

SOUTH AFRICAN KIDS ONLINE:

A glimpse into children's internet use
and online activities.



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About Global Kids Online

*A digital toolkit to promote quality
global research on children's online experience*



Background

The internet is beginning to significantly impact all societies in numerous profound and dynamic ways, regardless of location, infrastructure and economic level. Recent global estimates suggest that one in three internet users is a child and that the proportion of child internet users is likely to be higher in developing countries.

Yet, there is a lack of robust evidence on the impact of internet use on children's well-being and rights, in particular in developing countries. There is an urgent need to gather rigorous data and develop evidence-informed policy that strengthens online safety, digital citizenship and all other aspects of child rights that are impacted in our digital age.

What is Global Kids Online?

- A global research network that brings together national research institutions to build a cross-national, robust evidence base. It makes research tools (surveys, guidelines, consent forms, checklists, sampling frames, etc.) available for researchers in any country.
- GKO resources will be accessible via the website www.globalkidsonline.net to help conduct quality research on children's internet use and use the research findings to influence policy making.
- Research instrument design is flexible and can produce data that is relevant in any country or context, and still allows comparability across countries and regions.
- Major national research and statistical bodies that meet criteria may apply for membership through the GKO website. Other interested parties can freely access and download high quality research tools without registration.
- Pilot research studies have been conducted in Argentina, the Philippines, Serbia and South Africa.
- Results from the pilot studies will form the basis of a global synthesis report to be published by UNICEF Innocenti.
- GKO will be launched in November 2016 via www.globalkidsonline.net

The overall aim of the Global Kids Online research toolkit is to help spur new research initiatives on children's experiences online across a wide variety of countries and contexts.

The objective is to support the development of sound, evidence based policy and programme decisions to ensure that children's rights are safeguarded in the digital space. This will be crucial to help promote healthy and positive child and adolescent internet use.

Global Kids Online was developed by the UNICEF Office of Research - Innocenti in collaboration with London School of Economics and Political Science, the EU Kids Online network and four pilot countries: Argentina, the Philippines, Serbia and South Africa.





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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The impact of the internet on the lives of children is a significant concern globally, both in terms of opportunities it provides and its potential to put children in risky situations. Understanding how these opportunities and risks interact, especially in contextually nuanced ways, is essential to ensuring that children are able to maximise the benefits of these information and communication technologies (ICTs)¹. While much work has been done to delineate these dynamics and develop appropriate policies in the global North, the nature of children's ICTs use in the global South is less well understood.

In recent years, efforts have been made to ensure that children's offline rights are extended to the online world, including the rights to protection, participation and the chance to benefit from the opportunities the internet provides.¹ While South Africa has some of the most advanced and rights-oriented legislation relating to children more broadly, it is only beginning to develop policies that sufficiently address children's online rights to safety, freedom of expression and privacy. Indeed, a significant drawback in South Africa's current legislation is the extent to which it includes consensual sexual interactions between minors online within its definitions of child sexual abuse materials, unnecessarily criminalising developmental normal behaviours and infringing on children's digital rights.

Aims and objectives

This study, conducted by the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention (CJCP) and the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) South Africa, forms part of a global research project, Global Kids Online, coordinated by the UNICEF Office of Research Innocenti and the London Schools of Economics and Political Science (LSE) as well as the European Union (EU) Kids Online network. The study had two objectives:

- a. to pilot and test appropriate qualitative and quantitative research tools exploring children's access to, use of and experiences of ICTs and social media, to be used in lower income countries, and
- b. to gather rigorously obtained and cross-nationally comparable evidence on the nature of child internet use in South Africa.

In addition, the study explored South African parents' internet use and to what extent parents mediate children's online experiences.

As this was a pilot study and implemented in only three of the nine provinces in South Africa, the data is not nationally representative, and only provides a snapshot of how South African children use the internet.

Methodology

Data collection consisted of qualitative and quantitative components, with children (aged nine to seventeen) and their parents being sampled. In the qualitative component, focus group discussions were conducted, with seven child and four parent focus groups taking place. A total of 49 children and 20 parents were interviewed in the qualitative component of the study. The term 'parents' is used in this study to refer to biological parents as well as other kinds of primary caregivers, including siblings and grandparents.

In the quantitative component of the study 913 children and 532 parents were interviewed in their homes using questionnaires.

Data collection took place in three South African provinces namely, Gauteng, the Eastern Cape and the Western Cape. The quantitative component was conducted in both an urban and rural setting and the qualitative component was only conducted in an urban setting.

Findings

Five key content areas were investigated in this study: access, opportunities and practices, skills, risks and vulnerabilities and protective factors. The findings for each of these sections are outlined below.

In terms of **access** to the internet, of the children who were interviewed, 70.4% used the internet, while 29.6% did not. Fewer young children used the internet or had access to their own device than older children. Nearly one in two internet child users (46.0%) were able to access the internet whenever they wanted. For those child internet users who could not always access the internet, it was most often because of the cost of

1. We use the term ICTs in this document to refer to the internet and the communication technologies that emerge from it. It includes all devices that host the internet and applications that use the internet, including search engines and the websites accessed via these tools. Older technologies like landline telephony and text messaging services are not included in the definition in this report.

data (47.3%). Child non-users were most frequently unable to access the internet because the adults in their lives would not allow them to (51.2%). Another main barrier to internet access among child non-users was the cost of devices (37.1%).

The children most often accessed the internet via smartphones, and devices like laptops, tablets and desktop computers were used much less frequently. Very few went online at school, but they frequently accessed the internet at home or when they were somewhere by themselves. Fewer parents used the internet than children (34.2% did not use the internet). But of those who did, almost all used the internet at least every week (88.5%) and two out of three parents (69.9%) were able to go online without any help.

In terms of the **opportunities** children accessed online, most child participants (95.6%) reported that they sometimes or always had fun when they went online. Socialising, especially via instant messaging, learning and school work were popular activities among these internet users, while civic and community participation online were not. Language and lack of culturally appropriate content was also identified as a barrier, with one in two children and two in three parents saying it was difficult to find content online in their first language.

Nearly two in three child participants (59.4%) stated that they knew a lot of things about using the internet and one in two said that they knew more about using the internet than their parents (52.1%), suggesting that a majority were confident in their technical **skills**. That said, most children reported being unable to perform more sophisticated tasks online, like using programming language or designing a website. They were adept at everyday online activities, such as saving a photograph from the internet, opening downloaded files and managing their settings of their social media accounts.

Despite their children's poor opinion of their technical skills, when asked the same skills questions as their children, parents who did use the internet tended to be roughly as skilled as their children, and sometimes more skilled.

Most children (86.3%) had an account on a social networking site and the most popular ones were WhatsApp (94.2%), Facebook (68.5%) and Instagram (18.0%). More than one in three (40.1%) children said that their profiles were set to private, with only friends being able to see it. One in three child participants (33.6%) said that they would only accept a contact if they knew them and 25.4% said that they would only accept a contact if they knew them very well. Nearly half of the participants (46.0%) reported having used privacy settings on social networking sites, with 49.4% of participants having had a reason to use the blocking tools on these sites.

The children were asked detailed questions on a range of potential **risks** they faced online. Nearly half the participants (45.6%) thought that there were things on the internet that

bother or upset people their age and a little over one in four (27.1%) had personally been bothered by something on the internet in the past year.

One in three child participants had been exposed to hate speech (34.5%) and to gory images (32.7%) online. Many children reported experiencing some indicators of excessive internet use. This included having a fight with family because of the time they spent online (34.5%) and trying to use the internet less but not being able to do so (29.3%). Nearly one in two (49.0%) felt they had to constantly check their device to make sure they were up to date. Both parents and children reported that their use would often become detrimental, causing children to avoid their chores and homework and get less sleep at night.

About one in five of all child participants who use the internet in this study (21.9%) reported having being treated in a hurtful or nasty way in the past year (either face to face or online). When asked if they had ever had contact with someone online that they had never met face to face before, 41.2% said that they had at least once in their life time. Of those children who said they had had contact with a stranger online, half (54.0%) said that they had met with someone that they first got to know online in the past year.

When asked if they had seen any sexual images online in the past year, 51.2% of child participants reported that they had and one in three had received a sexual message (30.5%). One in five (20.5%) child participants had been sent a message they did not want with advertisements for or links to x-rated websites, 19.2% opened a message or a link in a message that showed pictures of naked people or of people having sex that they did not want and 20.3% had seen or received a sexual message, image or video about someone else that they did not want. More boys than girls experienced this kind of unwanted sexual contact, but more girls than boys had been asked unwanted sexual questions about themselves.

Most parents (86.7%) thought that their child had not experienced anything that bothered them online in the past year and did not think it was likely that something would bother them in the coming months (80.6% not likely at all and not very likely). These figures broadly matched the reports of their children. When asked if their children had experienced any specific victimisation online, most parents were confident to say that their children had not, even when they had the option to say that they did not know whether their child had experienced anything.

To investigate the **factors that protect and make children vulnerable online**, the study explored the role of parents, teachers and friends. Nearly one in two (48.1%) child participants said that they never or hardly ever spoke to their parents about their internet use and 60.5% were never or hardly ever encouraged by their parents to explore and learn new things online. According to their children, 42.0% of parents never suggested ways for their children

to use the internet safely and 49.1% never spoke to their children about what do if something online bothered or upset them. Parents scored themselves even worse on their mediation, with 57.0% of parents (compared to 42.0% of children) saying that they had never suggested ways to use the internet safely. However, parents did show a deep concern for their children's online wellbeing in the focus group discussions, but this did not necessarily translate into tangible mediation practices. Only one in two (53.2%) parents reported having ever had any guidance on how to support and mediate their children's internet use.

A significant number of children reported that their teachers did not play a substantial role in mediating and guiding their internet use, even when it came to things like learning, with 46.4% of children saying they had never been encouraged by a teacher to explore and learn things on the internet.

Nearly two in three children (60.0%) reported that their friends had never helped them in the past when something had bothered them on the internet. That said, friends were often reported as being the people children were most likely to turn to when they had a negative experience online.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this pilot study, the following recommendations can be made for policy and practice.

Recommendations for policy

- A **common child ICTs strategy** needs to be developed that allows for a standardised and integrated approach across South Africa's policy and legislation landscape, a goal that speaks to the aims of the Department of Telecommunications and Postal Services' strategic plan (2015-2020). This strategy must uphold children's digital rights and avoid unnecessarily punitive measures to maintain child online safety.
- It is necessary to formally map out how South Africa's policy and legislation framework should be enacted in relation to cases of **child harm online**. Clarifying the roles of different stakeholders and the necessary pathways of action in relation to forms of online victimisation will ensure that children are able to access professional support and legal solutions.
- It would be valuable to formalise **standardised indicators of children's internet access, usage and online experiences**, to be used across various settings. This would allow for consistent and regular data collection to be undertaken, against which interventions and changes over time can be measured.
- In line with the goals of South Africa's National Development Plan 2030 and the Department of Telecommunications and Postal Services' strategic plan (2015-2020), establishing **universal internet access** at

competitive prices is essential to ensure that no child is prevented from benefiting from the opportunities the internet affords. The child participants in this study reported that cost of data was a significant barrier to their internet access overall, and that it limited the amount of time they could spend online. Creative, low-cost solutions such as free public WiFi provided by NGOs could be expanded and democratise internet access more broadly.

- **Public awareness** must be raised around the importance of **children's digital rights** and all discourse and messaging must take a balanced approach to children's online safety. Excessively inflammatory reports of online harm should be avoided and instead, messaging should focus on reporting accurate data and advice that does not impinge upon children's rights.

Recommendations for practice

- South African parents should **play a far greater role** in mediating and supporting their children's internet use. Regardless of their level of technological savvy, parents have the necessary life experience to teach their children to be good digital citizens.
- There is a need to find ways to **increase access** to the internet children have **in schools** and provide them with **technical support**. Teachers can also be encouraged to play a greater role in ensuring that children benefit more from the **learning opportunities** the internet provides, even if this is via the child's own private device.
- **Age appropriate internet use** should be encouraged in general, in order to build the technical skills of children from an early age. Where possible, parents should provide age-appropriate mediation of their children's internet use, rather than preventing them from accessing the internet all together.
- It would be worthwhile to provide children with opportunities to **grow their technical skills**, for example, through initiatives that teach coding and website design.
- Discourse and interventions around child exposure to **sexual content** and **sexual experiences online** must consider that **as many boys as girls are exposed to these risks** but that the type of harms experienced by each gender may be different.
- Programmes and messaging that **encourage peers to take a more active role in providing support** for each other should be promoted, so that when children are exposed to harm online, they have a source of support. In particular, children need guidance on how best to provide this support in a sensitive manner, and also when to seek out an adult or professional's help to ensure that the victim is adequately treated.

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1. Introduction and project context



Internet use is a global phenomenon that has become embedded in the lives of children and adults indiscriminately. While ICTs use is established and almost universal in the global North, in many parts of the global South internet access is relatively new and continues to expand. The impact of internet on the lives of children in these low income countries is currently not well understood, with much of the available evidence of the effects of the internet access coming from the global North.ⁱⁱ Thus, while the number of child internet users in low income settings continues to grow, arguably already dwarfing the number of child internet users in the global North, little is known about how internet use differs across these settings.

While the ICTs use of children is often associated with negative outcomes like cyberbullying or access to inappropriate materials, the internet also expands the opportunities available to children for learning, participation and creativity. These form part of children’s digital rights, the extension of children’s basic offline rights into the online realm. These rights have broadly been defined as extending from the general rights outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), of which South Africa is a ratified member, and the rights provided for children by a state.ⁱⁱⁱ Thus, in South Africa, children’s digital rights include the right to protection from all forms of abuse online and the provision of opportunities for learning, participation and leisure activities online.^{iv} Understanding these complexities and the extent to which children are currently realising these rights is essential for the development of appropriate policy and provision of suitable care for children in any country.

This study formed part of a global effort, developed and co-ordinated by the United Nations Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) to obtain evidence of how the internet is being used by children in the global South for the purpose of determining whether children’s digital rights are currently being realised.

1.1. Research aims

1.1.1. Global research project on the use of ICTs among children

Global Kids Online developed out of the EU Kids Online project, co-ordinated by the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), which gathered data on the nature and extent of children’s internet use in a number of countries in the European Union. Having identified the significant gap in research on children’s internet use outside the global North, the Global Kids Online project was established in early 2015 to research the impact of the internet on the lives of children who live in the global South and provide policy makers and stakeholders with the necessary evidence to inform the promotion of children’s digital rights in this setting.

The study was coordinated by the UNICEF Office of Research and the LSE, and involved the collaboration of a number of researchers and experts from different countries, including the UNICEF country offices. A key goal of the project was to develop, test and refine a set of qualitative and quantitative tools that included standardised and locally adapted measures on the practices, attitudes and experiences of young people who use ICTs, to be administered to children and their parents or caregivers in the prospective global South countries. The development and piloting of these tools would lead to evidence of how best to conduct research on ICTs use in countries where access to these technologies is not universal and where internet use may follow different norms to those identified in the global North. In addition, this research was intended to fill the large gap in knowledge of children in South Africa’s access to, usage of, and experiences on the internet.

1.1.2. Multi-country research into children’s digital rights

For the initial pilot of the research tools, four countries participated in the project. These countries were included because they fell within the low to middle income categorisation and formed part of the global South. The research was conducted in four pilot countries:



- the Philippines
- Argentina
- Serbia, and
- South Africa.

Research activities took place over the course of 2015 and 2016, with each country conducting their pilot study at different times. As pilot studies, only one was nationally representative (Argentina), with the rest being conducted with smaller samples. Each pilot country was provided with an initial toolkit of research instruments, along with guidance and support for the project Steering team. The countries then adapted and piloted the tools, and in the process, tested and refined the tools for use in various settings. The toolkit was then amended using the lessons learned in this process and was established as an international resource that could be adopted by any global South country interested in exploring children's internet use.

The ultimate goal of this process is to generate a globally comparable body of evidence on children's online usage, based on rigorous research studies conducted in as many countries as possible, using the common indicators contained in the project's toolkit. This evidence will be invaluable in understanding the impact of the internet on the global South and for the development of appropriate national (as well as regional and global) policies that uphold children's digital rights in these contexts.

With this in mind, the South African study had the following specific aims:

- Develop, test and refine a set of **qualitative** and **quantitative** tools that could be used to conduct research on ICTs use in low-income countries. This involved adapting the internationally developed and tested toolkit to the South African context and piloting it.
- This research was also intended to fill the gap in knowledge on children in South Africa's access to, usage of, and experiences on the internet and social media. Although the study was a pilot and did not include a nationally representative sample, the tools were designed to be exploratory and allow the researchers to access a wide range of information regarding children's internet use, including:

- How access to the internet and internet use changed in different age groups.
- Investigating urban and rural differences in internet use.
- Exploring the opportunities South African children accessed online.
- Obtaining data on the technical skills South African children possess.
- Understanding what risks South African children are exposed to or are taking online.
- Determining parents' knowledge of their children's internet use and how they mediate this use.

The findings of this study were intended to inform the design and implementation of a nationally representative Global Kids Online study in the future.

1.2. The South African country context

South Africa is home to 54.4 million people. The population is diverse and is made up of 80.1% people of African heritage, 8.9% 'coloureds' (or people of mixed race), 2.5% of Asian or Indian heritage and 8.3% whites or people of European heritage.^v Since the end of the apartheid regime and first democratic election in 1994, efforts have been made to integrate the previously excluded black majority into the economic realm and produce a more equal society. However, despite some progress, the society as a whole remains extremely unequal, with blacks still bearing the brunt of this inequality.^{vi} This impacts on the extent to which South Africans can access the internet and fully enjoy the opportunities it affords.

1.2.1. Children and the internet in South Africa

1.2.1.1. Children

In South Africa a child is legally defined as anyone under the age of eighteen years.^{vii} The country is home to approximately 20.6 million people are below the age of twenty years old (37.9% of the population).^{viii} This means that South Africa has a relatively young population, with large numbers of potential internet users under the age of twenty.

Only 34.9% of children in South Africa live with both their parents.^{ix} The highest number of children live with their mother only (40.6%), while 3.7% live with their father only, and 20.9% of children live with neither parent. In a sizable proportion of households male caregivers appear to be totally absent, with 40.3% of all South African households being female-headed.^x This suggests that the majority of South African children are raised by a range of different caregivers, and often only a single biological parents. Although this may not mean that children are raised in single caregiver households, this could have implications for the amount of time and involvement caregivers can provide to their children, because they may need to work long hours to make ends meet or look after a number of children on their own.

Currently, the overall unemployment rate in South Africa is 26.7%.^{xi} Nearly one in three South Africans (30.1%) receive a social grant, or 45.5% of households, to supplement or sometimes constitute their monthly income.^{xii} The majority of these (70.5%) are child support grants, issued to children in low income families.^{xiii} However, in most cases (65.5% of households), salaries are the main source of income.^{xiv} According a 2011 study 64.6% of South Africans have a monthly income of R1113.0 or less per capita (the equivalent of approximately 75 US dollars), an estimated upper bound poverty line for the time.^{xv} While this amount will have changed in the five years since this data was collected as a result of inflation, it suggests that a majority of South Africans face challenges meeting their basic needs.

From the age of seven to fifteen years, school attendance in South Africa is almost universal.^{xvi} However, after the age of fifteen years old, attendance at an educational facilities drops off, with many South Africans failing to complete their secondary schooling.^{xvii} Among individuals aged twenty years and older, 37.1% have only attained some secondary schooling, almost 10.0% more than have completed their schooling (28.0%).^{xviii} Thus, many South African children face challenges completing their final stages of schooling.

