

GLOBAL KIDS ONLINE MONTENEGRO

Opportunities, risks and safety

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Contents

Executive summary	4
<i>Policy implications</i>	<i>6</i>
Introducing the research and policy context.....	8
Project aims and context.....	8
The country context.....	9
<i>Key indicators.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Policy context and key stakeholders</i>	<i>10</i>
Key findings	14
Introduction.....	14
Access and opportunities	17
<i>Prevalence and rate of internet usage: The number of children, and how often they use the internet</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Places and devices of internet access: Where and how do children access the internet?</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>How much time do children spend on the internet?.....</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>What do children feel are good things for them on the internet?</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>What do children do most often online?.....</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>Internet and school.....</i>	<i>24</i>
Skills and practices	26
<i>What core skills do children have on the internet?</i>	<i>28</i>
<i>Information/search skills.....</i>	<i>28</i>
<i>Knowledge and skills related to the digital footprint that children leave on the internet</i>	<i>29</i>
<i>Children's online creative skills</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>Mobile phone skills</i>	<i>31</i>
<i>Comparison with adults.....</i>	<i>33</i>
<i>How accurate are self-assessed internet skills?</i>	<i>34</i>
Risks.....	34
<i>What do children think upsets them or their peers on the internet?</i>	<i>34</i>
<i>Risky online activities</i>	<i>36</i>
<i>How many children in the past year had an upsetting experience on the internet and how often did it happen?.....</i>	<i>37</i>
<i>How do bothering or upsetting incidents on the internet make children feel?</i>	<i>38</i>
<i>What do most children do after something on the internet upsets them?</i>	<i>38</i>
<i>Who do the children mostly talk to when they are upset by something on the internet?.....</i>	<i>39</i>
<i>Treating children in a nasty or hurtful way</i>	<i>41</i>
<i>Fights between peers and the internet.....</i>	<i>42</i>
<i>Experience with sexual content on the internet</i>	<i>43</i>
<i>Sexual messages.....</i>	<i>43</i>
<i>Contact with strangers</i>	<i>45</i>
<i>Other bad experiences on the internet.....</i>	<i>46</i>
<i>Excessive internet use</i>	<i>48</i>
Vulnerabilities and protective (enabling) factors	49
<i>Children's wellbeing</i>	<i>49</i>
<i>Material and other support provided by parents</i>	<i>49</i>
<i>Psychological vulnerability</i>	<i>49</i>



<i>Risky behaviour of children</i>	50
<i>Digital environment</i>	51
<i>Availability of information on social networking sites</i>	52
<i>Social networking communication</i>	52
<i>(Non)-accepted requests for friendship on social networking sites</i>	54
<i>Use of options on social networking sites</i>	54
<i>The role of parents in the protection of children on the internet</i>	55
<i>Parental advice and help</i>	57
<i>Parental control</i>	58
<i>Parents' source of information</i>	62
<i>The role of school in children's internet safety</i>	64
<i>Role of peers in child internet protection</i>	65
Conclusions, key recommendations and looking ahead	67





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The internet is deep-seated in children's everyday life in Montenegro. As many as 91% of children aged 9 to 17 use it, and most of them, 87%, are online every day. Internet usage increases as children grow older – 97% of those aged 15 to 17 use it every day, and 71% several times a day.

Children recognise a wide range of opportunities that the internet offers, but most often use it for entertainment and social relationships on social networking sites. For example, 65% reported that they visited a social networking site every day (or several times a day), while just a third reported having used the internet daily to learn something new by searching online, and every fourth respondent that they used it daily for school work.

A smartphone is by far the most extensively used online device. With the device constantly at hand, **children's opportunity to access the internet becomes truly extensive.**

More extensive use of the internet significantly strengthens children's digital skills. So children become substantially more skillful as they grow older. While **older children evaluated their skills with considerably high grades, children aged 9 to 11 evaluated their skills somewhat under average, including safety skills.** For example, less than half of the children aged 9 to 11 know how to change their privacy setting, which information they should or should not share online, and how to remove people from their contacts list.

Children's attitudes towards internet safety is rather ambivalent. A substantial number seem either not aware of the potential risks (29%), or not quite sure if there are upsetting things on the internet (34%); only 37% definitely agree that there are things on the internet that bother or upset children their age. Nine- to 11-year-olds are the least aware that upsetting things are present on the internet – only 27% agreed with the statement that there are things on the internet that bother children of their age.

On the other hand, despite higher awareness and advanced digital skills, **older children more often perform online risky activities and run into some nasty online incidents.**

As many as 72% of the children have their own profile on a social networking site: 47% aged 9 to 11, 77% aged 12 to 14 and 86% aged 15 to 17. And a substantial number of them are quite open for communication under their own identity:


- **90% reveal their last name** on their profiles
- **89% reveal a photo that clearly shows their face**
- **53% reveal their school**
- **35% their address**
- **26% have their profile set to 'public' so that everyone can see it**
- **18% communicate with more than 50 people**
- **13% accept all requests**

In addition, 27% reported that they had online contact with someone they have never met face-to-face, and 13% that they met face-to-face someone they first had contact with on the internet.

When it comes to **online experiences in the past year, 38% reported that they have experienced at least some of the online upsetting incidents in at least one of the four areas:** something happened that upset them; someone treated them in a hurtful way; they have seen sexual images; or they have received sexual messages:

- **14% reported that upsetting things had happened to them**
- **12% stated that someone had treated them in a hurtful or nasty way**
- **29% reported that they had seen images on the internet that were explicitly sexual**
- **7% reported that they had received sexual messages**

These experiences are significantly more present with boys than girls, and their incidence **substantially increases as children grow older** (23%, 39% and 49% respectively for the three age groups).



It is striking, however, that the majority of the children who had nasty experiences reported that these incidents did not really upset them. For example, out of 29% of the children who saw images with sexual content, 69% stated that the images did not upset them at all, or just a little bit; out of 7% who received sexual messages, more than half stated that it did not upset them. **This rather relaxed attitude towards the nasty incidents definitely reduces children's alertness regarding online safety.** It might also explain the fact that when asked if any upsetting things have happened to them, only 14% stated that it did happen to them, while substantially more actually had some nasty experience.

In addition, the survey showed that on the internet **children are often faced with violence-related content:**

- Children who stated that there are bad things on the internet most often said that the bad thing is violence.
- In the focus groups, the children stated that social networks are often used to organise face-to-face physical fights among peers, which are video recorded and video clips posted on social networking sites – 22% saw a video of their peers' fight recorded and posted by friends.
- The majority of the children who reported that they were bullied online stated that it was done by a peer from their school.
- Online bullying among pupils was also mentioned by teachers and parents in the focus groups as a rising problem.

Children are not accustomed to reporting nasty online incidents to an official body. Children who reported that upsetting things happened to them online **usually just close the window or application containing the nasty content.** The majority of them also stated that **they talked about it with their parents.** But **just a few of them stated that they reported the problem online, and even fewer that they talked to anyone whose job it is to help children.** This attitude was further confirmed in the focus groups discussion.

Parents' involvement in children's online activities is quite limited, and children rarely initiate parental


support. Only every fourth respondent stated that they often initiated a discussion with their parent about what they do on the internet. The frequency of child-initiated discussion further decreases as children grow older: while 35% of 9- to 11-year-olds stated that they often initiated discussion with their parents, it was true in only 20% of cases for 15- to 17-year-olds.

Parents' mediation of children's internet use is also rather sporadic, and mainly consists of talking to children. According to the children's evaluations, parents' mediation is even less present. In short, the most frequent parents' involvement refers to the following:

- 55% of parents stated that they often talk to their children about what they do on the internet as opposed to 39% of children who reported that their parents often do it
- 51% of parents stated that they often explain to their children why some websites are appropriate or inappropriate as opposed to 29% of children who reported that their parents often do it
- 49% of parents stated that they often suggested to their children ways to use the internet safely as opposed to 45% of children who reported that their parents often do it
- 39% of parents stated that they talk to their children about what to do if something on the internet upset them which is the same percentage of children who reported that their parents often did it

Parents' restrictive mediation is even more sporadic. Most of the children perform various internet actions without any parental restriction. Parental prohibitions are somewhat more present only with the youngest group of children.

Parents' technical control is by far the least practised. Only 5 to 7% of parents reported that they use any of the parental control options, the only exception being the use of software to prevent junk mail and viruses (used by 20% of parents). Parents are somewhat more active only with regards to the time their children spend on the internet: 35% stated they set rules about how long or when their child is allowed to go online, and 11% stated they use a service or a contract that limits the time their child



spends on the internet.

Parents seem to be just partly aware of the nasty things happening to their children online.

Discrepancy between the children and parents' statements regarding children's online experience with sexual images illustrates the point well: while 29% of children stated having seen such images, only 4% of parents stated that it had happened to their child, and 22% of parents stated that they did not know if it had happened or not.

