GLOBAL KIDS ONLINE RESEARCH TOOLKIT

Quantitative guide

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Welcome to the Global Kids Online quantitative guide. This guide outlines the parameters of quantitative research with children and offers practical guidance on conducting the research.

Before using this you should consult *Getting started with the Global Kids Online research toolkit* ([www.globalkidsonline.net/tools](http://www.globalkidsonline.net/tools)), which introduces you to the purpose and approach of Global Kids Online, and explains the range of qualitative and quantitative research resources freely available to you at [www.globalkidsonline.net](http://www.globalkidsonline.net).

These tools have been developed to enable academics, government, civil society and other actors to carry out reliable and standardized national research with children and their parents on the opportunities, risks and protective factors of children’s internet use.

### Why conduct the Global Kids Online survey?

It is important to generate and sustain a rigorous cross-national evidence base in order to better understand children’s use of the internet and its associated opportunities and risks. Research allows children’s voices and experiences of the internet to be heard. The resulting knowledge about how children’s rights are being enhanced or undermined in the digital age can help to inform policy-makers nationally and internationally.

So far, most research has been conducted in the global North rather than the global South, and studies generally use different samples, methods and measures. As a result it is difficult to compare findings across countries or contexts, or to extend lessons learned in one context to another.

To produce meaningful comparisons internationally, the Global Kids Online survey is standardised to allow for cross-national comparison of data, yet flexible to account for local and contextual variations.

### What’s included in the quantitative toolkit?

The *Quantitative research toolkit* comprises the research instruments that will help you design, carry out and analyse the Global Kids Online survey on children’s online risks and opportunities. These are designed to cover the key topics identified by Global Kids Online, while remaining flexible enough to explore topics relevant to the lives of children in your particular country. In addition to this guide, the toolkit includes:

- Core (compulsory) survey modules, to optimise cross-national and longitudinal comparisons.
- Optional survey modules, to extend depth for particular topics.
- An optional module for parents of the children surveyed.
- Guidance for the construction of additional modules, tailored to new or specialist themes or specific country settings.
A short version of the questionnaire (‘essential indicators’) that can be incorporated into other surveys.

A data dictionary.

SPSS syntax files that construct a Global Kids Online data set structure and provide basic analysis of core variables.

All elements of the Quantitative research toolkit can be accessed at www.globalkidsonline.net/survey

Survey modules

The Global Kids Online survey covers an array of psychological, social and cultural factors that potentially influence children’s well-being positively or negatively, while simultaneously exploring children’s internet use in depth. The topics covered have been identified based on a combination of international literature reviews, the work of the EU Kids Online network, and the Global Kids Online pilot research in Argentina, South Africa, Serbia, and the Philippines.

See more information about the work of EU Kids Online at www.eukidsonline.net. The model is summarised in Livingstone, Mascheroni & Staksrud (2015, http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/64470/) and European findings are presented in Livingstone et al. (2012, http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/44761/).

Module A: Child identity and resources

Module B: Access

Module C: Opportunities and practices

Module D: Digital ecology

Module E: Skills

Module F: Risks and harm

Module G: Unwanted sexual experiences

Module H: Well-being

Module I: Family

Module J: School

Module K: Peers and community

Module L: Parent module

For the Global Kids Online model and framework see Method guide 1: Research framework at www.globalkidsonline.net/framework

Research toolkit is also designed for children who use the internet at least minimally. To be defined as internet users children should have ‘used the Internet from any location in the last three months’ (ITU, 2014: 55, www.itu.int/dms_pub/itu-d/opb/ind/D-IND-ITCMEAS-2014-PDF-E.pdf). We hope to develop questions for non-users in the future.

1 We follow the UN CRC in defining ‘a “child” as a person below the age of 18, unless the laws of a particular country set the legal age for adulthood younger’ (UN, 1989, www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx). Global Kids Online focuses on children aged 9–17, while also encouraging research on younger children and on young people aged 18+. The Global Kids Online
Module A: Child identity and resources
The first module of the survey, divided into two parts because of the varied sensitivity of the questions, includes questions on children’s demographic (age, gender, etc.) and socio-economic background, some psychological characteristics, health and able-bodiedness, and further measures of children’s capacities, experiences or vulnerabilities. Some of these issues are also addressed in the parental module. The data from this module can be used to explore or explain children’s ability to take advantage of existing online opportunities or their vulnerability to harm – for example, it is possible to explore how socio-economic conditions might influence children’s digital skills and online opportunities, or if parents’ digital skills influence children’s experience of online risk.

