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EU Kids Online

Use, Views and Worries on Age Bans on Social Media: Responses from 29,169 children in 19 European countries.

EU Kids Online 2026

Elisabeth Staksrud, Sonia Livingstone, Kjartan Ólafsson, with members of the EUKO network

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Executive summary

- The report draws on **survey responses from 29,169 children aged 9–16, from 19 European countries between April 2025 and April 2026** by the EU Kids Online research network (EUKO).

- The findings report children's screen use across the day, their online activities, who has a social media profile, experiences of safety and communication online, exposure to harmful content, children's worries and their views of age-based restrictions.

- **The survey shows that children's online lives are deeply embedded in their everyday social, educational and leisure activities.** The internet seems less a separate space from offline life and more continuous with everyday social interaction.

- Digital device use peaks after school, followed by use in the evening before bedtime. It appears that **children's digital media use is concentrated during leisure time, not during class or at night**.

- **Communication with friends is the most frequent activity, followed by watching videos on social media, listening to music and communicating with parents or caregivers**. Beyond these top activities, children engage in a wide range of online activities, with considerable variation across the population.

- **Social media use increases strongly with age, but it also begins before the mid-teen years**. Across six countries, 34% of 9–11-year-olds, 70% of 12–14-year-olds and 89% of 15–16-year-olds report having a social media profile.

- **Children's online experiences are mixed**. Many use the internet for social connection, entertainment, learning and information. Some report exposure to risks, including potentially harmful content, image-based abuse concerns, pornography, eating-disorder content and misinformation.

- **Only half (48%) say they feel safe online. 6 in 10 children (61%) say they know what to do if someone acts online in a way they do not like.**

- **Up to one in five 9–16-year-olds in Europe report encountering some forms of problematic user-generated content.** Harmful content is reported mainly by older teenagers. Conspiracy theories are the most commonly reported type overall, supporting widespread concerns about misinformation and disinformation online.

- **Children's worries are not limited to social media**. Although image-based abuse and fake images are important concerns, their top worries are broader, including family illness or death, war, future employment and school achievement.

- **Children from lower socio-economic homes were more likely to search online for information about mental health and wellbeing.** Children from low socio-economic status (SES) homes are twice as likely as better-off children to look for new contacts online or publicly share some information about themselves in a way that it could be viewed by people they had never met before, which suggests they may be more at risk.

- **Children are highly ambivalent about age-based restrictions:** 33% say they would feel safer online, 45% disagree. Their concerns relate to freedom, responsibility, social connection, education, and democratic participation.

- **The findings show patterns of exposure, not simple causality**. They do not establish whether social media causes harm, whether vulnerable children are more likely to encounter or seek out certain content, or whether online and offline difficulties reinforce each other. Exposure does not automatically mean harm, and risks vary by age, gender, socioeconomic status, vulnerability, intention and platform context.

- **Overall, the findings do not support a simple interpretation that access to social media is either clearly safe or clearly harmful**.

- While age bans, if they can be effectively implemented, may address some risks for some younger children, the findings show that this would be at the cost of important online opportunities.

- Social media bans are unlikely to be effective or sufficient on their own. A more balanced approach would combine age-appropriate protections, safety-by-design, platform accountability, digital literacy, support systems and attention to children's rights to participation, information and social connection.

- **In conclusion, we suggest that the findings clearly point to a safety-by-design, or indeed a child rights-by-design, approach, as set out in the guidelines to Article 28 of the Digital Services Act.**

About this report

Over the past three decades, the internet and digital technologies have become deeply embedded in the daily lives of children and young people in Europe and beyond. In parallel, the normative international framework for children's rights has evolved, anchored in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and elaborated in General Comment No. 25. The UNCRC and General Comment No. 25 establish that children's rights apply fully online as well as offline, reinforcing states' obligations to ensure protection, participation, provision, privacy, non-discrimination and redress in a digitalised world.

In Europe, important foundations for safeguarding children online include the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the Digital Services Act (DSA), the Artificial Intelligence Act and the upcoming Digital Fairness Act (DFA). Also important are the Council of Europe's Recommendation CM/Rec(2026)4 on online safety and empowerment of users and content creators, and Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)7 on Guidelines to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of the child in the digital environment.

Since 2006, the EU Kids Online research network (EUKO) has systematically studied children's online engagements and factors that may contribute to or undermine their wellbeing. This multidisciplinary research network provides policymakers, educators, parents and other stakeholders with an evidence base on how children use digital technologies, the opportunities they encounter, and the risks they face. EUKO is independent, being neither centrally funded nor directed by a government or commercial actor. This independence is central to its mission: to provide robust, impartial evidence that can inform public debate and policymaking without being shaped by particular political or industry agendas.

Through successive international surveys in 2010, 2018 and 2025, EUKO has documented how emerging technologies, from personal computers to smartphones, from chat groups to social networks, have become embedded in children's everyday lives. This comparative cross-national perspective is crucial for understanding how differences in regulatory approaches, educational systems, and cultural contexts influence children's digital lives, helping to distinguish what is context-specific from what is shared across countries and groups.

In recent years, public concern about children's safety and wellbeing online, especially in relation to social media, has placed young people's digital lives at the centre of policy debates, prompting governments worldwide to pursue stricter measures, including age-based restrictions on social media access. These initiatives are driven by legitimate concerns about young people's wellbeing, exposure to harmful content, data protection, and the influence of platform design. Nonetheless, researchers have cautioned that rapid, reactive forms of regulation, in particular broad age-based social media restrictions (or "bans"), may restrict children more than they compel platforms to comply with laws and regulations designed to protect children. Indeed, bans may produce unintended and potentially adverse and harmful consequences, such as limiting access to beneficial online resources, excluding vulnerable groups, or pushing children toward less regulated digital spaces.

There is little comparative evidence in Europe on whether children's practices, motivations, experiences and wellbeing online justify calls for age restrictions, or how they may be impacted by such measures. As the policy agenda evolves, there is a clear and further need for independent, high-quality evidence to assess how children actually use digital services and how different regulatory approaches may affect their rights, opportunities, and experiences. **Evidence-based policymaking is essential** to avoid oversimplified solutions and to ensure that interventions are proportionate, effective, and aligned with children's best interests.

This report presents selected findings from the EUKO 2025 survey, a unique cross-national dataset from 29,169 children aged 9 to 16 in 19 European countries: Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, and Switzerland.

The first sections on online activities and comparisons over time provide the broader context. They inform how social media use fits within children's wider digital practices and whether current concerns reflect new developments or longer-term trends. The section on having social media profiles then addresses a central question for age-ban debates: how many children

already use social media accounts, including those who may be below existing platform age limits.

The following sections examine children's experiences of screen use, having social media profiles, safety and communication, harmful content, and their worries. The report ends by presenting children's own views on age-based restrictions, recognising that debates about regulation should include those most affected.

Together, these findings help inform the debate about where risks are most evident, whether they are increasing, and whether policy should focus mainly on restricting access or also on safer design, support, education, and platform accountability.

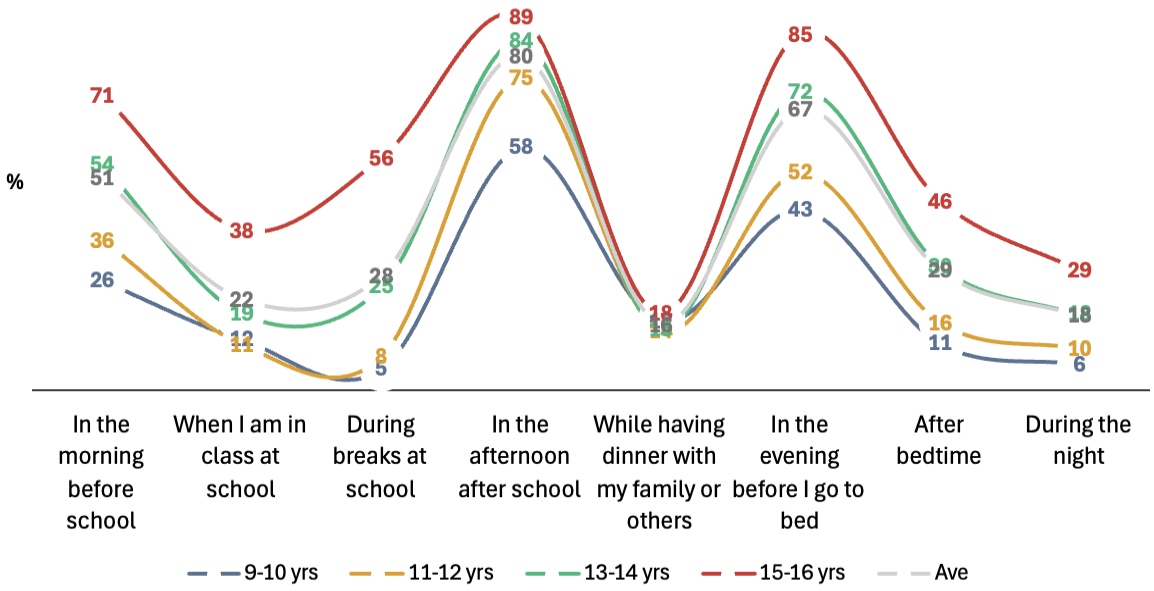
For further research insights, see the EUKO national reports and our forthcoming full findings report.