Moreover, **69% of the parents believe that it is not likely that in the near future anything bothering or upsetting will happen on the internet to their children**; 13% think that it is 'fairly likely' and 3% that it is 'very likely' (15% do not know). **This attitude definitely further reduces parents' alertness to their children's online activities.**

Finally, with the exception of parents of 9- to 11-year-olds, the **digital skills of the parents (carers) most involved in children's online activities** (i.e., selected respondents) **are quite inferior compared to their children's skills**. In addition, **20% of them do not use the internet at all**. This further reduces the parents' aptitude to help and control their children when using the internet.

The role of the school is marginal. Over half of the children state that their teachers are completely uninvolved in any of the issues related to children's personal use of the internet (from setting rules about what children can do with the internet at school, encouragement to learn and explore things, to safety issues, such as suggesting ways to use the internet safely and help when something bothering has happened).

On the other hand, **over half of the parents named the school their child attends as the preferred source of getting information and advice on how to help and support their child on the internet, and to keep the child safe in the future.**

Policy implications

Several policy implications arise from the survey findings. The evidence shows that a multifaceted campaign connecting all the relevant stakeholders (government, NGOs, schools and the internet industry— internet service companies and social


networking providers in particular) is needed. The campaign should cover widespread interrelated actions, from raising general awareness of internet safety issues to improving digital skills and more visible and user-friendly online safety options.

Increasing general awareness of internet-related risks seems to be an overall priority. Awareness of the problem is always the basis for any action to reach the targeted group effectively enough.

The survey evidence shows that children and their parents are rather ambivalent towards internet-related risks. Just four in ten children think that there are upsetting things on the internet. In addition, the majority of children who have had nasty experiences stated that these incidents have not really upset them. On the other hand, parents are just partly aware of the nasty things that happened to their children. Moreover, the majority of the parents think that it is not really likely that some of the nasty online things will happen to their children. These somewhat relaxed attitudes of both children and parents towards safety issues easily reduce the alertness with regards to online risks. This is why an increasing general awareness of internet-related risks is essential.

Adequate coping mechanisms with nasty online incidents should be strengthened. The survey shows that a substantial number of parents and children lack the confidence and/or capacity to effectively respond to an online safety problem when it occurs. When faced with nasty things, children most commonly just close the window or application containing the nasty content, or at best, use the blocking button. Children also talk to parents about the upsetting incidents. But only four in ten parents feel completely confident in their ability to help their children cope with upsetting online occurrences. In addition, both children and parents rarely report the incident to the pertinent officials, either online or face-to-face. Thus, parents and children need coaching in coping with the online nasty incidents.

In addition, children and parents **should be encouraged to report the problem** and be aware that this way they can help make the internet safer for all. But in order to accomplish this, **awareness of help centres and other relevant supporting bodies should also be raised, along with trust in these organisations.**



Digital literacy requires wider attention, especially when teachers, parents and young children are concerned. The survey shows that less than half of the 9- to 11-year-old children know how to change their privacy settings, which information they should or should not share online, and how to remove people from their contacts list. However, survey evidence shows that older children should also be encouraged to improve their online coping strategies and digital skills regarding safety and reporting online problems.

Strengthening the role of schools is probably the key pillar for campaign efficiency. The survey

shows that schools have the potential to play a key role in a variety of campaigns related to internet use. Children perceive schools as a friendly environment, and parents choose schools as the preferred source of information and advice on their children's use of the internet. Schools are definitely in the best position to address all children on internet safety issues, and to guarantee the highest reach of all related campaigns. In addition, they are in a unique position to stimulate children to use a variety of positive internet opportunities and to extend the use of the internet in education.

INTRODUCING THE RESEARCH AND POLICY CONTEXT

Project aims and context

Montenegro participated in the Global Summit 'We Protect Children Online' organised by the UK government in London on 10–11 December 2014, and, together with more than 50 countries worldwide and the ICT industry, signed a statement of action committing to take global action to identify and protect victims, remove child sexual abuse material from the internet, strengthen cooperation across the world to track down perpetrators and build global capacity to tackle the sexual exploitation of children online.

After the Global Summit, the UNICEF Office in Montenegro, as part of the UNICEF Global Programme tackling online child sexual exploitation, has started to implement the new initiative, aiming to support the government to prevent and protect children from online child sexual exploitation and in that sense, to fulfil the commitment made by the Global Summit and Global Alliance against child sexual abuse online.

As part of this initiative, a survey including children aged 9–17, their parents and schools' representatives was conducted. The survey was designed according to the Global Kids Online (GKO) project, funded by UNICEF during 2015–16, and jointly coordinated by researchers at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) and the UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti. As stated in the GKO *Research toolkit*, the aim of the project is to learn from children's experiences to help policy-makers, educators and governments make the internet better for children everywhere.

In order to accomplish the main project objective, the specific objectives of research in Montenegro were as follows:

- To develop a robust quantitative survey instrument to identify the key dimensions of children's online experience in line with the GKO model adapted to the local context.
- To develop a robust quantitative survey instrument

to identify parents' experience, practice and concerns regarding their children's online experiences in line with the GKO model adapted to the local context.

- To develop qualitative survey instruments corresponding to the same key dimensions as in the quantitative survey instruments, in line with GKO topic guides.
- To conduct the quantitative surveys with a national representative sample of children aged 9 to 17 and their parents, with rigour-enabling data generalisations to the whole population.
- To conduct the qualitative survey in order to gain deeper understanding of children's online experiences and the mood of the accompanying social surrounding (parents and teachers).
- To analyse data from the quantitative and qualitative surveys in a way that would provide core findings for key dimensions, identification of the key factors differentiating children's experiences, risks and well-being, and robust comparisons between relevant demographic subgroups (gender, age, socio-economic status, region and type of settlement).
- To prepare the written report providing the relevant information to support the initiative of the UNICEF Office in Montenegro, as well as to enable cross-country comparisons.

In realisation of the survey, the following stakeholder groups were involved in different phases of the research:

- In the *pre-field phase*, consultations regarding the local perspective were conducted with Parents Alliance, representatives of elementary and secondary schools, national internet providers (Domen and Digitalizuj.me), the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry for Information Society and Telecommunications.

- In the *pilot phase*, with the support of the UNICEF Office in Montenegro, schools were involved in organising the pilot focus groups (helping with participants' recruitment and providing space in schools for conducting focus groups), and pertinent resource centres were involved in selecting children with special needs for individual interview.
- In the *qualitative survey data collection phase*, elementary and secondary schools were involved again in the organisation of focus groups with children, parents and teachers. In addition, relevant resource centres were involved in the organisation of focus groups and individual interviews with children with special needs, children in institutional care and children in a correctional institution (a resource centre for children and youth with special needs, Podgorica; a correctional institution, Ljubovic; and an orphanage, Mladost).

The survey was realised with the approval of the Ministry of Education of Montenegro.

A **quantitative survey** was accomplished with a stratified random representative sample of 1,002 households: 1,002 children and 1,002 parents were interviewed (one child and one parent per household). Interviews were conducted face-to-face at respondents' homes, with a self-completion section for sensitive questions.

A **qualitative survey** comprised 36 focus groups and 12 individual interviews:

- 16 focus groups with children from the general population
- 12 focus groups with children from vulnerable groups (children from Roma families, economically deprived families, children in institutional care and children in a correctional institution)
- 5 focus groups with parents (general population, Roma, economically deprived families and parents with children with special needs attending regular and special schools)
- 3 focus groups with teachers (classroom teacher in grade IV, and teaching relevant subjects in grades V to IX, and grades X to XII – secondary school)

- 12 individual interviews with children with physical and intellectual impairments (children with physical disability, hearing or vision impairment and slight intellectual disability)

The country context

Key indicators

The emergence and rapid development of information and communication technology (ICT) has had a dramatic impact on children around the world. Digital media now occupy a central place in children's social lives and the competent use of ICT is becoming a precondition for children's inclusion in society and, later, the workforce. There is an urgent need for all countries to develop national and international evidence-based policy frameworks and guidelines for ICT. Several recent studies serve as useful bases for European and high-income countries (Livingstone, Haddon, Görzig, & Ólafsson, 2011; Livingstone, Mascheroni, Ólafsson, & Haddon, 2014).

Basic facts on Montenegro

- *Population:* 620,029 (2011 Census)
- *Age structure:*
 - 0–14 years: 15.18% (male 48,138/female 50,095)
 - 15–24 years: 10.27% (male 30,681/female 35,776)
 - 25–54 years: 47.02% (male 164,104/female 140,142)
 - 55–64 years: 13.12% (male 42,354/female 42,542)
 - 65 years and over: 14.41% (male 37,040/female 56,201) (2015 estimated)
- *Education:* Without school: 2%; elementary or some elementary: 28%; secondary: 52%; college or university: 17% (no data for 2%) (2011 Census)
- *Gross enrolment ratio:* primary school, both sexes 2012, 95.3% (The World Bank)
- *Unemployment rate:* 2013: 19.5%, 2014: 18.0%, 2015: 17.6% (MONSTAT, Labour Force Survey)
- *GNI per capita:* 2014 (converted to US dollars): \$7,320 (The World Bank)

- Poverty line: 2013: 8.6% (MONSTAT)

Basic facts on ICT and connectivity

Percentage of households with internet access, 2014 (MONSTAT, survey estimation): total, 63.6%; urban, 68.9%; rural, 53.1%

Mobile telephone lines, April 2016 (Agency for Electronic Communication and Postal Services, Montenegro): total, 958.191; subscriptions per 100 inhabitants, 159. Compared to the same period in 2015, the number of subscriptions has increased by 1.55%.

