters:** In general, younger children (9-11 years) are less likely to have encountered undesirable content (as in Figure 7), but they tend to be more upset by it when they do see it.

Priorities for future research

Carefully examine the extent and nature of actual harms associated with online risks: Unwanted or undesirable content varies considerably, from the mildly distasteful to hard core or illegal material. Acknowledging the ethical issues involved in researching this with children, the consequences of exposure to unwanted or inappropriate content remain a key research gap. Little is known of how children and young people respond to exposure to different kinds or levels of content or, especially, whether or when this has adverse consequences for their sexual or personal development.

Policy recommendations

Continue efforts to prevent exposure to undesirable content: Parents and children are clear that pornography and other forms of undesirable content are more available online than via other media. Most exposure is accidental and much is unwelcome, with some being disturbing or upsetting, particularly when encountered in unexpected circumstances (eg when doing homework, when in school or with younger siblings). Continued efforts are required to seek to prevent accidental and unwanted exposure. Efforts are also required to increase the likelihood that children will tell an adult if something has upset them.

More on this issue can be found in Report 2 – UK Children Go Online: Surveying the experiences of young people and their parents, July 2004.

Key findings on the risks of online communication

'My friend's family kind of used to send me horrible messages. I gave my email address to my friend, and then she used it, and somehow her friend got it, and half of her mates did…' *(Laura, 13, from Essex)*

Interviewer: 'Do you sometimes sign up to sites to get more info, win competitions?'
Rosie: 'No, 'cause I don't trust it.'
Bethany: 'Yeah, and also 'cause I don't want to get spam or them to give my details to some other place, which is what they usually do.'
(13 year old girls from Derbyshire and London)

'I've got about five buddies on my thing [IM], but you can't really say, oh, this is a young girl, she's got brown hair, blue eyes, 'cause she could be an old – she could be a he and it's an old man, but I suppose it's quite nice to just say, oh, I've met someone on the internet.' *(Rosie, 13, from Derbyshire)*

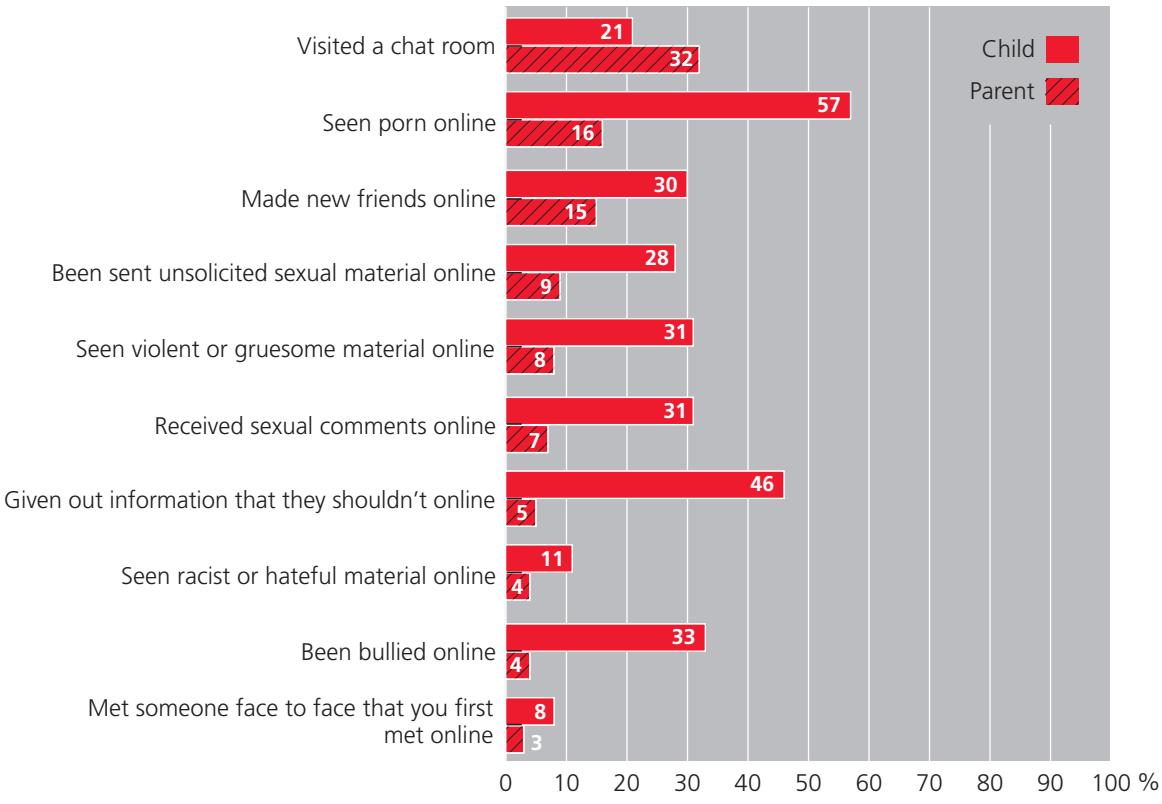
'I would say that chat rooms would be dangerous because… you don't know who you're talking to. And then if you give your address, then they can come and kidnap you or something. And take you away. It's just, I think it's on the news. I remember someone's got into a chat room and gone off to Paris'
(Joe, 13, from Derbyshire)

Online communication is not always a positive experience for children and young people, and the benefits must be balanced against the problems. The research asked about a range of potentially negative or risky consequences of online communication in order to establish the incidence of upsetting, worrying or intrusive experiences online.[21]

Among 9-19 year olds who go online at least weekly:

- **Parents underestimate children's negative experiences:** One third of children and young people report having received unwanted sexual (31%) or nasty comments (33%) via email, chat, instant messaging or text messaging. Parents substantially underestimate their children's negative experiences online and so appear unaware of their children's potential need for guidance. Only 7% of parents think that their child has received sexual comments, and only 4% think that their child has been bullied online (see Figure 8).
- **Children divulge personal information online:** Most parents whose child has home access to the internet (86%) do not allow their children to give out personal information online, though only 49% of children acknowledge existence of this rule. Moreover, nearly half (46%) of children and young people say that they have given out personal information, such as their hobbies (27%), email address (24%), full name (17%), age (17%), name of their school (9%) phone number (7%) or sent a photograph (7%), to

Figure 8: Have you/has your child done these things on the internet? (Multiple response)



Base: All 9-19 year olds who use the internet at least once a week (N=1,257); Parents of 9-17 year olds (N=906)

Key findings on the risks of online communication

Such meetings occur more among older than younger children, and they may be less common in the UK than in some other European countries.

A survey among primary school children in England by the **Cyberspace Research Unit** in 2003 found that 54% have never been asked to meet someone they first met in a chat room (12% sometimes, 34% often), and only 3% actually met the person afterwards.

The European **SAFT** survey of older children (9-16 year olds) in 2003 reported that 14% had attended a meeting (8% of 9-12 year olds, 18% of 13-16 year olds). Only 4% of parents were aware of this. Furthermore, 13-16 year olds pretended more about themselves online than other age groups.

In the US, 24% of 12-17 year old teens pretended to be someone else in a chat room according to **Pew** in 2000, and 60% received and 50% exchanged messages with a stranger. More than half (53%) were not worried about this though.

(Full details of these surveys can be found in the Appendix.)

someone that they met on the internet. By contrast, only 5% of parents think their child has given out such information.

- **Children engage in identity play:** Two fifths (40%) say that they have pretended about themselves online – using, for example, a different name (27%), changing their age (22%), appearance (10%) or gender (5%). And though they often know the rules, a minority (7%) admits to forgetting about safety guidelines online while 17% enjoy being rude or silly on the internet.

- **Some have attended face to face meetings:** One third (30%) have made an online acquaintance, and one in 12 (8%) say they have met face to face with someone whom they first met on the internet. Although 6% said the person they met turned out to be different from what they had expected, the majority of these young people tell someone they are going to the meeting (89%), take a friend with them (67%), meet someone of their own age (65%) and, they say, have a good time (91% said the meeting was 'good' or 'okay').

- **Children have concerns about the internet:** Despite their considerable enthusiasm for the internet, children, like their parents, are aware of media anxieties. Three quarters of 9-19 year olds (74%) are aware of some internet safety campaign or have heard or read a news story that made them think the internet can be dangerous, 48% of daily and weekly users worry about 'being contacted by dangerous people', and 38% worry about 'others finding out things about you'.

- **Age matters:** Older children are more likely to encounter or engage in the risks of online communication, for example giving out personal details to someone they haven't met (9-11 years: 25%, 12-15: 45%, 16-17: 61%, 18-19: 64%), meeting up with people from the internet (9-11 years: 2%, 12-15: 7%, 16-17: 14%, 18-19: 16%) or being the victim of bullying (9-11 years: 11%, 12-15: 35%, 16-19: 44%).