Module B: Access
This module seeks to explore and measure the growing complexities of online presence and participation by accounting for the diverse locations where children may go online, the multiplicity of devices they use, and the varying levels of access afforded in their country/area. It covers topics such as age of first internet use, intensity of internet use, places of use, devices used, and barriers to access.

Module C: Opportunities and practices
Online opportunities may (or may not) result in tangible benefits to children. To help identify the potentially positive outcomes for children, this
Module D: Digital ecology
This module explores how the specific assemblage of digital devices, platforms and services used by children shape the ways they engage with the internet (and, through the internet, with the wider world). It includes issues related to children’s use of websites or apps, their approach to online communication, behaviour and safety on social networking sites.

Module E: Skills
This module is focused on unpacking an array of digital skills, literacies and competences that capture the complexity of today’s internet use. It covers operational skills, informational/browsing skills, social skills, creative skills and skills related to mobile devices. The proposed measures allow for a multidimensional analysis of children’s digital skills and literacies, which opens up possibilities for exploring their mediating role in relation to resilience and well-being.

Module F: Risks
One of the most intensely debated areas of children’s online experiences is related to the exposure to risk. This module covers different types of online experiences that may put children at risk, such as meeting new people online, being treated or treating others in a hurtful way, exposure to sexual content (voluntary and involuntary), excessive internet use, and risky online opportunities, as well as the possible connections to risks experienced offline (whether face-to-face or via traditional media). It is also possible to measure whether children experience harm from such risk, or whether the activities do not lead to any problematic outcomes but instead might benefit the child. It can, therefore, be helpful to conceive of online ‘risky opportunities’ in addition to the otherwise stark opposition between risks and opportunities. The survey also distinguishes between the different roles children can play in relation to risky online content – as receivers, participants and actors.

Module G: Unwanted sexual experiences
The internet provides new challenges when combating child sexual violence. Based on good practice of research on child sexual violence online, the survey includes a series of questions exploring unwanted exposure and harm, as well as the need to assess, rather than assume, harm from such exposure. The difference between risk and harm may lie in the nature of the online content, but it may also depend on the child’s own maturity and needs. The module allows the outlining of some distinctions between unwanted and welcome exposure to sexual content or interactions, when compared to questions in Module F, where any exposure is recorded.

Module H: Well-being
With an overall purpose to understand what makes a difference to children’s well-being, the survey focuses on its economic (e.g., socio-economic status, availability of basic necessities, noting that these vary across countries), emotional (happiness, self-efficacy) and social elements (support from family, peers, educators and the community). Looking at well-being can also allow for a better understanding of the relationship between exposure to risks and harm and possible mediating factors.

The questions on well-being are located in this module, as well as throughout the survey under the appropriate sections (e.g., the section on social support from family, friends, at school), regarding them more as ‘predictors’ of internet experiences’ than ‘outcomes’. Well-being may also be the reverse of the SDQ measure included in ‘child variables’.

Module I: Family
This module, taken together with the following ones on school, peers and the community, shift the focus beyond the individual child, encompassing the social dimensions of children’s lives, focusing on important actors that also contribute to children’s well-being.

This module includes questions on the child’s relationship with their parents, where the child feels supported and safe at home, as well as a range of questions on the ways parents/carers and any other relatives mediate children’s internet use (family mediation is measured both from the child and parent/carer’s perspective) and the possible positive outcomes of such mediation. The questions allow distinguishing between different types of mediation including supervision, monitoring, discussions of risks and opportunities (‘active mediation’), and limiting use or activities (‘restrictive mediation’).

Module J: School
Similarly, the module on school experiences includes questions on children’s overall feelings about school life – belonging, being supported, school performance, pressure of doing school work, as well as the extent to which educators mediate children’s internet use.

Module K: Peers and the community
Peers, including but going beyond friends, can mediate children’s online experiences through involvement in (sub)cultures, influence perceptions of risks and opportunities, and introduce ways of coping with online risks and developing resilience. Hence, this module offers questions on the ways peers mediate online experiences and also how they might generally support and help the particular child. Community, including the often-extended social networks with which the child interacts (sub)cultures, influence perceptions of risks and opportunities, and introduce ways of coping with online risks and developing resilience.

These three modules allow for extending the analysis of how parents, educators and peers mediate children’s internet use and also explore children’s help-seeking practices and sources of support, both generally and in relation to online experiences.

Module L: Parent module
This module covers a number of topics that correspond to the children’s questionnaire, aiming to compare the experiences of the child and their parent/carer. These include access (frequency of use, places and devices, barriers to use), skills (the full range of digital skills), parental mediation, parental perception of child’s online risk and harm, sources of information about the internet, and a range of questions about the child and family’s background including household income, parental education and employment status, religiousness, and child disability. Parent data is powerful because it can be used to understand how parents’ experiences, attitudes and knowledge of the internet impact on the child’s skills and their experiences of risk and harm.