According to data obtained in a survey conducted by Ipsos Strategic Marketing in 2015, as many as 78% of young people aged 10 to 19 in Montenegro use the internet every day.

The current GKO survey, realised in June 2016, showed that 91% of children aged 9 to 17 use the internet, and 79% are online every day, or several times each day. The smartphone is by far the most extensively used online device. Only 11% of children never use a smartphone, and 72% use a smartphone daily/almost daily or several times a day. Among the children who use a smartphone, 79% have it just for their own use.

Policy context and key stakeholders

Despite the systematic increase in the number of children online in Montenegro, there is no systematic data on children's usage of the internet, their experiences and awareness of the risks of abuse and exploitation. Furthermore, there have been no prevention campaigns to increase awareness and to initiate child protection in a more systematic way.

Stakeholders consulted in the pre-field phase agreed that in spite of the increasing awareness of online safety issues, this topic has not yet achieved adequate attention, either by government institutions or by civil society organizations (CSOs), educators or policy-makers in general.

Schools seem to be quite familiar with children's risky

use of the internet. School staff generally reported that most of the children, while in school, go online via smartphones without supervision. For example, in one school a teacher reported having caught pupils watching online pornography via smartphones during class. In addition, the occurrences of peer online violence were recorded and believed to have happened more often than perceived by school authorities and parents. At the same time, according to school authorities, parents are not aware enough of the online risks their children are exposed to, and nor do they have enough digital literacy to control, advise and help their children to use the internet in a safer way.

Similar attitudes were found with national internet providers (Domen and Digitalizuj.me), the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry for Information Society and Telecommunications.

Awareness of the importance of the issue of children's internet use in general, and the safety of its use in particular, was found to be highly present with stakeholders. Efforts in the area of legislation and initiatives to increase public awareness and provide education for safer internet use have also been introduced, as described below. However, the general consent was that the initiatives are still lagging far behind the challenges, and hence, that a more systematic policy agenda related to both opportunities and risks of children's internet use is needed.

Legislation in Montenegro

Montenegro signed and ratified all international documents in the field of fighting violence against children both online and offline, and its current criminal legislation that regulates online child sexual exploitation is largely in line with international standards.

- General international legal standards in combating child online sexual abuse and exploitation

The **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child** (UN CRC)¹ is the most comprehensive document on the rights of children. The UN CRC and its 3rd **Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children**,

¹ Adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly Resolution No. 44/25 of 20 November 1989 entry into force 2 September 1990, in accordance with Article 49.

Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (OPSC)² provides important guidance for the realisation of children's rights with respect to sexual exploitation and abuse over the internet.

- Specific international standards

The **Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention)** is the first treaty to address children's protection from sexual violence in the face of challenges presented by technological developments, and to identify as an offence the solicitation of children for sexual purposes through ICTs, often known as 'grooming'. It aims to eradicate all sexual exploitation and abuse of children, and requires the criminalisation of sexual exploitation and abuse, the criminal prosecution of perpetrators and effective remedies and support for child victims.

The **Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime (Budapest Convention)** criminalises offences against and through computer systems, including child pornography; provides law enforcement with effective means to investigate cybercrime and secure electronic evidence; and offers a framework for international police and judicial cooperation in computer-related cases involving crimes against children.

The Lanzarote and Budapest Conventions represent international standards that may serve as benchmarks and may support the harmonisation of criminal law aimed at protecting children against sexual exploitation and abuse.

Based on the global need for a joint and organised fight against online child sexual exploitation, Montenegro was part of the 'We Protect Children Online' Global Summits **held in London in December 2014 and in Abu Dhabi in November 2015, with the aim of strengthening global efforts to combat online child sexual exploitation, and a signed Statement of Action together with more than 50 worldwide states, the IT industry and NGO sector.**

- National legislation of Montenegro

Current criminal legislation of Montenegro that

regulates online child sexual exploitation is largely in line with international standards. The Criminal Code of Montenegro that entered into force in 2013 introduced a large number of criminal offences under the Criminal Offences against Sexual Freedom Chapter. It criminalises all conduct related to the sexual exploitation and abuse of children on- and offline. Moreover, treatment of children who are victims and witnesses of crime but also perpetrators is regulated by other laws, such as the Law on the Treatment of Juveniles in Criminal Proceedings, the Criminal Procedure Code, etc.

Criminal offences governing the protection of children from sexual abuse and sexual exploitation are prescribed in **Chapter XVIII, 'Criminal offences against sexual freedom of the Criminal Code of Montenegro'**.³

Legislation that regulates the responsibility of internet service providers (ISPs) or other private sector companies to report back to the police if they become aware of child sexual abuse materials stored or distributed through their services is regulated through the **Law on Electronic Commerce** covering ISPs and the **Law on Criminal Liability of Legal Entities**⁴ covering other private sector companies (Article 23).

Most prominent initiatives and campaigns in Montenegro

In addition to legal regulations, during the past few years there have been a number of initiatives in Montenegro related to safer use of the internet.

- Safer Internet Day


Since 2012, Montenegro has been marking Safer Internet Day, the aim of which is to promote safer and responsible use of the internet and modern technologies, with a special emphasis on children and young people.

In February 2016 Safer Internet Day was opened by the Ministry for Information Society and Telecommunications and the Ministry of Education. In addition to the Minister of Information Society and Telecommunications, Professor Dr Vujica Lazović, the

² Adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly Resolution No. A/RES/54/263 of 25 May 2000, entered into force on 18 January 2002.

³ *Official Gazette of the Republic of Montenegro*, No. 70/2003, and Correction No. 13/2004, revised 2015.

⁴ *Official Gazette of the Republic of Montenegro*, Nos. 2/2007 and 13/2007.



list of speakers also included the Minister of Education Predrag Bošković, Executive Director of Telenor Montenegro Sandra Steiner, Executive Director of M:tel Vladimir Lucic, Assistant Executive Director of Montenegro Telekom Vladimir Beratović and Andrea Mićanović, educator and member of the project to combat hate speech on the internet from the Volunteer Club of Slobodan Škerović Grammar School.

The event attracted the attention of a large number of media, and all national television and newspapers have shown messages from this event.

The Minister for Information Society and Telecommunications Vujica Lazovic emphasised that protection of children on the internet is an obligation of modern civilisation, and appealed to educational institutions to encourage children to use the internet for the right purposes.

The Minister of Education Predrag Boskovic said that this department would be part of the system of education in order to show children how to use the internet safely.

The Minister for Information Society and Telecommunications, in his statement on the Safer Internet Day in Montenegro, noted that just a small number of users are familiar with proper practices when using a smartphone or surfing social networks.

Representatives of M:tel and Crnogorski Telekom pointed out that they would continue to help with education, particularly of young people, and contribute to the development of an information society.

- Computer Incident Response Team (CIRT)

In 2011 the government adopted a decision on the establishment of a national Computer Incident Response Team (CIRT) of Montenegro, and from then on it has been operating within the Ministry for Information Society and Telecommunications. The CIRT team is responsible for responding to cyber-attacks on government authorities, businesses and individuals.

Besides the response to such incidents, the role of CIRT is educational, so during previous years it has held a series of training and presentation events on the topic of cybersecurity. Due to a noticeable increase in complaints and problems that citizens are now faced

with, a new CIRT portal (www.cirt.me) has been created. This will include the latest news from the field of computer security, recommendations relating to the use of social networks, and various instructions and tips.

The Law on Cybersecurity, among other things, precisely defines the role of CIRT as a body that coordinates the activities of state bodies, state administration bodies and bodies of local self-government in the implementation of information security measures.

On Safer Internet Day, the CIRT team in Podgorica gave a presentation 'Cyber culture and security on the internet' for school teachers in Podgorica.

- Electronic line for reporting jeopardised children's rights through the internet

The Ministry for Information Society and Telecommunications, in cooperation with the Institution of Montenegrin Ombudsman, opened an electronic line for reporting illegal content which jeopardises, in any way, children's rights via the internet.


- European Computer Driving License (ECDL)

The Ministry for Information Society and Telecommunications and regional European Computer Driving License (ECDL) offices have joined the action of the European Union (EU) 'eSkills for Jobs in 2015'.