Daily screen use

EU Kids Online has generally been cautious about using "screen time" as a concept or measure of children's digital lives. Time spent on screens can suggest that all digital media use is the same, when in practice children may be learning, socialising, creating, relaxing, seeking support, playing, or simply passing time. **From a research perspective, what matters is not only how much time children spend but what they are doing, with whom, for what purpose, and under what circumstances**. The same amount of screen use may have very different meanings depending on the child's age, family context, wellbeing, school demands, social relationships, and opportunities for participation. Still, questions about screen use remain important in public and policy debates, given concerns about sleep, routines, schoolwork, family life, and children's ability to disconnect. Hence, the survey asked about children's use of screens, including TV, mobile phone, computer games or tablets, at different times of day. While screen time is not a simple indicator of harm, the findings provide contextual information about how digital media fit into or disrupt daily rhythms such as mornings, school time, evenings, and bedtime.

Across a regular weekday, European children use multiple types of screens (Figure 1). **The peak time for using digital devices is after school, followed by in the evening before bedtime – in other words, during children's leisure time in the day**. Half of 9–16-year-olds (51%) use a screen daily before school - this could be to plan the journey to school, check on the weather, review the day's timetable, chat to friends or many other activities. This proportion rises to four in five (80%) using screens after school and two-thirds (67%) before bed. The proportions using screens are lower at other times - during class (22% say they do this daily), in school breaks (28%), during the family evening meal (16%), or after bedtime (29%). **Older teens generally use screens more than younger children, except during the evening meal.** There are few differences by SES (though those from lower SES homes make a little more use of screens during the evening meal). There are no statistically significant gender differences. Note that we do not know children's purpose (learning, leisure, social media or TV etc.) for using screens at these times. See the Appendix for more information.

Figure 1. Daily use of screens during the day.



QC 8 In the PAST MONTH DURING A REGULAR WEEKDAY, how often did you use any type of screen, such as TV, mobile phone, computer games or tablets? The graph shows the percentage of those who report to do this every day or almost every day. Base: All children aged 9-16 (number of respondents from 27,112 to 28, 053).

Online activities

In the digital age, children engage in many and various online activities, and their screens – especially their smartphones – serve multiple purposes. Across several waves of research, EU Kids Online has asked children about both their online activities and opportunities and their experiences of online risks of harm, to gauge the full range of their online experiences and how these might be connected. Figure 2 shows how often 9–16-year-olds have undertaken a wide range of online activities in the previous month.

Children's most frequent online activity is communication with friends. This is a daily activity for the vast majority, with half (49%) saying they do this several times a day.

Further top activities include watching videos on social media (7 in 10 do this every day), followed by listening to music and then communicating with their parents (6 in 10 everyday, about a third several times a day).

Playing games, streaming long-form media and doing schoolwork are also common. These are followed by multiple activities that children sometimes engage in, with wide variability in activities across the population.

Some, if not most, of these online activities are likely linked to social media use and would therefore be particularly restricted if Europe were to decide on age-based social media restrictions.

Less frequent are some activities that policymakers and the public have considered among the benefits of internet access. These include accessing news, health and other valuable forms of information. **Civic activities are also a relatively uncommon activity.**

These may be judged a policy problem as it suggests missed opportunities, and inequalities. The idea of a "ladder of participation" highlights that such activities may need explicit facilitation, especially if such participation is not to perpetuate inequalities, and also that more popular activities may usefully serve as the 'bottom rung' of the ladder, enabling the development of digital skills and confidence (Livingstone et al., 2019).

Some of the risky activities that policymakers and the public are concerned about are less frequent. These include looking for new contacts online, sharing information about themselves in public, or sharing others' personal information without permission.

We also find demographic differences. **Age differences are considerable**, with older teens undertaking more of most activities online, except for gaming and the less common activities. **It appears that restricting social media access for those younger than 15 or 16 is most likely to limit communication with friends and family.**

As found in previous EU Kids Online reports, gaming remains more the province of boys. Boys are also more likely to trade or buy digital goods, possibly reflecting their greater engagement with online games.

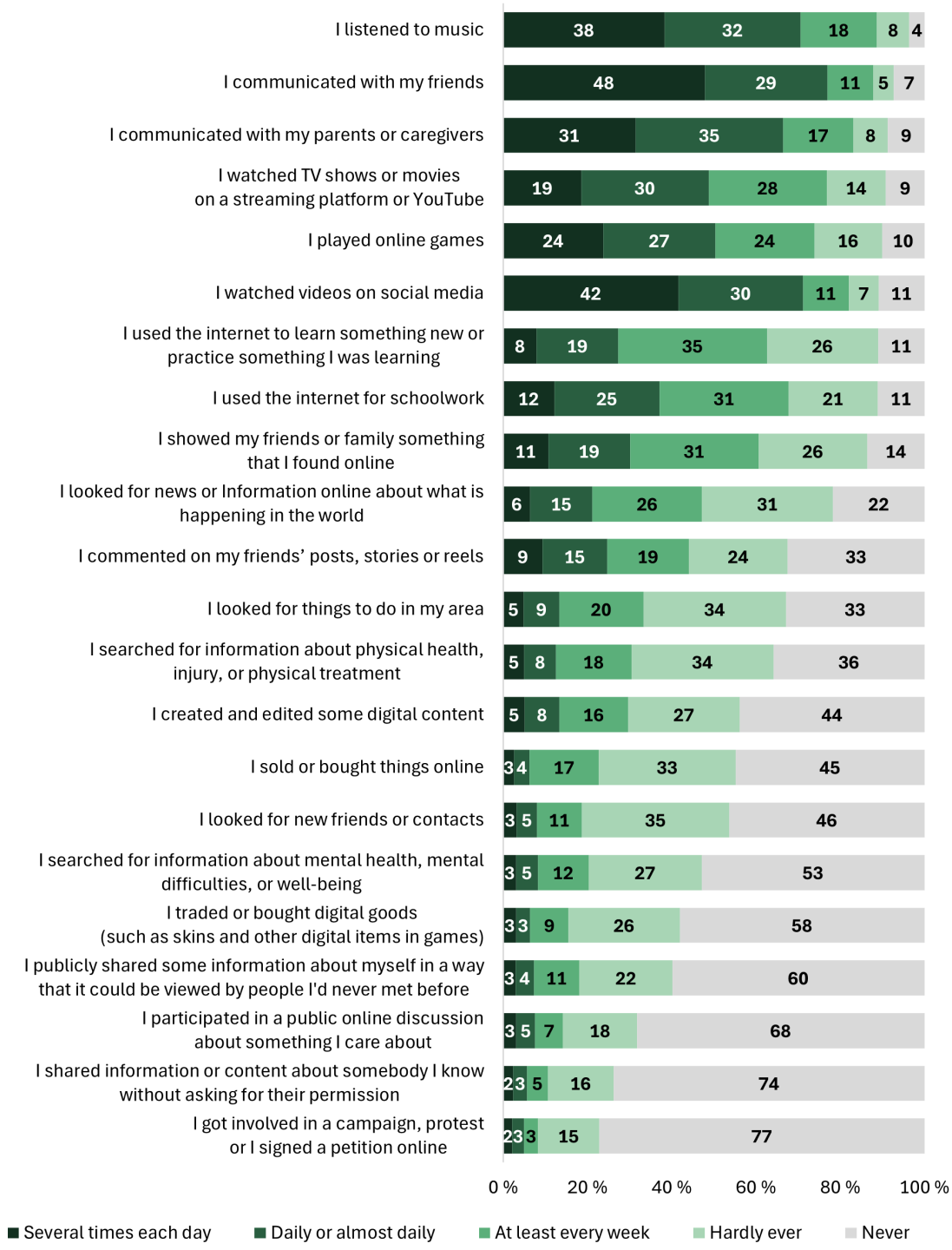
Importantly, children from lower socio-economic homes were more likely to search online for information about mental health and wellbeing. Children from low socio-economic status (SES) homes are twice as likely as better-off children to look for new contacts online or publicly share some information about themselves in a way that it could be viewed by people they had never met before, which suggests they may be more at risk.

The main change we observe between the 2018 and 2025 surveys is an increase in communication with family and friends. Daily or nearly daily communication with friends rose from 61% to 77% from 2018 to 2025, and communication with family members from 61% to 66% in the same period. The increase for friends may be a consequence of shifting norms during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Daily or nearly daily watching of video clips has risen slightly since 2018, (from 65% to 70%) of children, as has listening to music (from 65% to 69%) and gaming (from 44% to 51%).

There has been **only a slight rise in the proportion of children making near-daily/daily use of the internet for schoolwork (31% in 2018 vs. 37% in 2025) or looking for news online (19% vs. 21%)**. While the direction is consistently towards greater reliance on the internet, these are generally not large increases overall. Demographic findings are detailed in the Appendix.

Figure 2. Children's online activities.



QC9 and QC10 How often have you done these things ONLINE in the PAST MONTH? Base: All children aged 9-16 (number of respondents from 26,901 to 28,033).

Having a social media profile

In six countries (Switzerland, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Poland and Portugal), we asked children whether they have and use a profile on social media, defined as a page or place where they can post things others see, keep in touch with people and share content.

This is important because current debates about social media restrictions often focus on accounts, profiles, and age thresholds. However, having a profile does not define or necessarily limit their engagement with social media per se. **Without having a personal account children may and still do use social media-related services** to watch videos, listen to music, follow content, communicate with friends, family and other users, or encounter recommendations and advertising even without maintaining a visible profile (see also Figure 2). At the same time, having a profile may enable more active forms of participation, such as posting, commenting, messaging, sharing content, and keeping in touch with others. Also, having a social media profile does not necessarily mean that you are an active user.