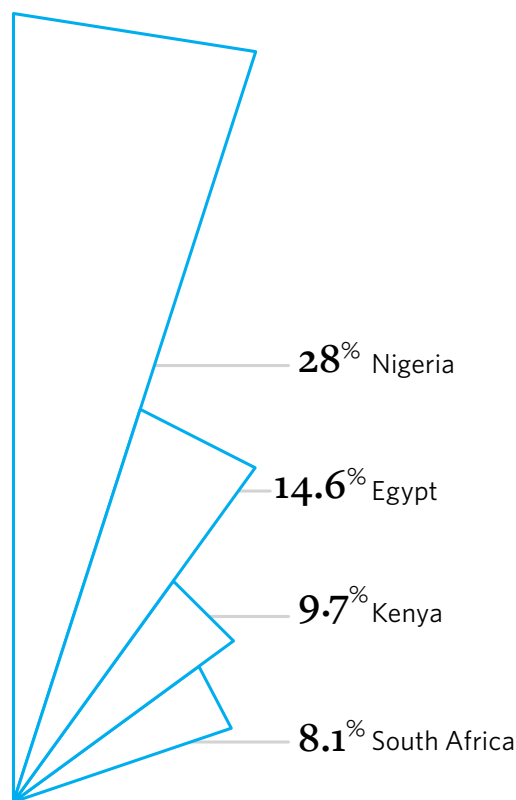
1.2.1.2. Internet use

Best estimates suggest that 20.7% of people living in Africa have access to the internet.^{xix} South Africa accounts for 8.1% of Africa's internet users, coming in fourth after Nigeria (28.0%), Egypt (14.6%) and Kenya (9.7%).^{xx} South Africa has approximately 26.8 million internet users and the number of users in the country has increased by roughly 2.4 million since 2000.^{xxi}

While 96.5% of households in South Africa have access to either landline telephones or mobile phones, in only 53.5% of these households did at least one member have access to the internet.^{xxii} This included people who could only access the internet via a place of work, a place of study or an internet café and not just those who had their own devices.^{xxiii} One in two (47.6%) South Africans who access the internet tend to do so via their mobile phone, compared to one in ten who can access the internet at home.^{xxiv} According to the Department of Basic Education's (DBE) most recent estimates, 19.4% (n=4599) of South African public schools have access to the internet for the purpose of teaching and learning, with slightly more (24.7%) having access to the internet for the purpose of administrative functions as well.^{xxv} From the available statistics the exact percentage of children using the internet in South Africa is unknown, but the statistics suggest that access is not universal, and that those children using the internet may go online using a mobile phone.

1.2.2. Policy context and key stakeholders

South Africa's legislative framework features multiple laws and policies that pertain to the rights of children but very few that directly address their digital rights. In recent years, there has been a move towards developing a more comprehensive



South Africa accounts for 8.1% of Africa's internet users, coming in fourth after Nigeria



approach to the promotion of online safety and wellbeing, but currently, the bulk of policies address the rights in terms of promoting safety, but not access, skills and opportunity. Indeed, the rights of children to benefit from the internet are not explicitly enshrined anywhere in South African legislation.

The Constitution of South Africa, 1996, addresses children's rights more thoroughly, specifically in Chapter 2 of the Constitution, the Bill of Rights. Within this chapter, it is stated that children have the same constitutional rights as adults and these include the right to have their dignity respected, the right to freedom and security and the right to be free of all forms of violence including torture or any cruel, degrading or inhumane punishment.^{xxvi} The Bill of Rights also, importantly, enshrines the right to privacy and of particular relevance to ICTs use, the privacy of their communications. That said, because this document was written during the early days of the internet, it understandably does not explicitly address the digital rights of children.

The Children's Act of 2005 augments these basic rights and provides the legal definitions of abuse and the necessary procedures to act in the best interests of the child and provide them with care and protection. The Act's definition of abuse includes:

- a) assaulting a child or inflicting any other form of deliberate injury to a child;
- b) sexually abusing a child or allowing a child to be sexually abused;
- c) bullying by another child;
- d) a labour practice that exploits a child; or
- e) exposing or subjecting a child to behaviour that may



harm the child psychologically or emotionally.

Most, if not all of these forms of abuse can be interpreted in terms of the types of harms perpetrated online. However, this is not explicitly laid out within the Children's Act. The Department of Social Development is the custodian of the Children's Act and therefore the government body charged with the protection of children and the promotion of their rights and wellbeing in South Africa. Although this does not expressly include the promotion of online safety and digital rights, protection of children from any form of harm, including online harm, is this Department's mandate.

Another critical stakeholder in promoting children's wellbeing is the Department of Basic Education which is tasked with the education of children from pre-school age to the completion of secondary school. Currently, the Department has a number of policies and guidelines in place to manage the use of digital technologies in schools, including guidelines for e-safety in schools.^{xxvii} This document outlines the benefits of digital technologies to education and the potential risks attached to their use in the school environment, indicating the steps to be taken in all government funded schools to manage the use of these technologies in this context. However, the extent to which this policy is followed is not known, especially considering relatively few schools have internet access for educational purposes.

The Department of Telecommunications and Postal Services recently launched its own Children and ICTs Strategy, which seeks to provide a coherent approach to the empowerment of children in the ICTs sector for the Department itself and its subsidiaries.^{xxviii} This strategy takes a rights-based approach to children's internet use and promotes internet access by vulnerable groups such as disabled children, children living in rural areas and girl children. While the strategy is still in the process of being implemented and its effects are not yet known, its existence suggests steps towards a more inclusive and rights-based approach to children's ICTs use in South Africa.

There are a number of laws that deal directly with the potential crimes and abuses committed via the internet. The Protection from Harassment Act of 2011, for example, includes

in its definition of harassment, harassment via electronic communication. It allows for an individual to obtain a court protection order against the harasser, as one would in an offline harassment scenario. It also allows for the victim to be furnished with the contact details of their harasser by the service provider through which harassment is being perpetrated, should that person's identity be unknown, a very valuable addition for cyber harassment cases. The law provides that "any child, or person on behalf of a child, may apply to the court for a protection order without the assistance of a parent, guardian or any other person." This ensures that in all cases of harassment, but of particular relevance here, online harassment, that children themselves can combat harassment, without parental consent.

A number of other potential legal remedies against online harassment and bullying in South Africa exist, although none of these were explicitly created for this purpose. For example, an individual can be criminally charged with the following offences depending on the kind of bullying perpetrated:

- *crimen injuria* (or the violation of the dignity or privacy of another person),
- assault (where the perpetrator inspires a belief or fear in the victim that they will be physically harmed),
- criminal defamation (where the perpetrator seeks to seriously injure the victims reputation),
- and extortion.^{xxix}

Success in prosecuting these charges depends on how the bullying was perpetrated and whether the bullying can reasonably be considered to fall within the definition of the charges listed above. There have been a number of South African cases of online victimisation where prosecutions were successful.^{xxx} However, an important caveat to this is that when criminal charges are laid against a minor in South Africa, the Child Justice Act of 2008 comes into effect. This Act created a separate criminal justice system for children that, where possible, promotes the principles of restorative justice.^{xxxi} Thus, while children may face criminal charges as a result of cyberbullying, the justice system will, where possible, avoid unnecessarily criminalising them.

This becomes especially significant when considering one of the more problematic aspects of South African law in relation to children's technology use, the fact that the legal framework does not distinguish between producing child sexual abuse materials and consensual sexting between minors. The Films and Publications Act of 1996 states that any person who:

"unlawfully possesses; creates, produces or in any way contributes to, or assists in the creation or production of ... knowingly makes available, exports, broadcasts or in any way distributes or causes to be made available ... any film, game or publication which contains depictions, descriptions or scenes of child pornography or which advocates, advertises, encourages or promotes child pornography or the sexual exploitation of children, shall be guilty of an offence."

Similarly, the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act of 2007 defines child sexual abuse

materials as:

“any image, however created, or any description or presentation of a person, real or simulated, who is, or who is depicted or described or presented as being, under the age of 18 years, of an explicit or sexual nature, whether such image or description or presentation is intended to stimulate erotic or aesthetic feelings or not ...”

This law states that exposing a child to child sexual abuse materials, under the inclusive definition above, renders the individual guilty of an offense, no matter their age. And if this individual is found guilty under the Sexual Offences Act, their name will be added to the national register of sex offenders. These laws do not provide for circumstances where child sexual abuse materials are produced in the context of a consensual romantic relationship and where this behaviour could be argued to be part of normal and healthy sexual development among minors in the digital age.

In 2013, sections 15 and 16 of the Sexual Offences Act were contested in South African’s Constitutional Court for unduly criminalising normal consensual sexual activity between teenagers aged 12 to 17 years old. A unanimous judgment was handed down that sections 15 and 16 of the Act were constitutionally invalid in terms of their criminalisation of consensual sexual conduct between children.^{xxxii} The Act was then amended to reflect these changes in 2015.^{xxxiii} However, the Act is very clear that these amendments only apply to sections 15 and 16 and sections relating to the prosecution of the offences defined in these sections, and not to the sections of Act that refer to the production of child sexual abuse materials. It was argued that in their original form, sections 15 and 16 conflicted with children’s constitutional rights to dignity, privacy and bodily and psychological integrity, and a key principle of the Constitution, that a child’s best interests must be the crucial factor in all matters concerning the child. The reasons why these considerations were not extended to the consensual production of sexual images among teens is unclear, although it may in part be a result of concern around the unintended negative effects of such activities, such as sharing of images without permission.

The Film and Publications Act is also currently undergoing a process of review and initial drafts have been subject to much criticism. The amended Bill still criminalises children who engage in consensual sexting² among peers, along with those who are coerced into producing sexually explicit content of themselves for adults.

A submission by Media Monitoring Africa and SOS Coalition argues that the law should make clear that those children who produce child sexual abuse material in circumstances where

they are coerced and exploited, even if this was seemingly consensual and the child profits in some way from it, should not be criminalised, and the child should instead be considered a victim of abuse.^{xxxiv} This consideration should extend to children engaging in consensual, developmental normative, private sexual experimentation via digital technologies, but not where images or videos are made without the child’s consent. The law is therefore still in need of refining and public consultation on its content is ongoing.

While there are a number of laws and policies addressing the digital rights and protection of children, and indeed all persons, in South Africa, the framework that is currently available is far from comprehensive. In addition, the inability of the legislation to distinguish between the production of child sexual abuse materials and consensual sexting between minors is unnecessarily punitive of normal sexual development and can be perceived as infringing on children’s digital rights. Although there is an ongoing challenge in implementing these laws, this is evidence of the need for South African law to reform to better manage the complexity of online victimisation and uphold children’s right to enjoy the opportunities the internet affords them.

1.3. Report structure

In the report that follows, the authors present the findings of the study contextualised in this chapter.

Chapter two consists of a brief description of the methodology used in this study, including sampling procedures, fieldwork, capturing and analysis, limitations and ethical procedures. The chapter also includes a discussion of the adaptations made to the Global Kids Online survey toolkit and the construction of the research instruments used in this study. A more substantial description of the study’s methodology is available in the technical report of this study.

Chapter three details the findings of this study. The chapter is structured around the five key content areas of the study: access; opportunities and practices; skills; risks; and vulnerabilities and protective factors. The quantitative and qualitative data collected from children and parents is presented within each of these sections. However, in line with the aims of the study and the amount of data amassed from the various tools, priority is given to presenting the findings of the child quantitative instrument, with the findings of the parent survey being presented in smaller sections of the chapter. The findings of the qualitative study have also been included to provide contextualisation for some of the quantitative findings.

Chapter four presents the conclusions of the study and the recommendations based on the study. The chapter includes thoughts for future research.

2. ‘Sexting’, a combination of the words ‘sex’ and ‘texting’, refers to the consensual sending of sexual messages via ICTs, which can include images or videos (Mitchell et al, 2012). Sexting forms part of an interaction between individuals that is a simulacrum of sex or sexual foreplay, not dissimilar to the notions of ‘cybersex’ or ‘telephone sex.’

2.

Methodology

The design of the study was informed by the need for a consistent approach with the other countries piloting the Global Kids Online study and to ensure that the study's tools and procedures were appropriate for use in the South African context. The study began by adapting the quantitative and qualitative research tools developed by the Global Kids Online Steering and Expert teams to the South African context and designing of suitable data collection strategies. As a pilot study, it was not necessary to sample a representative population of South Africans, and this informed the sample size and data collection procedures.



2.1. Adapting the toolkit

The South African researchers were provided with qualitative and quantitative toolkits to guide the development of locally appropriate instruments. Each tool comprised of:

- **Core questions:** Questions essential to the tool that would be used for cross-country comparison.
- **Optional questions:** Questions that could be included and excluded from the questionnaire depending on the research interests of the country at hand. These included sensitive questions that may not be appropriate for younger participants.
- **Adaptable questions:** Suggestions for questions that could be included and should be adapted to be made more appropriate for the relevant country context.

Based on this guidance, the tools were constructed and adapted. Key concerns throughout this process were balancing the need to obtain data that was useful in the South African context and making the tools user friendly and time efficient in implementation. Below, the adaptation process for the qualitative and quantitative tools is discussed.

2.1.1. Qualitative component

This component was intended to supplement the quantitative data collected, providing more in-depth information on the specific practices and experiences of South African children online. It was also intended to enhance the design of the quantitative tool, as it would allow for the authors to explore contextual nuances they might otherwise not have been aware of and where relevant, include them in the new survey tool. While it was not essential to do so, the South African authors opted to interview children and parents in this component, constructing a tool appropriate for parents and a tool appropriate for children.

The authors chose to use focus group discussions as our data collection method, because of its utility in obtaining the input of many people in short periods of time and allowing for a shared construction of meaning and common experience.^{xxxv} The adaptation and design of the qualitative tools was informed by the need to make the questions suitable for the wide age range of children being researched,

and by the necessity of making the tool relevant for the focus group format. As a result, the tools for parent and child focus groups featured activities through which the critical content areas could be covered.

2.1.2. Quantitative component

Designing the quantitative tools involved three key concerns:

- Following the guidelines provided in the toolkit to ensure that the comparable data was obtained.
- Making the most of the opportunity to obtain a greater understanding of child internet use in South Africa by asking as many questions of the participants as feasible. This meant including many of the optional questions, making adaptations to the questions and including new, locally relevant questions.
- Ensuring that the questionnaire was not too complex or long and that it was easily understandable for the participants and enumerators.

No changes were made to the **core questions**, although some of the phrasing was adapted to be more culturally relevant.

Most **optional questions** were included in the interview questionnaire and where necessary these were also adapted to make them more culturally relevant. The optional addition made by in this South African study was the module on unwanted sexual experiences, which was included to explore whether the high rates of offline sexual violence in South Africa translate in any way to online sexual violence.

The authors made some **unique additions** in the child questionnaire to accommodate the South African context: these included a question on the barriers children might face to accessing the internet and questions on whether children were able to access content online in their home language (when this was not English), and access content that they felt was culturally and socially relevant to them.

2.2. Sampling

The study sampled children between nine and seventeen years old and their parents. The authors made the decision to include children and parents who did not use the internet in the sample, along with children and parents who did use the internet. By including non-users, the authors were able to explore a broad range of exposure to ICTs and the variables impacting on access to the internet. Although this was a pilot study, the authors were interested in accessing a diverse sample of participants. For this reason, three out of South Africa's nine provinces were selected as data collection sites, Gauteng, the Eastern Cape and the Western Cape, because they represented a wide range of socio-

economic contexts. An urban and a rural site was selected in each province. Only the quantitative component was conducted in both sites, with qualitative data collection taking place in an urban centre.

Within the qualitative component of the study, seven child focus group discussions and four parent focus groups were conducted. Two child and one parent focus group was conducted in the Western Cape, three child and two parent focus groups in the Eastern Cape and two child and one parent focus group in Gauteng.

A total of 49 children and 20 parents were interviewed in the qualitative component.

Within the quantitative component, children and parents were sampled directly from their households. A final sample of 913 children and 532 parents was obtained, spread evenly across the three provinces and the urban and rural sites. The views of parents were intended to supplement the child data, rather than constitute a significant portion of the study and the parent sample size was set at a smaller amount than the child sample size.

2.3. Fieldwork

Fieldwork activities ran from December 2015 to the end of March 2016.

2.3.1. Qualitative component

Using the adapted qualitative instrument, focus group discussions were conducted with parents and children in each of the three provinces.

Focus groups were planned to last 90 minutes, with some running slightly longer and some shorter. The interviews were facilitated by a researcher from the CJCP, assisted by a local, skilled facilitator. These discussions were audio recorded, and notes were taken by the person assisting the facilitator. Between six and eight participants took part in each focus group discussion.

2.3.2. Quantitative component

Fieldwork began with training enumerators on the research tools and planning field activities and procedures. In each province, a team of five local enumerators were used to conduct the data collection process, with one of the five enumerators serving as the team supervisor. Once trained on the tools, the enumerators visited the urban and rural site, and went door to door, seeking suitable respondents at a household level. The only criteria for participation in an interview was a respondent being between nine and seventeen years old, and both the respondent and their guardian being willing for them to participate. Parents and children were matched, with parents only being interviewed if their child was interviewed. Surveys were completed face to face, with enumerators reading out questions and filling in the participants' responses. Enumerators quality controlled the completed questionnaires to ensure that the instruments were filled in correctly. These were then given to the field supervisor, who again checked the data for any errors before the surveys were sent to the CJCP offices.

2.4. Data processing and analysis

2.4.1. Qualitative component

The recordings from the qualitative interviews were transcribed in verbatim form and the notes from the interviews were compiled. All notes were anonymised. The data was then read and re-read by two authors and compiled into themes. The authors grouped data in ways that complimented the themes of this document: access, skills and practices, risks and mediating factors. The authors also attempted to identify



quotes that did not fit with these themes so as to explore the variation within the participants' responses.

2.4.2. Quantitative component

All surveys went through a rigorous process of quality control checks before being captured electronically onto the statistical programme SPSS. When the capturing of the parent and child questionnaires was complete, the data was checked for any errors or inconsistencies, and where these were identified these errors were corrected. Once the data was cleaned, basic analyses were run on the programme, including frequencies and comparisons between different variables.

2.5. Limitations

When interpreting the findings of this study, a number of limitations must be borne in mind. This study was not representative of the child population of South Africa and therefore no conclusions can be drawn about the overall patterns of internet use in South Africa. However, this study does provide a degree of insight into some of the dynamics that may impact internet use in South Africa, and indicates the value of exploring this topic at a nationally representative level.

The authors faced some challenges in the conceptualisation and implementation of the study, which made data collection more complicated and may have impacted on the quality of the data. The decision to include non-internet users in the sample proved useful in terms of gathering information on patterns of access, but did not end up contributing anything further to the study. Another challenge was the lack of already translated instruments: enumerators had to translate the survey instrument during interviews with participants who were more comfortable speaking a language other than English. While enumerators were trained to provide translations with comparable and standardised meanings, not providing an already translated instrument meant that these interviews could become time consuming and that meanings may have varied, affecting the responses participants provided.

2.6. Research ethics

In both the qualitative and quantitative components of the research, strict ethical procedure was followed to maintain the wellbeing of respondents. As this was a pilot study, an expedited review of the planned study and the research instruments was provided by the University of Cape Town, and the study was given approval to proceed.

When developing the research instruments, it was important to ensure that the participants were never upset or traumatised by the questions they were asked. For this reason, it was decided that questions about distressing content or experiences should only be asked of older participants, those aged twelve years old and up.

All respondents were required to be fully informed about the study and provide written consent to participate in it. Under South African law children are not considered able to provide written consent and for this reason, no child could take part in the study unless a parent or guardian had signed their consent.^{xxxvi} The child was also required to sign their assent to take part, once their parent's or guardian's consent was obtained. Participants were informed that their consent documents would be stored safely and privately and would never be used in any way to identify them. The participants' signed consent forms were stored separately to their questionnaires so that their anonymity could be protected.

Confidentiality and privacy was maintained in all interviews. In focus group discussions, this is always challenging, however, participants were asked to keep the content of the discussions to themselves and all recordings of discussions were transcribed and anonymised, and then stored safely. Recordings of interviews were only made when consent was obtained from all participants to do so. In the survey component, privacy and confidentiality were easier to maintain, as the participants were interviewed in private and their names did not appear anywhere on the questionnaire documents.

Although this study was generally interested in the more objective and descriptive aspects of children's internet use, discussing the participants' exposure to online risks and harm did have the potential to re-victimise any participants who had experienced severe online harm. While the risk of this happening was considered minor, these scenarios were covered in the enumerators' training. All enumerators were encouraged to be hypervigilant as to whether their interviewing a respondent may put the respondent at any kind of risk and if necessary, cease all research activities. As none of the enumerators were trained counsellors, they were unable to personally intervene to assist the participants and were trained to refer the participants to relevant counselling services instead. All enumerators used in this study have extensive experience in conducting research with children, particularly on sensitive and difficult subjects including violence and sexual abuse, and so were well equipped to handle any scenario where abuse was reported. The enumerators were also instructed to inform the authors if a participant disclosed in an interview that they had experienced any severe form of online or offline abuse, so that help could be obtained for this child. In South Africa it is mandatory for research organisations to report ongoing child abuse to the relevant government departments, if they identify an unreported case.