On Safer Internet Day the Secretary of the Ministry for Information Society and Telecommunications and the Secretary of the Ministry of Education handed ECDL certificates to teachers who successfully passed the module IT security.

- Surf wisely

'Surf wisely' ('*Surfuj pametno*'), launched by Telenor in 2012, is the initiative often mentioned as an example of good practice. It aims to provide education and skills to Montenegrin children, their parents and teachers to ensure that the internet is a positive experience for them while strengthening a sense of security in the digital environment. The Ministry for Information Society and Telecommunications and the Ministry of Education continued to work with Telenor on this project, and new partners that joined them are the Association of Parents and Teatar mladih (Youth Theatre). The initiative has been successfully



implemented for the fourth consecutive year.

- UNICEF Office in Montenegro initiative

The UNICEF Office in Montenegro, as part of the UNICEF Global Programme tackling online child sexual exploitation, has started to implement the new initiative, aiming to support the government to prevent and protect children from online child sexual exploitation and in that sense, to fulfil the commitment made by the Global Summit and Global Alliance against child sexual abuse online. The current GKO survey in Montenegro was conducted as part of this initiative. Thus, this initiative is the first to help policy-makers provide an evidence-based policy.

Policy gaps

Based on the findings of the current GKO survey in Montenegro, in the ongoing government campaigns to protect children online, two gaps seem to be the most notable: its limited reach, and a lack of agenda for the systematic engagement of schools.

There are no precise data either on the number of users of initiatives that promote opportunities and risks of internet use, or of the share of the public reached by messages communicating the issue of safer internet use. However, the appraisal of stakeholders in consultations was that all of these initiatives, no matter how successful, still covered a very limited part of the audience, especially when it comes to children and

their parents.

At least some data from the current GKO survey confirm this attitude. For example, only 37% of children agreed with the statement that there are things on the internet that bother or upset people of their age. In addition, in focus groups discussions, both parents and teachers stated that they were not aware if government institutions had safer internet issues on their current agenda at all.

Both parents and teachers agreed that the inclusion of schools would be an efficient approach to education about the use of the internet. The introduction of systematic programmes of education in schools would result in maximum coverage of children, while the cooperation of teachers and parents would also increase. Policy-makers have not paid sufficient attention so far to such a role for schools. Despite recognising the importance of the role of schools, no plan has yet been made for their systematic involvement, both in terms of raising awareness of children and parents about safe use of the internet, and in terms of the opportunities that the internet provides in education and the broader inclusion of children in school life. The current GKO survey has also shown that internet in schools is rarely used for learning, and to an even lesser extent for communication with teachers and inclusion of children in school life in general.

KEY FINDINGS

Introduction

This report presents the main findings from the survey aimed to provide evidence-based policies for safer internet use in Montenegro. The survey was designed according to the GKO project, funded by UNICEF during 2015–16, and jointly coordinated by researchers at LSE and the UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti.

The survey included quantitative and qualitative methods in data collection. A quantitative survey was accomplished with a stratified random representative sample of 1,002 households, and included children aged 9 to 17 and one of their parents (the one most involved in their child's online activities). The survey was conducted face-to-face at respondents' homes, with a self-completion section for sensitive questions. A qualitative survey included 36 focus groups with parents, children and teachers, and 12 individual interviews with children with physical and intellectual impairments.

This report presents just the top line findings by basic demographic variables (children's gender, age group and socio-economic status, SES) in the four key area: access and opportunities, skills and practices, risks, and vulnerability and protective (enabling) factors. In order to achieve more complete interpretation of the findings, more complex analyses of the relations among the variables are needed. An overall summary indicator, like, for example, an index of risk, would enable an estimation of the prevalence of risk among the children, and the most important impact variables.

In short, the key points in the four area are as follows:

- Access and opportunities

The internet has become an integral part of children's everyday life in Montenegro. A great majority of children aged 9 to 17 (91%), use the internet, and most of them, 87%, are online every day.

A smartphone is by far the most extensively used online device, and the majority of children have a smartphone just for their own use.

Time spent on the internet substantially increases as children grow older. On average, **children aged 15 to 17 are estimated to spend almost four hours a day online.** Parents disapprove of their children spending so many hours on the internet, and find that the internet has reduced the activities necessary for their children's healthy growth such as physical activities (workouts, outdoor activities) and live interaction with their peers and other people.

The majority of the children, **70%, agreed that there are a lot of things on the internet that are good for children of their age.** But only 23% agreed completely with this statement, and 3 in 10 did not agree.


What children feel to be good things on the internet, and what they most often do on the internet, collide. Things most often named as good by 12- to 17-year-olds were learning/things for school, while the things they most often do online were predominantly related to entertainment (listening to music, watching video clips) and social relationships (visiting social networking sites).

The internet is rather sporadically used in education. The great majority of children reported using the internet for school-related activities less frequently than weekly, or do not use it at all. Parents and teachers find the use of internet in education to be very helpful and stimulating, but on the other hand, they stress that the internet also provides numerous escape routes from the effort needed in acquiring true knowledge and responsibility.

- Skills and practices

Most of the children evaluated their digital skills with considerably high grades. Children become substantially more skilful as they grow older. Thus, the average grade of the oldest group of children on a scale of 1 to 4 was 3.4, while it was 2.2. for children aged 9 to 11.

Among the parents (carers) most involved in children's online activities (i.e., selected respondents), 20% never use the internet.



Concerning parents who use the internet, only the parents of 9- to 11-year-olds evaluated their skills with higher grades than their children. The advantage of children over their parents notably increases as children grow older. Focus groups confirmed that both **parents and teachers feel inferior to children regarding digital skills.**

Children's estimation of their skills was quite balanced across the areas of operational skills, information/browsing skills, social skills and mobile skills, but somewhat less so in the area of creative skills.

Younger children consistently evaluated their skills with lower grades, including safety skills. For example, only 30% of 9- to 11-year-olds know how to change their privacy setting, while 68% of 12- to 14-year-olds, and 90% of 15- to 17-year-olds, know how to do it; 49% of 9- to 11-year-olds know which information they should, or should not, share online, while 87% of 12- to 14-year-olds, and 97% of 15- to 17-year-olds, know it; 49% of 9- to 11-year-olds know how to remove people from their contacts list, while 87% of 12- to 14-year-olds, and 97% of 15- to 17-year-olds, know how to do it.

- Risks

A noticeable percentage of children do not feel that there are things on the internet that bother or upset people about their age: only 37% definitely agreed with this statement, a third was not sure, and 29% did not agree. Older children, aged 12 to 17, share this attitude substantially more than younger children (41% and 27% respectively). Children who believe that there are upsetting things on the internet **most often named violence (27%), and quarrels and insulting words (13%), but inappropriate content for their age, sexual content/pornography and paedophilia were also frequently named (19%, 11% and 4% respectively).**

Among the children aged 12 to 17,⁵ 13% stated that in the past year they have done some of four risky activities at least every week – sent their personal information to someone they have never met face-to-

face; added people they have never met to friends or contacts; pretended online to be a different person; or sent a photo to someone they have never met. The number of risky activities increases as children grow older, so that 13% of 15- to 17-year-olds performed at least 1 to 2 risky activities weekly, and 4% 3 to 4 activities.

When it comes to **online experiences in the past year, 38% of children reported that they have experienced at least some of the online nasty deeds in at least one of four areas – something happened that upset them; someone treated them in a hurtful way; they have seen sexual images; or received sexual messages.**⁶ These experiences are substantially more present with boys (41%) than girls (35%), and their incidence substantially increases as children grow older (23%, 39% and 49% respectively for the three age groups). In total, **5% had some of the nasty experiences in 3 to 4 areas** (2% in all 4).

However, **substantially fewer children reported that they were really upset by these experiences.**


The particular figures in each of the four areas show the following:

- **14%** of children reported that **upsetting things have happened to them** at least once, but 57% of them stated that this experience has upset them just 'a little bit', and only 14% that it has upset them 'very much' (i.e., 2% in the total population)
- **12%** stated that **someone had treated them in a hurtful or nasty way** at least once (36% of them reported that it has happened only face-to-face)
- **29%** (41% of 15- to 17-year-olds) reported that **they have seen images on the internet that are obviously sexual** (7% were not sure), but 69% stated that this experience has not upset them at all, or just a little bit
- **7%** reported **having received sexual messages** at least once (2% were not sure), but 56% stated that this experience has not upset them at all or

you seen any images on the internet that are obviously sexual at least once?'; 'In the past year, have you received any sexual messages?'

⁵ Children aged 9 to 11 were not asked this question.

⁶ They answered 'yes' to the questions: 'In the past year, has anything happened online that bothered or upset you in some way?'; 'In the past year, has anyone treated you in a hurtful or nasty way at least once?'; 'In the past year, have



just a little bit

Focus groups revealed that social networks are used to organise fights among peers (not virtual fights, but in real life that are video recorded by smartphones and **the video clips posted on social networks**. In the quantitative survey, **22%** of the children reported that they **had seen a video of a fight** recorded and posted by some of their friends.