The survey and all other elements of the quantitative toolkit can be accessed at
www.globalkidsonline.net/survey

Administering the survey

- Access to children: where possible the survey should be conducted in the home (unless there are good reasons for a school-based survey). This should permit a quiet context for children to give their answers, with the interviewer able to answer any questions children may have. It also provides the best chance of interviewing the parent of the child to match their answers in later analysis.

- Access to parents: when the research involves the parent/carer of the child, this should be the parent/carer who is most involved in the child’s internet use, if more than one parent is available. It should be explained to the parent that questions about ‘your child’ refer to the target child selected for interview (see also the section on asking sensitive questions below, on dealing with privacy).
The survey can be delivered in a paper-based or electronic (computer or tablet-administrated) format. Some questions are routed (routing instructions are in red in the survey questionnaire) and the necessary adjustments should be made to follow the routing in both the paper-based and electronic formats.

- It is assumed that ‘Don’t know’ and ‘Prefer not to say’ options will be available for all questions and should be included either as an instruction to the interviewer (to inform the child that they could always pick these answers and to record when the child does so) or to be included as an answer option under each question.

- It is recommended that researchers use showcards with the response options for each question for paper-based questionnaires. This will allow children to see all the answers when choosing their response, and could reduce bias.

- Interviewers administer the survey to children and so it is vital to provide them with sufficient training before beginning fieldwork, to ensure that they have a good understanding of the survey topics and the procedures for administering the survey. It can be particularly useful to go through the full survey with all interviewers in a group setting prior to fieldwork and to conduct mock interviews, in order to establish the meaning of certain complicated concepts and to provide a common understanding. Interviewers should be encouraged to ask questions and highlight potential problems with the survey based on their knowledge of the local contexts. Since the interviewers are executing the implementation, the quality of data partly depends on their ability to understand and explain the survey to children. Interviewer training can help to ensure that each survey is delivered to each child in a similar manner, which will improve the quality of data and reduce bias.

See also Method guide 3: Survey sampling and administration at www.globalkidsonline.net/sampling

How can you ensure comparability of your data?

Choosing the modules and questions for your survey

For the Global Kids Online project, a main challenge is generating cross-nationally comparative and reliable data while also providing the flexibility to contextualise the research and make sure the questions asked are relevant to children’s local experiences. To address this challenge, the Global Kids Online survey is designed as a modular survey with core, optional, and adaptable questions:

- **Core** questions are comparatively few and must be included in the survey in any country. They cover most elements of the Global Kids Online research framework and provide balanced research on opportunities and risks. While they may be changed as the research progresses and children’s digital environments change, they are expected to remain fairly stable to retain comparability over time as the project moves forward and the Global Kids Online research network grows.

- **Optional** questions are more encompassing and numerous, covering the elements of the framework in more depth, or adding new topics or response options, and are available for use as appropriate to the research context or as determined by national researchers’ interests. As an example of an optional module, see that

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3 Researchers who are unable or unwilling to use all core questions have the option to become affiliate members and use only parts of the toolkit they find useful. For more details on the different types and membership and the associated requirements, see www.globalkidsonline.net/join

4 The intention is to include a selection of variables and permit the research teams to include those important in their context. This is to entrust partners to develop a contextually relevant survey, as this cannot be undertaken centrally.
on unwanted sexual experiences (Module G).

See also Method Guide 7: Researching online child sexual abuse at www.globalkidsonline.net/sexual-exploitation

- Adaptable questions invite individual countries to add questions or response options of particular relevance to them. This was important for current partners and also for future partners, to provide a mechanism for future flexibility depending on specific national, cultural or digital contexts. Once piloted and evaluated, these questions could become optional questions in a future revision of the survey.

Almost all survey modules discussed above contain core and optional questions and suggestions on how to adapt the survey to the local context. Only the modules on unwanted sexual experiences and the parent module are fully optional and do not contain core elements. This is due to the possible financial and ethical obstacles that future research teams might face when implementing these modules. Where possible, however, the inclusion of these optional modules is highly recommended.

Note that if the parent module of the survey is not conducted, Module A: Child identity and resources, should incorporate questions from the parent module about parental education and employment, child disability and ethnicity.