The data on risks obtained in this study suggest that some of the participants may have had harmful experiences online. However, in no circumstances did the enumerators judge the participants to be in distress or in danger and so no referrals were made to any child protection agencies. That said, all participants were given a resource document that included information on the study and the contact details of the CJCP, ChildLine and local support services, so that should they feel distressed or in need of support as a result of participating in the study, they were able to get in contact. No child or parent contacted the authors.



3.

Key findings

3.1. Introduction

In this section, the findings of the study are presented. A more detailed breakdown of some of the key variables can be found in the appendices of the corresponding technical report for this study. A more thorough analysis of the findings of the study can also be found in that report.

In order to contextualise the findings that follow, this chapter begins with a brief outline of the demographics of the study's sample.

3.1.1 Participant demographics

The study included a sample of children and of parents, and of participants who used the internet and did not use the internet.

The child sample had more boys than girls, but girls accounted for slightly more of the age group of twelve to fourteen year olds (see figure 1).

Out of the total child sample there was an even distribution across urban and rural areas. When compared with

provinces this was also fairly even, with Gauteng having a slightly larger rural sample than urban. The sample sizes across provinces were also similar.

In terms of access to material resources, most participants reported that they always had their basic needs met (see table 1). Almost all participants reported having consistent access to shelter (96.5%) and access to medical care (80.0%) but fewer respondents reported certain access to a cash income (65.8%) and electricity (56.1%).

Age and gender of total child sample

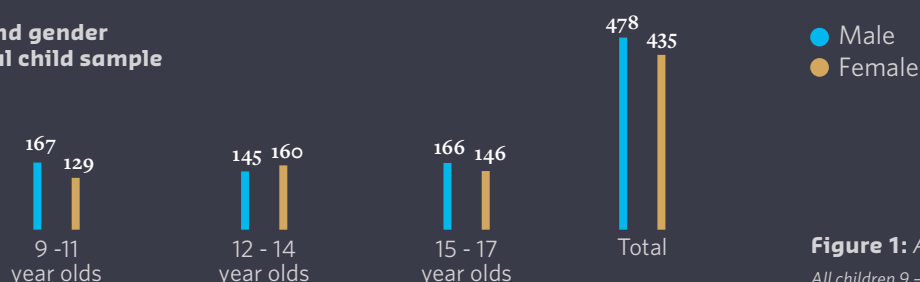


Figure 1: Age and gender of child sample
All children 9 - 17 years old (N=913).

Province and area type of total child sample

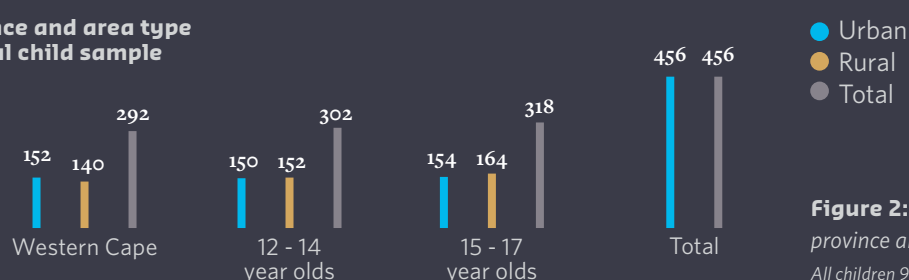


Figure 2: Child sample by province and area type
All children 9 - 17 years old (N=913).

In the last year, how often have you and your family...	Never
Gone without enough food to eat	73.8%
Felt unsafe from crime in your home	77.8%
Gone without medicine or medical treatment that you needed	80.0%
Gone without a cash income	65.8%
Gone without enough clean water to drink and cook with	75.2%
Gone without shelter	96.5%
Gone without electricity in your home	56.1%
Gone without enough fuel to heat your home or cook your food	79.4%

Table 1: Access to material resources among child participants
All children 9 - 17 years old (N=913).

Child participants were asked who they lived with and two out of three (66.4%) reported living with siblings. A little over half of the respondents lived with both parents (54.5%), while a third (34.2%) lived with just their mother.

Thinking about the home where you live most of the time, can you tell us who lives with you?

Mother	34.2%
Father	4.8%
Both parents	54.5%
Step or foster mother	1.0%
Step or foster father	2.4%
Grandparents	22.2%
Aunt or uncle	16.1%
Siblings	66.4%
Cousins	19.6%
Other relatives	1.8%
My sibling's/cousin's partner	0.4%
My sibling's/cousin's children	0.4%

Table 2: Household composition of child participants

All children 9 - 17 years old (N=913).

In the parent survey, parents were asked about their employment status as a way of determining their basic economic status. The highest percentage of participants were employed fulltime (41.5%), but one in five (22.4%) were unemployed and seeking work, suggesting that these parents experienced financial constraints and challenges.

What is your current occupational status?

Full-time employed	41.5%
Part-time employed	5.8%
Self-employed	5.3%
Retired/pensioner	9.2%
Housewife	10.9%
Unemployed seeking work	22.4%
Unemployed not seeking work	4.5%
Temporary or seasonal labour	0.8%
My sibling's/cousin's children	0.4%

Table 3: Parent/caregiver occupational status

All parents (N=523).

3.2. Access

Key findings

- Of the children interviewed, 70.4% used the internet.
- The number of children using the internet increased with age.
- Nearly one in two internet users (46.0%) was able to access the internet whenever they wanted.
- For those child internet users who could not always access the internet, it was most often because of the cost of data (47.3%) and for non-users, it was because the adults in the child's life would not let them use the internet (51.2%).
- Most child participants accessed the internet via smartphones (80.2%) and did so at home (90.9%) or when they were somewhere by themselves (79.1%).
- Most child participants owned their own device (83.8%), and a larger number of older children (92.5%) had a device to themselves than younger children (68.7%).
- One in three (34.2%) parent participants did not use the internet. But of those who did, almost all used the internet at least every week (88.5%) and two out of three parents (69.9%) were able to access the internet by themselves.

3.2.1. Children

3.2.1.1. Internet use

The study found that 70.4% of the children interviewed used the internet. A larger number of older children used the internet than younger children, as can be seen in figure 3. A big jump in the rates usage was seen between the nine to eleven year olds and twelve to fourteen year olds, suggesting that younger children may not have the interest, the permission or the access to devices to allow them to use the internet. Similar numbers of boys and girls used the internet and the rates across provinces also did not vary substantially. However, slightly more urban dwelling participants were found to use the internet than participants living in rural areas.

Internet users

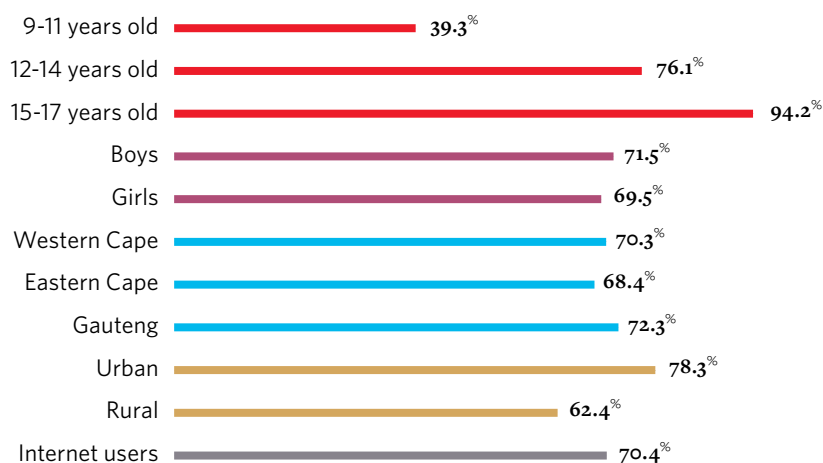


Figure 3: Percentage of internet use

All children 9 - 17 years old (N=913).

3.2.1.2. Barriers to access

Nearly half of all child participants who used the internet (46.0%), stated that they could always access the internet when they needed to or wanted to. As can be seen in figure 4, older participants had dependable access in greater numbers than younger children. There were also great differences in the percentage of child participants who always had access to the internet across different provinces.

The participants who did not always have access to the internet were asked what barriers prevented them from accessing the internet (this included participants who did not use the internet, and participants who responded ‘never’, ‘sometimes’ or ‘often’ to the question ‘are you usually able to access when you want or need to?’).

As can be seen in figure 5, internet users and non-users differed in the barriers they faced to access. Almost half (47.3%) of participants who used the internet stated that the cost of ‘data’³ was a barrier to internet use. This finding was substantiated by findings from the qualitative component of the study, where participants expanded on these challenges.

Eastern Cape, 16-18 year olds:

Interviewer (I): “How often would you say you use these [social media apps and websites]?”

FR: “Every day.”

FR: “Whenever I have data.”

FR: “Ja [yes].”

I: “Is data a big problem?”

FR: Laughs

FR: “Yes.”

Participants’ reported being frustrated by the cost of mobile internet access because it limited the time they were able to spend chatting via the internet, accessing movies, music and games and generally exploring the web. Indeed, data collected in the qualitative study suggested that this was the key barrier that impinged on all access to

3. ‘Data’ is a colloquial term for prepaid internet that is accessed via a mobile network and is typically used on smartphones or tablets.

Always have access to the internet

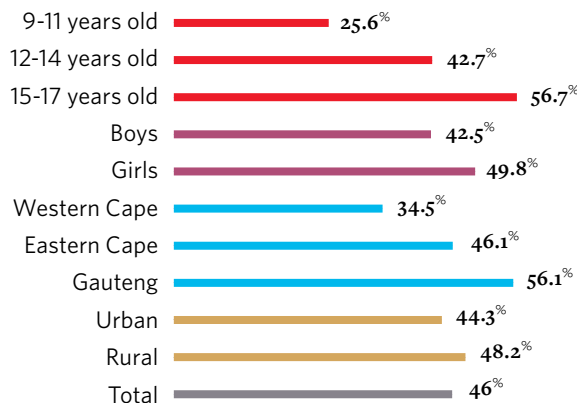


Figure 4: Percentage children who always have access to the internet

All children 9 - 17 years old who use the internet (N=643).

Barriers to access

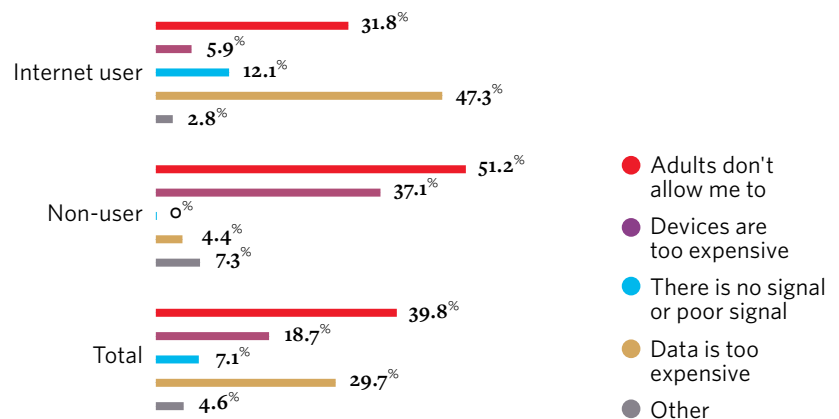


Figure 5: Percentage barriers to internet access

All children 9 - 17 years old who said they did not use the internet/ did not always have access to the internet (N=617).

opportunities for these respondents, with one participant saying access to “free data” would be the key thing she would change about the internet if she could change anything.

The second important barrier identified in the survey component of the project was obtaining a parent or adult’s permission to access the internet (31.8% among internet users and 51.2% among non-users). Within this question, the term ‘adults’ was not delineated and so this could refer to parents, caregivers, teachers or other significant adults in the child’s life. There was also no question to clarify why the child thought adults were restricting their internet usage, whether

this related to issues of safety, cost, adult’s lack of knowledge about ICTs or any other factor.

Obtaining adults’ permission was by far the most common barrier among nine to eleven year old internet users and non-users. For older participants, the price of devices among non-users and the price of data among internet users were the greatest barriers, showing the role expense played in limiting participants’ use. Figure 6 shows a direct relationship between the cost of internet use and the participants’ age and an inverse relationship between adults’ permission and the participants’ age.

Data from the qualitative interviews also provided some explanation for why adults might restrict young children’s internet use. As can be seen below, parents’ prohibited access in place of more active mediating strategies because they perceived themselves to be ill-equipped to successfully manage their children’s internet use:

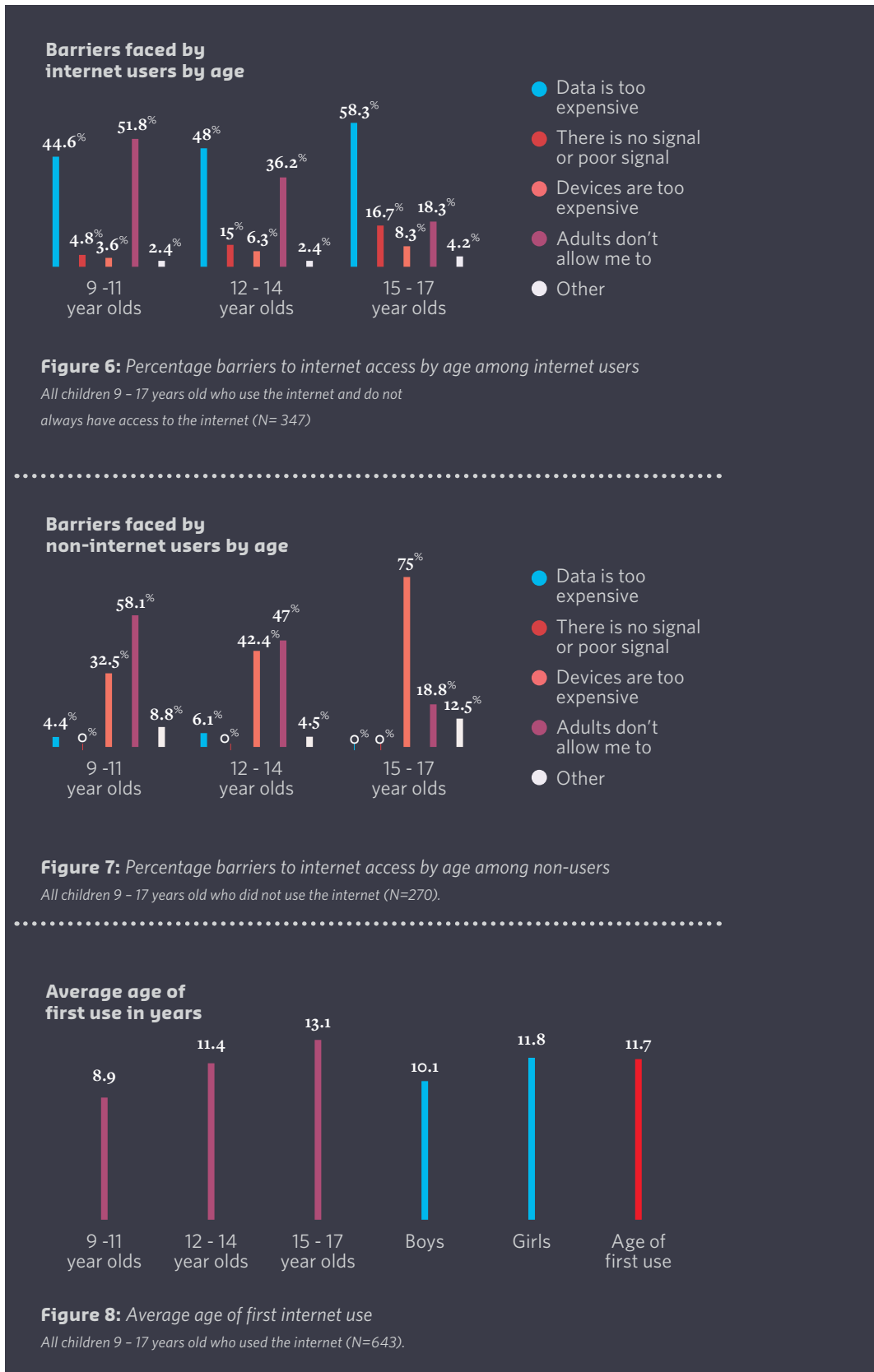
Western Cape, parent focus group:

FR: “Because for us parents, older parents, it’s difficult to access the new web [internet] because we weren’t raised with it. So we don’t know what rules to put in place [to monitor children’s use] because we weren’t raised in the modern times, so we don’t understand it. The children end up explaining to you how things work. So you don’t know how to respond to the wrong things [that can happen on the internet]. So then I rather not buy my child a cell phone because I am afraid [of what can happen online] and I can’t tell him how he should use it safely.”

Although parental mediation⁴ will be discussed in greater detail in later in this report, adults appeared to be an important gatekeeper to children’s internet use, and their restrictive mediation practices seem to stem from a self-perceived lack of ICTs knowledge. These findings on barriers suggest that children may go from total restriction and no access to a device, to access to a device with little guidance on how to use the internet safely. This has implications for how prepared children are for the internet when they do finally access it and their resilience⁵ when using the internet.

3.2.1.3. The nature of respondents’ internet use

The remaining discussion in this chapter of the report includes the findings from only those children who reported using the internet.



4. Parental mediation is a term that refers efforts by parents to manage their children’s internet use, usually to maintain their safety and wellbeing (Livingstone et al. 2015). This can consist a number of different strategies, including monitoring children’s internet use with or without their

knowledge, active mediation where a parent engages with their child to learn about their internet use and assist them, and restrictive mediation where a parent limits the time a child can spend online and sets rules about what content a child can view online (Mesch, 2009).

At least every week

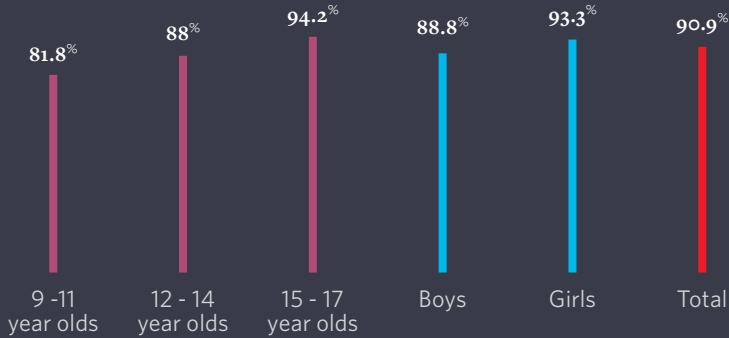


Figure 9: Percentage of participants who use the internet at least every week
All children 9 - 17 years old who used the internet (N=643).

At least every week

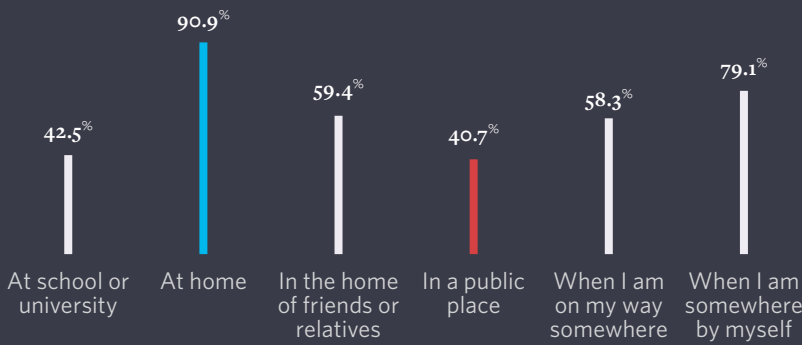


Figure 10: Frequency of use by place
All children 9 - 17 years old who used the internet (N=643).