In addition, **27%** reported that they **had contact online with someone they hadn't previously met in person** (42% of 15- to 17-year-olds), and **13%** stated that they **had met someone face-to-face they had first got to know by internet** (23% of 15- to 17-year-olds).

Most of the children who reported that upsetting things have happened to them (14%) said that they talked about the problem with an adult (mainly with parents/carers), but only 4% of them reported the problem online (e.g., clicked on a 'report abuse' button, or contacted an internet adviser or their ISP).

Parents are often unaware of their children's online experiences, especially regarding sexual content. For example, while 29% of children reported that they have seen images on the internet that are obviously sexual, only 4% of parents stated that their child has seen sexual images online.

- Vulnerabilities and protective (enabling) factors

Based on the survey results, the majority of the children seem to feel happy with their lives in general. On the imaginary ladder consisting of 10 steps, 85% of the children positioned their lives on the three highest steps, while only 4% positioned their lives on the lowest five.

Despite the fact that the internet is quite deeply ingrained in children's lives, **the majority of the children still seem to feel more comfortable and safe in their live environment** (in their homes and surroundings) **than in a digital environment:**

- 96% of the children stated feeling safe at home, 94% stated feeling safe in the area where they live, while **only 47% stated feeling safe on the internet**
- 95% stated that their families really try to help them, 89% that it is easy for them to talk with their

parents about the things that upset them, 85% believe that they can trust people in their surroundings, while **only 30% find that on the internet other people are kind and helpful**

Nevertheless, **26%** of the children stated that they **find it easier to be themselves online than when they are with people face-to-face**; **16%** stated that they **talk about different things online than face-to-face**; and **10%** of children stated that they **talk online about private things that they would not talk with people face-to-face**. In total, 7% of the children stated that all these three statements are completely, or at least fairly, true.

In any case, children are very active in the digital environment. As many as **72% have their own profile on a social networking site**, and a **substantial number are quite open for communication under their own identity**. Results show that out of the 72% of children who have their own profiles on social networking sites:

- **90%** reveal **their last name** on their profiles
- **89%** reveal **a photo that clearly shows their face**
- **53%** reveal **their school**
- **35%** **their address**
- **26%** have a profile set to public so that **everyone can see it**
- **18%** communicate with **more than 50 people**
- **13%** **accept all requests** from people to become their 'friends' online

Despite most of the children stating that they feel truly supported by their families, **parents' involvement in children's online lives is quite limited.**

Children rarely initiate parental support, and parental mediation is rather sporadic, both from the children and parents' perspective. The figures showing the items of parental mediation that were found to be by far the most present in children's evaluations illustrate this point well:

- 45% of children reported that their parent suggests ways to use the internet safely (parental safety mediation)

- 39% reported that their parents talk to them about what to do if something online upsets them (parental safety mediation)
- 39% reported that their parent often or very often talks to them about what they do on the internet (parental active mediation)
- 25% stated that their parent restricts them in playing games online with other people (they can do it either with permission or are not allowed at all) (parental restrictive mediation)
- 22% stated that their parent makes them use software to prevent junk mail and viruses (prenatal technical control)

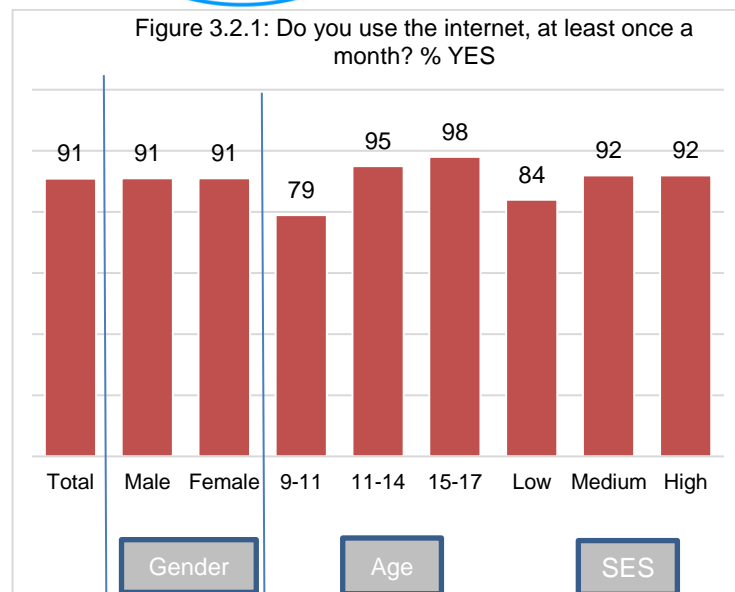
Only 7% of children reported that their parent uses some of the software for safety control (such as software that limits the people the child can be in touch with, parental control/means of blocking some websites, or keeping track of the sites the child is visiting, etc.).

Finally, despite children generally feeling safe and secure in school, **when it comes to internet use, schools are hardly involved in children's online lives.** More than half of the children stated that their teachers rarely or never communicate with them about various topics that are related to the internet (topics about safety, acceptability of content displayed on the internet, etc.).

Access and opportunities

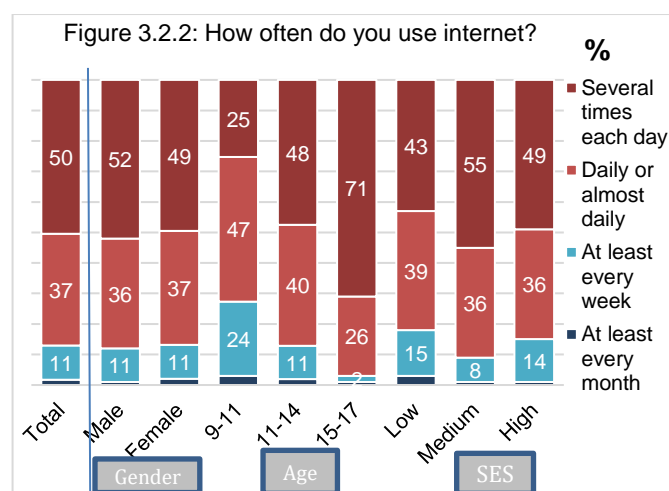
Prevalence and rate of internet usage: The number of children, and how often they use the internet

The internet has become an integral part of children's everyday life in Montenegro. A great majority of children, 91%, use the internet, and most of them, 87%, are online every day (see Figures 3.2.1 and 3.2.2).



The non-users are mainly found among 9- to 11-year-olds, and in families with low SES, mainly in the northern part of the country and in remote rural areas. The children named three main reasons for not using the internet: they have no device to access the internet (27%); the internet is not available in their homes (32%); and their parents do not let them use the internet, despite having the internet and devices to access it (34%).

A great majority of internet users, 87%, are online every day (or almost every day), or even several times a day.⁷ Internet use increases as children grow older, so that 97% of young people aged 15 to 17 use the internet every day, and 71% several times each day (see Figure 3.2.2).



⁷ Only the results for child users of the internet are presented so that all figures refer only to this part of the population (i.e., 91% of children aged 9 to 17).

Focus group discussions showed that younger children use the internet less often not because they are less eager to use it, but due to parents' restrictions which, at their age, they still have to abide by.

**Places and devices of internet access:
Where and how do children access the internet?**

Children use the internet at different places, but home is the place they use the internet most often:
76% reported using the internet at home every day, or several times a day, while going online from other places is substantially less frequent (see Figure 3.2.3).

However, as children grow older and internet use takes up more of their time, the frequency of internet use in a variety of different places also substantially increases (see Figure 3.2.3a).

On average, children aged 9 to 11 reported using the internet daily/almost daily (or several times each day) at just one place, 12- to 14-year-olds stated using it at 1 to 2 places (1.6), and 15- to 17-year-olds at 2 to 3 places (2.3). Daily usage of the internet at 4 or more places was reported by each fourth young person aged 15 to 17, 11% of 12- to 14-year-olds, and by 4% of 9- to 11-year-olds.

Figure 3.2.3: How often do you use the internet at the following places?