Priorities for future research

Investigate how to best target safety messages at different audiences: As in other areas of safety campaigns (eg health), research attention is needed to determine how to tailor safety messages for different target groups or to be applicable in different circumstances. Further, too little is yet known on the relation between risky practices and the incidence of actual harm, necessitating research that integrates the analysis of patterns of internet use with specific clinical cases and/or criminal investigations.

Assess the external threats to children's online privacy: What kinds of personal information are children giving out and under what circumstances? How can websites be designed differently to make their approach to privacy, tracking, cookies etc transparent to children? In terms of children's (and parents') advertising literacy, what are the parallels or differences between the now-familiar commercial environment of broadcast and print media and new forms of promotion, sponsorship and advertising developing on the internet?

Policy recommendations

Maintain internet safety awareness: As internet use grows, more children are encountering risky or unwelcome experiences online. There are encouraging signs that the safety messages are getting through, though these must be maintained to track the changing nature of online risks. However, general safety knowledge does not always translate into safe practices, necessitating more carefully targeted strategies in the form of campaigns across media platforms, continually updated to reflect new sources of risk. Risky or upsetting forms of communication occur off as well as online. Issues such as bullying, harassment etc can, therefore, be discussed with teens in relation to face to face, mobile and online environments simultaneously.

More on this issue can be found in Report 2 – UK Children Go Online: Surveying the experiences of young people and their parents, July 2004.

Key findings on regulating the internet at home

'I think parents should also try and educate themselves. You can say, 'my children know', and leave them… [but those] parents are going wrong. So you leave the child alone to sit down on the net for two, three hours? No! Sit in with the child… It's not wrong to learn from your children… You have to be interested in what your child is doing.'

(Mother of Anisah, 15, from London)

'Well, we've had long talks with them and they are fully aware of the dangers of chat rooms and things. And I do trust them to a certain extent. I do sort of, if they are on there, I just sort of look over their shoulder or something, but I do trust them not to. I think they're quite aware of the dangers that are lurking there.'

(Mother of Eve, 13, and Clarissa, 12, from Surrey)

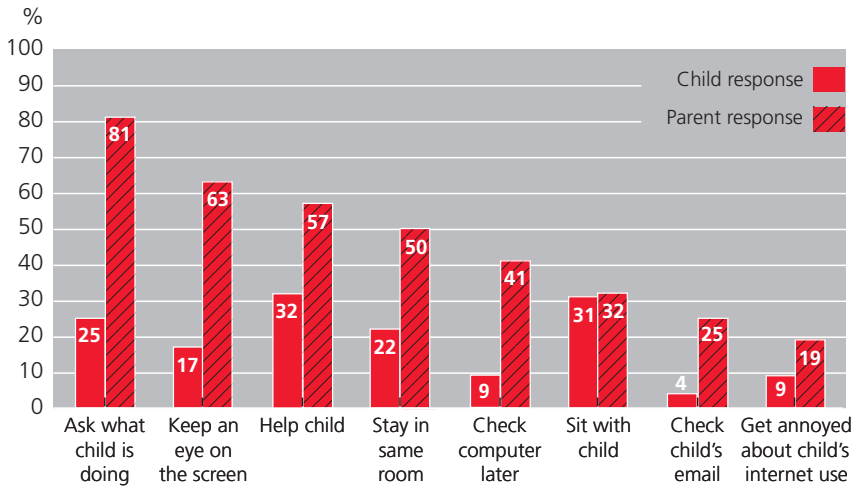
It is widely hoped that parents are able to manage their children's internet use, and few parents would deny such a responsibility. However, a key question is how exactly parents seek to achieve this, and how successful they are at ensuring their children's online safety. Parents have a key role to play – shared with schools and others – in guiding their children towards the positive uses of the internet. Again, how are they attempting this and with what success?

The UKCGO survey finds that children claim a higher incidence of risky experiences online than their parents recognise (see Figure 8, page 22), suggesting that parents may assume rules are not needed when they are. Conversely, it also finds that parents claim a higher degree of domestic rules and regulations than their children recognise, suggesting that parents tend to assume rules are being followed when they are not.

Rather than criticising parents for this apparent ignorance and complacency, we recognise first that parents are making a considerable effort to regulate their children's internet use and, second, that they face a series of challenges that threaten to undermine their efforts.

- **Parents seek to manage their children's internet use:** Most parents whose child has home access to the internet claim that they directly share in and/or support their child on the internet, though their children are less likely to say that this occurs. Parents also claim to monitor their child's internet use indirectly or discreetly, though again children appear less aware of this (see Figure 9).
- **Parents face some difficult challenges:** One in ten (10%) parents say they don't know what their child does on the internet, and a fifth (18%) say they don't know how to help their child use the internet safely – suggesting a clear need to improve and extend the reach of awareness and internet literacy initiatives.
- **Parents' view of the internet is ambivalent:** This is much more the case than for other media in the home. They are concerned that it may lead children to risk their privacy (90%), expose them to sexual (89%) and/or violent images (77%), displace more worthwhile activities (70%) or lead them to become isolated from others (59%). On the other hand, 73% believe that the internet can help their child do better at school and help them learn worthwhile things.
- **Confusion about filtering:** In homes with internet access, 35% of children say that filtering software has been installed on their computer while 46% of parents claim this. However, 23% of parents say they don't know if a filter is installed. Even among parents who have used the internet, only 15% say they know how to install a filter.
- **Parents lack expertise:** Children appear more confident and skilled in using the internet than many of their parents. Since computers are often located in private rather than public rooms, and since children may seek privacy online,

Figure 9: What parents do when child is using the internet (Multiple response)



Base: 9-17 year who live with parent(s) and use the internet at least once a week (N=1,060); Parents of 9-17 year olds whose child has home internet access (N=677)

Key findings on regulating the internet at home

According to the **Eurobarometer** 2003 survey, UK parents seem more restrictive than the European average of 49% not allowing their children to give out personal information and only 32% of parents banning chat rooms (for 0-17 year olds). Overall, 24% set rules for the internet, compared with 42% setting rules for television.

Similar to the UKCGO findings, the 2003 **SAFT** survey found that parents across Europe claim to monitor their children's internet use more than children acknowledge: 20% of parents said they talk with their child about what he/she does online a great deal, but only 12% of 9-16 year olds agree; 20% of parents said they often sit with their child at the computer while only 3% of 9-16 year olds confirm this.

In the US, 61% of parents said they had set rules about using the internet according to **Pew** in 2004, and 62% said they check up on their children's internet use afterwards although only 3% of 12-17 year olds believed this – a gap in perception also present in the UKCGO findings. Further, 54% of households had filters installed on their home computers, up from 41% in 2000, and 73% of teens said the computer was located in a public area in the home. Even though their parents check up on them, 64% of teens said they do things online that they wouldn't want their parents to know about.

(Full details of these surveys can be found in the Appendix.)

even evading parental monitoring, parents' attempts at regulation are not easy to implement.

- **Children don't want restrictions:** Two thirds (69%) of 9-17 year olds who go online at least once a week say that they mind their parents restricting or monitoring their internet use in various ways. Unwelcome restrictions may lead children to evade parental regulation.
- **Children protect their privacy from parents:** Two thirds (63%) of 12-19 year old home internet users have hidden their online activities from their parents – 38% have deleted emails so no one else could read them, 38% have minimised a window when someone else came into the room, 17% have deleted the history file, 17% have deleted unwanted cookies, 12% have hidden or mislabelled files to keep them private, and 12% have used someone else's password without their permission.
- **Simple restrictions don't work well:** The survey finds no direct relationship between parental rules and regulations and the range of risks that their children encounter on the internet. Hence, simply banning certain activities seems ineffective. For example, children who have been told not to give out personal information still do provide this online.
- **Going online with children may help:** The findings suggest that a range of factors seems to help, including the level of parental social support when children go online, increasing children's online skills and ensuring that children understand how to apply safety rules in everyday contexts.

Priorities for future research

Explore strategies and effectiveness of parental regulation: Research is needed to track how parental regulatory strategies evolve as parents gain internet experience, as the regulatory context changes and as different media and information technologies converge. Evaluation research should examine how effective these strategies are in guiding, directing and protecting children. For example, where are the gaps in parental strategies, which children are falling through the protective net, and how can these gaps be addressed? And are the moral panics in the media misleading parents as to the key risks?