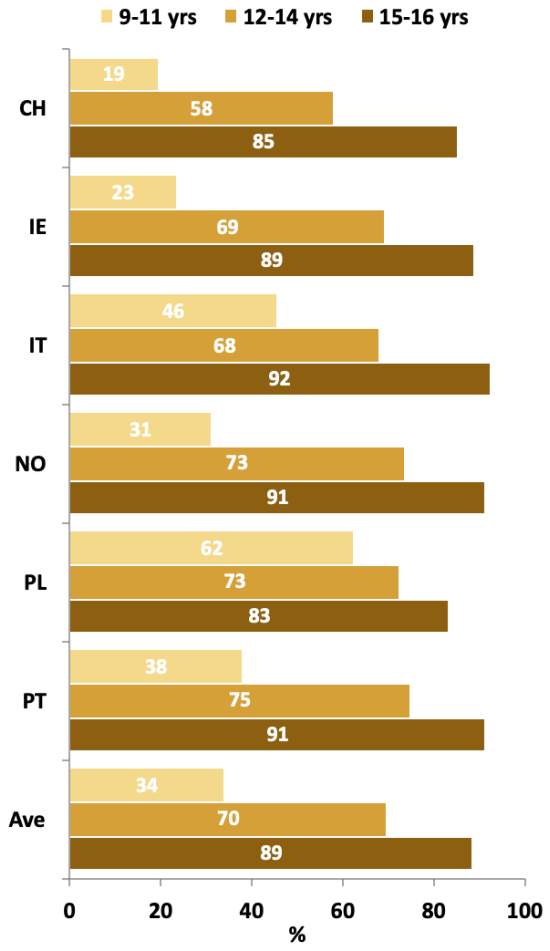
For this reason, the profile question helps distinguish between account-based participation and broader social media use. This, in turn, highlights who and what social media bans or age restrictions would potentially affect, and what kinds of online experiences might remain outside the scope of profile-based regulation.

Across all six countries, having and using a social media profile increases strongly with age. On average, 34% of 9–11-year-olds report having a profile, rising to 70% among 12–14-year-olds and 89% among 15–16-year-olds (see Figure 3).

Among 15–16-year-olds, social media profile use is very common across countries, ranging from 83% in Poland to 92% in Italy, suggesting that by this age, **having a profile on social media is close to the norm** across the countries surveyed.

The largest age difference is between the youngest and middle age groups. **In most countries, the share with a profile roughly doubles or more between ages 9–11 and 12–14**. We note here how many children have social media profiles even though this may be against platforms' terms and conditions, which are typically set at age 13 for major platforms.

Figure 3. Children with an account or profile on social media, by country and age.



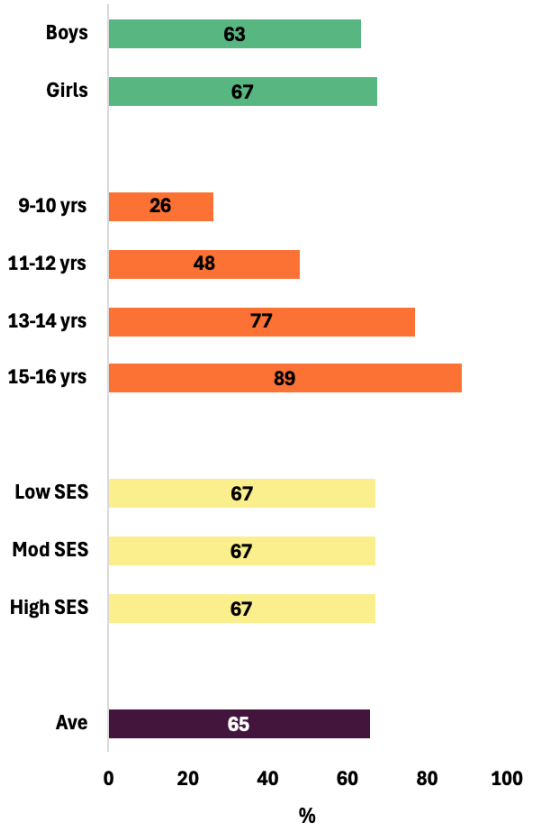
QO14 Do you have and use a profile on a social media? (i.e., a page or place where you put things that others see and where you can keep in touch with people and share things with them?) Base: See table 8 for number of respondents by country, age groups and gender.

This is not a new phenomenon and is consistent with our previous findings. Based on representative data from 25 European countries, EUKO in Livingstone et al. (2013) reported that **in 2011, 38% of 9–12-year-olds and 77% of 13–16-year-olds had their own social networking profile; one in five 9–12-year-olds had a Facebook profile despite the platform's 13-year age limit.**

Overall gender differences (Figure 4) are relatively small, with 67 per cent of girls and 63 per cent of boys saying they have and use a profile on average. Girls report slightly higher levels of social media profile use than boys in all countries, although the gap is small in most cases. Poland is the main exception, where the difference between girls (80%) and boys (68%) is more noticeable.

Interestingly, there is no reported difference by socioeconomic status: 67 per cent of children in low, moderate and high SES groups reported having and using a profile.

Figure 4. Children with an account or profile on social media, by gender, age and SES.



QO14 Do you have and use a profile on a social media? (i.e., a page or place where you put things that others see) and where you can keep in touch with people and share things with them? Base: Children in Switzerland, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Poland and Portugal aged 9-16 (7,868 respondents).

Safety and communication online

Children's safety online cannot be understood only through the lens of social media. While social media platforms are central to many current policy debates, children's digital lives and activities extend across a wider online environment. As demonstrated above, a substantial share of children's activities takes place outside social media, including gaming, messaging, watching videos, searching for information, school-related activities, and using apps and websites.

Risks may arise across all of these spaces, and children's sense of safety is shaped not only by specific platforms, but also by the broader conditions under which they go online: the design of services, the behaviour of others, the availability of support, children's digital skills, and the rules and resources provided by families, schools, industry, and governments. Social media-focused measures can only address part of children's wider digital environment. Thus, understanding children's general sense of safety online is important for assessing the broader conditions in which children use digital services.

This perspective is particularly relevant in discussions about age-based restrictions. **If access to some social media services is limited, children may not, and are unlikely to, simply stop communicating, sharing, playing or seeking information online.** Some may instead move to other digital spaces, including services that are less visible to adults, less well moderated, or subject to weaker safety systems. In such cases, negative experiences may become harder to identify, report and address. **Evidence on children's general feelings of safety, their experiences of online communication, and their confidence in knowing what to do when something unpleasant is therefore relevant to consider the potential the intended and unintended consequences of different forms of regulation.**

This section therefore examines children's general experiences of safety online. It asks whether children feel safe, whether they experience others as kind and helpful, whether they know what to do when something unpleasant happens, and how confident they are in navigating online situations.

Six in ten (61%) of 9-16-year-olds report that they know what to do if someone acts online in a way that they do not like – see Figure 5. Older children and those from higher socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds are more likely to say they know what to do (see appendix Table 2).

But only one in two children (48%) feel safe online – and only four in ten girls and four in ten of the youngest age group say so. And only a quarter of children (24%) say they find others kind and helpful online, and even fewer feel powerful online.

EU Kids Online asked questions comparing communication online and offline: do children find it easier to be themselves online, do they talk about different things, even perhaps more personal matters? The findings show that few children do any of these things. Nonetheless, we should consider the significance of these findings: **a minority of children go online to feel more fully like themselves, or to talk about personal things they cannot discuss in person. Age-based social media restrictions may leave these children without options.**

These findings are cause for concern. They lend strong support to efforts to regulate platforms through safety-by-design, among other measures, including digital literacy education. It is important that children feel safe online, that they can cope if they encounter a problem, and, most importantly, that platforms are regulated so that children do not encounter significant problems in the first place.

Comparisons over time

As already noted, wider policy debates assume that children's digital experiences have deteriorated over recent years.

In 2025, just 48% of children said they feel safe online.

In 2018, using different response scales, 28% said they always feel safe, 37% said they often feel safe, 24% said they sometimes feel safe, and just 10% said they never feel safe online.

The change from 10% who said "never" to today's 52% who say "no" indicates a decline in children's sense of safety online.

A similarly sizeable decline is evident in children who said they find people on the internet to be kind and helpful – 76% said they did not find this in 2025, but only 16% said they never found this (and 57% said they sometimes or never found this) in 2018.

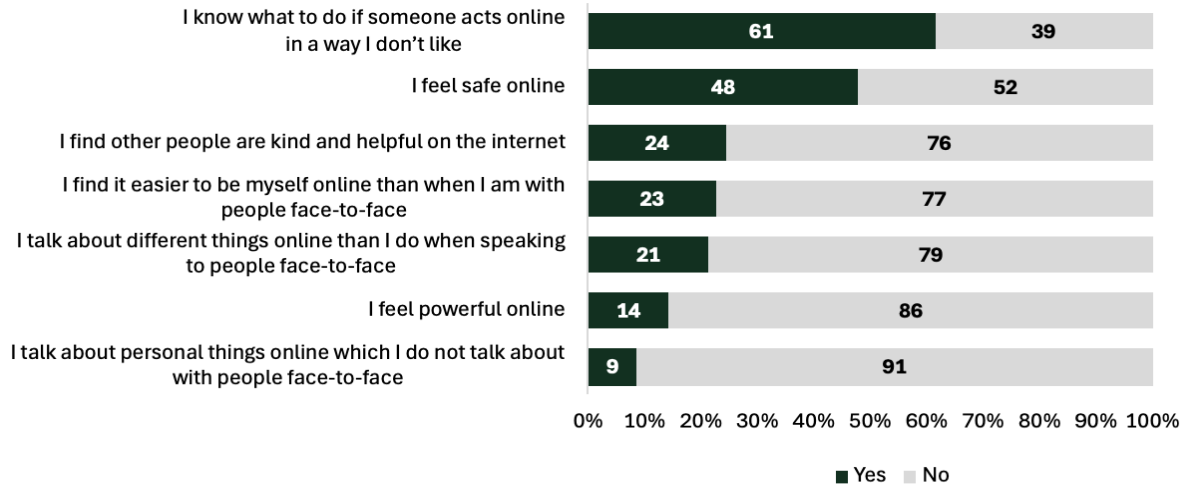
Also important is that, in 2018, only 13% of children said they never knew what to do when someone acted online in a way that they didn't like, and 20% said they only sometimes knew what to do.