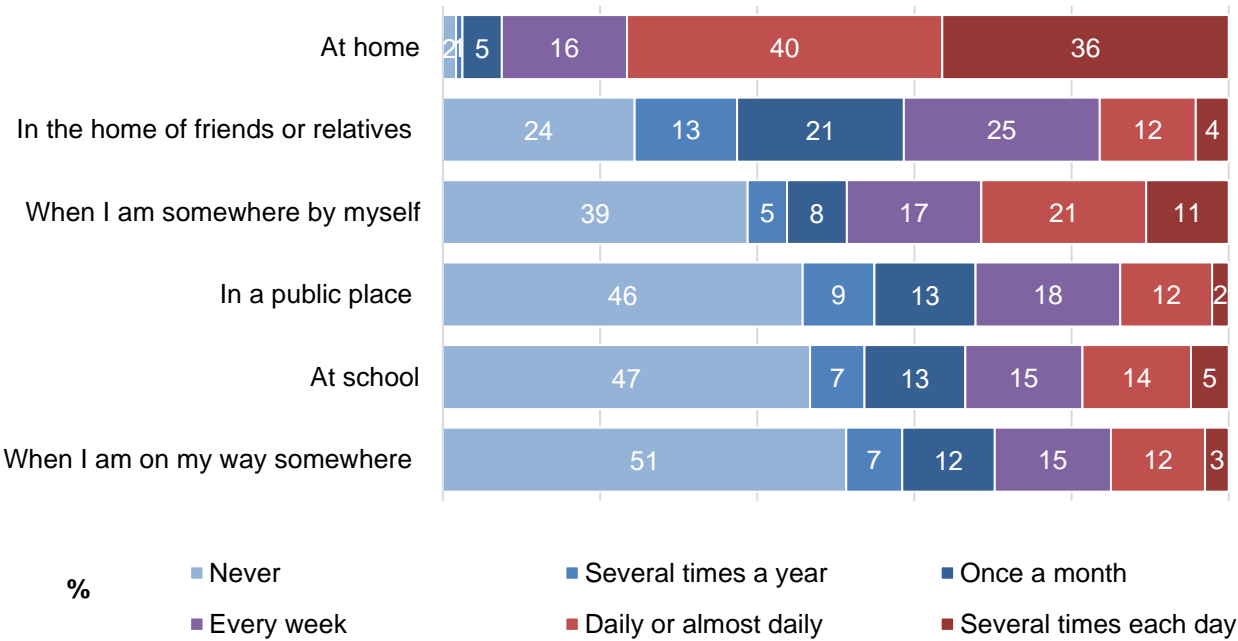
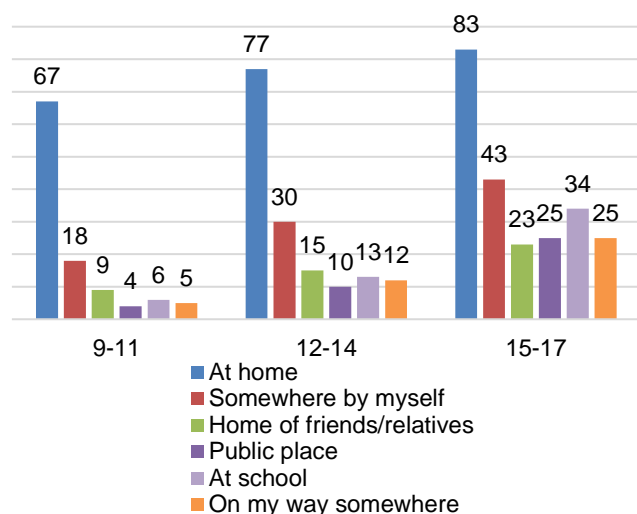


Figure 3.2.3a: How often do you use the internet at the following places?
% Daily or several times each day



The smartphone is by far the most extensively used online device. Only 11% of children never use the smartphone, and 72% use a smartphone

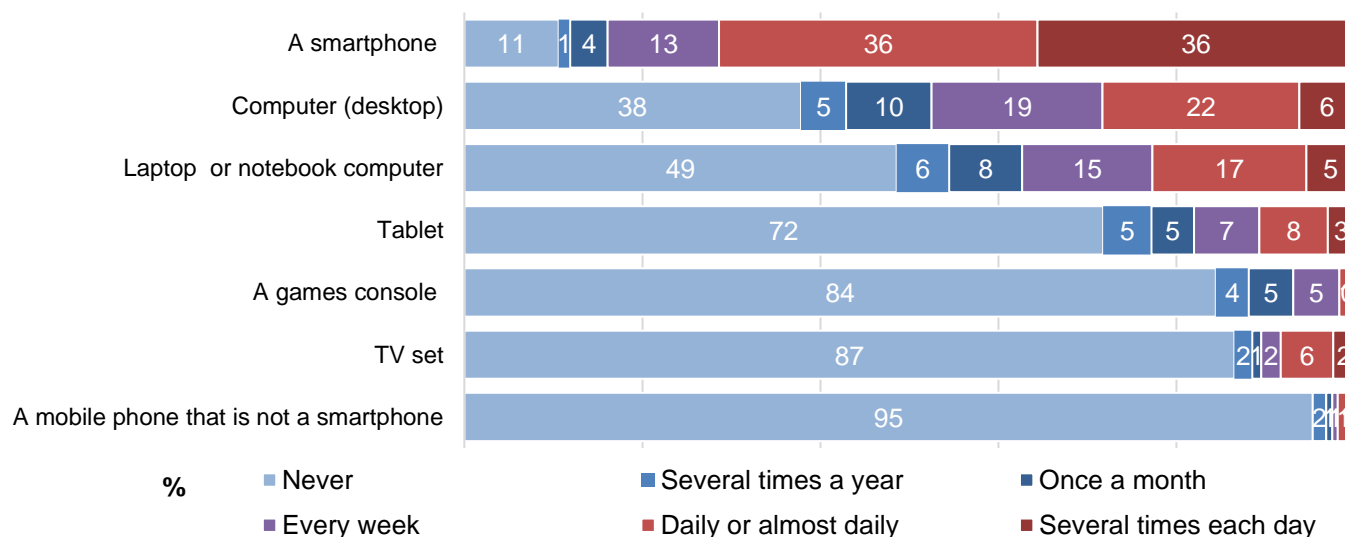
daily/almost daily or several time a day (see Figure 3.2.4). Among the children who use a smartphone, 79% have it just for their own use, which definitely enables the widespread usage of the internet.

Usage of the smartphone increases with age, so that 88% of 15- to 17-year-olds use a smartphone to go online each day (or several time a day); 73% of those aged 12 to 14 and 46% of 9- to 11-year-olds.

Discussions in focus groups revealed that children prefer smartphones to other devices not only because of the possibility of having it constantly at hand, but also due to easier access to applications that they use most frequently.

On average, children use approximately 2 devices a month. The number of devices, on average, just slightly increases with the age of children (on average, 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5 devices respectively for the three age groups).


Figure 3.2.4: When you use the internet, how often do you use any of these devices to go online?



The majority of children, 89%, use prepaid internet. Almost all, 94%, connect without help (83% of 9- to 11-year-olds, 98% of 12- to 14-year-olds and 99% of 15- to 17-year-olds).

How much time do children spend on the internet?

Children aged 12 to 17 estimated that they spend, on average, more than three hours (205 minutes) on



the internet daily.⁸ On average, children aged 15 to 17 estimated that they spend almost four hours (227 minutes) each day online, and children aged 12 to 14 spend three hours (181 minutes) each day online.

Focus groups revealed that the internet is so deeply ingrained in children's lives that they find it quite hard to estimate how much time they really spend online. A statement of a 14-year-old boy well illustrates this feeling:

“How much time do I spend online? I am on the internet 24 hours a day.”

Parents disapprove of their children spending so many hours on the internet. In focus group discussions parents were quite in agreement that the internet has reduced the activities they find necessary for children's healthy growth, such as physical activities (workouts, outdoor activities) and live interaction with their peers and other people.

The majority of children agree that the internet consumes a great part of their lives, but they do not share their parents' feelings that this prevents them from acquiring some really vital experiences. On the contrary, they feel that being without the internet would jeopardise some of the chief experiences in their lives. The statement of a 14-year-old girl illustrates well this feeling:

“Now that we all are on the internet 24 hours/7 days, if the internet suddenly disappeared, everyone would get hysterical.”

However, at least some children in the focus groups agreed with their parents that spending too much time online could be harmful for their healthy growth. For example, a 13-year-old girl stated:

“My parents tell me that I am not spending enough time outdoors. They took my smartphone for 48 hours. I felt quite awkward. Everyone in school asked me if I saw this or that on the internet that morning. But I think that my parents were right.”