Device use

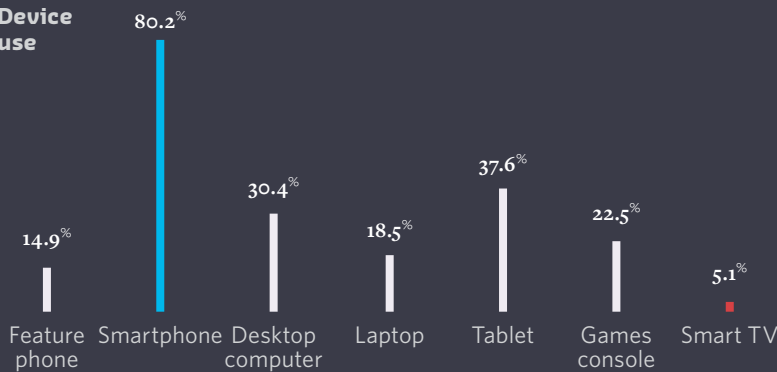


Figure 11: Frequency of use by device
All children 9 - 17 years old who used the internet (N=643).

The average age at which participants started using the internet was 11.7 years old, with the youngest age being six and the oldest being seventeen years. The age at which children began using the internet appeared to correlate with the age of the participants, as can be seen in figure 8, with younger children starting to use the internet at a younger age than older children. However, fewer younger children used the internet than older children: 115 nine to eleven year olds compared to 232 twelve to fourteen years olds and 293 fifteen to seventeen year olds. So, those young children captured here may be the few young children who had less restrictive caregivers, better access to devices or data and therefore better opportunity to start using the internet at a younger age than average. Boys in this study reported starting to use the internet almost two years younger than girls.

In terms of the participants' frequency of use, 90.9% of internet users reported using the internet at least once a week, if not more frequently. This use occurred daily or almost every day for 39.8% of these respondents, and 28.1% stated that they used the internet several times a day. A larger number of older participants used the internet at least once a week than younger participants and slightly more girls used the internet at least once a week than boys.

Large numbers of children who used the internet at least once a week did so at home, when they were by themselves or in the home of friends or relatives. Fewer participants used the internet in a public place or when they were at school or university. These findings show that internet use was more commonly associated with participants' leisure spaces than with formal learner spaces. This may reflect an absence of devices and internet

5. Resilience is the ability to cope with adversity and 'bounce back' from negative experiences. This can be used to describe the ability of a child to be exposed to negative or risky situations online and avoid being harmed by them.

This can include engaging in coping strategies to avoid being upset by the content or negative experiences the child is exposed to online (d'Haenens, Vandoninck & Donoso, 2013).

FREE INTERNET:

Internet that is available for free e.g. at school, in libraries in shops.

PREPAID INTERNET:

Internet accessed via a mobile service provider’s network (‘data’) or via broadband on a home modem that is pre-purchased.

PAID INTERNET:

Internet that is paid for as it is used (e.g. at an internet café).

connections with schools, or rules that prohibit the use of personal devices.⁶

A large number of children reported using the internet when they were by themselves, indicating that most respondents had the opportunity to use the internet in total privacy. This may suggest low levels of caregiver involvement in children’s internet use, and perhaps have implications for their safety online.

Most children used smartphones as the most frequent device to access the internet at least once a week. Far fewer respondents reported using tablets and desktop computers, with even fewer respondents using luxury technologies like smart televisions. These results suggest that mobile technology and portable internet was essential to participants’ internet access.⁷

More than four in five participants (83.8%) who used the internet reported that they had their own devices, which only they used.

For 63.0% of these participants, this device was a smartphone and for 16.7% this was a tablet. A much smaller 16.2% of participants used the internet on devices they shared with other people, most often their parents (65.9%) or siblings (17.1%).

Participants who had a device to themselves to use

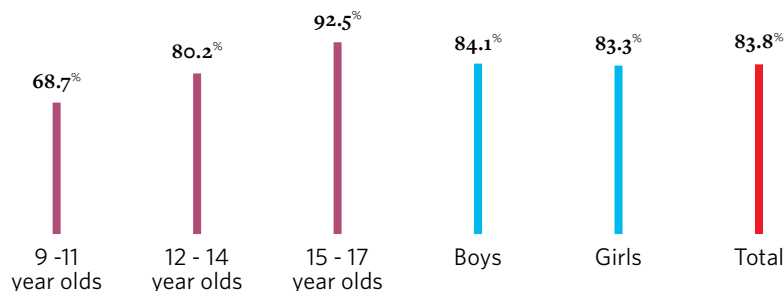


Figure 12: Percentage of participants who used their own device by age and gender

All children 9 - 17 years old who used the internet (N=643).

Method of internet access

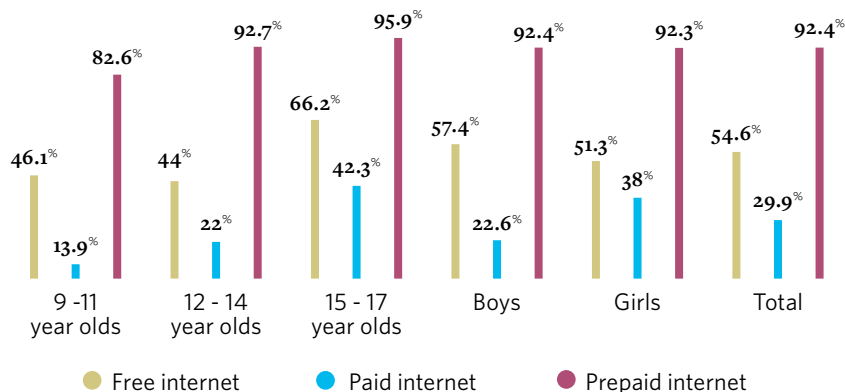


Figure 13: Percentage of participants who accessed the internet via various methods

All children 9 - 17 years old who used the internet (N=643).

Access to their own, personal device was much greater among older children, with almost all fifteen to seventeen year olds (92.5%) reporting having their own device. Very little difference was identified across genders.

When asked how they accessed the internet, most participants (92.4%) stated that they used prepaid internet to connect, with 54.6% using free internet and 29.9% paying to use the internet. These categories were not mutually exclusive and so it was possible for participants to report using all three methods.

This pattern of use remained unchanged even when the data was stratified. All

three methods of connecting were used in higher numbers by fifteen to seventeen year olds, for example, but prepaid internet had an overwhelming lead. Comparing the prominence of ‘data’ here to the extent to which participants were concerned about its cost as a barrier to their use, suggests that some participants may not have had access to lower cost options like free internet or cheap paid internet.

More than two in three participants (69.9%) said that they did not need any help to access the internet and could do it on their own. A smaller number (28.9%) said that they often helped their friends go online and 25.9% of participants said that they helped their friends with their online settings and safety settings.

6. As was noted earlier in the document, according to the Department of Basic Education, access to the internet in schools for formal learning purposes is limited in South Africa, with only 19.4% of public schools having access to the internet for the purpose of teaching and learning (DBE, 2014).

7. The available statistics on mobile technology use in South Africa substantiates this, with 20.3% of South African households owning one or more computers compared to 47.6% accessing the internet via mobile devices (Statistics South Africa, 2016a).

3.2.2. Parents

Parents and caregivers of children were also asked about their access to the internet. Slightly fewer parents (65.3%) than children (70.4%) reported using the internet. Only one in five (19.2%) parents stated that they had used the internet for the past few years, with most (34.7%) reporting having used the internet for only the past few months.

Considering that most children reported having started using the internet two or more years earlier, these findings may suggest that many children began using the internet *before* their parents or caregivers. That said, most parents reported using the internet frequently, with 88.5% of those parents who did use the internet accessing it at least every week or more often. More than two in three (69.9%) parents who did use the internet said that they were able to access the internet themselves, without any help, while 17.4% only went online when their children helped them.

These findings show that while fewer parents used the internet than their children and most had only started using the internet recently, they used the internet often and were, in most cases, skilled enough to connect to it on their own. These were perhaps not always the impressions children had of their parents and caregivers, as can be seen in the extract from the qualitative study below:

Western Cape, 11-12 year olds:

FR1: “My mother doesn’t even know how to turn her phone.” *Laughs*

Like their children, parents tended to use smartphones and tablets to access the internet rather than more formal devices like laptops and desktop computers. Most parents who used the internet used a smartphone almost every day, daily or several times a day (65.5%) and 22.2% used a tablet almost every day. One in three parents (33.6%) used the internet at work at least every day. Two in three parents (63.9%) used the internet at home almost every day and 54.7% used the internet when they were somewhere by themselves almost every day.

3.3. Opportunities and practices

Key findings

- Most child participants (95.6%) said that they sometimes or always had fun when they went online.
- Socialising, especially via instant messaging, learning and school work were popular activities among internet users, while civic and community participation online were not.
- Of the participants whose first language was not English, one in two (51.7%) children and one in three (34.5%) parents said it was difficult to find content online in their first language.

3.3.1. Children

The internet affords users many opportunities and these can involve a number of domains, including learning, communication, creativity and entertainment.^{xxxvii} For children, these opportunities can be especially appealing. They allow children to develop their skills and learn on their own terms, and to do so via a medium through which they can potentially escape the constraints and demands of their offline life, which builds their autonomy.^{xxxviii}

Participants in this study evaluated these opportunities favourably, with most participants (95.6%) reporting that they sometimes or always had fun when they went online. More than half (57.1%) of

children felt that it was fairly true or very true that there were lots of things on the internet that were good for children.

As can be seen in figure 14, in most cases, more than half the participants felt it was fairly true or very true that there were things online that were good for children. A greater number of older children had this positive attitude than younger children, suggesting that perhaps children’s enjoyment of the internet increased with age. Nearly 10.0% more boys than girls had positive attitudes towards the internet. Participants from Gauteng and urban areas reported more positive attitudes towards the internet.

Of those children who thought that the internet was good for children, the

Fairly true or very true that there were lots of things on the internet that were good for children

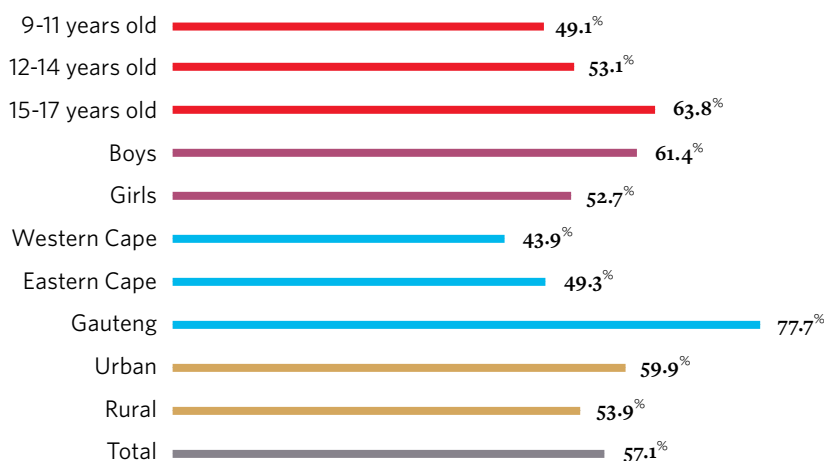
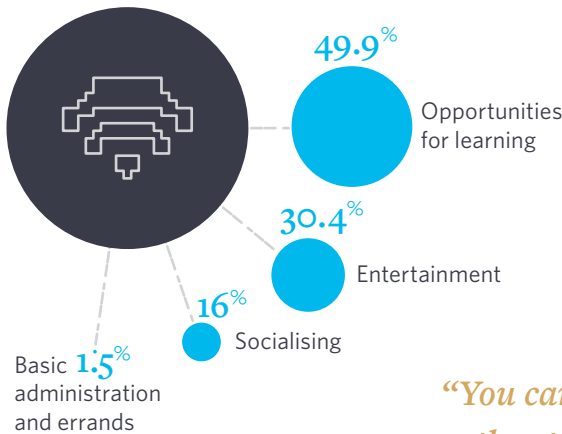


Figure 14: Percentage of participants saying there are lots of good things on the internet
All children 9 - 17 years old who used the internet (N=643).

“What things on the internet do you think are good for children your age?”



“Finding pictures and information for school, it’s even better than teachers.”

-Girl, 16 years old

“You can find explanations for words you don’t understand.”

-Boy, 17 years old

“I can learn about South African history.”

-Girl, 12 years old

“You can search for things rather to go to the library.”

-Boy, 17 years old

“Playing games, doing school work, doing puzzles, looking for a love partner.”

-Boy, 15 years old

“Information about bursaries, you can see places you’ve never been, talk to people you don’t know, watch the news.”

-Boy, 15 years old

following trends were coded from their open ended responses to the question: “What things on the internet do you think are good for children your age?” Nearly one in two participants (49.9%) liked the internet because of the opportunities it gave them for learning, 30.4% enjoyed accessing various forms of entertainment online (music/movies/games etc.), 16% enjoyed being able to socialise online and 1.5% thought the internet was good because it helped them with basic administration and errands (like banking).

In the qualitative interviews the participants mentioned multiple opportunities they accessed online, all of which mirrored the findings of the quantitative study. There was mention of the importance of the internet to school work and broadening their knowledge on various subjects, accessing entertainment, socialising and access to educational opportunities. All these themes can be seen in the following extracts:

Eastern Cape, 16-18 year olds:

MR: “You can also catch up with uhm... like soapies [soap operas] if it’s your favourite soapie.”

FR: “The latest.”

I: “So you can read up on what happened?”

MR: “Yes.”

FR: “Latest trends, what’s trends.”

MR: “Fashion.”

Western Cape, 14-16 year olds:

I: “Okay. Downloading soccer videos. Tell me a bit more about this?”

MR: “It’s very interesting... I have a passion for soccer, I love playing... Tricks and so on.”

I: “Okay. So is this to teach yourself how to do tricks?”

MR: “To improve.”

I: “Okay. How did you find out where to find those videos?”

MR: “Maybe a friend or so... possibly a website to which I go.”

Western Cape, 16-18 year olds:

I: “Or perhaps I should rather say, what value has the internet brought to your life? If you think about what difference it has made?”

MR: “Just that you know more about things you do not know much about.”

Eastern Cape, 16-18 year olds:

I: “So talking about feelings, uhm...how would you feel if you couldn’t go on the internet at all?”

MR: “Yoh!”

MR: “Yoh!”

MR: “I will feel like...”

FR: “Bored!”

FR: “Bored!”

I: “So it’s important just for entertainment to keep you...”

FR: “Occupied”

I: “Uhm...connected?”

FR: “Ja.”

Access to the internet was clearly very important to those participants using the internet. This was especially emphasised in a Gauteng focus group, where when children were asked whether there was anything else they wished they knew how to do on the internet, they reported wanting to be able to steal airtime, in order to ensure their access to the internet remained uninterrupted. These participants also wished they could hack into or unlock other people's phones in order to spy on them, specifically to keep track of romantic partners. The interest in these opportunities, though unorthodox and invasive, shows the extent of the participants' belief in the potential of the internet to meet their every need, but also reflects the need for raising awareness and educating children on individual user rights, and responsible usage of technology and appropriate online behaviour.

The opportunities pursued by children are delineated in greater detail below. Inter-personal communication was the most commonly reported opportunity offered by technology, with more than four out of five (85.8%) respondents saying they used instant messaging more than once a week. Learning and school work were also popular activities, while civic and community participation online were not done often by participants.

The low rates reported for many of these questions suggest that these were not especially significant opportunities for most respondents, and that perhaps some of the response options were not as relevant to South African internet users as might be expected, or were areas of opportunities that may remain as yet unexplored by South African children.

When asked whether various online activities were important to them, 42.8% of participants said that it was very important to learn online and 64.1% stated that it was fairly important or very important to socialise online.

How often have you done these things online in the past month?

More than once a week

	More than once a week
Learning	
I learned something new by searching online	76.5%
I used the internet for school work	70.0%
I looked for information about work or study opportunities	45.2%
Community participation	
I looked for resources or events about my local neighbourhood	16.3%
I got involved online in a local organisation or charity	6.7%
I used the internet to help somebody else	42.0%
I used the internet to talk to people from places or backgrounds different from mine	43.8%
Civic participation	
I looked for the news online	34.7%
I discussed political or social problems with other people online	17.0%
I got involved online in a campaign or protest	4.2%
I signed a petition online	6.1%
I used the internet to join a civic, religious or political group	7.3%
Creative participation	
I posted videos or music created by someone else	34.2%
I created my own video or music and uploaded it to share	33.0%
I created a blog or story or website online	18.0%
Social relationships	
I used instant messaging	85.8%
I visited a social network site	64.2%
I helped someone else who needed or wanted to go online	46.1%
I talked to family or friends who live further away	63.5%
I commented on the updates that friends or family have put online	59.6%
I showed my friends or family something that I saw online	56.7%
I visited a chatroom to meet new people	31.5%
Entertainment	
I watched video clips	51.8%
I played online games alone	49.9%
I played games with other people online	23.1%
I listened to music online (by downloading or streaming)	63.1%
Personal	
I posted photos or comments online (e.g. on Facebook or a blog)	58.1%
I looked for health information for myself or someone I know	28.9%
I participated in a site where people share my interests or hobbies	32.6%
Commercial	
I browsed for things to buy	22.9%
I checked out what things cost by looking online	32.3%

Table 4: Opportunities children accessed online

All children 9 - 17 years old who used the internet (N=643).

Participants were asked some questions about whether they felt the content available to them online was socially and culturally relevant to their own identity and whether they were able to access resources and information that was socially and culturally useful to them. Two in three participants (69.7%) said that they were always or at least sometimes able to find information online about their community, culture or lifestyle. More than half (58.3%) said that they wished there were more information resources available online that was relevant to their identity and situation. Roughly half of the participants (51.7%) whose home language was not English stated that it was easy to find information and resources online in their home language (only 15.0% of respondents stated that English was their first or home language). This suggests that there is content online in the participants' language and of relevance to their culture, but that children may benefit from access to more.

3.3.2. Parents

Parents were not asked as many questions about the opportunities they accessed online, although they were asked similar questions about accessing content and resources online that were relevant to their cultural identity. Of the parents who used the internet, 59.6% said that they were always or at least sometimes able to find information online about their community or culture or lifestyle and 72.4% said that they wished there were more information resources available online that was relevant to their unique identity. One in three parents (34.5%) whose home language was not English stated that it was easy to find information and resources online in their home language (12.2% of parents reported that their home language was English). These rates are far lower than their children's, suggesting that parents find the content available on the internet to be less relevant to them, or are less able to find relevant content.

In the qualitative interviews the parents mentioned many opportunities they



accessed online and ways that the internet improved their lives. Parents tended to describe themselves as less internet savvy than their children and the way the internet benefited them often reflected this, with parents using the internet in more practical or goal-orientated ways than their children. Parents discussed using the internet to access emails, look for jobs or maintain relationships with family members who lived far away. No parent mentioned doing things like playing an online game or searching for music, and usually their key activity was instant messaging, which they saw as a useful means of organising their lives, as well as socialising.

Western Cape, parent focus group:

FR1: "A person can't always get in touch with your people [e.g. family or friends etc.], to say "happy birthday" or if someone is ill [you are able to stay in contact with them], so it's a positive."

I: "So one can actually say that it brings family members closer to each other?"

FR1: "Closer to each other yes."

FR3: "Yes."

The focus groups also provided an opportunity for parents to reflect on the opportunities the internet provided their children, with all parents mentioning aspects of the internet they saw as benefitting their children. These usually related to the potential to improve their child's education, as well as their child's ability to socialise.

Eastern Cape, parent focus group 1:

I: "Do you think kids can be better students because they can be better, perform better at school because they can access all this information?"

FR: "Yes they can...I think so...it's my opinion, I do not know. I think they can because I saw with my two teenagers...you know? If they don't know something they just google and then they get better marks.....because sometimes we as parents don't know the things they are doing at school now. They are doing advanced stuff that we don't know."

Western Cape, parent focus group:

FR2: "The internet makes the children very clever."

I: "Okay...what do you mean by that aunty?"

FR2: "Knowledge. With their school work. And they don't understand something now, then they go in. Knowledge. It gives them knowledge."

Eastern Cape, parent focus group 1:

FR: "And secondly, they learn here at uhm..... Red Tree primary school. So for them it helps to get the English.....first of all. They are very brilliant. When they play the game, they go straight to the internet and get the games and they're making them very....bright and brilliant for their English to be perfect. So I think it's very good for them like that."