Policy recommendations

Encourage parental sharing in children's internet use: The recommendation to parents is to increase supportive activities (asking the child what they are doing online, keeping an eye on the screen, helping them online, staying in the same room and going online together) as this seems to increase children and young people's online skills and opportunities. While the findings suggest this may not reduce online risks, it could improve parental awareness of the risks their children encounter. There are limits, however, to relying on parents to manage children's internet use because the internet poses some new and difficult challenges that fall outside many parents' experience and expertise. As a result, parents undertake this task in varying ways and they succeed in varying degrees.

Respect children's online privacy in the home: Simply pressing for more parental monitoring, restriction and control could encourage children's evasion rather than their cooperation with attempts at internet regulation in the home. While often naïve about threats to their privacy from external sources, teenagers especially are fiercely protective of their privacy in relation to their parents. However, parents need more information, confidence and guidance so that they feel enabled to discuss the risks with their children, especially as they grow older. An explicit negotiation of the balance between children's safety and children's privacy is important to the trust relationship between parents and children.

More on this issue can be found in Report 2 – UK Children Go Online: Surveying the experiences of young people and their parents, July 2004.

Balancing opportunities and risks

'Talking to them [parents] about the internet is bad for you and stuff. They might try and think about taking the internet off your computer, which isn't good for us.'
(Amir, 15, from London)

'My dad… doesn't let me go on the internet very often because we had an incident one day where my sister… she was on MSN, and someone sent her something through. And it was actually like – it was like porn. So my dad saw it, and he was like very angry, so he doesn't let us use MSN now.' *(Hazel, 17, from Essex)*

'We have different names to log on to the computer, it's not just one. You can set up your own thing. So my dad's got hardly any [restrictions] on it. I've got, you know, quite a bit. But my brothers, they've blocked out most of the stuff, so they can only go on very limited sites.' *(Toby, 13, from Derbyshire)*

'I think parents are more inclined to shout at the children and say, 'get off the internet, go to bed', rather than spending the money on filtering.'
(Lorie, 17, from Essex)

As these quotes suggest, if things go wrong, young people's freedoms – understandably – tend to be restricted in response. Drawing the line, therefore, is a tough task for parents and regulators. A guiding principle of this research has been that online opportunities and risks for children must be considered together. Research and policy concerned with maximising opportunities must also take into account, as an unintended consequence, any increase in risk while that concerned with minimising risk must also take into account, again as an unintended consequence, any decrease in opportunities.

- **More skilled young people do not avoid the risks:** It was initially supposed that, as children become more skilled and experienced internet users, they would simultaneously embrace more opportunities and manage to avoid the risks. Indeed, expert children, it is often hoped, can be more-or-less left to their own devices while attention is devoted to those not yet or not much online who, because they lack experience and expertise, run greater risks than those who 'know what they are doing'. The UKCGO findings contradict this assumption. Not only do the most skilled young people fail to avoid online risks, but their risky encounters increase with increased use – thought these young people are more likely to be able to deal with the risks.

- **Opportunities and risks go hand in hand:** There is a strong, positive association between opportunities and risks – the more children and young people experience the one, the more they also experience the other, and vice versa. This points up the dilemma that parents and regulators face: increasing opportunities increases the risks – restricting children and young people's internet use reduces not only the risks but also their opportunities.

- **Online skills mediate online opportunities and risks:** Children and young people's level of online skills has a direct influence on the breadth of online opportunities and risks, over and above the effects of demographics, access and use. Notably, it seems that young people from a higher socio-economic background are more likely to have home access, that having home access leads to higher levels of online expertise and more internet use, and that this in turn leads these children and young people to experience both more opportunities and more risks online.

The UKCGO survey findings were further analysed to reveal four types of children and young people. Among 12-17 year olds, we identified two groups relatively low in online expertise ('low risk novices' and 'inexperienced risk takers') and two who are relatively skilled ('skilled risk takers' and 'all-round experts').

- The **'inexperienced risk takers'** merit concern. On the internet, they tend to seek problematic content on purpose and take few opportunities other than exchanging information with others. They seem little bothered by online violence and show an interest in online porn. Their low online expertise seems to put them at even greater risk than the 'all-round experts' (who, despite taking more risks, are more skilled, well-supported and benefit from a broader range of opportunities). Strikingly, they are the least regulated by their parents in their online use, and their parents also have the lowest level of online expertise.

- By contrast, the **'all-round experts'** are (older) teens with high online expertise, and they take the most advantage of the opportunities that the internet offers. They seem to have learned to avoid sites with problematic content, partly because they dislike it. Though, because they take up the most opportunities, they also most frequently come upon problematic content by accident. Their parents appear to rely more on trust as a style of regulation.

- The **'skilled risk takers'** – who are the biggest group – have a slightly different balance of opportunities and risks compared with the 'all-round experts', taking up fewer opportunities (though still more than the two low-skilled groups) and encountering more violent content by accident than the 'all-round experts'. Also unlike the 'all-round experts', whose parents are as highly skilled as they are, this group seems comparatively more skilled than their parents. However, despite being subject to a fair-to-high amount of parental regulation, they encounter a considerable number of risks. In addressing the risks here, the issue seems to be more the sensation-seeking of some young teenage boys rather than that of internet literacy per se.

- The **'low risk novices'** occasion concern for a different reason. Their risky encounters are few and far between, but so too are their online benefits. As part of the digital divide discussion, we would draw policy makers attention to this inexpert group of young people. Both their online expertise and that of their parents is low, and they are not yet benefiting from the new opportunities of the internet. In this context, the highly regulated domestic environment

Balancing opportunities and risks

that their parents are implementing is not as helpful as it might be, since it reduces both risks and opportunities and does not appear to result in increased online expertise.

Priorities for future research

Continue tracking balance of opportunities and risks: As the nature of online risks and opportunities changes over time, and as children and young people's skills develop, continued research should track the balance between risks and opportunities and the role of skills and expertise in mediating these. The present research has identified some ways in which parental regulation affects their children's use, but more work would be valuable in teasing out, and then testing, just which regulatory practices work best for which parents and which children in different circumstances.

Policy recommendations

Take care not to reduce young people's online opportunities: Since the UKCGO findings suggest that for some children and young people, anxieties about online risks, or restrictive parental (and school) practices, are acting to limit their take up of online opportunities, care is needed in designing literacy and safety initiatives. We note that at present, increasing online opportunities goes hand in hand with increasing the risks, but that our findings hint that carefully targeted parental regulation may protect children from risks precisely by increasing their online expertise.

Target guidance and regulation more carefully at different groups of children: Children and young people adopt different styles of engagement with the internet, depending not only on demographic factors but also on skills and interests, which leads them to balance opportunities and risks in different ways. This suggests that guidance and regulation should be more carefully targeted. For those who are risk averse (or whose parents are risk averse), more encouragement is needed; for children who take risks but have parents low in internet literacy, guidance should be targeted at parents as well as children; and the confident explorers would benefit from advanced critical and safety guidance.

Design websites which encourage internet literacy: Since children and young people's level of online skills has a direct influence on the breadth of online opportunities taken, multiple routes to improving internet literacy are recommended. Some website design facilitates literacy, some impedes it. For example, if websites ask for personal information without addressing the fact that many children are told not to give this out, or if sites are sticky, missing the opportunity to link to other good sites, or if they do not make clear their source and purpose, children will be confused about the application of safety advice, they will make narrow use of the web, and they will not develop critical skills.

Develop more and better child and youth portals: Since even the most skilled children and young people cannot avoid online risks, more attention is required to structuring the online environment itself so as to make it safer for them (and all users). Internet literacy results from the mix of individuals' skills and competencies, as well as the design and distribution features of online contents and services (see previous recommendation). Internet literacy initiatives, therefore, should pursue a two-pronged strategy, addressing both the skills and competences of children and young people and the nature and organisation of the online environment with which they are engaged.

More on this issue can be found in Report 2 – UK Children Go Online: Surveying the experiences of young people and their parents, July 2004.

The persistence of demographic influences on internet use

It will be evident from the many findings summarised in this report that age, socio-economic status and gender are important in understanding children and young people's internet use as elsewhere. Children are a far from homogenous group, and it can be unhelpful to treat them as a single category. Moreover, although they exhibit considerable diversity and creativity in their response to circumstances, demographic factors continue to matter, structuring young people's lives generally as well as the conditions under which they use the internet in particular.

Age

Age makes the biggest and most consistent difference. Having encompassed the range from 9 to 19 years, it is unsurprising that age differentiates internet use across most if not all of the dimensions examined here.

- **9-11 years:** Often not major media users, these young people are beginning to broaden the range of their internet uses. They are also a group whose internet skills are easily over-estimated and on whom many anxieties centre, yet their enthusiastic ambitions outstrip their abilities, and they would benefit from greater support and a wider diversity of age-specific online content.