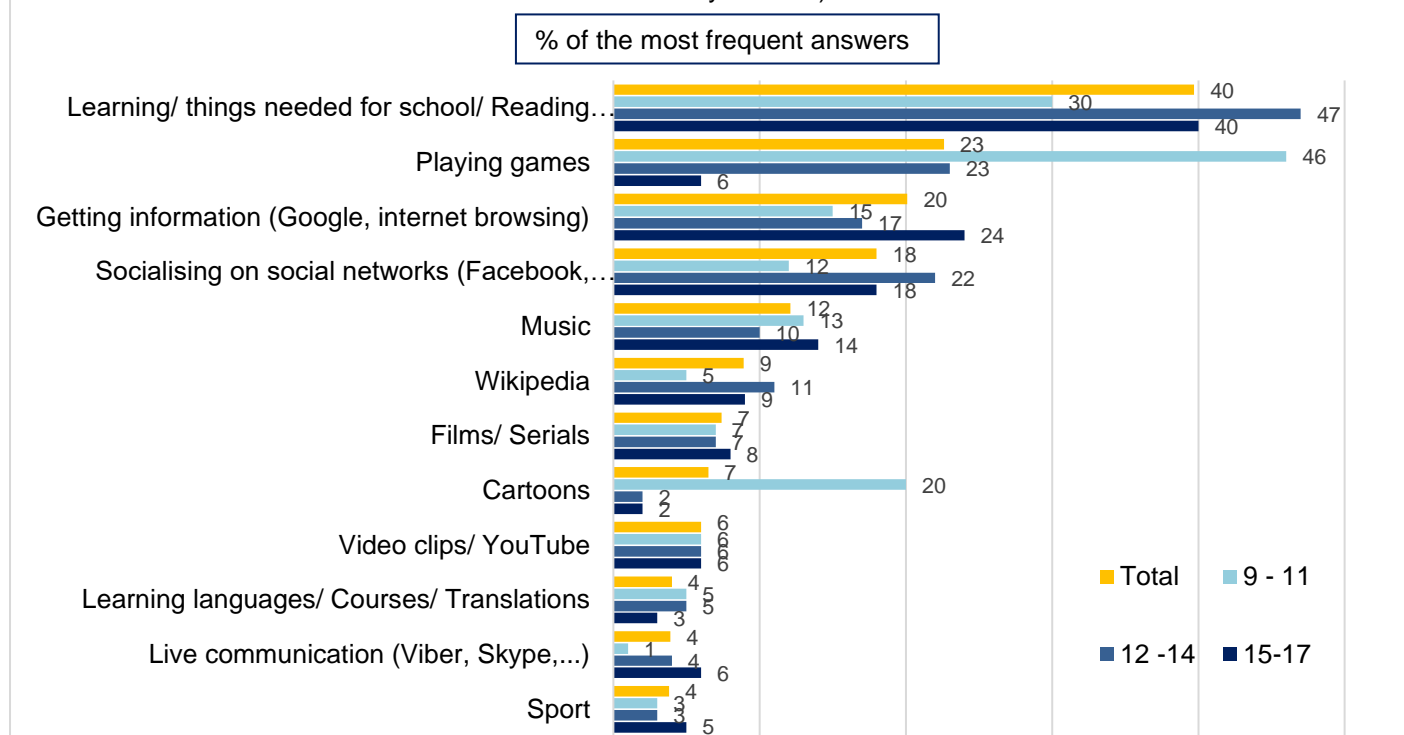
What do children feel are good things for them on the internet?

The majority of the children, 70%, agreed that there are a lot of things on the internet that are good for children of their age. However, despite extensive internet use, just 23% agreed completely with this statement, 47% find it mainly true, and almost a third did not agree (12% stating that it is mainly not true, 8% found it not true at all, and 10% were not sure or did not know). As revealed in the focus groups, the attitudes of almost a third of the children who stated that the internet does not offer so many good things most probably reflects the attitudes of their parents.

The things that children feel are good for them on the internet vary depending on their age: 12- to 17-year-olds most often named learning/things good for school (47% of children aged 12 to 14, 40% of those aged 15 to 17, and 30% of 9- to 11-year-olds), **while the children aged 9 to 11 most often named playing games** (46% of children aged 9 to 11, 23% of those aged 12 to 14, and only 6% of 15- to 17-year-olds) (see Figure 3.2.5).

⁸ Children aged 9 to 11 were not asked this question.

Figure 3.2.5: What things on the internet do you think are good for children of your age? (82% of the target group who agree that there are good things on the internet + those who find it mainly not true)



What do children do most often online?

The things that the children stated they most often do on the internet are not in accordance with the things children most often evaluated as good for them. The things children most often do online are predominantly related to entertainment and social relationships (see Figure 3.2.6).

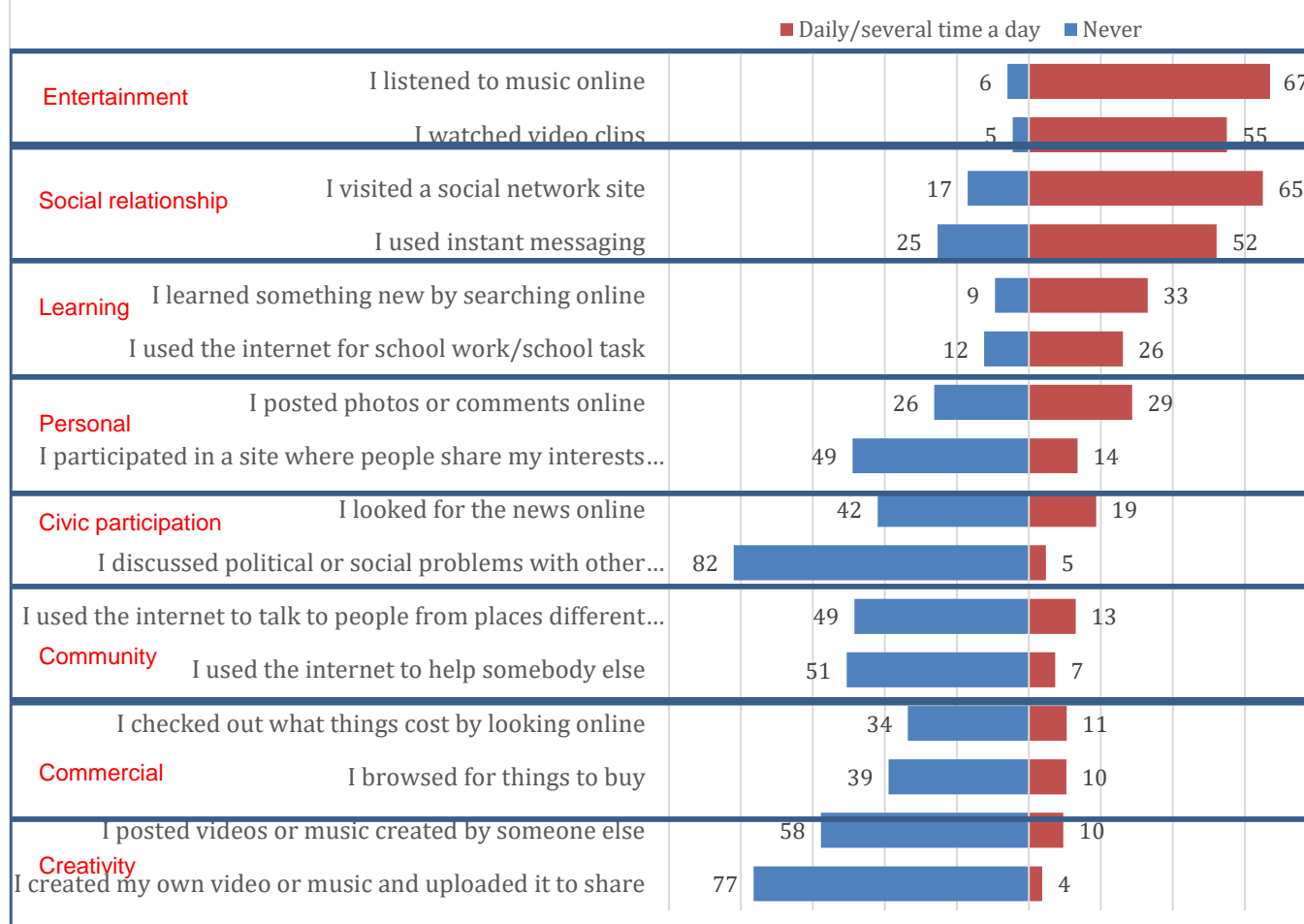
The majority of the children, 67%, reported that every day (or several times a day) they use the internet to listen to music (while only 12% mentioned music as a good thing on the internet); 55% stated that they watch video clips every day or several times a day (while only 6% mentioned video clips among the good things on the internet). Only 6% and 5% (respectively) reported that they never listen music or watch video clips on the internet.

As many as 65% reported that every day (or several time a day) they visit a social networking site (only 18%

named socialising on social networking sites as a good thing for children of their age), and 52% said that they use instant messaging (IM) (while only 4% mentioned live communication on Viber or Skype as a good thing on the internet) (see Figure 3.2.6).

The next most frequently reported activities were in the area of learning ('learned something new by searching online') and personal things ('I posted photos or comment online'). However, compared to activities in the domain of entertainment and social relationships, substantially fewer children reported activities in these two areas (33% reported that they use the internet every day to learn something new, and 26% use the internet for school work every day; 29% reported they posted photos or comments online every day). Even fewer children reported using the internet for other activities – the fewest number use it for activities in the area of civic and community participation and creative participation (see Figure 3.2.6).