In 2025 (Figure 5), 39% said they don't know what to do, while 61% do feel they do know what to do.

Children saying "I find it easier to be myself online" has declined slightly, from 29% to 23%.

Those saying they talk about different things online remain unchanged at 21%, and those talking only about personal things online have dropped marginally from 11% to 9%.

Figure 5. Safety and communication online.



QC15 Which of the following applies to you? Response options are shown in the Figure. Base: All children aged 9-16 (number of respondents from 25,490 to 25,495).

Harmful user-generated content

The EU Kids Online survey asked children about a wide range of online risks. For the purposes of this report, we focus on a small selection of questions that indicate children's exposure to potentially harmful user-generated content online. **This does not necessarily mean content encountered on social media. User-generated content circulates across many digital spaces**, including video platforms, messaging services, gaming environments, forums, comment sections, live streams, image-sharing services, and other websites and apps. A fuller analysis of children's experiences of online risks and harm will be presented in the forthcoming EU Kids Online full report in 2026.

A variety of forms of problematic content are reported by 12–16-year-olds in Europe. Conspiracy theories are the most common, highlighting the rise in mis- and disinformation online that researchers have widely documented (see Figure 6).

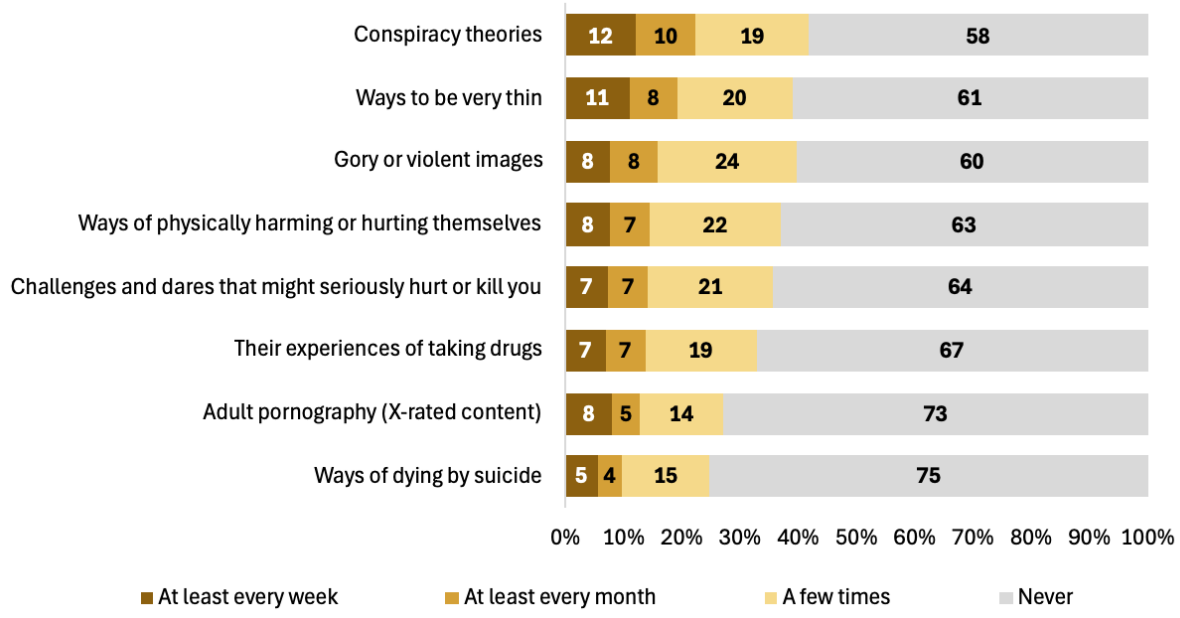
Figure 7 shows overall demographic differences, with detailed results in the Appendix tables.

Generally, older teens are more likely to see such content than younger children. As well as older teens, those from low SES homes are more likely to encounter content relating to self-harm or suicide.

Girls and older teens are more likely to see content linked to eating disorders – and this is the second most common form of harmful content that we asked about.

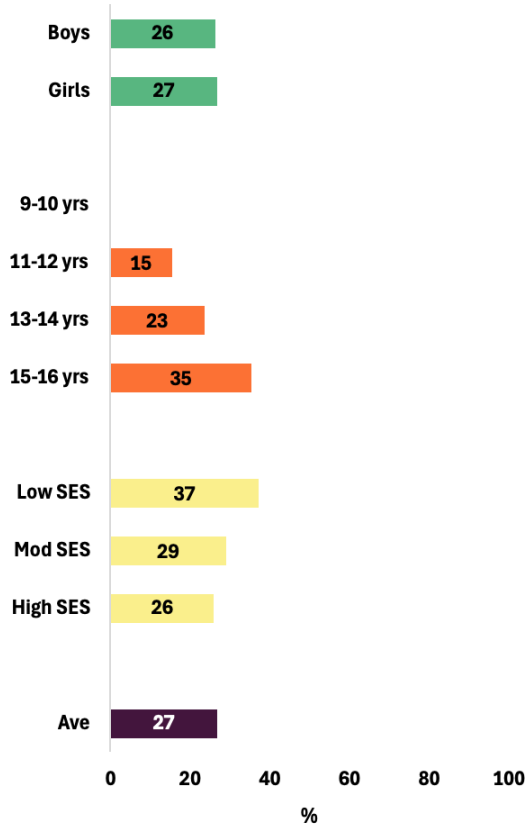
Boys and older teens report more exposure to pornography, although overall, three-quarters of children report little or no exposure to this.

Figure 6. Harmful user-generated content.



QC24 In the PAST YEAR, how often have you seen online content or online discussions where people talk about or show any of these things? Base: All children aged 12-16 (number of respondents from 17,743 to 18,697).

Figure 7. Exposure to harmful user-generated content by gender, age and SES.



QC24 In the PAST YEAR, how often have you seen online content or online discussions where people talk about or show any of these things? Those who have experienced one or more type of negative user-generated content weekly or daily. Base: All children aged 12-16 (number of respondents from 17,743 to 18,697).

Comparisons over time

In 2011 (for 11-16 year olds) and 2018 (for 12-16 year olds), EU Kids Online asked similar questions, enabling comparisons over time – though, as always, care should be taken given minor changes in survey methodology and countries surveyed, as well as changes in children's digital environment, notably their access to social media and gaming, along with underlying changes in platform operation.

- Ways of hurting/harming themselves – 2011: 7% (in the past year), 2018: 10% (at least monthly), 2025: 15% (at least monthly)
- Ways to be very thin – 2011: 10% (in the past year), 2018: 12% (at least monthly), 2025: 19% (at least monthly)
- Methods of suicide – 2011: 5% (in the past year), 2018: 8% (at least monthly), 2025: 9% (at least monthly)
- Taking drugs – 2011: 7% (in the past year), 2018: 11% (at least monthly), 2025: 14% (at least monthly)

Further analysis on these numbers found that experience with content related to suicide was predicted by on- and offline bullying experiences, and other vulnerabilities (Staksrud & Ólafsson, 2016).

When interpreting findings on young people's exposure to harmful user-generated content, several cautions are needed: Exposure does not automatically mean harm: children and adolescents may encounter such content accidentally, through recommendation systems, through peers, or as part of active searching, curiosity, identity exploration, or attempts to understand difficult experiences. Intentions and effects may therefore differ substantially between individuals and situations. Moreover, there are always multiple factors that shape children's wellbeing or adverse mental health.

Again, it is important to emphasise the need to distinguish between different types of online services, as harmful user-generated content may circulate not only on regulated social media platforms, but also in forums, messaging services, gaming environments, image boards, video-sharing sites, or other online communities. Finally, these findings should not be read as evidence of simple causality.

Children's worries

Understanding what children themselves worry about online is an important complement to measuring exposure to specific risks. Policy debates often focus on harms that adults, regulators, researchers or the media identify as most urgent. These concerns are important, but they may not fully capture what children experience as difficult, stressful, confusing or unsafe in their everyday digital lives. **Children may worry about issues that are less visible to adults, occur across different online spaces, or do not fit neatly into established risk categories.**

The EUKO survey, therefore, also asks about children's own worries to provide a broader and more child-centred picture of the online environment. It can indicate whether children's concerns align with current policy priorities, as well as where important issues may be overlooked. This is particularly relevant in debates about social media restrictions because children's worries may extend beyond social media. Asking children directly, therefore, helps policy makers assess whether proposed interventions address the problems children recognise themselves, and whether additional forms of support, regulation or education may be needed.

The survey asked them about a range of possible worries – see Figure 8 for the findings. These findings relate to a range of current issues on the societal and policy agenda. However, while adults – parents, policymakers, clinicians and the public – are concerned about children's time spent online and its consequences for their wellbeing, the EU Kids Online survey shows that **children have many and various worries on their minds**.