3.4. Skills

Key findings:

- Nearly two in three (59.4%) children stated that they knew a lot of things about using the internet. One in two (52.1%) children said that they knew more about using the internet than their parents.
- Most child participants reported knowing how to do things like saving a photograph from the internet, opening downloaded files and managing the settings of their social media accounts. That said, the majority of child participants reported being unable to perform more sophisticated tasks online, like using programming language or designing a website.
- When asked the same skills questions as their children, parents tended to be roughly as skilled as their children, and sometimes more skilled.
- Most children (86.3%) had an account on a social networking site and the most popular ones were Whatsapp (94.2%), Facebook (68.5%) and Instagram (18.0%).

3.4.1. Children

3.4.1.1. Skills

The child participants in this study were generally confident that they were skilled internet users and indeed, 59.4% of participants said that it was fairly true or very true that they knew lots of things about using the internet.

Older children were far more confident in their knowledge than younger children, with four out of five (79.6%) fifteen to seventeen year olds reporting knowing lots of things about using the internet. Boys were nearly ten percentage points more confident than girls about their internet knowledge.

Participants in Gauteng were also confident in their abilities (72.5%), far more than participants in the Western Cape (42.2%). Children in rural areas reported knowing slightly more about using the internet (61.8%) than participants in urban areas (61.8%).

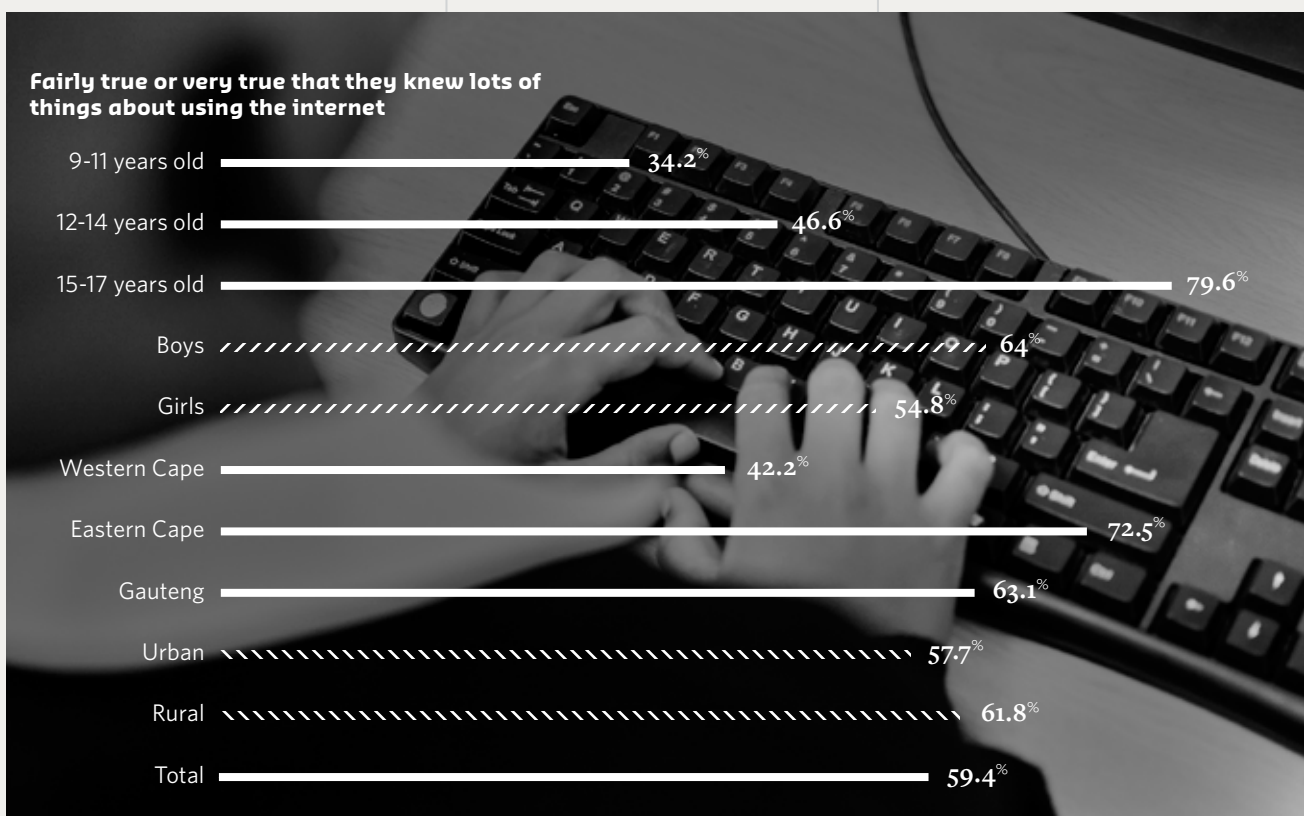


Figure 15: Percentage of participants who said they knew a lot about how to use the internet
All children 9 - 17 years old who used the internet (N=643).

One in two (52.1%) participants also said that it was fairly true or very true that they knew more about the internet than their parents or caregivers. This finding reiterates an attitude expressed throughout this study, that parents are not as knowledgeable about the internet as their children. This opinion was also found in the qualitative interviews, as can be seen in the following extracts:

Eastern Cape, 14-17 year olds:

I: “Do you ask your teachers for help?”

FR: “They ask me.”

FR: “They always ask us.”

Eastern Cape, 16-18 year olds:

I: “Okay so do you think your parents know as much as you about the internet? Or do you know more?”

FR: “I know more.”

FR: “I’d say the generation of today knows more than our parents. Like we’re much smarter than the previous generation.”

These extracts suggest that some participants had great confidence in their internet knowledge when compared to the adults in their lives. However, the quantitative findings suggest that this did not necessarily translate into an especially high level of technical skills among child participants.

Most child participants (80.5%) stated that they knew how to save a photo they found online and how to remove people from their contact lists (83.5%). However, far fewer (23.8%) knew how to use programming language or how to design a website (23.5%). These findings indicate that the participants were confident in some internet-related skills, but that most had not had the reason or opportunity to develop advanced technical skills.

3.4.1.2. Social media usage

When asked about their use of social networks, 86.3% of the child participants stated that they had a profile on a social networking

Think about how you use the internet. How true are these things for you?	Fairly true for me or very true for me
Operational skills	
I know how to save a photo that I find online	80.5%
I know how to change my privacy settings (e.g. on a social networking site)	72.5%
I know how to use a programming language	23.8%
I know how to open downloaded files	66.1%
I know how to use shortcut keys (e.g. CTRL -C for copy, CTRL-S for save)	41.2%
I know how to open a new tab in a browser	49.2%
Information/browsing skills	
I find it easy to find a website I have visited before	58.0%
I find it easy to check if the information I find online is true	45.1%
I find it easy to choose the best keywords for online searches	47.3%
Sometimes I end up on websites without knowing how I got there	53.1%
Social skills	
I know which information I should and shouldn't share online	73.1%
I know how to remove people from my contact lists	83.5%
I know how to change who I share content with (e.g. friends, friends of friends or everyone)	71.8%
Creative skills	
I know how to create something new from video or music that I found online	38.7%
I know how to post online videos or music that I have created myself	41.2%
I know which different types of licences apply to online content	20.7%
I know how to design a website	23.5%
Mobile skills	
I know how to install apps on a mobile device (e.g. phone or tablet)	60.0%
I know how to keep track of the costs of mobile app use	40.3%

Table 5: Children's online skills
All children 9 - 17 years old who used the internet (N=643).

website. When looking at the different social networking sites used by the participants, the findings show that Mxit, a previous favourite for instant messaging in South Africa, was only used by 7.7% of participants, with the highest proportion of participants (94.1%) using Whatsapp. More than two in three participants (68.5%) with a social networking account used Facebook, with far fewer using Instagram (18.0%) and Twitter (15.5%). Most participants (60.7%) did not have

more than one account on any of the social networks they used.

When asked how many contacts the participants had on the profile they used most often, 34.9% said that they had between ten and fifteen contacts while nearly a third of participants (32.2%) had their social media profiles set to public, where everyone could see it, 40.1% set their profiles to private where only their friends could see it. The remaining 27.6% had their profiles set to partially private.

MOST PARTICIPANTS (60.7%) DID NOT HAVE MORE THAN ONE ACCOUNT ON ANY OF THE SOCIAL NETWORKS THEY USED.

Participants' social media use

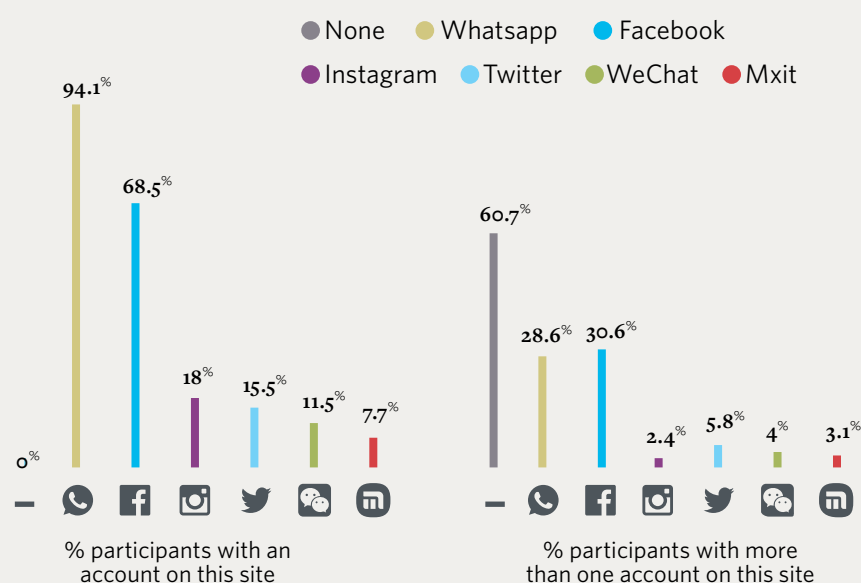


Figure 16: Participants' social media use

All children 9 - 17 years old who used the internet and had an account on a social networking site (N=555).

Thinking about your use of social networking or gaming sites, have you seen any of these online?	I don't know what it is	No, I haven't seen it	Yes, I have seen it	Yes, I have used it
Blocking button (to block contacts).	5.6%	4.5%	40.5%	49.4%
Report button (to tell someone if you are being treated badly online).	80.5%	20.2%	52.1%	13.3%
Help centre or link to a helpline (to contact someone who can help you).	72.5%	22.7%	47.4%	18.0%
Safety centre (to get information or advice).	23.8%	21.5%	45.8%	17.0%
Privacy settings (that allows you to change who can view your account etc.)	66.1%	8.5%	35.7%	46.0%

Table 6: Use of safety features on social networking sites

All children 9 - 17 years old who used the internet and had an account on a social networking site (N=555).

One in three participants (33.6%) reported that they would only accept a contact if they knew them and 25.4% said that they would only accept a contact if they knew them very well. However, in the qualitative study, older participants in Gauteng mentioned that they would accept a request if the person was attractive. This suggests that children may accept strangers as contacts in some exceptional cases.

Participants were also asked if they knew how to use or had used any of the safety features available on many social networking sites. Very few respondents reported being unaware of these features and most had at least seen them. The fewest number of participants had used the reporting button on a social networking site (13.3%), with a much larger number having used a blocking button (49.4%). This indicates that a large number of participants may have had unpleasant interactions online that caused them to block an individual.

3.4.2. Parents

Despite perceptions that parents were not as literate online as their children emerging elsewhere in the research, an examination of individual skills suggests that parents were in fact as skilled online as children, and in some instances more so (see table 7 below). For example, parents were less likely to know how to open a new tab in a browser, post a video or music online that they had created themselves or install an app on their mobile device. However, they were more likely to know how to check if the information they found online was true, remove people from their contact lists and keep track of the costs of mobile app use.

Contrary to the opinions of parents and children discussed earlier in this section, these results suggest that parents who used the internet had sufficient skills to match, and sometimes exceed, their children’s internet skills. While this dynamic could be investigated further, these findings suggest that parents may have far more potential to actively engage with their children around their internet use than they currently realise.

Think about how you use the internet. How true are these things for you?	PARENT True for me	CHILD True for me
Operational skills		
I know how to save a photo that I find online	81.2%	80.5%
I know how to change my privacy settings (e.g. on a social networking site)	72.1%	72.5%
I know how to use a programming language	25.1%	23.8%
I know how to open downloaded files	63.9%	66.1%
I know how to use shortcut keys (e.g. CTRL -C for copy, CTRL-S for save)	41.1%	41.2%
I know how to open a new tab in a browser	42.3%	49.2%
Information/browsing skills		
I find it easy to find a website I have visited before	57.7%	58.0%
I find it easy to check if the information I find online is true	49.2%	45.1%
I find it easy to choose the best keywords for online searches	46.9%	47.3%
Sometimes I end up on websites without knowing how I got there	56.6%	53.1%
Social skills		
I know which information I should and shouldn't share online	75.4%	73.1%
I know how to remove people from my contact lists	88.3%	83.5%
I know how to change who I share content with (e.g. friends, friends of friends or everyone)	73.6%	71.8%
Creative skills		
I know how to create something new from videos or music that I found online	30.0%	38.7%
I know how to post online videos or music that I have created myself	33.2%	41.2%
I know which different types of licences apply to online content	22.0%	20.7%
I know how to design a website	26.3%	23.5%
Mobile skills		
I know how to install apps on a mobile device (e.g. phone or tablet)	49.3%	60.0%
I know how to keep track of the costs of mobile app use	46.4%	40.3%

Table 7: Parents' online skills
All parents who used the internet (N=351).

*“Frequently having
older strangers
inviting me,
seeing nude
adverts.”*

-Girl, 17 years old

*“Most people type
sexual things that are
not meant
for the
eyes.”*

-Girl, 12 years old

3.5. Risks

“Gossiping about other people and there are ugly comments about other people.”

-Girl, 14 years old

Key findings:

- Nearly half of the participants (45.6%) thought that there were things on the internet that bother or upset people their age and a little over one in four (27.1%) had personally been bothered by something on the internet in the past year.
- One in three (34.5%) child participants had been exposed to hate speech, and to gory images online (32.7%).
- Many children reported experiencing some indicators of excessive internet use. This included having a fight with family because of the time they spent online (34.5%) and trying to use the internet less but not being able to do so (29.3%).
- When asked if they had ever had contact with someone online that they had never met face to face before, 41.2% of respondents who used the internet said that they had. Of those who said they had had contact with a stranger online, half (54.0%) said that they had met with someone that they first got to know online in the past year.
- When asked if they had seen any sexual images online in the past year, 51.2% of participants reported that they had and nearly one in three had received a sexual message (30.5%).
- One in five (20.5%) participants had been sent a message they did not want with advertisements for or links to x-rated websites, 19.2% opened a message or a link in a message that showed pictures of naked people or of people having sex that they did not want and 20.3% had seen or received a sexual message, image or video about someone else that they did not want.
- Most parents (86.7%) thought that their child had not experienced anything that bothered them online in the past year and did not think it was likely that something would bother them in the coming months (80.6% not likely at all and not very likely). These figures roughly matched the reports of their children.

“Lies. People pretend they are what they are not.”

-Boy, 14 years old

3.5.1. Children

While ICTs provide children with many opportunities, the use of these technologies can also expose children to risks that may ultimately lead them to be harmed. Three categories of risk have been identified:

- content risk (the risk of exposure to content that children may find upsetting),
- contact risk (the risk of interacting with individuals with dubious motives), and
- conduct risk (the risk of children themselves behaving irresponsibly or aggressively online).^{x1}

Exposure to the risks that fall into these three broad categories is inevitable when children use the internet, but this exposure is not necessarily harmful to children, because children develop coping strategies that allow them to avoid harm. The participants in this study were asked

whether they were exposed to a range of risks, and whether they were upset by this experience, in order to determine the harmful nature of this exposure.

3.5.1.1. Being bothered or upset by something online

Participants were asked whether they thought that there were things on the internet that bother or upset people their age and 45.5% agreed. When asked what specifically the respondents thought bothered young people, the participants gave a wide range of responses to the open-ended question, including things like internet scams, ‘pop-up adverts’ that were pornographic, cyberbullying, unpleasant or scary news or pictures, harrassment or sexual harrassment by strangers and people sharing too much personal information online.

Fewer participants (27.1%) stated that they had been personally bothered or upset by something online in the past year.

Bothered by something online

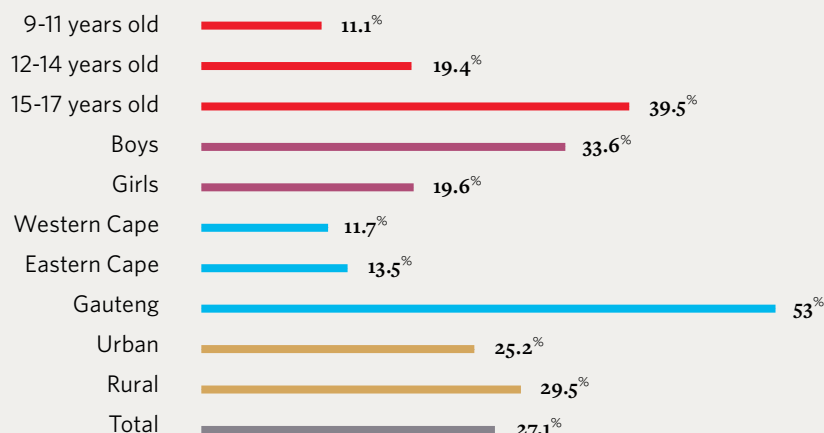


Figure 17: Percentage of all participants bothered by something online
All children 9 - 17 years old who used the internet (N=643).

In the past year, how often have you done the following things online?

More than once a month

Looked for new friends or contacts on the internet.	47.3%
Sent my personal information (e.g. my address or phone number) to someone that I have never met face to face.	14.3%
Added people to my friends or contacts whom I have never met face to face.	30.2%
Pretended to be a different kind of person online from who I really am.	16.5%
Sent a photo or video of myself to someone I have never met face to face.	20.5%

Table 8: Risky online opportunities
All children 9 - 17 years old who used the internet (N=643).

The findings show that a larger number of older children had been bothered by something online in the last year than younger children. This contrasts with what might be expected to occur, namely that younger children tend to be more bothered by what they see online and that resilience to harmful content increases with experience.^{xli} There may be many explanations for this finding. One may be that parents’ restrictive mediation practices with younger children (noted on page 20) extends to young children’s internet activities but falls away as children age and become more sophisticated users. Researchers have identified this phenomenon elsewhere.^{xliii} Other reasons may be that older children were exposed to or sought out more adult content, or simply used the internet more.

A larger number of boys than girls reported being bothered by something online in the last year. This may have been an indication of culturally

normative gender practices playing a role in what boys and girls were exposed to, with boys potentially having more wanted and unwanted exposure to pornographic and violent content, especially with peers.^{xliiii} Indeed, a recent study on sexual abuse in South Africa found that boys were more likely to have unwanted exposure to sexual content than girls.^{xliiv}

Of those child participants who had been bothered by something online, most (71.3% or 122 respondents) had only been bothered by something once or twice and only 11.1% (n=19) had been bothered daily or almost everyday. In terms of the emotions this experience elicited, 60.9% (n=106) of participants had felt very upset by this experience, 20.7% (n=36) felt very embarrassed and 16.1% (n=28) felt very afraid.

While 10.3% (n= 18) of child participants did not speak to anyone about this

experience, 64.9% (n= 113) spoke to a friend their own age, 33.3% (n= 58) to their parents and caregivers and 11.5% (n= 20) to their teacher. This finding shows that adults are not always the first port of call when children are upset by something online and in fact, that children tend to favour their friends and peers as a source of support around these matters, over adults.

When asked what strategies the children used to manage unpleasant online situations, most children responded that they just ignored the problem (28.2% or n=49). Some said they closed the app or window where this experience had occurred (21.3% or n=37), others blocked the person from contacting them (21.3% or n=37) and 15.5% (n= 27) said they deleted any messages from the person. When asked whether taking their chosen reaction had helped the unpleasant situation, 87.5% (n=140) of respondents said that it had.