- **12-14 years:** Relishing their new-found independence, these young teens are experimenting with and expanding their use of the internet to pursue their interest in games, fandom, music etc. Still the focus of parental anxieties but concerned to maintain their privacy, they are no longer easily subject to parental regulation.

- **15-17 years:** Older teens are absorbed by the culture of their peer group, yet also seeking to express their individuality through their interest in music, social networks, consumer goods and internet expertise. They are still at risk from inappropriate contact and other risks, yet facing high educational expectations and have a growing serious interest in civic/political and personal/health/careers information. Hence, they have much to gain from the internet.

- **18-19 years:** These young adults negotiate a range of information, communication and literacy demands as they manage the transition from school to further study and/or work. On average, they access and use the internet less and have lower levels of online skills. Being no longer 'minors' subject to parental regulation, they are beginning to reflect on the risks and opportunities facing children younger than themselves.

Socio-economic status

While acknowledging that socio-economic status encompasses a range of factors (household income, parental education, parental occupational status etc), the importance of socio-economic status varies across the dimensions of internet use examined.

- Socio-economic status makes a continuing and significant difference to the quality of access. However measured – access at home, broadband at home, number of access locations, personal access in their bedroom etc – middle class children are privileged over working class children.

- Socio-economic status also makes a difference to the indicators of internet use. For example, young people from the lowest socio-economic background have the lowest rating of self-efficacy, average time online per day and years of internet use. Further, on a range of measures (such as civic participation, interactivity and content creation, levels of parental expertise and social support, range of overall opportunities taken up online etc), socio-economic status again privileges middle class children.

Gender

There is a growing debate over whether a gender divide continues to exist now that the internet has become widely available. Certainly, this report has found some differences although there are some key similarities too. These include:

- **Boys** spend more time online per day, have been online for longer (in years) and have higher levels of online skills and self-efficacy. They also experience more online risks than girls. They are more likely to seek out pornographic and violent/racist websites on purpose and to come across online porn by accident. Boys take up slightly more peer-to-peer opportunities (such as emailing, instant messaging, downloading music and playing games), though overall, the gender differences are modest. Furthermore, web design is an activity undertaken more often by boys than girls.

- **Girls** tend to visit a broader range of civic sites, particularly charity sites and human/gay/children's rights sites, and they take up slightly more civic opportunities (such as visiting civic/political sites and signing petitions online). Girls encounter less pornography online but are more likely to experience contact risks (such as online bullying, talking to strangers online and meetings with people from the internet).

- There are **no differences** in the take up of opportunities to interact with websites and no differences in parental rules and practices between boys and girls. In relation to regulating the internet at home, parents report equivalent treatment of sons and daughters.

The persistence of demographic influences on internet use

Ethnicity

Ethnic background does not appear to play a large role in determining internet access or frequency of use:

- **Access:** 75% children and young people from a white background and 72% from a non-white background have used the internet on a computer at home, and 92% of white and 90% of non-white children have used it at school.
- **Frequency of use:** Children and young people from an Asian or mixed race background are more likely to be daily online users than other ethnic groups. Children and young people from the black community are more likely to use the internet only on a weekly basis. However, those from a white background are equally divided between daily and weekly users, and they also include the largest percentage of occasional and non-users. There are no significant differences between children and young people who speak English as a first or subsequent language.

Region

Internet access at home is comparatively lower in the North, Yorkshire and Humberside, Wales and Scotland, and access at school is lower in East Anglia and Wales. Greater London is the most 'included' region, with half of children and young people (51%) being daily users, followed by the East Midlands (48%), the South West (46%) and the West Midlands (45%). The least included region is the North with 10% non-users.

More on this issue can be found in Report 2 – UK Children Go Online: Surveying the experiences of young people and their parents, July 2004.

A parental wish list

'You see, children spend a lot of time in school, and they tend to hear more [safety advice] from the teachers... And then, the parents shouldn't leave it to the teachers because at weekends the children are here with us... Everybody has to play their part. The government also, that's the highest level. But we have to start from the basics. And if the government has a guideline, then the teachers will also follow through... the Education Secretary, and from there to schools, and so to the parents.'

(Mother of Anisah, 15, from London)

'Wilf's always telling me that he's having these adverts for Viagra... I know it can't happen at school because they have to sign an agreement that they won't do this and they won't do that... We have to sign it as well to say that we've discussed it with our children, and I think that was quite good because it actually brought up conversations that, you know, how on earth do you talk about it otherwise?'

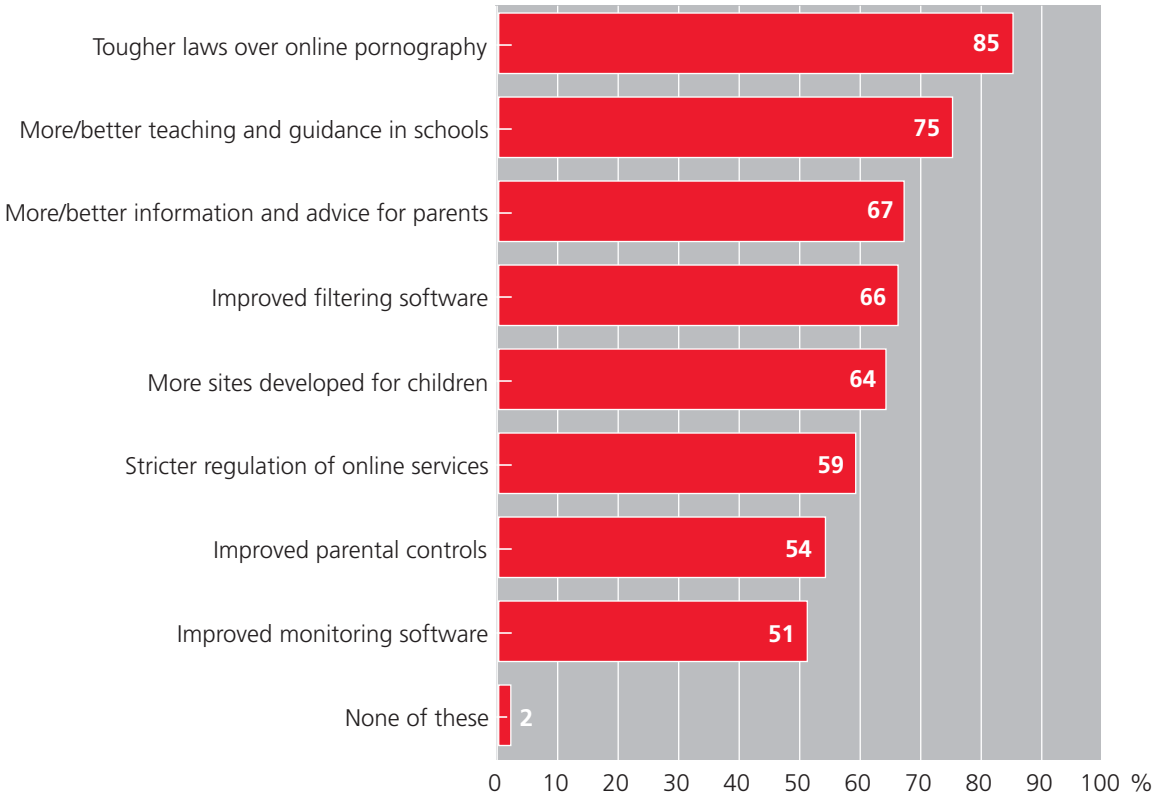
(Mother of Wilf, 13, from Hertfordshire)

Much is said on behalf of children and parents in policy discussions about the internet. The broad premise that internet content cannot and should not be regulated is well known in policy circles but less well understood or accepted by the public. Since in some ways, internet content is regulated (mainly by extending offline laws online, for example seeking to restrict spam or illegal content), the UKCGO survey finds that parents welcome this and wish for further regulation, largely because, as we have seen, many feel burdened and worried by the task of managing their children's internet use. However, regulation can take various forms, including not only legal restriction but also 'soft regulation', such as information and awareness campaigns or promoting filtering and rating tools.

The UKCGO research findings show that parents favour a multi-stakeholder approach. Their priorities are as follows:

- **Stricter regulation:** 85% want to see tougher laws on online pornography, with 59% wanting stricter regulation of online services.
- **More education:** In support of media and internet literacy, 75% want to see more and better teaching and guidance in schools while 67% want more and better information and advice for parents.

Figure 10: Which of these would help you to make sure that your child uses the internet effectively and safely? (Multiple response)



Base: All parents of 9-17 year olds (N=906)

A parental wish list

Almost half of European parents (47%) in the **Eurobarometer** 2003 survey said they have enough information on how to protect their child online, 43% would like more information. 42% of all parents would like more information from schools, 28% from the media and 16% from the government.