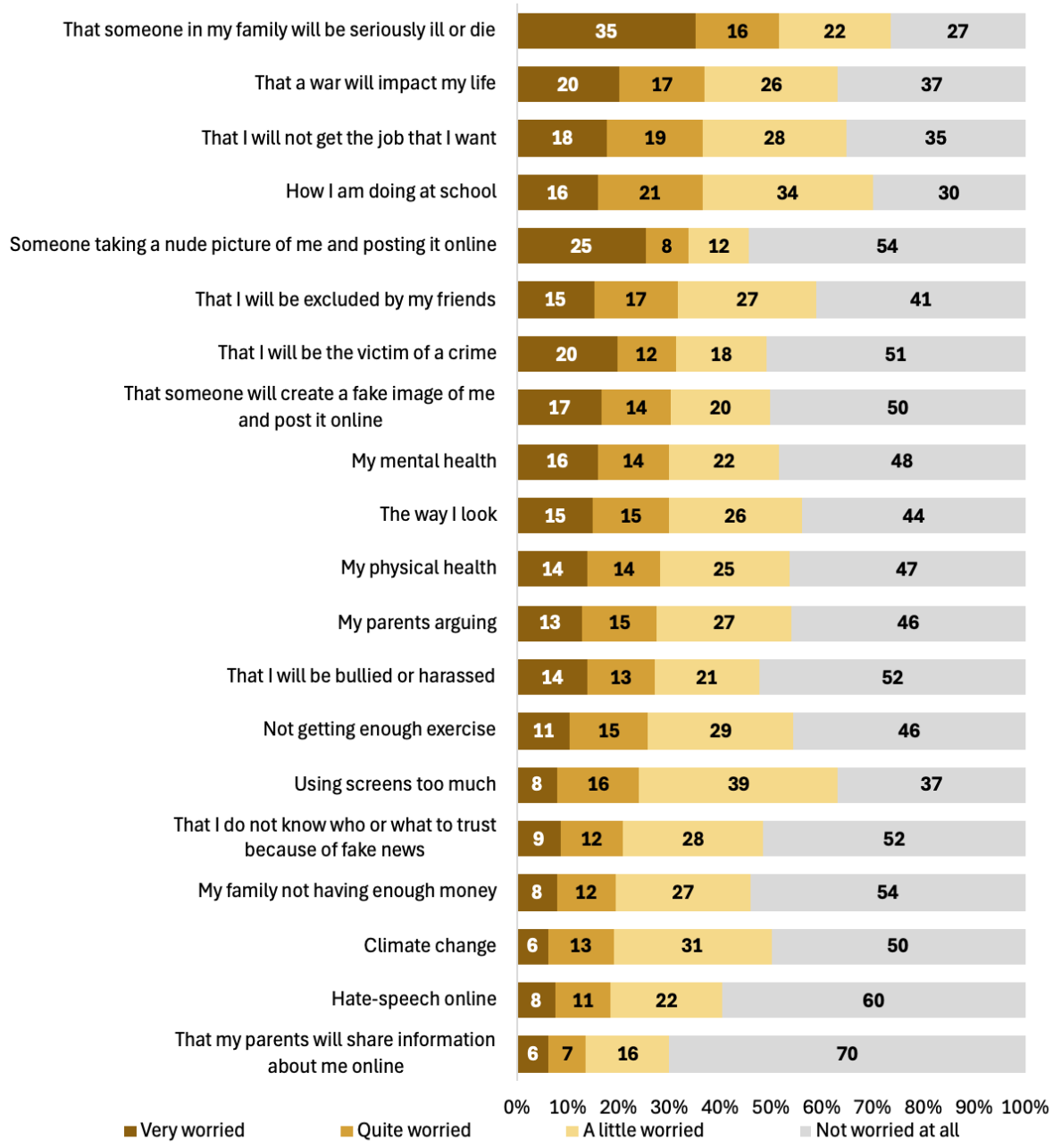
Importantly, we asked children how worried they were about a range of issues in their lives, including offline risks, online risks, health, school, family and wider societal concerns. The statements deliberately cover both digital and non-digital worries, allowing online safety concerns to be understood in context rather than in isolation.

Notably, around a third of children are not at all worried about using screens too much, a further third are a little worried, and the remaining third are quite or very worried.

Regarding age-based social media restrictions for children, the findings highlight several social media-related concerns that worry children. The highest is someone sharing a nude image of themselves or a fake image of themselves. Other worries could be related to social media (though these worries also existed long before social media), including being excluded by friends, mental health, and appearance (Kostyrka-Allchorne et al., 2025).

Most noteworthy, however, is the finding that children's top worries are different – that a family member may become ill or die, war, their employment prospects, and their academic achievement at school. Also striking is the wide range of worries children report. This suggests that children have many concerns, some of which are or could be linked to their digital lives, some of which are unlikely to be. Some concerns have also been suggested in prior research to lead children to value social media as an escape from their real-world worries. Though some may also be exacerbated by online experiences.

Figure 8. Children's worries.



QC30 Sometimes, and over a period of time, people might worry about different things in their lives, while other times they do not worry so much. Are you worried about any of the following things? Base: All children aged 11-16 (number of respondents from 19,973 to 21,597).

Children's own views on age-based restrictions

Children's own views are central to any debate about age-based restrictions on social media. Under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, children have the right to express their views on matters that affect them, and for those views to be given due weight. This is especially relevant in discussions about potential future bans, which could directly shape children's access to information, social connection, privacy, participation and safety online.

In four EUKO countries, Ireland, Norway, Poland and Romania, children were therefore asked directly for their views of age-based social media restrictions to better understand how children themselves assess the possible consequences of an age ban, including both the opportunities for protection and the risks of exclusion or reduced autonomy.

The question uses a mixed set of positively and negatively framed statements to capture different possible reactions to age-based social media restrictions. Some statements present potential benefits, such as feeling safer online or more comfortable with parental awareness, while others focus on possible harms, including reduced freedom, privacy, responsibility, learning opportunities and social connection. Mixing statement types helps avoid a one-sided interpretation of the issue and encourages respondents to consider both protective and restrictive effects of age bans.

The findings show that children and young people are highly ambivalent regarding how they anticipate or might experience age-based restrictions on social media. Figure 9 shows that one third of children (33%) somewhat or strongly agree that this would make them safer online. A quarter (23%) are unsure, and almost half (45%) disagree. Across the statements, there is no single dominant reaction: sizeable minorities see possible benefits, but equally large groups anticipate negative impact to autonomy, privacy, learning, social connection and participation online.

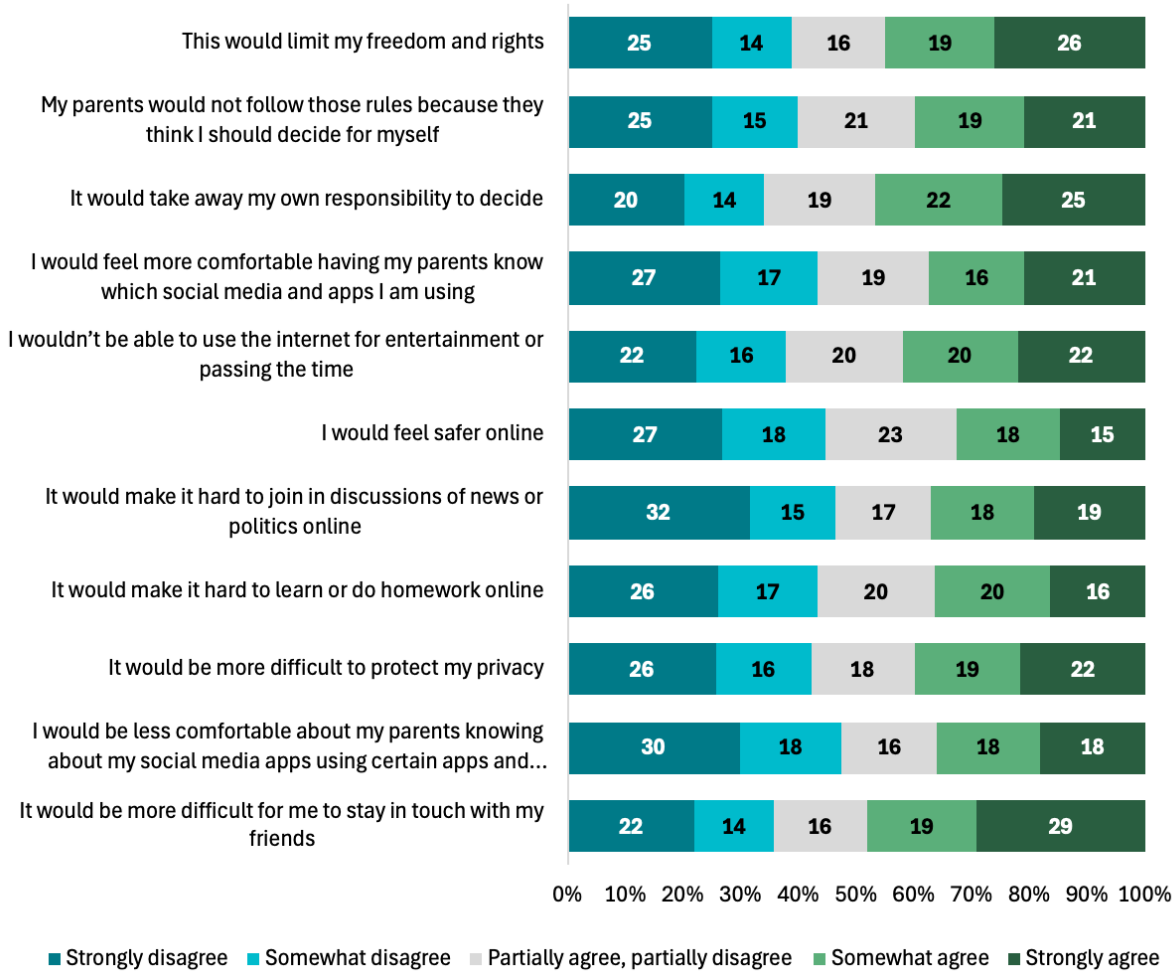
Children's greatest concerns relate to freedom, responsibility and social connection. Specifically, they are worried that such restrictions would make it more difficult to stay in touch with friends (half of them – 48%) say this, something that underlines how social media for many is part of everyday social life.