Exposure and emotional response to potentially negative user-generated content

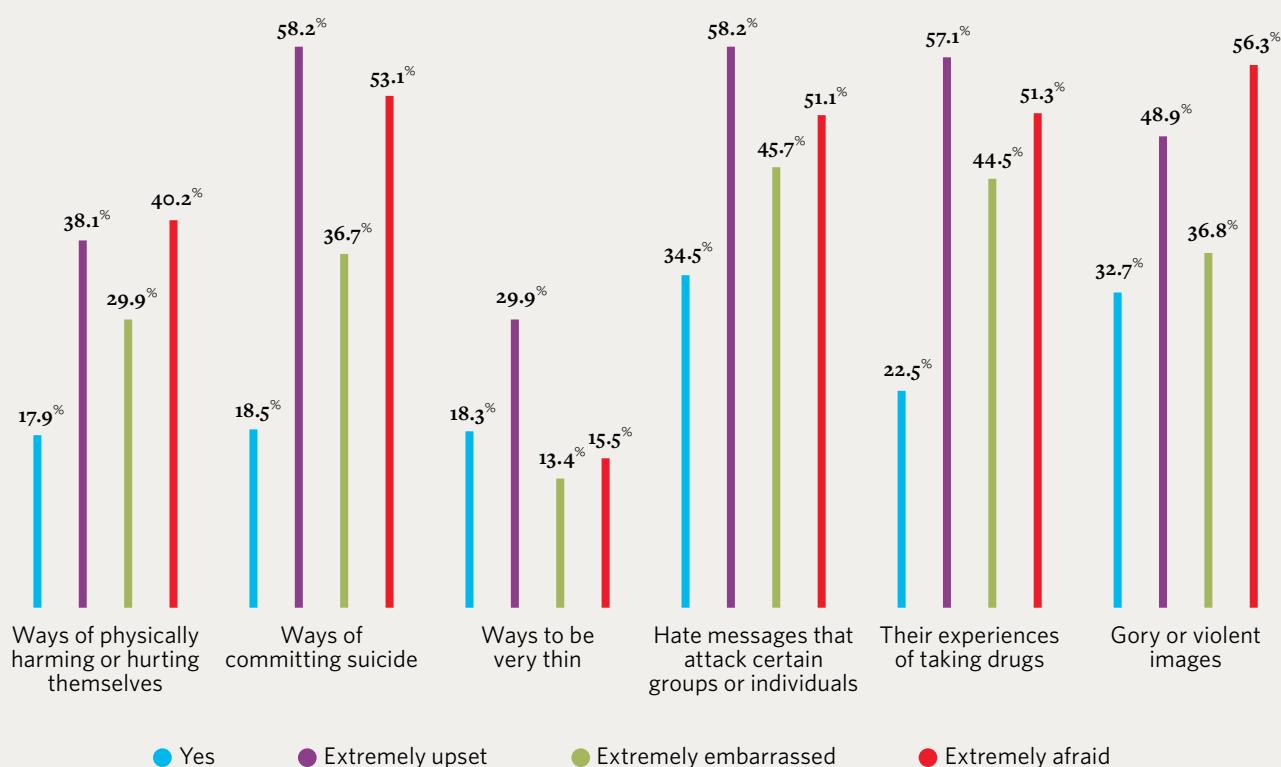


Figure 18: Potentially negative user generated content exposure and responses in the last year
Children 12- 17 years old who used the internet (N=531).

3.5.1.2. Risky behaviour and exposure to dangerous content

Small but still noteworthy numbers of participants reported engaging in social interactions online that were potentially risky. One in five (20.5%) child participants had sent a video or photo of themselves to someone they didn't know more than once a month and nearly one in three (30.2%) had added people to their contact list that they had never met face to face. This suggests that not all participants were as careful with who they made friends with online as reported in the social media discussion on page 30.

Children were asked about their exposure to negative user generated content, including distressing materials, such as discussions about self-harm, gory images or hate speech (see figure 18 above). The participants who had been exposed to this type of content were also asked to rate their emotional responses to this experience and depending on the type of

content, half or more of these respondents had had an extreme emotional reaction to this exposure. Indeed, the rates for extreme emotions presented here represent the highest possible option on a five point scale, with the remaining participants still expressing some negative emotion.

Various forms of self-harm, including suicide and eating disorders, were reported at relatively lower rates, with hate speech and gory and violent images being reported at the highest rates. A possible explanation for this finding may be that South Africa's violent and, at times, politically volatile context may permeate into the online world in the form of hate speech and violent content. For example, many of the racial tensions that characterised the Apartheid era in South Africa continue to influence public discourse in the post-Apartheid era, along with new hot-buttoned issues like xenophobia and economic redress policies. South African children may be exposed to and distressed by heated debates online,

or even videos or photos of violent incidents experienced in the country. This finding suggests that South African children may benefit from greater support in how to interpret this kind of content when they are exposed to it and perhaps, strategies to avoid particularly upsetting content.

Participants' exposure to other negative online experiences and their emotional responses to these experiences were also investigated (figure 19). Examples of negative experiences questioned about were spending too much money on games and getting a virus. Although the greatest number of participants spent too much money on online games, they did not experience any severely negative emotion as a result of this. The largest number of participants were upset by being cheated online, although this occurred for the fewest number of participants. Overall, participants reported feeling high levels of negative emotions as a result of these experiences, suggesting that they were harmful.

Exposure and emotional response to other negative online experiences

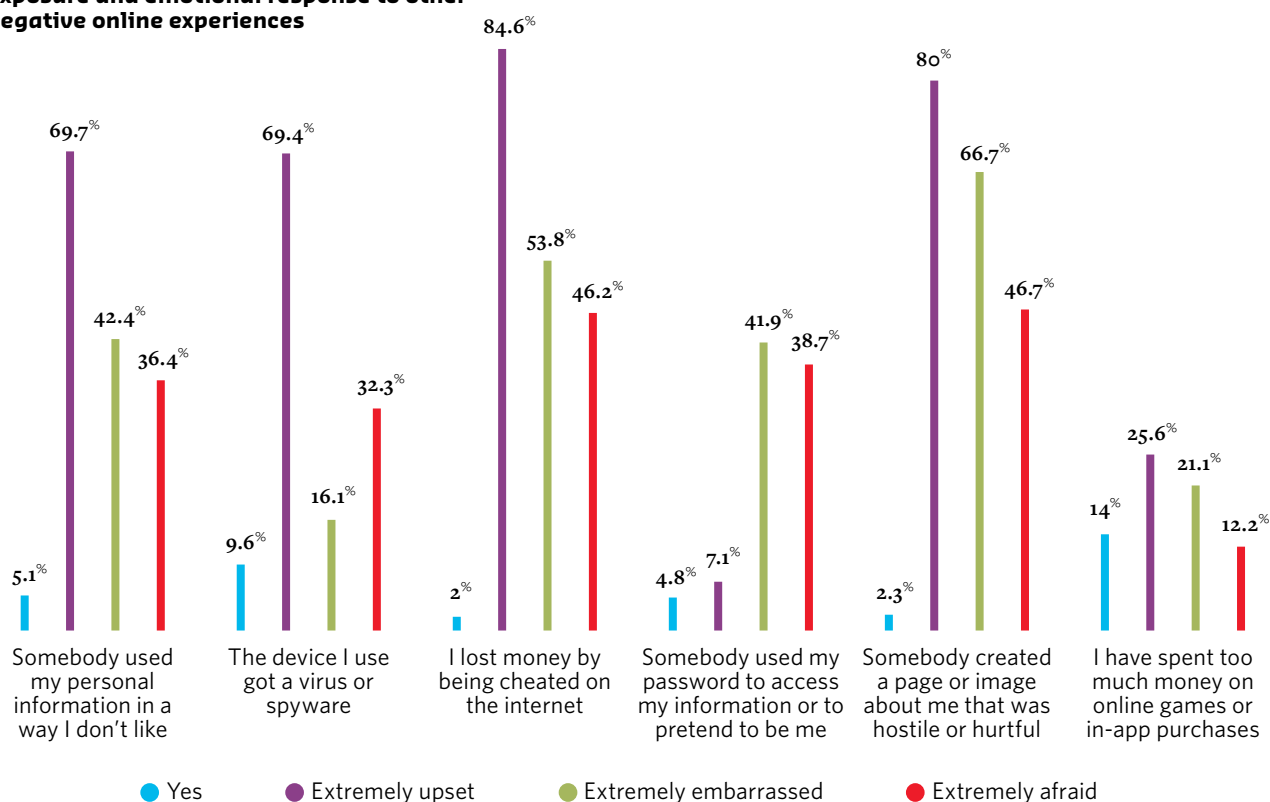


Figure 19: Exposure to other negative online experiences within the past year
All children 9 - 17 years old who used the internet (N=643)

The participants were also asked about whether their internet use ever became uncontrollable, especially to the point where it may have negatively impacted on their lives. Table 9 on the right shows that a fair number of participants reported having some difficulty managing their own internet use, to the point that for some it impacted their relationship with their family (34.5%), their self care (22.0%) and even their school marks (12.8%). These results are difficult to interpret because the internet is often a persistent feature in people's lives, with offline and online activities regularly merging. So for example, while one might consider the finding that almost half of all participants (49.0%) felt the need to check their devices frequently as a troubling sign of internet addiction, considering its value in performing even basic daily functions, this may simply be an indication that the participants in this study had integrated the internet into their lives.

In the past year, how often have these things happened to you?	Sometimes and often
I have gone without eating or sleeping because I spent most of my time on the internet.	22.0%
I have had fights with my family or friends because of the time I spent on the internet.	34.5%
My marks have dropped because of the time I spent on the internet.	12.8%
I think the amount of time I spend on the internet causes problems for me.	31.7%
I feel I have to check my device (e.g. phone or computer) to see if anything new has just happened.	49.0%

Table 9: Excessive internet use with the past year
All children 9 - 17 years old who used the internet (N=643).

Excessive internet use was also a theme that emerged in the qualitative study, with children reporting that the internet often got in the way of their daily activities.

Eastern Cape, 16-18 year olds:

FR: "Uhm, they waste your time, because like, instead of, you get tempted

to use social media even though you have homework."

Western Cape, 11-12 year olds:

I: "Okay but why would they take the phone? What are you doing on the phone?"

FR1: "WhatsApp with everyone."

Met with a stranger the child got to know online face to face last year

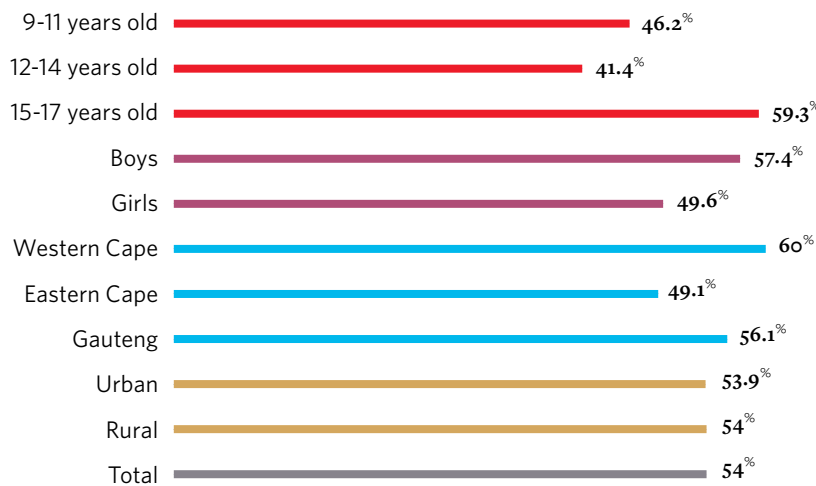


Figure 20: Met with a stranger offline in the last year

Children 9 - 17 years old who used the internet and reported having met with a stranger offline in the last year (N=143) out of the total number of children who reported having had contact with a stranger offline in the last year (N=265).

FR2: "Then you forget about your schoolwork."

FR3: "Then you fail the year... then that is a whole of your life that you've wasted."

Western Cape, parent focus group:

I: "And communication between mothers and children? Or fathers and children? Has technology made it harder? Or has technology made it easier?"

FR2: "Made it harder."

FR1: "Mmh."

I: "Harder?"

FR2: "Mmh."

I: "Okay, so why is it harder these days?"

FR2: "Because the kids are more into their phones now."

FR1: "And then they will never speak."

As can be seen in these extracts, both parents and children asserted that children did not always use the internet appropriately and would evade other responsibilities to spend more time online. Most parents mentioned this

as a point of conflict, with children avoiding chores, lying about completing their homework and being found using their phones under the sheets of their bed at all hours of the night. Some parents reported attempting to control this use, but this often just involved taking the device away until the child had completed the necessary task or had a good night's sleep. Parents also attempted to speak to their children about why this behaviour was problematic at times. These tensions give meaning to the finding that one in three participants (34.5%) fought with family or friends online and suggests that for some participants, their extent of use may have been counter-productive because of the degree to which it impacted on their daily lives.

3.5.1.3. Meeting a stranger face to face

When asked if they had ever had contact with someone online that they had never met face to face before, 41.2% (n= 265) of child respondents who used the internet

said that they had at least once in their life time. Of those who said they had had contact with a stranger online, 54.0% (n= 143) said that they had met with someone that they first got to know online in the past year. When asked who initiated this offline meeting, there was almost an even split among participants, with 50.3% (n= 72) saying they had initiated the meeting and 48.3% (n =69) saying the other person had initiated the face to face contact.

In figure 20, the small number of participants who had met with a stranger in the past year is disaggregated. While roughly half of all children in each age category reported meeting with strangers offline, there was a vast difference in the sizes of the groups, with only 13 nine to eleven year olds reporting having met a stranger, compared to 70 twelve to fourteen year olds and 182 fifteen to seventeen year olds. The findings also show that more boys than girls met with a stranger offline, which may possibly be explained by differing social attitudes to girls and boys regarding safety and the abilities to protect themselves.

One in two participants (50.3% or n=76) said that they had first got in contact with this person via a social networking site. Most respondents reported feeling 'fine' about this face to face meeting (61.7% or n=87), suggesting that these were not unpleasant experiences in many cases and that it perhaps even felt good about being able to extend an online friendship to the offline world (as some of the responses provided in the 'other' write-in option suggested). However, 11.3% (n=16) of respondents said they felt a bit afraid about this meeting.

Only 4.9% (n=7) of respondents met with an adult at this face to face meeting. The rest met with people of similar ages to them (69.7% or n=99), with a teenager older than them (18.3% or n=26) or with a teenager younger than them (7.0% or n=10).

Participants in the qualitative component of the study expressed concern over the potential dangers of meeting with strangers offline, and some parents and children gave first and second hand accounts of negative

offline meeting experiences. For most however, especially in the Eastern Cape and Gauteng, their knowledge of this issue came from the American reality television show ‘Catfish’, based on the movie with the same title. The show follows people who develop relationships with strangers online who meet with these individuals for the first time offline, and often discover that they were deceived in some way by this stranger. Parents and children in a number of interviews immediately mentioned this show when asked about the risks associated with internet use, indicating the impact of this show on their understanding and awareness of the dangers of meeting with a stranger offline and perhaps, the ways in which exposure to the show warped their views on what could occur if they met a stranger offline.

In other cases, meeting with strangers offline was reported as being an entirely positive experience. Parents in the Gauteng qualitative interviews reported using the internet to connect and meet with clan members and family members. These were often group meetings, where clan members could reconnect or families could get to know a new member. Children also reported using the internet to connect with friends of friends and developing offline friendships out of these contacts.

These findings suggest that meeting with a stranger offline was considered both an opportunity, and a risk by the participants in the qualitative study. The findings of the quantitative study show that children of all ages, genders and locations were meeting with strangers offline, potentially exposing themselves to harm. However, the nature and purpose of these meetings is not known and understanding this would certainly clarify why children were putting themselves in situations that their own reports suggest were known to them to be risky.

3.5.1.4. Being treated badly or treating others badly online

One in five participants (21.9%) reported having being treated in a hurtful or nasty way in the past year (either face to face or online). For most respondents, this happened just once or twice (74.5% or n=105) but for a small few, this was an everyday occurrence (2.1% or n=3). For the majority of respondents, this bad treatment took place in person (49.3% or n=68), but for some it took place via the internet, namely via social networking sites (35.5% or n= 49) or instant messaging services (25.4% or n=35).

Child participants were also asked about specific experiences of being treated in a hurtful way online, presented in figure 22. One in five (22.4%) reported

being sent hurtful messages and 14.9% reported having hurtful or nasty messages about them being posted where others could see them, or being passed around. Participants felt particularly strong emotions after being threatened, perhaps expectedly, as being threatened suggests the potential for future victimisation as well. Less extreme emotion was reported for being left out of group activity online, suggesting that this was not as distressing an experience.

More than one in ten participants (15.1%) stated that they had treated someone else in a hurtful or nasty way in the last year. For 70.1% of respondents this occurred just once or twice. In the majority of cases, this took place in person (39.6% or n=53), but in some instances it took place via instant messaging (22.4% or n=30) or a social networking site (20.9% or n=28).

Participants described being treated in a hurtful or nasty way online as a common experience in the qualitative interviews. Indeed, participants even reported that some local platforms exist primarily for the purpose of gossiping anonymously about people, often in a mean way. Participants in the Western Cape mentioned the site ‘outoilet’,⁸ as one such space.

Western Cape, 11-12 year olds:

FR: “On Opera-Mini you can go onto ‘ou toilet.’”

I: “Okay. Ok, so say if you go onto ‘ou toilet’, who do you speak to on ‘outoilet?’”

FR: “You see all the, the, the peoples stuff.”

FR: “They gossip about each other.”

FR: “But you don’t put your name there.”

FR: “They gossip about each other but you don’t put you names there.”

I: “Oh. How does that work??”

Being treated in a hurtful or nasty way online

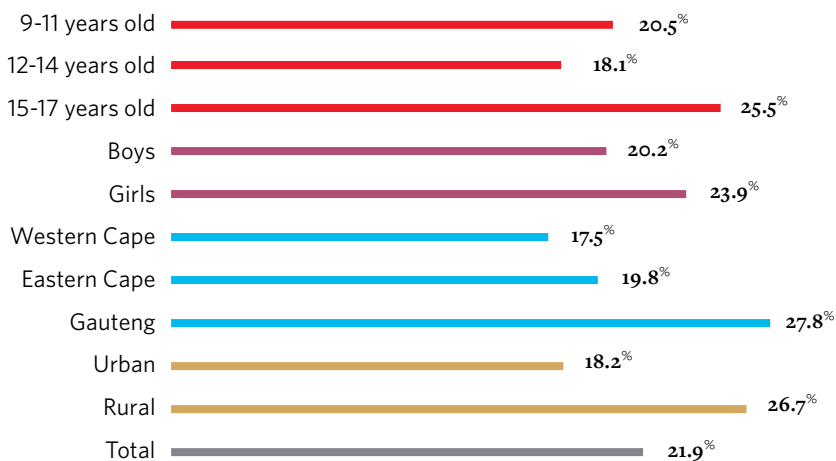


Figure 21: Being treated badly online
All children 9 - 17 years old who used the internet (N=643).

8. ‘Outoilet’, meaning ‘old toilet’ in Afrikaans, is a reportedly Russian website popular in South Africa where users can anonymously gossip or chat with prospective sexual partners. The website has gained some infamy and local news reports suggest that there have been incidents of severe bullying via the website (Mtolo, 2010).