See also Method guide 9: Comparative analysis at: www.globalkidsonline.net/comparative

When adapting the survey, consider creating a document that outlines your adaptation of the quantitative tool to the country context and the research aims and sharing it with the Global Kids Online team at www.globalkidsonline.net/contact

Order of modules and questions
The order in which the survey modules or questions are covered is not fixed. The sequence suggested in the survey takes into account the sensitivity of certain topics and the need to build rapport with the participants. Certain modules (e.g., risks, well-being, family and some of the child variables) are identified as containing sensitive topics that need to be discussed with the participants in private. The order of questions or response options can be altered within each module if the research team believes that such changes might make it easier for children to respond. They can also be randomised to avoid ordering bias, but keep in mind that there are benefits to asking sensitive topics later on in the survey. Irrespective of the order of presentation in the survey, questions should be regrouped in the data set according to the Global Kids Online data dictionary for subsequent analysis.

Translating questions and response options
- Translations should maintain the original meaning of each question and response option to the greatest extent possible. In cases where literal translations do not produce meaningful sentences, marginal changes to phrasing can be made as long as the original meaning is retained. Ideally, the translation process should consist of: (a) two researchers experienced in opinion surveys independently translating the questionnaire and compiling the two translations into one; (b) the questionnaire should then be checked and sent to back-translation by a native English speaker with a sufficient level of knowledge in the source language; and (c) the back-translated documents should be checked against the original English questionnaire and all necessary adjustments should be made to the final questionnaire to avoid inconsistencies. Cognitive interviews should then be used to ensure that the questions make sense to children after translation.

For further guidance on adapting surveys, examples and best practice see Method guide 4: Adapting a standardised modular survey at www.globalkidsonline.net/adapting-surveys

Changing response options
- Beyond necessary translation it is
recommended that as few changes as possible are made to the core elements of the survey. If changes to certain response options are necessary, it is important that the length of the response scale remains the same. For example, a 5-point Likert scale, from ‘Strongly disagree’ to ‘Strongly agree’, could be replaced with a 5-point Likert scale with ‘Not at all true’ to ‘Very true’, but changing a 5-point Likert scale into a 4-point scale will make comparisons less reliable.

- Keep a record of any adaptations and note why these were necessary. Such feedback will be useful for further development of the toolkit. The Global Kids Online Steering Group will be happy to receive your experiences and insights.

Ensuring clarity and understanding
Some questions might need careful explanation to make sure that the children understand them as intended.

- The survey contains suggestions for how each section can be explained when administered to respondents (e.g., by use of showcards or by using examples to explain certain concepts), but these will often need to be adjusted for local use, and might need additional adjustment for younger children.
- Remember to establish at the outset what is meant by key terms, such as the ‘internet’ – for example, specify that it includes going online on any device in any place. Even simple terms may need interviewer explanation.
- Remind the child that they can skip any questions that they don’t want to answer and that they can ask for clarification.
- The interviewer should fill in the section on ‘Interviewer’s account of the survey’ for each participant, identifying any difficulties the child had in understanding the questions, or if the child got upset. This section can be found at the end of the questionnaire.

Asking sensitive questions and handling difficult issues
- It is recommended that questions marked as sensitive (‘Ask in private’) be asked in a confidential and private way (such as pen-and-paper with self-sealed envelope or computer-assisted presentation of questions to the child only), so that the child’s answers are not observed by the interviewer, parent or other. However, talking to a child ‘in private’ might be less culturally acceptable in some contexts, or practically unfeasible. In such cases, at minimum, the interviewer needs to ensure that parents or siblings are not close enough to overhear the child’s responses. Two different researchers interviewing the parent and the child at the same time might be a good way to achieve more privacy.
- Be prepared to refer children to support services, and consider alternative options in cases where formal services are not available.

Data entry, processing and quality controls
It is important to carry out quality control and back-check procedures to ensure a high quality of data. This might include:

- Checking if responses are valid and ID variables are consistent. The overall N would always be reported as the base, and the valid N should exclude missing responses and use of answer options ‘Don’t know’ and ‘Prefer not to say’. Findings can then be reported as percentages of the valid N.
- Strict quality measures should be applied at each stage of data collection – for example, ensure that respondents fit the sample criteria,
that recruitment procedures are followed, that missing data are clearly recorded, and that edit checks are used to ensure routing has worked correctly and that questions are accurately recorded.

For further guidance, see Method guide 4: Adopting a standardised modular survey at www.globalkidsonline.net/adapting-surveys

Recommendations for data analysis

Using the data dictionary
The Global Kids Online data dictionary contains standardised labels for questions and numeric values for response options in the child and parent questionnaires. It mirrors the labels and values used in the questionnaires, but also provides a more structured overview. Its purpose is to make sure that every Global Kids Online partner uses the same labels for questions and numeric values for response options when constructing their data set, to make analysis, comparisons and validation of data easier. It should be followed when questions and response options are labelled and numbered in the survey and when the data set is constructed. Note that the Global Kids Online Research toolkit also contains a written syntax for SPSS that will automatically create a data set with correct labels and values according to the data dictionary. This will make data input easier as long as the survey design follows the standard in the data dictionary.