The **Internet Advisory Board** 2004 survey found that 93% of parents in Ireland thought the primary responsibility of protecting children online lies with parents. This is followed by schools (61%), the government (24%) and internet service providers (22%).

(Full details of these surveys can be found in the Appendix.)

- **Better content:** Parents also hope for a more stimulating and rewarding online experience for children and young people, with 64% wanting more sites developed specifically for children.
- **Improved technology:** Lastly, 66% want improved filtering software, 54% improved parental controls and 51% improved monitoring software (see Figure 10).

'I check [computer's] the history every now and again and see who's looking at what, and Eve's been doing quite a few projects at school so it's been important for her to be able to look at things... it's pointless having parental controls, not being able to look at all these different sites. We also find that the school, when they send out a project, they give you a list of websites to visit to help you with the project, and a lot of those, you wouldn't be able to get onto with controls.'

(Father of Eve, 13, and Clarissa, 12, from Surrey)

Reflecting on parental expectations regarding domestic regulation within the family, our child-centred perspective means that we cannot simply report parents' desire for greater control over or monitoring of children by parents. For, from the children's point of view, some key benefits of the internet depend on maintaining some privacy and freedom from their parents, making them particularly wary of intrusive or secret forms of parental regulation.

Kim: 'Parents are a bit over the top because they should be able to trust us...'
Interviewer: 'You have a strong sense of the invasion of your privacy then?'
Kim: 'Yeah. I think it is like your personal space and...'
Milly: 'It's like tapping your phone calls and things. It's like you're being stalked!'

(14-15 year old girls from Essex)

After all, as we have argued under 'balancing opportunities and risks', the internet must be perceived by children as an exciting and free space for play and experimentation if they are to become capable and creative actors in this new environment.

Managing, guiding and regulating children's internet use is, therefore, a delicate and challenging task and one that will surely most effectively be pursued with children's cooperation. Such cooperation need not be impossible. While children are often confident of their online skills, they are also aware of many ways in which they are confused, uncertain or lacking in skills, and their desire to combat these is genuine.

More on this issue can be found in Report 2 – UK Children Go Online: Surveying the experiences of young people and their parents, July 2004.

A last word from young people themselves

Although we didn't ask children and young people in the survey directly about their wishes for their internet access and use, it was a theme of all our discussions throughout the interviews. We end with some ways in which children and young people told us that they would welcome more support.

Most importantly, they value content that addresses their interests and welcomes their responses, content that at present they find hard to locate. Here, 15 year old boys from London discuss the possibilities for a Londoners' website for young people:

Malik: 'They could arrange for us young Londoners to meet people like, you know, the Prime Minister perhaps and MPs, so you can… they could listen to them.'
Lee: 'Things that affect us like, about our schools, about like when we leave school, college – what we're gonna do, like things that will affect us. We might not be able to get a job, so what would they do to help us?... It could be if like they had, say we were talking about our area, like how it could improve. Then they could have a website, and then they use a part where [young people] can just give tips. And they might not listen to them, but you'll feel like you're doing something.'

As this suggests, political participation might be encouraged if young people feel listened to, and if the sites are 'cool':

'I know a friend, she has actually emailed [our MP] about the war and stuff, and how she feels toward it. And she [our MP] has replied back.'
(Amir, 15, from London)

'Cool sites generally have fun things to do and things that are comical. These [government sites for young people] don't have that because they are being serious about serious issues. These sites are what I would class as being interesting but not cool.'
(Greg, 15, from Essex)

Moreover, young people would welcome more opportunities to create their own websites:

Interviewer: 'What would you tell other young people to encourage them to make websites?'
Zhi Zhi: 'It's fun… You can put down all stuff that you're thinking about and make everybody else look at it, and you can kind of make new friends.'
Henrietta: 'You could have lessons. If they kind of start younger, then they're more willing to try it and therefore they would – if they enjoy doing it, and then they could make them later.'
(14-15 year old girls from Oxfordshire)

And they would like fewer restrictions on internet access:

Anthony: 'I think we shouldn't be able to play games during lessons, but I think we should be able to play games [on the internet] during our free time, like during lunch time. Cause that's what we should be able to do. Like, what's wrong with doing games? It's not as if we were doing work. It's our free time.'
Sahen: 'Yeah, 'cause you're not really going to be doing work anyway, you're probably going to be eating your lunch or go out on the field or doing something. So that's not work either. So why can't we play games at lunch time?'
(13 year old boys from Essex)

'I used to have kids AOL, but my dad changed it. You couldn't go on Google because it wouldn't let you go on it. So my dad changed it because you couldn't go on anything.' ***(Ellen, 10, from Hertfordshire)***

On the other hand, they know there is content online that they want protection from:

Interviewer: 'You said sometimes it's good that [the filter] doesn't let you go on some sites. So what kind of websites… are not good for you?'
Robby: 'If they're like really violent ones, like what happened in the war, and you see all these people dying, and you might not want to.'
(10 year old boy from Hertfordshire)

'It restricts the websites that you can go on… And it stops people emailing you like nasty emails.'
(Emma, 10, from Hertfordshire)

'My little sister, she'd type in like her favourite artist or band, and porn sites just come up that had their name on it… Boyzone… Spice Girls… She was eleven at the time.' ***(Nina, 17, from Manchester)***

A last word from young people themselves

They value and learn from safety campaigns:

'There's obviously the scare of paedophiles and people like that on chat rooms... It's on the news, and there are ad campaigns against it. It's just a kind of thing that you realise there's probably someone on it who is a paedophile or like a child sex-abuser or someone, and you don't really want to kind of meet one of them or speak to one of them.'

(Alan, 13, from Essex)

Interviewer: 'I'm just wondering, what age you think people should be protected up to?'
Nina: 'I'd say about – just when they're young, and they don't really know what they're doing. About 14... 13, 14, about then. Because after that they know what they're doing and all that... they've got more sense.'
Interviewer: 'And how do you think they should be protected?'
Nina: 'I think they need to know not to go around giving email addresses out and meeting people they don't know.'

(17 year old girl from Manchester)

'Sometimes my mum might, like when I'm on MSN, she goes, 'Hope you're not going to chat rooms' and stuff because she hears loads of stuff. So I just say I'm chatting to my friends and she can see that.'

(Kim, 15, from Essex)

And they value the intimacy offered by the internet and, therefore, their online privacy from parents:

'You just like don't want your mum spying on you and knowing everything about you.'

(Nina, 17, from Manchester)

More on this issue can be found in Report 1 – UK Children Go Online: Listening to young people's experiences, October 2003.

Conclusions

This report has surveyed findings across a wide range of activities on the internet. Here, we draw out some of the overarching themes that have emerged.

- **Continuum of in/exclusion depends on quality of use:** No longer are children and young people only or even mainly divided by those with and without access, though 'access' is a moving target in terms of its speed, location, quality and support, and inequalities in access do persist. Increasingly, children and young people are divided into those for whom the internet is an increasingly rich, diverse, engaging and stimulating resource of growing importance in their lives and those for whom it remains a narrow, unengaging, if occasionally useful, resource of rather less significance. Hence, a new divide is opening up, one centred on the quality of use. The UKCGO survey finds that middle class children, children with internet access at home, children with broadband access and children whose parents use the internet more often are more likely to be daily users and to gain more internet skills. Consequently, they experience the internet as a richer, if risky, medium than do less privileged children.

- **The internet is not yet used to its full potential:** As an information medium, the internet has rapidly become central in children's lives, and as a communication medium, it represents a significant addition to the existing means of communication available to them. The UKCGO survey reveals a plethora of ways in which children and young people are taking steps towards deepening and diversifying their internet use, many of them gaining in sophistication, motivation and skills as they do so. But it has also identified many children not yet taking up the potential of the internet. These young people worry about the risks, visit only a few sites, fail to upload and maintain personal websites and treat sites more as ready-made sources of entertainment or information than as opportunities for critical engagement, user-generated content production or active participation. How this potential can be better realised remains a key challenge for the coming decade.

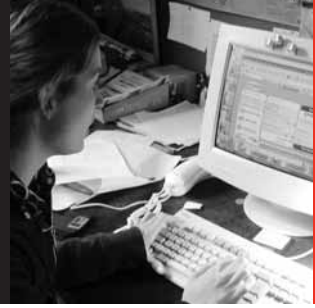
- **Internet literacy is crucial:** The Government's UK Online report[22] has added ICT skills to the literacy and numeracy requirements of education for all pupils. This is vital since our analysis shows that children and young people's level of online skills has a direct influence on the breadth of online opportunities and risks they experience, in addition to (and to some degree compensating for) the effects of demographics, access and use. As we have seen, access to the range of opportunities on the internet involves far more than the provision of technology. Additionally, it requires a range of skills, some more complex than others, many of which are stratified by age, gender and socio-economic status. The key point is that greater online skills are consistently associated with the take up of a wide range of online opportunities for children and young people.