Experiences and emotional responses to being treated badly online

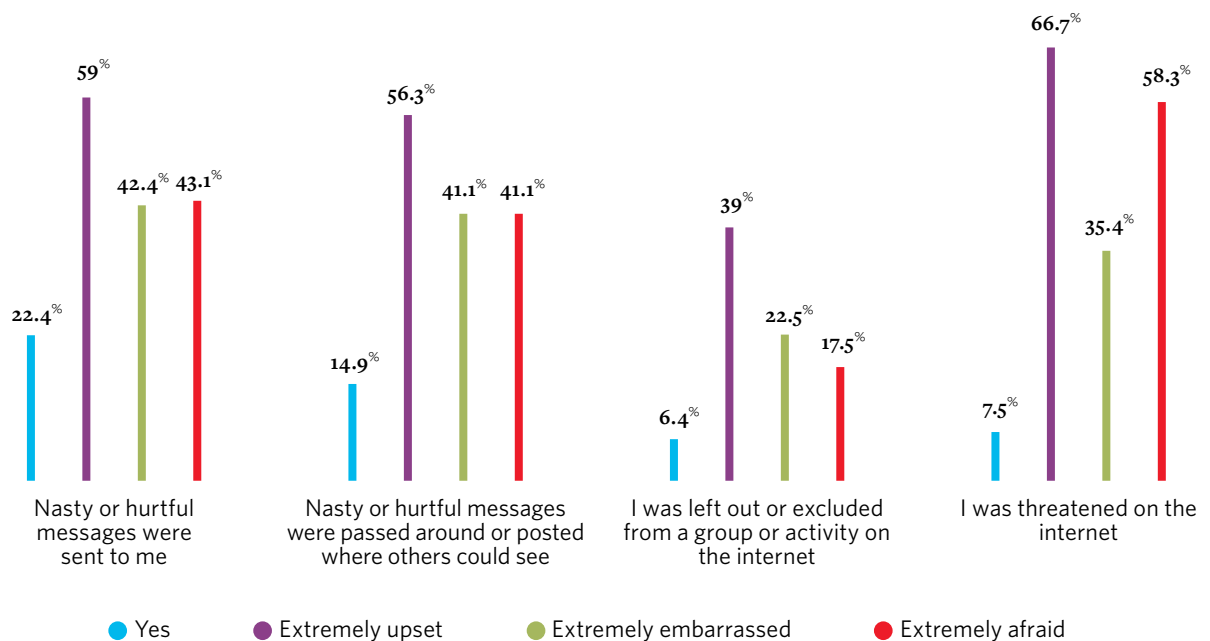


Figure 22: Being treated in a hurtful or nasty way by others online in the last year

All children 9 – 17 years old who used the internet (N=643).

FR: “So for example you can post something bad about her [points to one of the other participants] on ‘ou toilet’ but I don’t put my name there, I don’t put any other details, then she won’t know it was me.”

Participants in the qualitative study frequently mentioned unkind treatment online as being a key negative aspect of internet use and were familiar with its harmful effects.

Eastern Cape, 14-17 year olds:

I: “Do you think there’s a difference between when someone is mean to you in person and when someone is mean to you on the internet? Like if someone says something horrible about you to your face and if someone says something horrible about you on the internet. Is it different?”

MR: “Yes it is different.”

I: “So how is it different?”

MR: “Cos in your face it’s mostly verbal but on the internet it’s a lot of people.”

I: “So everyone can see it?”

MR: “Yes.”

MR: “Ja.”

FR: “Yes. Everybody knows your business.”

While no participants reported experiences of what might typically be considered cyberbullying, participants’ discussions in the qualitative component of the study, suggested regular personal experiences of, or witnessing of, nasty and hurtful treatment online. This was also a form of risk that was frequently worried about by the adults in the children’s lives, perhaps because of the degree to which it is publicised as a major risk of the internet, with participants mentioning their parents and teachers as being concerned about their exposure to cyberbullying.

3.5.1.5. Online sexual experiences

Participants were asked some basic questions about their exposure to sexual content offline and online. Half of the participants (51.2%) reported seeing a sexual image in the past year. When stratifying the responses, it can be seen that many more older children had seen sexual images than younger children. There were also great differences in the numbers of children who saw sexual images across provinces. Of the participants who had been exposed to sexual images, 58.7% of participants said that this had happened just once or twice but 16.1% of respondents stated that this occurred daily or almost daily.

When asked how they felt about being exposed to sexual images online, 34.3% (n=113) of respondents said they weren’t upset in any way. More older children reported feeling fine about seeing sexual images, with almost half of the fifteen to seventeen year olds (42.2%) feeling perfectly fine as a result of this exposure, compared to only 10.7% of nine to eleven year olds. One in ten respondents (10.9% or n=36) said they felt very upset by this exposure and 20.7% (n=68) felt very embarrassed. Only a small number felt very afraid as a result of this exposure (n=8).

The participants were asked where this exposure had happened most recently, including contexts other than the internet. Nearly one in three participants (29.9% or n=176) reported that they had seen sexual images on a social networking site and 18.0% (n=106) reported seeing sexual images via instant messaging. These findings suggest that children are most often exposed to sexual materials via direct social interactions (possibly including sexting) and public sharing of sexual content, rather than via more involuntary means like pop-up adverts (3.9% or n=23).

Nearly one in three participants (30.5%) reported receiving a sexual message in the last year. A greater number of older children received a sexual message in the last year than younger children and more boys received messages than girls. More than half the people who had received a sexual message (59.8% or n=116), had done so just once or twice. A small proportion of respondents (14.9% or n=29) reported that this occurred daily or almost daily.

The majority of participants said they weren't bothered or upset in any way by this experience (40.2% or n=80). The most frequent emotion was embarrassment, with 18.6% (n=37) saying they were very embarrassed by receiving a sexual message.

These messages were typically received via instant messaging (52.8% or n=143) and social networking sites (32.1% or n=87), with very few being received via text (5.2% or n=14), calls (2.6% or n=7) or pop-ups (2.6% or n=7). These findings reflect those on the locations where children are exposed to sexual images, suggesting that social networking sites and instant messages are the prominent platforms for young people's engagement and exposure to sexual interactions online.

The participants were also asked if they had themselves sent or posted any sexual messages to anyone else in the past year. Just over one in ten (11.0%) of all respondents stated they had sent a sexual message. Again, more older children than younger children sent sexual messages, perhaps suggesting a developmental normal increase in interest in sexual interactions as children aged. Of the participants who said they had sent a sexual image, 47.9% (n=34) stated that this had happened just once or twice and 26.8% (n=19) said that this happened at least every week. In the focus groups discussions, children were in most cases very conscious of the presence of sexual content online and many participants did not enjoy exposure to sexual content. Some younger participants even objected to the presence of dating websites online, finding them offensive and overly sexual

This tended to be a topic that was joked about and discussed less seriously, but participants were familiar with the some of the dangers of online sexual interactions.

Eastern Cape, 16-18 year olds:

FR: "But you can also like, you mustn't post pictures online that you...can like.... never delete. Like you post something, you post a nude picture of yourself and people react to it and stuff...it's forever gonna be online on google and stuff. It's gonna carry on."

3.5.1.5. Unwanted sexual experiences

The survey included an additional module that explored the unwanted sexual experiences children may have had online. Because of the sensitive nature of these questions and because they referred to activities only internet users would engage in, these questions were only asked of respondents who used the internet and who were twelve years old and older. Detailed tables on the follow up responses to these questions can be found in the corresponding technical report for this study.

Seen sexual images online in the past year

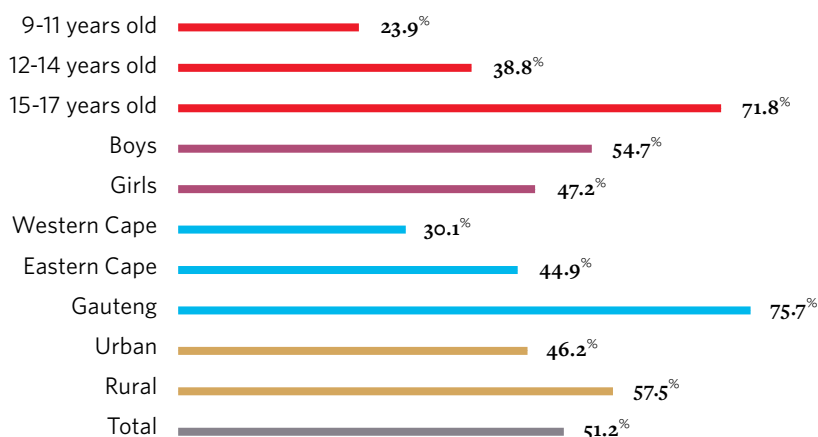


Figure 23: Participants who had seen sexual images on the internet
All children 9 - 17 years old who used the internet (N=643).

Received sexual images online in the past year

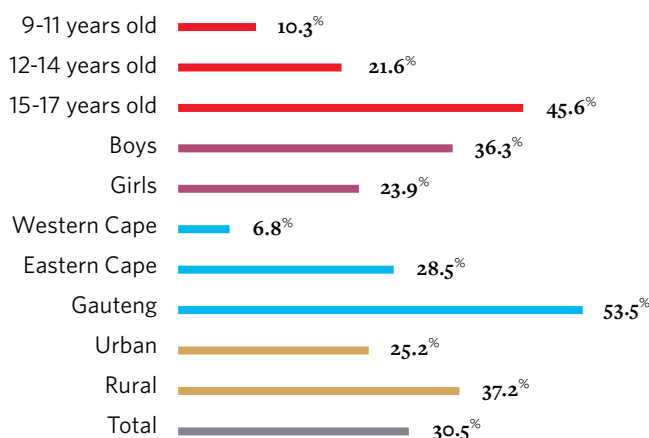


Figure 24: Participants who received sexual messages
All children 9 - 17 years old who used the internet (N=643).

Sent sexual images online

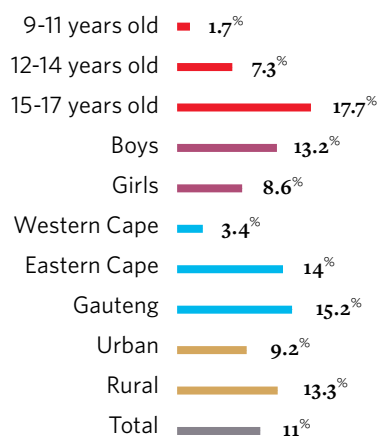


Figure 25: Participants who sent sexual messages
All children 9 - 17 years old who used the internet (N=643).

One in five participants (20.5%) had received unsolicited adverts or links to pornographic websites and a little less than one in five participants (19.2%) had opened a link or message that resulted in exposure to pornographic content. When asked if they had seen or received a sexual message about someone else when they did not want to, 20.3% of participants said they had.

Very few (5.1%) respondents stated that they had been asked for sexual information about themselves when they felt uncomfortable about answering such questions. Only two of those who were asked for sexual information actually shared this with the person asking. Only one in twenty respondents (5.1%) said they had been asked to talk about sexual acts with someone on the internet when they did not want to. Of the 5.1%, six participants responded to the person and discussed sexual acts when they did not want to.

A very small number of respondents (1.5%) were asked to do something sexual with someone via the internet when they did not want to. Of that 1.5%, three respondents actually did something sexual as a result of being asked to by someone via the internet.

Finally, 3.8% of participants had been asked for a photo or a video of their private parts when they did not want to send one. Of the 3.8%, two had reciprocated with a picture or video.

The data collected on unwanted sexual experiences suggests that only a minority of respondents ever had any unwanted sexual experiences online and the most potentially harmful were experienced by very few respondents. In general, more boys reported exposure to unwanted sexual content and more girls reported being asked to provide sexual content themselves, of themselves, when they did not want to do so. While this finding is explored in greater detail in the technical report, it shows that the type of risk of unwanted sexual experience may vary across gender.

In the past year, has any of the following happened to you on the internet...	%	n
I was sent a message that I did not want with advertisements for or links to x-rated websites	20.5%	108
I opened a message or a link in a message that showed pictures of naked people or of people having sex that I did not want	19.2%	101
I have seen or received a sexual message, image or video about someone else that I did not want	20.3%	107
I have been asked for sexual information about myself when I did not want to answer such questions	5.1%	27
If the participant responded YES to the previous question, they were asked: I have sent sexual information about myself when I did not want	/	2
I have been asked to talk about sexual acts with someone on the internet when I did not want to	5.1%	27
If the participant responded YES to the previous question, they were asked: I have TALKED about sexual acts with someone on the internet when I did not want to	/	6
I have been asked by someone on the internet to DO something sexual when I did not want to	1.5%	8
If the participant responded YES to the previous question, they were asked: I have DONE something sexual on the internet when I did not want to	/	3
I have been ASKED on the internet for a photo or video showing my private parts when I did not want to	3.8%	20
If the participant responded YES to the previous question, they were asked: I have SENT someone a photo or video showing my private parts when I did not want to	/	2

Table 10: Unwanted sexual experiences
Children 12 - 17 years old who used the internet (N=527).

3.5.2. Parents

Parents were not asked about their own risk taking behaviour or exposure to risk online in the qualitative and quantitative interviews. However, in general parents were concerned about their children’s safety online and particularly, the risk of their exposure to and engagement in discussions around sexual content. Parents tended to have far more clarity about the risks their children could be exposed to online than the opportunities the internet afforded them. What is more, their discussion usually focused on the extreme forms of risk, which none of their children were reported as having actually experienced, rather than the less obvious risks that may directly affect their child’s life, such as excessive internet use.



Eastern Cape, parent focus group 1:

I: “So then it’s hard for you to even check if they’re doing.”

FR2: “And then they tell you that “my phone is my privacy so you can’t touch my phone”. Like my 15 year old. We always fight because of her phone because sometimes I want to know “why are you on the phone until late?” She tells me “mummy it’s my privacy you can’t always look at my phone and check what is going on in my phone” so....”

MR1: “That’s one of the challenges we go through. They sometimes go sleep late.”

FR2: “Ja.”

I: “So they’re tired the next day and it affects.....they can’t concentrate at school.”

In the quantitative survey, parents were asked what they worried about in relation to their child’s wellbeing. Parents were most likely to worry about their child’s health (62.1% often or all the time), having enough money to care for their child (69.4% often or all the time) and the child’s school performance (65.3% often or all the time), worries central to children’s most basic care. However, parents did seem to be concerned about their children’s online safety, with 36.3% worrying about a stranger contacting their child online, 33.1% worrying about their child seeing

inappropriate material online and 33.0% worrying about what their child does on the internet.

Parents were also asked more detailed questions about their knowledge of their child’s exposure to risks online, which might suggest the extent to which parents and children communicated about the child’s online experiences. Most parents (86.7%) thought that their child had not experienced anything that bothered them online in the past year and didn’t think it was likely that something would bother them in the coming months (80.6% not likely at all and not very likely). Few parents (27.4%) felt that they would not be able to help their child cope if something did bother them online, with 54.2% saying they would be able to help. Some parents (28.8%) thought that their child would not be able to cope with anything that bothered or upset them online, but 50.1% said they thought their child would be able to cope.

Table 11 outlines the parents’ responses to other questions about their knowledge of their children’s exposure to danger online. Here, participants were given the option to say that they simply did not know. The majority of parents were confident enough to say that their child had not experienced that specific thing

online. The rates at which children reported experiencing these various events online has also been included to allow for comparison. Where cells are empty in this column, no comparable data was available in the child survey. It must be noted that the samples are not directly matched, as for some children, no parents were interviewed. Comparisons should therefore be made with some caution.

The number of positive responses were very low for these questions, with the highest rate (11.1%) being for something parents would typically find out about, their child spending too much money on apps. Indeed, parents grossly underestimated children’s exposure to risk online, with children’s reported rates being higher than their parents believed they were in all cases. This may be explained by a finding identified elsewhere in this section (page 32), that children tend not to talk to adults about their negative online experiences. As a result, parents may feel confident to assume that their child has not had a certain experience, when in fact their child has simply not confided in them. If this is the case, this has implications for the support and guidance children are currently receiving from parents when faced with unpleasant online experiences.

As far as you are aware, in the past year, have any of these things happened to your child[ren] on the internet at least once?	Don't know	No	Yes	% children who responded yes
Has your child[ren] had contact on the internet with someone he/she had not met face to face before?	28.2%	63.2%	8.6%	41.2%
Been treated in a hurtful or nasty way on the internet by someone?	25.8%	71.6%	2.6%	19.2%
Treated someone else in a hurtful or nasty way on the internet?	26.9%	72.4%	0.8%	12.9%
Met anyone face to face that your child[ren] first got to know on the internet?	30.8%	67.7%	1.5%	/
Somebody used his or her personal information in a way he or she didn't like.	18.2%	80.5%	1.3%	5.1%
The device he/she uses got a virus.	19.5%	75.8%	4.7%	9.6%
He/she lost money by being cheated on the internet.	19.5%	78.4%	2.1%	2.0%
Somebody used your child[ren]'s password to access his or her information or to pretend to be him or her.	20.1%	78.8%	1.1%	4.8%
Somebody created a page or image about him or her that was hostile or hurtful.	18.8%	80.3%	0.9%	2.3%
He/she spent too much money on online games or in-app purchases.	19.7%	69.2%	11.1%	14.0%
He/she was asked to make an in-app purchase when playing an online game (e.g. to progress faster in the game).	20.9%	75.2%	3.9%	/
Someone found out where your child[ren] was because they tracked his/her phone.	17.3%	82.3%	0.4%	/
He/she has seen images on the internet that are obviously sexual.	32.5%	61.8%	5.6%	51.2%
He/she has received a sexual message (this could be words, pictures or videos.)	32.0%	63.5%	4.5%	30.5%
He/she has sent or posted a sexual message.	29.7%	69.4%	0.9%	11.0%
He/she was sent a message that he/she did not want with advertisements for or links to porn websites.	28.2%	67.9%	3.9%	20.5% (12-17 year olds)
He/she opened a message or a link in a message that showed pictures of naked people or of people having sex that he/she did not want.	31.8%	63.7%	4.5%	19.2% (12-17 year olds)
He/she has seen or received a sexual message, image or video about someone else that he/she did not want.	30.3%	65.8%	3.9%	20.3% (12-17 year olds)
He/she has been asked for sexual information about him/herself when he/she did not want to answer such questions.	31.2%	68.4%	0.4%	5.1% (12-17 year olds)
He/she has been asked to talk about sexual acts with someone on the internet when he/she did not want to.	30.6%	69.0%	0.4%	5.1% (12-17 year olds)
He/she has been asked by someone on the internet to do something sexual when he/she did not want to.	29.9%	69.7%	0.4%	1.5% (12-17 year olds)
He/she has been asked on the internet for a photo or video showing her/his private parts when they did not want to.	30.3%	68.9%	0.8%	3.8% (12-17 year olds)

Table 11: Parents' awareness of their children's exposure to risky situations online
All parents (N=523).

3.6. Vulnerabilities and protective (enabling) factors

Key findings:

- Children reported high rates of feeling safe (95.5%), being heard (82.4%) and helped (90.4%) by their families but most parents did not actively mediate their internet use.
- Parents were likely to rate themselves as worse mediators than their children did.
- Most parents reported wanting access to more advice on how to support and guide their children's internet use.
- Most teachers (69.3%) never asked children to use devices in class to complete assignments but more than half (53.6%) encouraged children to learn online.
- Children tended to turn to their friends to get advice on how to use the internet (62.8%), but not to get support in relation to negative experiences (30.0%).

3.6.1. Family environment and parent mediation

As noted earlier in this document, this study used a holistic definition of 'parent', including not only biological parents but other kinds of primary caregivers too, including siblings, grandparents and others. Both children and parents were asked about their relationship with each other in their respective surveys and, in particular, how parents mediated their children's internet use.

When asked about how their parents and family treated them generally, 80.2% of children felt it was easy or very easy to speak to their parents. When asked whether their family listened to what they said when they spoke, 82.4% felt that it was fairly true or very true that their family did listen to them. Almost all participants (90.4%) felt that it was fairly true or very true their family really tried to help them and 95.5% stated that it was fairly true or very true that they felt safe at home. A lower number of children, 68.1%, reported being praised by their parents for behaving well often or very often. Most parents (72.3%) set rules about what could be done in the home often or very often. In general, therefore, child participants lived in homes where

they felt cared for and supported. A recent nationally representative study found similarly high percentages of children feeling acceptance and support in their home environment.

That said, according to the child participants, most of their parents were not actively involved in mediating their internet use. Almost half of participants who used the internet (48.1%) said that they never or hardly ever spoke to their parents about their internet use and 60.5% were never or hardly ever encouraged by their parents to explore and learn new things online. More than two in three participants (70.3%) reported that their parents never or hardly ever stayed nearby while they used the internet and 63.6% said they had never or hardly ever done shared activities online with their parents. According to their children, 42.0% of parents never suggested ways for their children to use the internet safely and 49.1% never spoke to their children about what to do if something online bothered or upset them. 61.1% of participants never or hardly ever started a discussion with their parents about what they did on the internet and 76.8% never or hardly ever told their parents about things that bothered or upset them online.

Unsurprisingly then, 60.4% of respondents thought that their parents knew nothing or just a little bit about what they did on the internet and a majority (52.2%) would like their parents' interest in what they do online to stay the same. One in four respondents (26.9%) wanted their parents to take less interest in their internet use and only one in five (20.9%) wanted their parents to take more interest.

When comparing child and parent impressions of the quality of parents' engagement in their child's internet use, parents had a slightly worse impression than their children did (see table 12). It must be noted again that these two groups are not directly matched, as not all children's parents were interviewed, and so comparisons should be read with caution.