A fair proportion are also concerned about restrictions on their freedom and rights, their responsibility to decide for themselves, and adverse consequences for their civic engagement and schoolwork. A majority either somewhat (19%) or strongly agree (26%) that an age ban would limit their freedom and rights, and many also feel it would take away their own responsibility to decide (47%). This is important in the wider age bans debate because restrictions are often framed as protective measures, but young people may experience them as a loss of agency rather than as support.

The findings also complicate the idea that age bans would automatically increase safety. While a third of the respondents say they would feel safer online (33%), the majority (45%) do not agree.

Furthermore, safety cannot be understood solely as reducing exposure to harmful content; it also encompasses control over personal information, independence, and trusted relationships. As the figure shows, many believe bans could make it harder to protect their privacy or could increase parental visibility over their app use in ways that feel uncomfortable, while an almost equal amount do not agree, pointing to a diversity among children.

Figure 9. Children's views on restrictions on social media.



QO47 The government might make a law that says children under 16 can only use social media if their parents give permission. What do you think about this? Base: Children from Ireland, Norway, Poland and Romania aged 9-16 (number of respondents from 2,419 to 2,993).

Children also express concerns related to education and democratic engagement. Many respondents think restrictions could make it harder to learn, do homework, follow news or join political discussions. These findings point to a broader democratic and educational issue: age bans may reduce access not only to entertainment, but also to information, peer learning and civic participation.

Although EU Kids Online's previous research has shown children are often glad that their parents engage with their digital activities, especially when this is enabling (communication, safety guidance, joint activities) rather than rule-based or restrictive. In Figure 9 they are clearly divided about whether they want their parents knowing everything they do online or about whether they should be responsible for their own online decisions.

Conclusions

The EUKO survey findings make clear that **the vast majority of European children have come to rely on the internet for their everyday communication with friends and family, and for their entertainment.** It is likely that much of this activity takes place on social media platforms.

Social media's top use by children is for communicating with friends. Since the findings show that children's most frequent online activity is communication, a crucial question arises. If Europe introduces age-based social media restrictions, how do policymakers anticipate children will maintain their social relationships and obtain entertainment? If this is not to take place via social media, will children switch to messaging platforms or gaming platforms? Or will alternative provision be made for children to stay in touch, perhaps through safer streets and enhanced community play spaces?

Most children have a social media account. With two-thirds of European 9-16-year-olds having a social media platform, social media use is already an established part of everyday life for many children, especially teenagers. A potential ban would therefore affect the large majority of 12–16-year-olds, and not only a small minority of users. Social norms are hard to change, especially once a reliance on social media has become embedded in the wider society, and when alternative forms of social, participatory and entertainment activities are not readily available to children.

The finding that few children feel safe online is a serious warning signal. It strengthens the case for robust implementation and enforcement of European platform regulation, including the Article 28 Guidelines of the Digital Services Act. However, this evidence should not be interpreted as support for blanket age restrictions as the primary policy response. Such measures risk addressing access rather than safety, while overlooking the benefits children gain from digital participation and the fact that heightened risks are often reported among older teenagers who may not be covered by age-based bans. The evidence therefore supports a rights-based regulatory approach: one that places stronger obligations on platforms to prevent and mitigate risks of harm, while preserving children's opportunities for learning, social connection, creativity, civic engagement and participation.

It is commonly claimed that children are online "constantly" or that social media notifications interrupt their schoolwork or keep them up late or wake them during the night. The findings tell a more nuanced story. **Most use is after school, and before bedtime, followed by in the morning before school and during school breaks.** Use in class, during mealtimes, after bedtime or during the night is very low, especially for 9–14-year-olds. **Most families are managing screen use across the day.** From the findings on children's daily screen use by time of day, we suggest that, broadly speaking, children and families are managing to prevent children's screen time from interrupting their studies or sleep. However, as is widely reported, this may require undue effort from families. We acknowledge this possibility and again point to the ways in which the Digital Services Act and related European regulations now address the compulsive or potentially "addictive" features and business models typical of many platforms. If effectively implemented, the compulsive nature of social media and gaming platforms should be notably reduced.

The findings show that it is mainly the older teens who report exposure to potentially harmful online user-generated content. Age-based social media restrictions would not prevent much of this exposure, though it could protect a small but likely vulnerable minority of younger children. More important is safety-by-design that would benefit all children up to 18.

The survey findings suggest that **children's worries about online harms are real, particularly around image-based abuse and manipulated images, but they sit alongside wider worries about family, safety, school, health, conflict and the future.** This is important for the age-ban debate: policies focused only on restricting access to social media may address some anxieties, but they risk overlooking the broader social and emotional context in which children experience risk, safety and wellbeing.

The findings on safety and communication online point to a broader normative shift: **compared with the early days of the internet, children may have become less experimental, risky, or private in their online communication**, perhaps seeing the internet less as a contrast with their in-person interactions and more as

a continuation. They also appear to have become more risk-averse about the digital environment.

In conclusion, we suggest that the priority should be ensuring that children can participate fully and safely in a digital world. The present report's findings add to studies that suggest an age-based social media ban is unlikely to succeed in principle and in practice (EU Kids Online, 2025a). Instead, the evidence points to the importance of implementing Article 28(4) of the DSA as the most practical way to both protect and empower children (EU Kids Online, 2025b). If compliance with Article 28 were made mandatory, this would place evidence-based, rights-respecting, risk-assessed restrictions on platforms, improving their provision for children by design and default.

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Table 1. Frequency of general activities online (QC9 and QC10).

How often have you done these things ONLINE in the PAST MONTH?

% Almost daily to several times each day...	Boys	Girls	9-10 yrs	11-12 yrs	13-14 yrs	15-16 yrs	Low SES	Mod SES	High SES	Ave
I used the internet for schoolwork	35	39	**16**	**23**	**41**	**54**	39	39	37	37
I used the internet to learn something new or practice something I was learning (e.g., by watching tutorials)	25	27	**17**	**22**	**26**	**34**	31	26	27	26
I looked for news or Information online about what is happening in the world	22	19	**12**	**16**	**22**	**28**	25	20	22	21
I got involved in a campaign, protest or I signed a petition online	8	4	7	6	5	7	9	7	6	6
I created and edited some digital content (e.g., music, videos, gifs, memes)	12	12	11	12	13	13	17	12	12	12
I listened to music (e.g. on Spotify or YouTube)	**64**	**74**	**45**	**60**	**72**	**83**	66	69	71	69
I looked for things to do in my area	14	12	15	12	13	13	17	13	13	13
I watched videos on social media	69	70	**39**	**58**	**76**	**83**	64	69	72	69
I watched TV shows or movies on a streaming platform or YouTube	46	49	**38**	**42**	**50**	**54**	50	47	48	47
I searched for information about physical health, injury, or physical treatment	13	14	**10**	**11**	**14**	**18**	20	15	13	14
I searched for information about mental health, mental difficulties, or well-being	7	9	6	6	8	11	**15**	**9**	**7**	8
I played online games	**64**	**38**	48	51	53	50	49	52	51	51
I participated in a public online discussion about something I care about (e.g., mental health, the climate crisis, etc.)	10	8	8	8	9	11	14	10	8	9
I communicated with my friends (e.g., via Messenger, email, WhatsApp, Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, etc.)	73	81	**41**	**67**	**85**	**92**	**71**	**76**	**80**	77
I communicated with my parents or caregivers (e.g., via Messenger, email, WhatsApp, Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, etc.)	62	69	**38**	**58**	**72**	**77**	60	64	69	66
I looked for new friends or contacts	8	7	6	6	8	9	**14**	**7**	**7**	8
I commented on my friends' posts, stories or reels	**20**	**30**	**11**	**18**	**29**	**34**	28	23	27	25
I showed my friends or family something that I found online	27	33	**19**	**23**	**30**	**40**	32	31	31	30
I publicly shared some information about myself (including a photo or a video of myself) in a way that it could be viewed by people I'd never met before (e.g., on Instagram).	6	8	5	4	7	10	**14**	**6**	**7**	7
I shared information or content (e.g., photos, videos) about somebody I know without asking for their permission	6	4	5	4	5	8	9	5	5	5
I sold or bought things online	7	5	4	5	6	8	9	5	6	6
I traded or bought digital goods (such as skins and other digital items in games)	**9**	**3**	7	5	6	7	10	6	6	6

Numbers in **bold** indicate effects that are large enough to be of interest as measured by Cohen's h

Table 2. General perception of safety and communication online (QC15).
Which of the following applies to you?