- **The internet poses more risks than other media:** It is clear to parents and children that the internet is both more exciting but also more risky than the media they have been used to hitherto. The nature of the risks changes continually. Today, these include spam, pornography, invasions of privacy, grooming, bullying, unreliable or manipulative content, viruses, gambling, and many others. In the near future, the list will change. The extent to which these offend against cultural norms and, more significantly, the extent of actual harm associated with these risks is less than clear. A substantial investigation in the distribution and consequences of internet-related harms to children is now much needed.

- **Mind the gap:** This research has consistently identified gaps in understanding between parents and children – in internet expertise, in awareness of risks encountered (see Figure 8, page 22) and in acknowledgement of domestic regulation implemented (see Figure 9, page 24). These findings suggest a rather low level of understanding between parents and children, impeding an effective regulation of children's internet use within the home. It would be impractical to hope for complete understanding between parents and children, of course, but it is important not only to seek ways of closing the gap where possible but also to recognise the existence of the gap insofar as it persists – in designing research, safety guidance and other policy initiatives.

- **Evidence-based policy:** As our priorities for future research indicate, research raises as many questions as it answers. Yet, when we began this project, it was not known how many children had internet access in their bedroom, for example, or whether parental regulation was working, or whether children could avoid the risks as they became more skilled. We hope that this project has served its purpose in addressing these and many other questions by producing a careful and sound picture of the ways in which 9-19 year olds are using the internet today. We hope too that this is useful in informing the development of policy in relation to education, commercial and public sector content development, child protection, media literacy, parenting practices, and so forth (see recommendations).

Impacts



The findings of the UKCGO research project have informed:

An advert for the for 'Virtual Global Taskforce', a new website by the National Crime Squad Paedophile OnLine Investigation Team (www.virtualglobaltaskforce.net), placed in the EasyJet Inflight magazine, September 2004, cited findings from the UKCGO survey:

'Nearly half of 9-19 year olds who use the internet have given out personal information to strangers they've met online', Department of Media and Communications, London School of Economics.

The DfES Parents Online newsletter on online plagiarism in schoolwork from September 2004 (now Parentscentre, www.parentscentre.gov.uk) used a parent quote from the UKCGO family visits:

A parent, John, (not his real name) father of two girls aged 12 and 13 from Surrey, says:
'Nowadays children don't know how to search anymore. If it doesn't come up in Encarta or Google, it doesn't exist. But there is this thing called a library, but they don't want to know about it... At their school, they get extra marks for handing in part of the project handwritten. That's what we used to do, just everything handwritten and draw the pictures, now they just get everything off the internet.'

The Social Trends 2005 report (Office for National Statistics, www.statistics.gov.uk) cited findings from the UKCGO survey:

Use of the Internet is far higher among UK children than among adults. According to the 'UK Children Go Online', study, which surveyed 9 to 15 year olds between January and March 2004, 74 per cent of children have accessed the Internet via a computer from home and 93 per cent have accessed it at school. Information gathering and school and college work was their main use.

Households with children are more likely than those without children to own a computer or have Internet access. In 2004 54 per cent of children aged 9 to 15 lived in a household with a computer and 34 per cent lived in a household with more than one; 34 per cent of children had broadband access at home.

The Children's Charities' Coalition for Internet Safety's (CHIS) digital manifesto on 'Child Safety Online' (www.nch.org.uk/chis) cited findings from the UKCGO survey:

One third of 9-19 year olds who go online at least once per week report having received unwanted sexual (31%) or nasty comments (33%), via email, chat, IM or text message.

Only seven per cent of parents think their child has received sexual comments, and only four per cent think their child has been bullied online.

Others include:

- The development of the Epal website, a pilot project by Greater Manchester Connexions to provide life and career's advice to young people (www.epal.tv)
- The Kidsmart Parent Seminars: internet safety advice for parents in schools developed by Childnet-International (www.kidsmart.org.uk)
- Ofcom's work on the promotion of media literacy (www.ofcom.org.uk)
- Vodafone's parent safety leaflet about children's use of mobile phones (www.vodafone.co.uk)
- Various police constabularies, schools, parent organisations (eg National Family and Parenting Institute), children's charities (eg Unicef, NSPCC, Barnardo's, ChildLine, NCH, Childnet International), broadcasting corporations (eg BBC), internet service providers (eg AOL UK, Wanadoo), non-profit internet organisations (Citizens Online, Internet Watch Foundation, Internet Content Rating Association) and new media companies (eg Intuitive Media, Cimex Media, Atticmedia) across the country.

Advisory panel

The research was informed by guidance from the project's advisory panel, with members from the policy community, industry and children's organisations:

- **AOL UK:** Karin Sieger (Director, Research and Analysis), Camille de Stempel (Director, Policy) and Simon Kinnersley (Manger, Research – Research and Analysis)
- **BCS (Broadcasting Standards Commission) and ITC (Independent Television Commission):** Andrea Millwood Hargrave (Research Director)
- **Childnet-International:** Stephen Carrick-Davies (Chief Executive), Nigel Williams (Founder), Mary Louise Morris (Education and Awareness Officer)
- **Citizens Online:** John Fisher (Chief Executive), Gail Bradbrook (Director of Strategy and Partnerships)
- **NCH – the children's charity and CHIS (The Children's Charities Coalition on Internet Safety):** John Carr (Internet Advisor)
- **Ofcom:** Alison Preston (Senior Research Associate), Robin Blake (Manager, Media Literacy), Andrew Carruthers (Policy Executive)

Media coverage

Selected excerpts from what the media have said about *UK Children Go Online*:

The Guardian, 16 October 2003, *Children are internet experts*

Children are becoming the internet experts in families as their parents leave them to it in what could be 'a lasting reversal of the generation gap', according to research published today. The report from the London School of Economics claims that warnings about the risks of chat rooms and of meeting strangers and paedophiles have got through to youngsters, but that parents, government departments and internet providers could do more to make the internet safer for children.

BBC News Online, 16 October 2003, *Children 'need to improve web use'*

Children should be taught to use the internet 'more creatively', rather than spending their time playing games and chatting to friends, a report recommends. Research carried out at the London School of Economics found youngsters were often at the forefront of family computer use. But schools and parents should do more to encourage children to participate in online political discussions and produce their own websites, it added.

CBBC Newsround, 21 July 2004, *Parents 'unsure how kids use net'*

Parents aren't sure what happens when their kids go online and don't know much about the dangers of surfing. That's what a new survey reckons, after asking kids how they used the net and parents how they thought kids did.

Silicon.com, 21 July 2004, *Porn pop-ups and spam hijacking UK kids' surfing*

Teenagers are looking at dodgy content on the internet and their parents don't know anything about it – that's no surprise. What is surprising, however, is that most claim to be unwitting victims of spammers and pop-up merchants. According to a London School of Economics report, UK Children Go Online 36 per cent of children have stumbled upon porn while surfing for another type of site, 25 per cent have got porn spam and 38 per cent have seen porn pop-ups they weren't expecting.

The Register, 21 July 2004, *Parents clueless about kids online*

Parents haven't a clue what their kids get up to online. That's just one of the findings of a report out today by the London School of Economics which reveals a gulf between what children do online – and what parents think their children get up to. Of course, any parent knows they will never really know what their children get up to – either online or offline. Nonetheless, the research found that parents need to be more 'Web wise' about their kids' activities online.

The Sun, 22 July 2004, *50% of kids see net porn*

More than half of kids have seen porn on the internet, it was revealed yesterday. A third have also been subjected to unwanted sexual comments. And most parents are unaware their kids have been affected – with only 16 per cent believing their children have seen porn online.

The Straits Times, Singapore, 26 July 2004, *Youngsters 'can't evaluate reliability of info on Net'*

Children lack the skills needed to evaluate the reliability of information available on the Internet, says a new study by the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). The study, published last week, found that only one in 10 children are sceptical about the information they find online. Youngsters 'can't evaluate reliability of info on Net'.

Wendy Early, British Film Institute, in Spiked Online (www.spiked-online.com), 23 September 2004, *Lost in cyberspace?*

The authors of the report, LSE academics Sonia Livingstone and Magdalena Bober, reveal that the vast majority of children are now connected to the internet and have mobile phones. The report tries to give a balanced perspective, measuring the risk and opportunity in children's access to this sophisticated technology. Nevertheless, it is very much a product of today's fearful times, which is preoccupied with issues such as inequality of access (the 'digital divide') and 'undesirable forms of content and contact'.