An important barrier to using the internet was obtaining adult permission. When asked whether they needed permission to perform certain activities online, children tended either to never be able to do something without permission, or to not need permission or supervision, as table 13 shows. Only 14.2% of participants needed to obtain permission or be supervised when using a webcam, 18.8% when watching video clips, 17.0% for downloading music, 12.0% for playing games with other people online, 12.0% when visiting a social networking site, 10.3% when instant messaging, 10.2% to read news online, 10.7% when using the internet for schoolwork and 13.3% to post photos, videos or music online to share with others.

Fewer parents than children said that permission or supervision was required to do the activities below. The only exception was posting content online, where parents were slightly more likely to say their children required their permission than the children did.

Within the parent survey, parents were also asked whether they ever got any information or advice on how to help and support their children online and if so, from where they received this support.

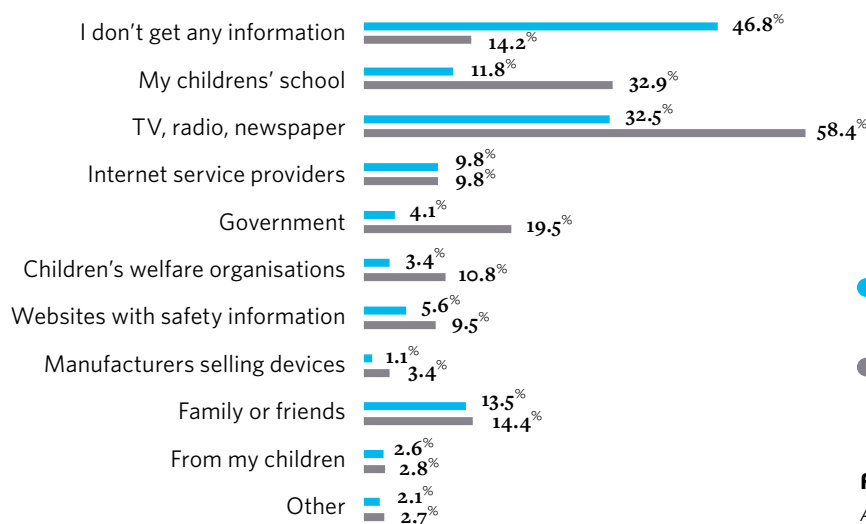
How often do parents or caregivers...	PARENT Never and hardly ever	CHILD Never and hardly ever
Talk to you about what you do on the internet.	54.4%	48.1%
Encourage you to explore and learn things on the internet.	65.2%	60.5%
Stay nearby when you use the internet.	74.6%	70.3%
Do shared activities together with you on the internet.	69.7%	63.6%
Suggest ways to use the internet safely.	57.0%	42.0%
Talk to you about what to do if something online bothers or upsets you.	68.0%	49.1%
How often have you...		
Started a discussion with your parents/caregivers about what you do on the internet.	64.2%	61.1%
Told your parents/caregivers about things that bother or upset you on the internet.	81.7%	76.8%

Table 12: Comparison between child and parent impressions of parent engagement in child internet use
All parents (N=523), all children 9 - 17 years old who used the internet (N=643).

Do you need your parents' permission/supervision when engaging in the following activities online...	PARENT		CHILD	
	Can never do this	Don't need permission	Permission	Permission
Use a webcam.	59.8%	30.1%	10.2%	14.2%
Watch video clips.	42.7%	42.5%	14.8%	18.8%
Download music or films.	38.5%	47.6%	13.9%	17.0%
Play games with other people online.	50.2%	39.5%	10.3%	12.0%
Visit a social networking site.	40.0%	49.2%	10.7%	12.0%
Use instant messaging.	29.1%	62.0%	8.8%	10.3%
Read/watch news online.	47.6%	44.0%	8.5%	10.2%
Use the internet for school work.	30.1%	60.3%	9.6%	10.7%
Put (or post) photos, videos or music online to share with others.	41.5%	44.9%	13.5%	13.3%

Table 13: Comparison between child and parent impressions of which activities children need permission to engage in online
All parents (N=523), all children 9 - 17 years old who used the internet (N=643).

Current and wished for sources of information and advice for parents



- Where do you currently receive advice from?
- Where would you like to receive advice from?

Figure 26: Sources of advice for parents
All parents (N=523).

As can be seen in figure 26, nearly one in two parents (46.8%) never received any advice or support on this topic, perhaps suggesting why internet use was rarely discussed between parents and children. By far the most common sources of information for respondents were media like television, radio and the newspaper (32.5%), followed by their friends and family (13.5%), their children's school (11.8%) or internet service providers (9.8%).

When asked if they would like to receive any information about this, only 14.2% of respondents said they wouldn't, with 58.4% saying they would like receive guidance via television, radio and the newspaper, 32.9% from their children's school, 19.5% from the government and 14.4% from family and friends. These findings suggest that parents would like to be exposed to more guidance about how to support their child online but that they may prefer to receive this passively, via the media, or through active support from their child's school.

In the focus group discussions with parents, participants tended to express a sense of helplessness around managing their children's internet use, especially when the child had a device that only they used.

Eastern Cape, parent focus group 2:

FR3: *"Like me....that's what I'm worried about because I'm getting fed up so easily....because even if I buy a phone, she will have Facebook, WhatsApp..."*

I: *"Even if you say no?"*

FR3: *"Even if. Because I'm giving up so easily! I can say 'okay do whatever you want to do but when you have a problem don't come to me' and my daughter will say 'I will come...I will come.'"*

Group laughs

Western Cape, parent focus group:

FR1: *"...We don't know the internet, we don't know where to press to go in to look while they aren't there. We must also almost know how it works before we can say 'how can we help?', because we can't help if we don't know, how to go into the phone or the thing, or the Facebook network, to secretly look to see what the*

child is busy with. You see? We don't know what to press."

I: *"Ja. And I think it is also important because a person also wants to know, do parents feel they have enough knowledge to know?"*

FR1: *"So it's pointless. We can do but we don't know how to work with the stuff. We must first be helped before we can know what to do with the thing because they say we can do this or do that but we don't have the knowledge to be able to do it."*

Eastern Cape, 14-17 year olds:

I: *"Okay, so your parents never check what you do online or anything like that?"*

FR: *"No I'll probably me murdered if they check." Laughs*

Western Cape, 14-16 year olds:

I: *"Okay and the other people? Are there other people you can talk to?"*

MR: *"Parents."*

I: *"Do you think your parents know enough about Facebook? And about WhatsApp?"*

FR2: *"No. There are plenty things that I need to hide from them."*

MR3: *"They mustn't go on your phone."*

As can be seen above, parents felt a responsibility to keep their children safe and assist but struggled to find ways to impose structure onto their child's internet use and monitor what they were doing. Children, on the other hand, were aware that they engaged in activities their parents wouldn't approve of and relied on their superior knowledge of how to use the technology to hide what they did online. The relationship presented in the qualitative discussions was therefore one where parents felt somewhat powerless to manage and guide their child's internet use and where children avoided the input of their parents because they assumed they knew the online world better. Evidence of parents' frustration can be seen in the quotes above and provides a possible explanation for why most parents reported being interested in obtaining more advice and guidance on how to support their child's internet use in the quantitative survey.

3.6.2. School and peers

3.6.2.1. School

Child participants were asked about their relationship with their school and peers in terms of their wellbeing and their internet use. Most participants reported that they felt like they belonged at their school (90.7% very true for me or fairly true for me), that their teachers cared about them as a person (83.8% very true for me or fairly true for me) and that there was at least one teacher they could go to if they had a problem (83.9% very true for me or fairly true for me). There also tended to be rules about how children used their devices at school (85.1%) and teachers tended to check learners had their devices off in class (61.2%), make rules about how mobile phones are used at school (77.6%) and when necessary, take phones away for a period (83.2%). Nearly one in four teachers (24.8%) also took it upon themselves to look on children's phones to see who they were in touch with and what they were doing, a possible indication of an overstepping of boundaries.

Despite these rules, teachers didn't seem to play as a big a role as they could in encouraging and guiding internet use for educational purposes in the school environment.

At least half of the children who used the internet did not receive any support or guidance from their teachers about internet use. Teachers were least likely to allow children to use devices for assignments in class (69.3%) and most likely to encourage children to explore and learn new things online (46.4%). A possible explanation for this finding may be that schools do not have their own devices and so while teachers may see the benefit of children accessing educational resources online, it is not feasible to engage in these activities at school. Considering how much children and parents emphasised the value of the internet to children's education, these findings suggest that online learning rarely took place in the school environment. They indicate that online learning was more likely to happen outside of school and to be

self-motivated, rather than as a result of teachers' encouragement. Large numbers of children therefore seem not to be benefiting from any guidance or support from their teachers around their internet use, as well as the opportunity to use the internet to further their education in the school environment.

3.6.2.2. Friends and peers

In terms of the quality of their friendships, nearly two thirds of participants felt their friends really tried to help them (62.3% very true for me or fairly true for me), about half thought that they could count on their friends when things go wrong (51.3% very true for me or fairly true for me) and that they could talk to their friends about their problems (48.9% very true for me or fairly true for me). These rates suggest that participants'

relationships with their friends were not always supportive or secure, and perhaps this is not surprising considering the typical volatility of friendships during the teenage years. Indeed, 42.0% of all participants worried about their friends having fun without them, suggesting a degree of insecurity in these relationships.

In terms of their internet use, more than half the participants who used the internet reported not being assisted in any way by their friends, as can be seen in table 15 below:

Participants were most likely to receive support from their friends when they found something difficult to do online (37.2% ever or hardly ever) but least likely to receive guidance around which websites are good and bad (60.7%) or help when

it came to being bothered by something online (60.0%). These findings conflict somewhat with the findings described in the risks section of this document (page 34), where children were reported as being most likely to discuss negative online experiences with their friends. This may suggest that not all children received such support from friends, or possibly, may just be a reflection of the fact that not all children who used the internet had experienced anything negative online. It may be that a portion of respondents had not had need to call upon their friends to support them. Nevertheless, the fact that children tended to turn to friends for support, suggests that this may be a critical area of intervention in order to ensure that children do receive sound advice, and are referred to necessary support services should they be in need of such intervention.

Have your teachers ever done any of these things or wanted you to do any of these things?	Never or hardly ever
Helped me when I found something difficult to do or to find on the internet.	53.3%
Suggested ways to use the internet safely.	52.5%
Encouraged me to explore and learn things on the internet.	46.4%
Suggested ways to behave towards other people online.	56.8%
Collaborate with other students over the internet.	61.3%
Use smartphones/tablets/computers for assignments in class.	69.3%

Table 14: Online engagement at school
All children 9 - 17 years old who used the internet (N=643).

Have your friends ever done any of these things?	Never or hardly ever
Helped me when I found something difficult to do or to find on the internet.	37.2%
Suggested ways to use the internet safely.	58.3%
Encouraged me to explore and learn things on the internet.	45.6%
Explained why some websites are good or bad.	60.7%
Suggested ways to behave towards other people online.	58.2%
Helped me in the past when something has bothered me on the internet.	60.0%
Have YOU suggested to your friends ways to use the internet safely?	51.1%

Table 15: Friends' input in children's internet use
All children 9 - 17 years old who used the internet (N=643).

4.

Conclusion, key recommendations and looking ahead

4.1. Conclusions

Within this study, the authors set out to investigate how ICTs can both positively and negatively impact on the well-being of child users in South Africa, and how best to approach researching this topic in the global South. Although this study was a pilot study and was not representative of the South African population, the findings provide some insight into the role played by ICTs in children and parent's lives.

Access: Access to the internet was found to be greatly influenced by the age of the child, with 94.2% of children using the internet by the time they reached the fifteen to seventeen year old age group. This access was not mediated by cost as much as one might expect in a global South context, but rather by adults, who played the greatest role in determining when children could start using the internet and how often they used it once they were online. Language and lack of culturally appropriate content was also identified as a barrier, with one in two children and two in three parents saying it was difficult to find content online in their first language.

Child participants were found to mainly use the internet at home and by themselves, rather than in public spaces such as their school. The majority of participants accessed the internet via smartphones, with far fewer participants regularly using devices like computers or tablets. A larger number of older children had these devices than younger children, and more older children had access to a device of their own.

Opportunities and practices: Child participants were not universally enthusiastic about the benefits of the internet in this study, but did report benefiting from the opportunities for learning, socialising and accessing entertainment provided by the internet. However, the quantitative and qualitative components of the study suggested that the devices children used and the high monetary cost of internet access imposed limitations on the extent to which children could explore these opportunities, or access more sophisticated ones.

Skills: The child participants reported being confident that they knew a lot about the internet and a majority were found to possess some basic technical skill. However, only a minority reported being able to complete more complex tasks, such as designing a website.

While children in this study were also confident that their technical skills surpassed their parents', the findings show that those parents who used the internet were by and large just as technically skilful as their children. The implication of this is that parents may be able to provide children with more technical advice than they currently assume they can. This is particularly the case with skills that are enhanced by life-experience, such as knowing which information to share online.



In terms of social media usage, WhatsApp was found to be the most widely used application. Socialising via this application proved to be one of the key opportunities afforded by the internet to the study's participants. In fact, anecdotal evidence from enumerators suggests that for a portion of respondents, WhatsApp, or indeed, instant messaging, was the limit of their internet use.

Risks: The majority of participants had not personally been bothered by anything online in the last year but participants did reported engaging in risky behaviours like sharing personal information with strangers online, or being exposed to content that they found distressing. In both the quantitative and qualitative studies, it was noted that there were children who used the internet in ways that impacted negatively on their daily functioning and relationships.

Many participants, even of young ages, reported meeting a stranger face to face that they first got to know online. The reasons for these meetings were unknown and so it cannot be speculated as to whether they endangered participants in any way. Nasty or hurtful treatment was also reported as being common online.

Exposure to sexual content and engaging in sexual exchanges were also found to occur, particularly on instant messaging and social networking platforms. Lower numbers of participants reported having more severe unwanted sexual experiences.

Vulnerabilities and protective factors: This study found that parents tended to take a more passive approach to mediating their children's internet use, and in fact, appraised themselves as being slightly less involved than their children rated them as being. While they expressed worry and concern over their children's online practices, their excessive use and the risks they may have been exposed to, the majority of parents did not report managing or supervising their children's internet use. Most parents did report wanting more advice about how to support their children's internet use and safety online.

The children reported that their teachers generally did not encourage or guide their internet use in relation to learning and safety, and that internet did not form part of their learning experience at school.

When asked directly about their friendships, only approximately half the participants felt supported by friends. A minority also reported getting help from their friends when something bothered them online or guidance around internet safety from their friends. That said, elsewhere in the findings, specifically in the risks section, the majority of participants named their friends as the people they spoke to when they were exposed to an online risk. So while friends were generally considered an uncertain source of support, participants did seem to turn to them, rather than any adults, when having a negative experience online.

4.2. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this pilot study, a number of preliminary recommendations can be made.

4.2.1. Recommendations for policy

- As discussed in the outline of the policy framework in South Africa, the current policy and legislative framework on children and the internet is fragmented and does not always work in children's best interests. **It is therefore essential that a common ICTs strategy be developed that speaks to the wellbeing of children, to allow for a standardised and integrated approach across South Africa's policy landscape**, in line with the goals of the Department of Telecommunications and Postal Services' strategic plan (2015-2020). It is also vital that this strategy upholds children's digital rights and avoids unnecessarily punitive or restrictive measures to maintain child online safety.
- Following from the previous recommendation, **it is necessary to formally map out how the policy and legislative framework should be enacted in relation to cases of child harm online**. Currently, the roles of various stakeholders such as parents, teachers, police, social workers and the legal system more broadly are not clear and the legal remedies for different online victimisations are either non-existent or not widely publicised. Clarifying the roles of these stakeholders and the necessary pathways of action in relation to these forms of victimisation will ensure that children are able to access professional support and legal solutions to harm the experience online. South Africa has some of the most advanced and rights-oriented legislation and policy relating to children more broadly, but this does not explicitly consider children's use of ICTs and the internet, or the implications of the increasing integration of ICTs into the daily life of children. Existing policies and legislation should be reviewed with an "online" lens, and any necessary amendments integrated as part of upcoming policy review processes.
- Along with establishing a standardised strategy and standardised procedures, **it would be valuable to formalise standardised indicators of children's internet access, usage and online experiences, to be used across various settings. This would allow for consistent and regular data collection to be undertaken, against which progress of interventions and changes over time can be measured**. This could include data collection via administrative services, such as helplines and hotlines, and more formalised studies on child ICTs use, including national surveys.
- In line with the goals of South Africa's National Development Plan 2030 and the Department of Telecommunications and Postal Services' strategic plan (2015-2020), **establishing universal internet access at competitive prices is essential in ensuring**

that no child is prevented from benefiting from the opportunities the internet affords. The participants in this study reported that the cost of data was a significant barrier to their internet access overall, and that it limited the amount of time they could spend online. Creative, low-cost solutions such as free public WiFi provided by NGOs could be expanded to further democratise internet access more broadly. Other solutions could include incentivising the provision of free WiFi in public spaces or the provision of low cost services in under resourced areas by service providers.

- **Public awareness must be raised around the importance of children's digital rights and all discourse and messaging must take a balanced approach to children's online safety.** Excessively inflammatory reports of online harm should be avoided and instead, messaging should focus on accurate data and advice that does not impinge on children's rights.

4.2.2. Recommendations for practice

- **South African parents should play a far greater role in mediating and supporting their children's internet use.** Currently, parents seem to feel powerless to both assist their children and manage their internet use, yet according to this study parents may be more technically skilled than they or their children realise. Regardless of their level of technological savvy, parents have the necessary life experience to teach their children to be good digital citizens.
- The findings of this study suggest that parents are currently restricting younger children's internet access as a way of mediating their use at this vulnerable age. Age appropriate internet use should be encouraged in general, in order to build the technical skills of children from an early age. **Where possible, parents should provide age-appropriate mediation of their children's internet use, rather than preventing them from accessing the internet all together.** Parents are in need of more support to assist them in providing age appropriate mediation of their children, so that they do not have to resort to restrictive measures to ensure their children's safety.
- **There is a need to find ways to increase the access to the internet children have in schools and provide them with technical support. Teachers must be encouraged to play a greater role in ensuring that children benefit from the learning opportunities the internet provides.** This may involve guidance around specific classroom management techniques to ensure that internet is beneficial to learning and not disruptive.
- Child participants reported poor advanced technical skills, possibly because they simply had no need to develop these skills. **It would be worthwhile to provide children with opportunities**

to grow their technical skills, which become highly valuable as children finish school and enter the labour market. This could be done via initiatives that teach these technical skills, such as coding.

- **Discourse and interventions around child exposure to sexual content and sexual experiences online must consider that as many boys as girls are exposed to these risks but that the type of harm experienced by each gender may be different.**
- Friends currently appear to be the primary source of support for children who are victimised online. **Programmes and messaging that encourage peers to take a more active role in providing support for each other must be promoted, so that when children are exposed to harm online, they have a source of support.** In particular, children need guidance on how best to provide this support in a sensitive manner, and also when to seek out an adult or professional's help to ensure that the victim is adequately treated.

4.3. Future research

While this study has provided some indication of the dynamics around children's internet use in the global South, it also raised further questions that might be explored in future research. It would be especially valuable to integrate these new areas of investigation into a nationally representative Global Kids Online study.

- Future research could explore parents' attitudes and behaviours around mediation in greater depth. The passive and restrictive methods of mediating children's internet use identified in this study are not currently well understood, as parents may prevent children from accessing the internet out of concern for their safety, or because devices are too expensive. It is not currently clear whether parents are avoiding engaging in active mediating strategies because they lack the knowledge to do so or because they do not feel their children are at risk. Interrogating the reasons behind parents mediating strategies might allow for appropriate intervention and support.
- The dynamics around children's online risk taking behaviours could certainly be explored further, especially the nature of their excessive internet use as this seems to currently be a site of conflict between parents and children.
- A critical area of future exploration would be understanding the circumstances under which children meet face to face with strangers they met online. Anecdotal evidence suggests that for some participants this may be a wholly innocent and welcomed activity, but the intentions of the stranger may never be completely transparent. It may therefore be useful to unpack the purpose of these meetings and explore their outcomes.



5.

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