% Yes...	Boys	Girls	9-10 yrs	11-12 yrs	13-14 yrs	15-16 yrs	Low SES	Mod SES	High SES	Ave
I feel safe online	**55**	**41**	**41**	**44**	**50**	**52**	42	45	51	48
I find other people are kind and helpful on the internet	25	23	21	21	26	26	24	25	25	24
I know what to do if someone acts online in a way I don't like	60	64	**44**	**59**	**65**	**66**	**53**	**64**	**63**	61
I find it easier to be myself online than when I am with people face-to-face	23	22	20	22	24	22	28	25	22	23
I talk about different things online than I do when speaking to people face-to-face	22	20	14	18	24	25	22	24	21	21
I talk about personal things online which I do not talk about with people face-to-face	8	9	**7**	**7**	**9**	**11**	12	10	8	9
I feel powerful online	17	11	15	15	14	14	14	13	15	14
I feel safe online	55	41	41	44	50	52	42	45	51	48

Numbers in **bold** indicate effects that are large enough to be of interest as measured by Cohen's h

Table 3. Use of screens during the day (QC8).
In the PAST MONTH DURING A REGULAR WEEKDAY, how often did you use any type of screen, such as TV, mobile phone, computer games or tablets?

% Almost every day or every day...	Boys	Girls	9-10 yrs	11-12 yrs	13-14 yrs	15-16 yrs	Low SES	Mod SES	High SES	Ave
In the morning before school	48	53	**26**	**36**	**54**	**71**	46	53	52	51
When you are in class at school	21	22	**12**	**11**	**19**	**38**	21	22	22	22
During breaks at school	25	30	**5**	**8**	**25**	**56**	27	27	29	28
In the afternoon after school	79	82	**58**	**75**	**84**	**89**	77	82	81	80
While having dinner with my family or others	16	16	17	14	15	18	**23**	**16**	**15**	16
In the evening before I go to bed	66	69	**43**	**52**	**72**	**85**	66	69	68	67
After bedtime	27	30	**11**	**16**	**30**	**46**	31	29	29	29
During the night	17	18	**6**	**10**	**18**	**29**	22	18	18	18

Numbers in **bold** indicate effects that are large enough to be of interest as measured by Cohen's h

Table 4. Experience and frequency of harmful user generated content (QC24).

In the PAST YEAR, how often have you seen online content or online discussions where people talk about or show any of these things?

% Monthly or more often...	Boys	Girls	9-10 yrs	11-12 yrs	13-14 yrs	15-16 yrs	Low SES	Mod SES	High SES	Ave
Ways of physically harming or hurting themselves	12	15	n.a.	**8**	**13**	**19**	**21**	**14**	**13**	14
Ways of dying by suicide	8	10	n.a.	**5**	**9**	**12**	**16**	**10**	**8**	9
Ways to be very thin (such as being anorexic or bulimic, or "thinspiration")	**10**	**24**	n.a.	**10**	**18**	**24**	24	19	18	18
Their experiences of taking drugs	12	12	n.a.	**4**	**10**	**21**	15	14	14	13
Gory or violent images, for example of people hurting other people or animals?	15	14	n.a.	**7**	**13**	**22**	21	16	14	15
Challenges and dares that might seriously hurt or kill you	14	13	n.a.	**8**	**13**	**18**	20	13	13	13
Conspiracy theories	20	21	n.a.	**10**	**19**	**30**	24	23	20	21
Adult pornography (X-rated content)	**15**	**8**	n.a.	**4**	**9**	**20**	18	13	11	12

Numbers in **bold** indicate effects that are large enough to be of interest as measured by Cohen's h

Table 5. What children are worried about (QC30).

Sometimes, and over a period of time, people might worry about different things in their lives, while other times they do not worry so much. Are you worried about any of the following things?

% Quite worried or very worried...	Boys	Girls	9-10 yrs	11-12 yrs	13-14 yrs	15-16 yrs	Low SES	Mod SES	High SES	Ave
My family not having enough money	18	21	n.a.	20	18	20	**50**	**28**	**13**	19
My parents arguing	24	31	n.a.	30	26	27	**45**	**34**	**24**	28
How I am doing at school	**31**	**42**	n.a.	**30**	**38**	**43**	**47**	**42**	**34**	37
Not getting enough exercise	25	27	n.a.	**21**	**25**	**31**	**36**	**31**	**23**	26
Using screens too much	23	26	n.a.	22	24	26	31	27	23	24
That someone in my family will be seriously ill or die	47	56	n.a.	54	52	50	**65**	**57**	**49**	52
Climate change	0	0	n.a.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
That I will be excluded by my friends	**24**	**39**	n.a.	32	33	31	**45**	**37**	**29**	32
That I will be bullied or harassed	22	31	n.a.	**31**	**27**	**23**	**43**	**32**	**23**	27
The way I look	**20**	**39**	n.a.	**23**	**31**	**36**	**40**	**34**	**28**	30
That my parents will share information about me online	14	13	n.a.	15	13	12	**26**	**16**	**12**	14
Someone taking a nude picture of me and posting it online	33	34	n.a.	**41**	**33**	**28**	**50**	**38**	**30**	34
That I will be the victim of a crime	30	32	n.a.	**36**	**30**	**27**	**47**	**37**	**28**	31
My mental health	26	34	n.a.	29	29	32	**47**	**36**	**26**	30
My physical health	26	30	n.a.	28	27	29	**44**	**33**	**25**	28
That someone will create a fake image of me and post it online	28	33	n.a.	**36**	**30**	**26**	**46**	**35**	**27**	30
That I will not get the job that I want	33	40	n.a.	**33**	**36**	**41**	**49**	**42**	**34**	37
That a war will impact my life	34	40	n.a.	**41**	**36**	**34**	**49**	**43**	**34**	37
Hate-speech online	16	21	n.a.	**22**	**18**	**16**	**30**	**21**	**16**	19
That I do not know who or what to trust because of fake news	18	24	n.a.	**23**	**20**	**19**	**36**	**25**	**18**	21

Numbers in **bold** indicate effects that are large enough to be of interest as measured by Cohen's h

Table 6. Views on age restriction on social media (QO47).

The government might make a law that says children under 16 can only use social media if their parents give permission. What do you think about this?

% Somewhat agree or strongly agree...	Boys	Girls	9-10 yrs	11-12 yrs	13-14 yrs	15-16 yrs	Low SES	Mod SES	High SES	Ave
It would be more difficult for me to stay in touch with my friends	44	51	**35**	**40**	**55**	**53**	46	55	46	48
I would be less comfortable about my parents knowing about my social media apps using certain apps and services when my parents know about them	35	37	33	33	37	39	43	42	33	36
It would be more difficult to protect my privacy	38	41	**30**	**33**	**42**	**48**	45	46	38	40
It would make it hard to learn or do homework online	35	37	**31**	**31**	**37**	**42**	**47**	**39**	**35**	37
It would make it hard to join in discussions of news or politics online	39	35	41	29	39	40	**54**	**41**	**35**	37
I would feel safer online	34	32	29	36	33	32	**44**	**38**	**30**	33
I wouldn't be able to use the internet for entertainment or passing the time	40	44	**32**	**38**	**44**	**46**	47	45	41	42
I would feel more comfortable having my parents know which social media and apps I am using	37	39	**47**	**47**	**36**	**28**	**47**	**41**	**35**	37
It would take away my own responsibility to decide	44	48	44	39	51	49	**55**	**52**	**44**	47
My parents would not follow those rules because they think I should decide for myself	41	39	38	32	39	46	**53**	**39**	**39**	40
This would limit my freedom and rights	42	47	42	37	47	50	**55**	**49**	**43**	45

Numbers in **bold** indicate effects that are large enough to be of interest as measured by Cohen's h

Appendix

This report is based on survey data collected in 19 European countries between April 2025 and April 2026 by members of the EU Kids Online network. The questionnaire was designed to be administered in a school-based sample. It contained questions that can be compared with previous EU Kids Online surveys and new questions that were intended to capture recent developments in children's use of digital technologies (Livingstone, Mascheroni & Staksrud, 2018).

The survey sample

The countries that participated in the survey collected at least 1,000 responses and designed the sample so that if data were collected through schools, there would be at least 50 primary sampling units on the school level. To meet the criteria for a minimum number of primary sampling units on the school level and to facilitate country-level analysis of the data (for example, by regions), several countries chose to collect more than the minimum number of individual respondents. The overall dataset thus comprises 31,453 children from 19 European countries. In some countries, the sample also included children outside of the target group from 9 to 16 (mostly older children that were included in the survey to facilitate country-level analysis), and a few children outside the target age range also responded to the survey as they were in classes that had been recruited for the survey.

Furthermore, not all countries were able to cover the whole age range from 9 to 16, as data collection was restricted for children below a certain age. This was the case in Belgium and Finland. Several countries also encountered resistance from schools in providing access to the youngest respondents, with school principals frequently raising concerns that the survey might result in a backlash from parents due to the nature of some of the questions. This is interesting, as most of the questions have previously been used with the same age groups in EU Kids Online surveys, both in school-based surveys and face-to-face interviews.

To ensure comparability across countries, the data have been restricted to respondents aged 9 to 16, totalling 29,169 children for this report.

Table 7 shows the unweighted number of respondents for each country by age and gender. To adjust for the uneven number of respondents across countries, a population weight was added to the data so that each country would contribute equally to the overall average. This weight adjusts the data so that the sample size in each country is 1,000 children (in Malta, the sample size was adjusted to 250 children).

Binary gender categories were evenly distributed in the overall sample and within each country. A small number of children did not identify themselves within the binary boy/girl categories and ticked "Other", "Don't know", "Prefer not to answer", or left the gender question unanswered, totalling 756 respondents across all 19 countries in the targeted age range. Within this group, 217 children selected the category 'other', which is not large enough to support reliable statistical analysis before additional data checks were carried out, and this group was therefore excluded when the data was analysed by gender.