Henry Jenkins, MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), in Technology Review (www.technologyreview.com), 3 September 2004, *The Myths Of Growing Up Online*

Livingstone's report arrives at a pivotal moment: after decades of state-supported broadcasting, the British government is deregulating media content and opening the airwaves to greater commercial development. The number of media channels in British homes is expanding – and parents are being asked to play gatekeepers determining what media entered their home without being given the training or resources needed to do that job properly.

BBC News Online, 9 February 2005, *Children 'lack web safety advice'*

Nearly one in three UK children have not had any lessons on how to use the internet safely, a study suggests. Those most at risk of encountering pornography or paedophiles were the most expert computer users, the survey of nine to 19-year-olds found. They entered sites more adventurously, ignoring safety concerns, London School of Economics researchers said.

Appendix

Details of the survey administration are provided in UK Children Go Online: Surveying the experiences of young people and their parents, July 2004, www.children-go-online.net

UKCGO children's survey sample

In this report, percentages have been weighted in accordance with population statistics. Sample sizes are reported as unweighted. The sample characteristics (N=1511) are as follows:

Age	9-11 years (N=380), 12-15 years (N=605), 16-17 years (N=274), 18-19 years (N=251)
Gender	Boys (N=668), Girls (N=842)
SES	AB (N=264), C1 (N=418), C2 (N=407), DE (N=422) [9]
Region	England (N=1,232), Wales (N=69), Scotland (N=161), Northern Ireland (N=48)
Ethnicity	White (N=1,333), Non-white (N=169)

UKCGO focus group sample

The focus groups (27 in total) were carried out in ten schools across England, involving 88 students in all, as shown below. The interviews in 2003 consisted of a semi-structured discussion in the secondary schools and post-16 colleges and a mind-mapping exercise in the primary school and in 2004, an evaluation of websites.[23]

School	Type	Size	Area	Location	Social grade	Achievement	Ages interviewed	Date of interview	Number interviewed
A	Primary	97	Rural	Hertfordshire	Mixed	Above average	10-11	July 2003	8
B	Secondary	369	Town/ rural	Derbyshire	Middle class	Above average	12-13	July 2003	8
C	Secondary	928	City	London	Working class	Above average	14-16	July 2003 Dec 2004	8 + 6
D	Secondary	1,148	Town	Essex	Mixed	Above average	13 14-15	July 2003	14
E	Post-16	2,010	Town	Essex	Middle class	Slightly above average	16-17	July 2003	10
F	Post-16	2,911	City	Greater Manchester	Working class	Below average	17-19	June 2003	7
G	Primary	501	City	South Yorkshire	Working class	Average	10-11	Nov 2004	8
H	Secondary	763	City	South Yorkshire	Working class	Below average	14-15	Dec 2004	5
I	Primary	178	Town/ rural	Oxfordshire	Mixed	Above average	10-11	Dec 2004	8
J	Secondary	1,343	Town	Oxfordshire	Mixed	Above average	14-15	Dec 2004	6

Appendix

UKCGO family visit sample

The family visits consist of initial interviews with parents and the child, conducted separately in-home, followed by two periods of observation of the child using the internet in their own home (carried out during 1999-2000) and recently extended by a three or four year return visit combining interviews and observation (in summer 2003 or 2004). The age of the child given below was recorded at the time of the return visit.

Family	Age of child	Gender	Area	Location	Social grade	Family type
1 'Ted'	18	Male	Town	Surrey	B – Middle class	Couple, single child
2 'Anisah'	15	Female	City	London	C2 – Skilled working class	Couple, one older brother and sister
3 'Megan'	12	Female	Suburb	Essex	C1 – Lower middle class	Couple, one older brother
4 'Jane'	18	Female	Rural	Surrey	C1 – Lower middle class	Couple, one older brother
5 'Poppy'	16	Female	City	London	B – Middle class	Couple, one older brother
6 'Eve'	13	Female	Town	Surrey	C1 – Lower middle class	Couple, one younger sister
7 'Simon'	13	Male	Town	Surrey	C1 – Lower middle class	Couple, one older, two younger sisters
8 'Wilf'	13	Male	Rural	Hertfordshire	C1 – Lower middle class	Couple, one younger brother
9 'Daniel'	20	Male	City	London	B – Middle class	Couple, single child

UKCGO project reports

Livingstone, S and Bober, M (2003, October) *UK Children Go Online: Listening to young people's experiences,* London: LSE, www.children-go-online.net

Livingstone, S and Bober, M (2004, July) *UK Children Go Online: Surveying the experiences of young people and their parents,* London: LSE, www.children-go-online.net

Livingstone, S, Bober, M and Helsper, E (2004, October) *Active Participation or Just More Information? Young people's take up of opportunities to act and interact on the internet,* London: LSE, www.children-go-online.net

Livingstone, S, Bober, M and Helsper, E (2005, February) *Internet Literacy among Children and Young People: Findings from the UK Children Go Online project,* London: LSE, www.children-go-online.net

Livingstone, S, Bober, M and Helsper, E (2005, April) *Inequalities and the Digital Divide in Children and Young People's Internet Use: Findings from the UK Children Go Online project,* London: LSE, www.children-go-online.net

See also:

Livingstone, S (2003) Children's Use of the Internet: Reflections on the emerging research agenda, *New Media and Society*, 5(2), 147-166.

Livingstone, S (in press) Children's Privacy Online, in R Kraut, M Brynin and S Kiesler (Eds), *New Information Technologies at Home*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Livingstone, S and Bober, M (2004) Taking up Opportunities? Children's uses of the internet for education, communication and participation, *E-Learning*, 1(3), 395-419, www.wwwords.co.uk/ELEA

Livingstone, S and Bober, M (in press) UK Children Go Online, in B Anderson, M Brynin and Y Raban (Eds), *Information and Communications Technologies in Society,* London: Routledge.

Livingstone, S and Bovill, M (2001) *Families, Schools and the Internet,* London: LSE Report, www.lse.ac.uk/collections/media@lse/pdf/familiesschoolsinternet.pdf

Livingstone, S, Bober, M and Helsper, E (forthcoming) Active Participation or Just More Information? Young people's take up of opportunities to act and interact on the internet, *Information, Communication & Society.*

Livingstone, S and Bober, M (forthcoming) Regulating the Internet at Home, in D Buckingham and R Willett (Eds), *Digital Generations*, Mawah NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

UKCGO website

Further information, the survey questionnaires, focus group and interview guides and the research ethics policy for UK Children Go Online can be downloaded from the project website, www.children-go-online.net

Appendix

Other surveys referenced for comparison purposes

Becta: A government-funded in-depth survey with 2,073 home-based interviews of a nationally representative UK sample of 5-18 year olds and their parents in relation to ICT use at home and school (with one child and their parent per household; see Becta (2002) *Young People and ICT 2002,* www.becta.org.uk/page_documents/research/full_report.pdf

Cyberspace Research Unit: A school-based survey of 330 8-11 year olds in England carried out in 2003; see O'Connell et al (2004, February) *Emerging Trends amongst Primary School Children's Use of the Internet,* Preston: University of Central Lancashire, www.uclan.ac.uk/host/cru/docs/emerging_trends_full_report_060204.pdf

Digital Future: 2,000 US citizens aged 12+ were interviewed by telephone in July-September 2003; see USC Annenberg School Center for the Digital Future (2004) *The Digital Future Report,* www.digitalcenter.org

Eurobarometer: A survey of 16,000 parents of 0-17 year olds across the EU on children's internet use, parental regulation and safety awareness, conducted in November-December 2003; see Eurobarometer (2004) *Illegal and Harmful Content on the Internet*, Brussels: European Commission, http://europa.eu.int/information_society/activities/sip/docs/pdf/reports/eurobarometer_survey.pdf

Internet Advisory Board: An Irish survey of 317 children aged 10-14 years and their parents (N=317) with face to face interviews in August-September 2004; see Amárach Consulting (2004) *The Use of New Media by Children,* Dublin: Internet Advisory Board, www.iab.ie

Kaiser Family Foundation: A telephone survey of 1,506 adults and 625 children aged 10-17 conducted in February 2000; see Kaiser Family Foundation (2000) U.S. Adults and Kids on New Media Technology, in C von Feilitzen and U Carlsson (Eds), *Children in the New Media Landscape,* Göteborg, Sweden: Nordicom.