Using the syntax
The Global Kids Online Research toolkit contains several pieces of syntax written for SPSS.

- The first syntax file will create a data set with a standardised structure for question labels and values for response options. This will help to make sure that the data sets produced by each individual country study are standardised across all countries.
- A second syntax file is provided to produce cross-tabulations of all core questions in the survey, disaggregated by socio-economic status, gender and age. This will facilitate reporting the descriptive statistics and is expected to save a great deal of time.
- Note that the two syntax files work together, and that the syntax that performs analysis only works if the data set is designed according to the standard Global Kids Online structure. It is therefore recommended that researchers first design and label the survey questionnaires according to the Global Kids Online data dictionary, then generate a data set according to the Global Kids Online data set structure by running the first piece of syntax. Once data from the survey have been entered, the analysis syntax can be run to produce outputs and estimates that are standardised and easily comparable across countries.

Dealing with derived variables
There are a number of derived variables that can be computed from the data collected by the survey. A list of the derived variables is available at www.globalkidsonline.net/survey

The exact naming, labelling and coding of variables can be found in the data dictionary at www.globalkidsonline.net/survey
List of essential indicators

Here we suggest a short questionnaire of essential indicators for inclusion in other surveys. This represents a selection from the full Global Kids Online questionnaire to address five priority areas:

- What is the frequency and location of children’s use of the internet? (Global Kids Online survey, question B6)
- What are the activities (or opportunities) that children undertake online? (C4)
- How digitally skilled are children? (E1)
- Have children encountered online risk of harm? (F11) and if so, how frequently? (F12) and how upset are they, if at all (F13)
- What social support do children get when they encounter online risks? (F14)

Future development of the survey

Global Kids Online aims to generate a rigorous cross-national evidence base on how children’s rights are being enhanced or undermined in the digital age that looks beyond the context of the Global North. We welcome further suggestions on how the survey can be adapted and extended, for example, in relation to:

- Improved breadth of measures (e.g., in relation to online activities, digital skills, etc.).
- Revision of measures based on statistical tests for scale construction and reliability.
- New digital devices for going online (mobile, personalised, diverse).
- Greater diversity of children’s life circumstances, internet access and experiences.
- Additional modules tailored to new or specialist themes or specific country settings.

What to do next?

There are a number of steps you could do next:

- If you have not read the Getting started guide on the purpose and approach of Global Kids Online, which explains which resources are available in the Global Kids Online Research toolkit, please read this at www.globalkidsonline.net/tools
- Guidance for future partners and minimum requirements for the Global Kids Online research are available at www.globalkidsonline.net/join
- Continue with the practical research instruments from the Quantitative research toolkit that will help you design, carry out and analyse the research.

All elements of the quantitative toolkit can be accessed at www.globalkidsonline.net/survey

- Read our methodological guidance on a selection of key topics related to researching children’s online risks and opportunities, giving practical advice to researchers (with case studies, best practice examples, useful links and checklists). See below for a full list of the relevant Method guides.

Method guides


qualitative and quantitative research with children of different ages. London: Global Kids Online. Available at www.globalkidsonline.net/young-children


A full list of the Method guide topics can be found at www.globalkidsonline.net/guides

Other useful resources

You can access the Research toolkit and findings from EU Kids Online at www.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/research/EUKidsOnline/Home.aspx

The Original EU Kids Online III Technical interviews report. Available at http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/60558/

Full qualitative research findings report. Available at http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/56972/

EU Kids Online Best practice guide. Available at http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/50437/


The Global Kids Online network has drawn on a range of methodological expertise. This included taking note of how the toolkit performs when administered through different systems of administration and locations, and reflexive consideration of how the findings are useful to and used by policy-makers and practitioners. All of these insights will be drawn on and developed further in future iterations of the toolkit.

Other materials from the Research toolkit

- Additional Quantitative research toolkit resources include: the survey, data dictionary, syntax files, list of derived variables, at: www.globalkidsonline.net/survey
- Qualitative research toolkit, at: www.globalkidsonline.net/qualitative
- Getting started with the Global Kids Online research toolkit, available at: www.globalkidsonline.net/tools
- Method guides, available at: www.globalkidsonline.net/guides
Further information on adapting the toolkit:
www.globalkidsonline.net/adapting