

## Global Kids Online: Research Synthesis 2015-2016

### Aims

The Global Kids Online project has been established to gather rigorous cross-national evidence on children's online access risks, opportunities and rights, especially in countries where the massive expansion of the internet is relatively new. It aims to generate qualitative and quantitative evidence on children's online access and activities, risks and opportunities, analysing how these affect their well-being and rights and thereby gaining a deeper understanding of children's digital experiences that is attuned to their individual and contextual diversities and sensitive to cross-national differences, similarities, and specificities. Global Kids Online has also developed flexible and practical methodological tools for national researchers to collect data on and with children aged 9-17 who use the internet. By doing so, it intends to strengthen an international network of experts in the field who can monitor global trends, support the interface between evidence and policy, and help disseminate findings to relevant audiences on the global level. The synthesis report of 2015-2016 shows pilot evidence from Argentina, the Philippines, Serbia and South Africa.

### Key Findings

- Children predominantly access the internet at home and through mobile devices.
- The majority of children learn something new by searching the internet.
- Younger internet users lack the digital skills of their older peers.
- Younger children's digital safety skills also need support.
- A substantial minority of young internet users have had contact with unknown people online.
- Argentinian children are most likely to report having been bothered or upset online in the past year.
- Countries vary in the amount of risks encountered and the balance with online opportunities.
- Children are most likely to seek support from a friend, and rarely from a teacher.

### Policy Context

Access, skills, risks and opportunities are all part of the overall picture of children's well-being and rights in the digital age and should all, therefore, be kept in mind when developing policy interventions. Future policy and practice should also encompass the full range of children's rights

including the rights to information, education, protection, privacy and participation. Considering that children are not a homogenous group, it is suggested that policy makers differentiate policy goals based on the age of the child and places of internet access, among other factors, paying special attention to those who may be of greater vulnerability, such as indigenous or ethnic minority children. Most importantly, children's agency, including their desire to experiment and sometimes to take risks, and also their desire to be responsible for themselves and their actions, should be considered in the policy-making process. Last but not least, acknowledging the fact that the offline world still poses risks to children, policy and practice focused on the internet should not neglect offline risks, while that focused on offline risks should now take into account their online dimensions.

### Methodology

The qualitative and quantitative research sampled internet-using children aged 9-17 in the Philippines, Serbia and South Africa, and internet-using children aged 13-17 in Argentina. The South African sample included both internet users and non-users but the internet-related questions were asked only of the users. Surveys were conducted with both parents and children in the same household. The child sample sizes from the quantitative data collection were: Argentina (N=1,106), Serbia (N=197), South Africa (N=913) and the Philippines (N=121). Three out of four countries (Philippines, Serbia and South Africa) also conducted interviews with parents.

### Background

With children making up an estimated one third of internet users worldwide, living in the 'digital age' can have important implications for children's lives. Additionally, there is already a steady increase in internet access in the global South where evidence of children's digital experiences is very scarce.

**Report available at** [www.globalkidsonline.net/synthesis](http://www.globalkidsonline.net/synthesis)

**Sources** Global Kids Online website: [www.globalkidsonline.net](http://www.globalkidsonline.net)

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