Kids.net: A UK marketing survey of 2,019 7-16 year old internet users carried out by NOP in June 2000; see Wigley, K and Clarke, B (2000) *Kids.net,* London: National Opinion Poll, www.nop.co.uk

Media Awareness Netowork: A telephone survey was conducted in Canada in March 2000, involving 1,081 parents with children aged 6-16 who owned PCs; see Media Awareness Network (2000), *Canada's Children in a Wired World: The parents' view,* www.media-awareness.ca

Ofcom: A nationally representative sample of 2,131 adults 15+ was surveyed in the UK in November 2003; see Ofcom (2004, August) *The Communications Market 2004,* www.ofcom.org.uk/research/cm/cmpdf

Office for National Statistics: These quarterly statistics on internet access and use draw from the national 'Expenditure and Food Survey' of individuals aged 16+; see ONS (2004, April) *Internet Access: 12.1 million households online*, www.statistics.gov.uk

Oxford Internet Survey: Face to face interviews with a nationally representative random sample of 2,000 individuals aged 14+ were carried out in the UK May/June 2003; see Dutton, W (2005, February) *The Social Dynamics of the Internet,* Presentation for the International Technology, Knowledge and Society Conference, University of California, Berkeley, USA, www.oii.ox.ac.uk

Pew 2000: US sample of 754 internet users aged 12-17 and one of their parents/guardians (total of 1,508 participants) were interviewed by telephone in November/December 2000 about the child's use of the Internet at home and school; see Pew (2001) *Teenage Life Online,* www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_Teens_Report.pdf

Pew 2002: A total of 14 focus groups were conducted with 136 students aged 11-19 drawn from 36 different schools in the US between November 2001 and February 2002; see Pew (2002) *The Digital Disconnect: The widening gap between internet savvy students and their schools,* www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_Schools_Internet_Report.pdf

Pew 2004: A nationally representative US sample of 1,100 12-17 year olds and their parents was interviewed by telephone in October/November 2004; see Pew (2005) *Protecting Teens Online,* www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_Filters_Report.pdf

SAFT: In this survey, 4,700 children aged 9-16 and 3,200 parents from Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Ireland and Iceland completed a school-based self-completion questionnaire (children) and telephone interviews (parents) between December 2002 and March 2003; see SAFT (2003, October) *What do SAFT kids do online?* Paper presented at the 'Future Kids Online – How to Provide Safety Awareness, Facts and Tools' Conference, Stockholm, Sweden, www.saftonline.org

University of Salford: A survey of 1,972 adults aged 15+ during May 2002 with questions relating to political participation on and offline; see R Gibson, W Lusoli and S Ward (2002) *UK Political Participation Online: The public response,* Salford: ESRI, www.ipop.org.uk

Young People New Media: A face-to-face, in-home, computer-assisted survey of UK children's media use with a representative sample of 1,303 6-17 year olds and a self-completion questionnaire to 978 of their parents, carried our in April-May 1997; see Livingstone, S and Bovill, M (1999) *Young People New Media,* London: LSE, www.lse.ac.uk/collections/media@lse/whosWho/soniaLivingstonePublications3.htm

Endnotes

1 The project develops an earlier project in which the first author conducted participant observation in thirty families; see Livingstone, S and Bovill, M (2001) *Families and the Internet: An observational study of children and young people's internet use,* www.lse.ac.uk/collections/media@lse/ pdf/btreport_familiesinternet.pdf

2 See Ofcom (2004) *Ofcom's Strategy and Priorities for the Promotion of Media Literacy: A statement,* London: Office of Communications, www.ofcom.org.uk/consult/condocs/strategymedialit/ml_statement/strat_prior_statement.pdf

3 See also Livingstone, S (2001) *Online Freedom and Safety for Children,* IPPR/Citizens Online, www.lse.ac.uk/collections/media@lse/pdf/free_safety_children1.pdf

4 See Livingstone, S (2002) *Young People and New Media,* London: Sage.

5 See also James, A, Jenks, C and Prout, A (1998) *Theorizing Childhood,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

6 See also Greig, A and Taylor, J (1999) *Doing Research with Children*, London: Sage.

7 The names of all children appearing in this report have been changed to preserve anonymity.

8 See also Rice, R (2002) Primary Issues in Internet Use: Access, civic and community involvement, and social interaction and expression, in L Lievrouw and S Livingstone (Eds) *The Handbook of New Media,* London: Sage.

9 The market research category ABC1 is described as 'middle class' households, and C2DE is described as 'working class' households. Socio-economic status is measured according to the standard market research categories as follows: A – Upper middle class (Higher managerial administrative or professional occupations, top level civil servants), B – Middle class (Intermediate managerial administrative or professional people, senior officers in local government and civil service), C1 – Lower middle class (Supervisory or clerical and junior managerial administrative or professional occupations), C2 – Skilled working class (Skilled manual workers), D – Working class (Semi and unskilled manual workers), E – Those at lowest levels of subsistence (All those entirely dependent on the State long term, casual workers, those without regular income). Socio-economic status is strongly correlated with measures of parental occupation, education and income. The 'Index of Multiple Deprivation' for England 2004 combines seven domains of deprivation: income deprivation, employment deprivation, health deprivation and disability, education, skills and training deprivation, barriers to housing and services, living environment deprivation and crime.

10 See also Valkenburg, PM and Soeters, KE (2001) Children's Positive and Negative Experiences with the Internet: An exploratory survey, *Communication Research,* 28(5), 652-675.

11 See also Selwyn, N (2003) Apart from Technology: Understanding people's non-use of information and communication technologies in everyday life, *Technology in Society,* 25(1), 99-116.

12 Self-efficacy (or self-rated internet expertise) was assessed on a four-point scale. We asked respondents whether they think of themselves as beginner (7%), average (56%), advanced (32%) or expert (5%) in using the internet.

13 See also Buckingham, D (2004) *Assessing the Media Literacy of Children and Young People: A literature review,* London: Ofcom, www.ofcom.org.uk/advice/media_literacy/medlitpub/mlcyp.pdf

14 Key Stage 1: 5-7 years; Key Stage 1: 7-11 years

15 See also Ling, R (2004) *The Mobile Connection: The cell phone's impact on society,* San Francisco: Elsevier.

16 See also Sundin, E (1999) The Online Kids: Children's participation on the internet, in C von Feilitzen and U Carlsson (Eds) *Children and Media: Image, education, participation,* Göteborg, Sweden: Nordicom.

17 See also Stern, S (1999) Adolescent Girls' Expression on Web Home Pages: Spirited, sombre and self-conscious sites, *Convergence,* 5(4), 22-41.

18 See also Montgomery, K et al (2004) *Youth as E-Citizens: Engaging the Digital Generation,* www.centerforsocialmedia.org/ecitizens/youthreport.pdf

19 We discussed the definition of this with children and young people in the focus groups. In the survey, the following definition was provided: 'The next questions are about porn, which is stuff meant for adults. For example, nude people, rude and sexy pictures.'

20 See also Mitchell, KJ et al (2003) The Exposure of Youth to Unwanted Sexual Material on the Internet: A national survey of risk, impact, and prevention, *Youth & Society,* 34(3), 330-358.

21 See also Palmer, T and Stacey, L (2004) *Just One Click: Sexual abuse of children and young people through the internet and mobile telephone technology,* London: Barnardo's.

22 See Office of the e-Envoy (2004, January) *UK Online Annual Report,* www.e-envoy.gov.uk

23 Information about schools is taken from the most recent OFSTED inspection report. Achievement was determined according to how the school had performed in relation to National Average Performance levels cited in the most recent school league tables (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

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Designed by: **LSE Design Unit (www.lse.ac.uk/designunit)** Photography: **LSE Research Team** and **www.imageafter.com**

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A research report from the UK Children Go Online project
www.children-go-online.net

April 2005

Acknowledgments

This research was funded by an Economic and Social Research Council grant (RES-335-25-0008) as part of the 'e-Society' Programme, with co-funding from AOL UK, BSC, Childnet-International, Citizens Online, ITC and Ofcom.

We thank the project's Advisory Panel for their support: Camille de Stempel, Karin Sieger and Simon Kinnersley (AOL UK), Andrea Millwood Hargrave (BSC and ITC), Nigel Williams, Stephen Carrick-Davies and Mary Louise Morris (Childnet-International), John Fisher and Gail Bradbrook (Citizens Online), Alison Preston, Robin Blake and Andrew Carruthers (Ofcom) and John Carr (NCH and CHIS).

We also thank the project's Children's Panel for their discussions and guidance which informed the design and interpretation of the survey. Thanks to Bridget Williams, Susan Kay and Taj Sohal from BMRB and to Ellen Helsper and Peter Lunt for their contributions to the analysis and interpretation of the findings reported here. And, last but not least, thanks to the many children, young people, parents and teachers who generously gave us their time to make this research possible.