The age distribution is relatively balanced across the four age groups. Children aged 11–12, 13–14 and 15–16 years each constitute approximately 30% of the valid sample, while the youngest group (9–10 years) is smaller and accounts for just over 10% of the sample. This distribution ensures robust representation of both younger and older children, while placing analytical weight on early and mid-adolescence, where digital autonomy is expected to increase most markedly.

Research ethics and data management

Ethical considerations and the handling of personal information were carried out in accordance with national laws, regulations, and ethical guidelines in each country, and with EUKO principles. These were managed by the national research teams, who obtained required approvals and ensured that data collection complied with relevant standards for research involving children. Informed consent/assent was secured from all participants. Further details on ethical procedures can be found in national reports. For the purposes of international analysis, data from each country were shared in anonymised form and subsequently merged into a single international dataset, ensuring that no personally identifiable information was included.

A note on the analysis

This report presents EU-aggregated patterns and do not capture country variations.

The survey questions are analysed in relation to a set of key background characteristics, including country, age, gender and perceived socioeconomic status. In addition to measures of use, the survey also included selected questions on children's attitudes towards the regulation of social media.

While overarching trends provide valuable comparative insights, significant variation exists across countries in legal structures, cultural contexts, access to technology, and child protection systems. It is important to acknowledge that **findings should be interpreted alongside national contexts and supplemented by the work of national EU Kids Online (EUKO) teams and country-specific reports**, which offer more detailed and contextually grounded evidence.

Table 7. Number of respondents by country, age groups and gender[1]

	Total	Boys	Girls	9-10 yrs	11-12 yrs	13-14 yrs	15-16 yrs
AT	1,670	735	894	35	334	635	666
BE	981	487	475	-	8	389	583
CH	1,371	686	656	256	386	421	308
CZ	2,344	1,198	1,102	502	603	669	570
EE	2,408	1,180	1,186	313	738	725	632
ES	2,596	1,298	1,212	348	767	720	761
FI	1,008	451	514	-	350	350	307
HR	1,024	487	543	32	317	314	361
IE	879	440	439	181	253	235	210
IT	2,170	1,109	1,030	351	776	500	543
LU	1,202	578	606	140	428	325	309
LV	2,287	1,131	1,068	689	564	503	531
MT	232	114	109	111	49	32	40
NO	1,048	521	514	115	328	333	272
PL	1,502	667	750	43	480	490	489
PT	1,988	967	996	147	641	712	488
RO	1,093	516	559	184	264	302	343
RS	1,675	800	844	41	487	435	712
SK	1,691	821	830	116	602	564	409
Total	29,169	14,185	14,228	3,606	8,375	8,654	8,534

[1] Note: Numbers for girls and boys in Croatia and Czechia, as well as for girls in Switzerland, differ slightly from those reported in the EUKO AI report (Staksrud et al., 2026) due to coding adjustments.

National contacts for the EUKO child survey

Country	Main contact/national PI	Funder
Austria	Assoc. Prof. Sascha Trültzsch-Wijnen, Department of Communication, University of Salzburg, Prof. Christina Ortner, Department of Communication and Knowledge Media, University of Applied Sciences Upper Austria and Prof. Christine Trültzsch-Wijnen, Salzburg University of Education Stefan Zweig	Own research funds
Belgium	Prof. Leen d'Haenens, Faculty of Social Sciences, Media Culture & Policy Lab, KU Leuven	Own research funds
Croatia	Asst. Prof. Lana Ciboci Perša, Association for Communication and Media Culture, Catholic University of Croatia	Association for Communication and Media Culture (NGO organisation), Agency for Electronic Media
Czech Republic	Assoc. Prof. Hana Machackova, Interdisciplinary Research Team on Internet and Society, Masaryk University	Programme Johannes Amos Comenius under the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic from the project "Research of Excellence on Digital Technologies and Wellbeing CZ.02.01.01/00/22_008/0004583", co-financed by the European Union.
Estonia	Prof. Veronika Kalmus, Institute of Social Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Tartu Dr Iiris Tuvi, Institute of Psychology, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Tartu	The Ministry of Social Affairs and the Development Fund of the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Tartu
Finland	Prof. Sirkku Kotilainen, Faculty of Information Technology and Communication Sciences, Tampere University	Media Industry Research Foundation of Finland
Ireland	Prof. Brian O'Neill, Technological University Dublin	Coimisiún na Meán
Italy	Prof. Giovanna Mascheroni, OssCom – Research Centre on Media and Communication, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore	Own research funds
Latvia	Researcher Gints Klāsons, Applied Research Project Manager, Latvian Academy of Culture	Latvian Academy of Culture (LKA)
Luxembourg	Prof. Claudine Kirsch, Faculty of Humanities, Education and Social Sciences, Department of Humanities	Own research funds
Malta	Prof. Mary Anne Lauri, Psychology, Faculty for Social Wellbeing, University of Malta	Own research funds
Norway	Prof. Elisabeth Staksrud, Department of Media and Communication, University of Oslo	Ministry of Children and Families, Ministry of Education and Research and Ministry of Culture and Equality
Poland	Prof. Jacek Pyżalski, Faculty of Educational Studies, Adam Mickiewicz University	Fundacja Orange
Portugal	Asst. Prof. Susana Batista, Sociology, NOVA FCSH	Gulbenkian, Associação Ponto PT e Fundação Millennium
Romania	Dr Anca Velicu, Institute of Sociology, Romanian Academy	The Romanian Ministry of Education and Research, CCCDI – UEFISCDI, PN-IV-PCB-RO-MD-2024-0424.
Serbia	Asst. Prof. Tijana Milošević, Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), OSCE Mission to Serbia [Media Reform Sector] and the United Nations Development Programme, Serbia (UNDP Serbia)
Slovakia	Assoc. Prof. Pavel Izrael, Department of Journalism, Faculty of Arts and Letters, Catholic University in Ružomberok	The Slovak Research and Development Agency (Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of the Slovak Republic)
Spain	Dr Maialen Garmendia Larrañaga, Faculty of Education, Philosophy, and Anthropology, University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU)	Safer Internet Centre Spain, Call DIGITAL-2023-DEPLOY - 04 - NETWORK OF SICs
Switzerland	Prof. Martin Hermida, Schwyz University of Teacher Education	Federal Social Insurance Office – FSIO, Schweizerische Kriminalprävention and Action Innocence

About EU Kids Online

EU Kids Online is a multinational, multidisciplinary research network that studies children's online opportunities, risks, and safety. The network uses multiple research methods to examine children's and parents' experiences of the internet and to support the development of knowledge relevant to policy and practice at national, European, and international levels.

EU Kids Online adopts a children's rights perspective, in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and General Comment No. 25 on children's rights in relation to the digital environment. Its holistic approach to children's digital lives includes children's participation, protection, privacy, provision, dignity, and voice.

Organisation

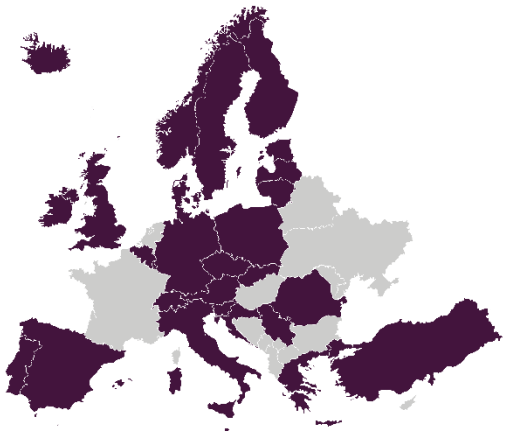
EU Kids Online operates as an independent research collaboration without centralised core funding. Participation from national research teams generally depends on support from national authorities.

The network coordinator is Professor Elisabeth Staksrud, Department of Media and Communication, University of Oslo, Norway, assisted by the EUKO Management Group. Each national research team is led by a national coordinator who ensures that research activities in their country are rigorous and aligned with the network's overall agenda.

Current phase and ongoing work

Building on nearly two decades of research activity, EU Kids Online is now undertaking its Phase V. This phase includes a new representative survey building on the previous 2010 and 2018 surveys, designed to capture developments in children's digital lives.

This report is the second thematic report from the 2025 survey. The first report is *European children's use and understanding of Generative AI* (Staksrud et al. 2026), https://researchonline.lse.ac.uk/id/eprint/137132/



EU Kids Online research principles

- **High-quality science**: We conduct scientific research using rigorous and transparent methodologies appropriate to the research task, including enabling cross-country comparisons.

- **Ethical**: We follow the highest standard of ethical principles and practices in research with children and young people.

- **Balanced analysis**: We seek to be informed and balanced in our approach, and to critique overly optimistic, alarmist, moralistic or reductive accounts of technology's impacts on children.

- **Evidence-based policy**: We actively seek to expand and deepen academic, policymaker and public understanding of children's digital lives by promoting relevant and high-quality research, also noting research weaknesses and gaps as appropriate.

- **Open**: We disseminate our findings fairly and honestly, using open-access and/or peer-reviewed outlets wherever possible.

- **Independence and transparency**: We engage with multiple stakeholders, including government, policymakers, industry and civil society, sustaining an independent approach and avoiding conflicts of interest.

- **Integrity**: We conduct all our research and collaborations with integrity and are transparent about our sources of funding.

For further information, see **www.eukidsonline.net**