Figure 3.2.6: How often have you done these things online in the past month?
% Two most frequent activities within the listed areas



The number of daily (almost daily) activities children do online increases with the children's age. On average, children do 4 activities (out of the 19 listed) daily/almost daily or several times a day.⁹ However, while children aged 9 to 11 carry out, on average, 2 activities, children aged 12 to 14 perform 4 activities, and 15- to 17-year-olds engage in 6. Out of 31 activities evaluated by children aged 12 to 17, children, on average, do almost 7 activities daily or almost daily (or several times a day). Children aged 12 to 14 carry out, on average, between

5 and 6 activities, and children aged 15 to 17 do approximately 8 activities a day, or several times a day.

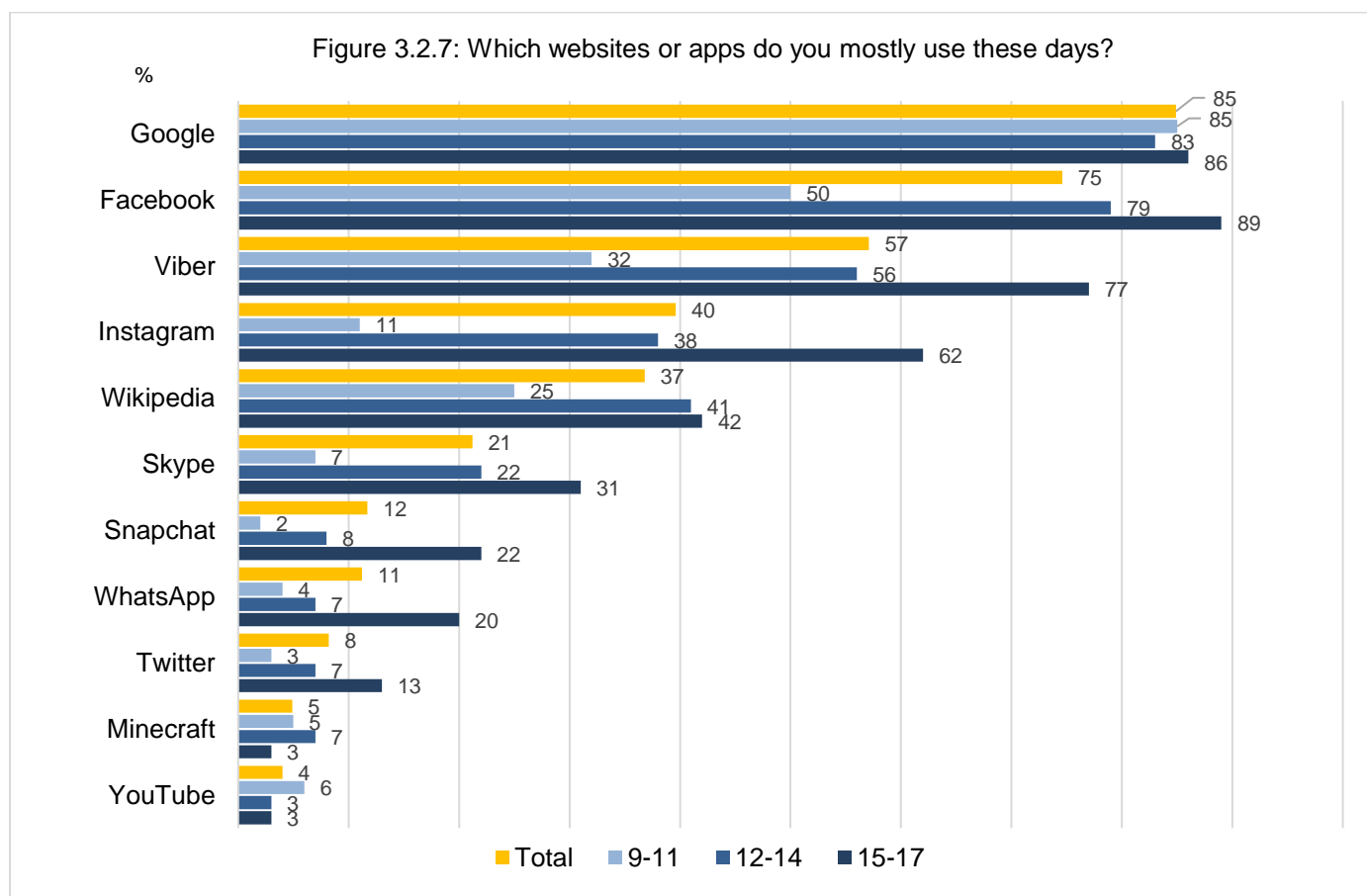
Google and Facebook are by far the most frequently used internet-related services. As many as 86% of the children reported mostly using Google. Google is the only site equally visited by all children, regardless of their age. All other sites and applications are used by a substantially higher percentage of older children than younger ones (see Figure 3.2.7).

⁹ These 19 activities were evaluated by all children. Children aged 9 to 11 were asked to evaluate fewer activities than older children, 19 in total (2 in the area of learning, 2 in community participation, 1 in civic participation, 3 in creative participation, 5 in social relationships, 3 in entertainment and 3 in the personal area); children aged 12 to 17 were asked to evaluate 31 activities (3 in the area of learning, 5 in community participation, 5 in civic participation, 3 in creative participation, 7 in social relationship, 5 in entertainment, and 3 in the personal area).

As a 14-year-old girl stated in a focus group, Google seems to be the first step in searching for applications and sites of interest:

“What would I miss the most? Google. Without Google there is no YouTube, no Facebook, there is nothing...”

Focus group discussions indicated that children most probably use YouTube substantially more than was shown in the quantitative survey (see Figure 3.2.7). This discrepancy might be due to the fact that children often access YouTube via Google. They use YouTube not only to listen to music and to watch video clips, but also to search for ‘Now how’ and to look for help with their homework, especially for help in solving maths problems.



Among social networking sites, Facebook is by far the most popular. Facebook was stated to be mostly used by 75% of children. However, Facebook use varies substantially depending on age. It was named as the most used application by 89% of 15- to 17-year-olds, 79% of 12- to 14-year-olds, and by just 50% of 9- to 11-year-olds (see Figure 3.2.7).

The importance social networking sites have in children’s lives was further revealed in focus group discussions. From the children’s perspective, the main value of social networks is the opportunity to communicate and make friends with a huge number of people. On the one hand, it makes them feel involved

in other people’s lives (including people they have never met offline), and on the other hand, it gives them a chance to present themselves to a huge number of people in the way they would like to. The possibility of communicating not only verbally but also visually – by posting photos and video recordings – makes them feel that they are creating an image of themselves according to their own choice.

In addition, the children stated that social networks are an important source of information about popular topics (such as details about the lives of popular celebrities and sports events), as well as about school gossip. Social networks are also found to be an

important source of information about homework and school exams.

A small number of focus group participants stated that social networks are rather boring. The majority of those who do not have a profile on a social networking site were mainly among the 9- to 11-year-olds, and the main reason for this seems to be parents' prohibition.

Finally, the focus groups showed that, besides Facebook, the popularity of Snapchat has been increasing, especially with girls. Girls especially appreciate Snapchat because of its focus on visual communication – sharing a 'selfie' and scenes from their everyday lives they feel is interesting enough.

Internet and school

Somewhat less than half of the children stated that they use the internet at school, but usage varies substantially depending on the age of the children: 70% of those aged 15 to 17 stated they use the internet at school, 44% aged 12 to 14, and only 18% of 9- to 11-year-olds (see Figure 3.2.8).

Children reported using the internet when at school for a variety of things, but the majority use the internet for school-related activities less frequently than weekly, or do not use it at all (see Figure 3.2.8)

A small percentage of the children practice school-related activities on a daily basis. The most frequent activities were found to be checking information and chatting online, reported by 22% and 21% of children respectively. Since these percentages relate to only 47% of children who stated using the internet at school, the percentages in the total population are over twice less (10% and 9% respectively). **If weekly level is included, the results show that children most frequently use the internet to check information and practice something they are learning.** But still less than half of the children respectively are involved in these activities: 47% of children who use the internet at school use it at least weekly to check information, and 35% to practice something they are learning (i.e., 22% and 16% in the total population, respectively) (see Figure 3.2.9).

Figure 3.2.8: Do you ever use the internet when you are at school?
% YES

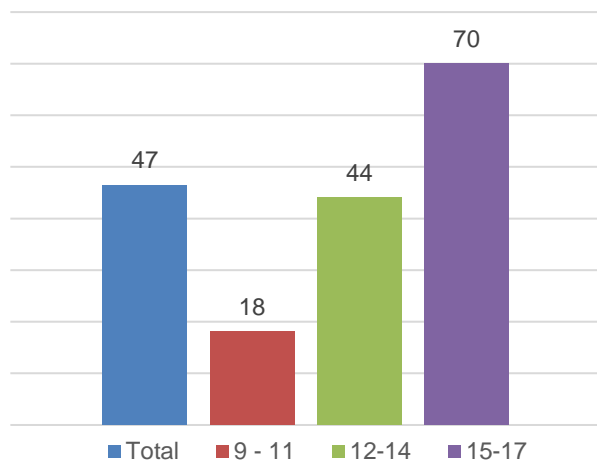
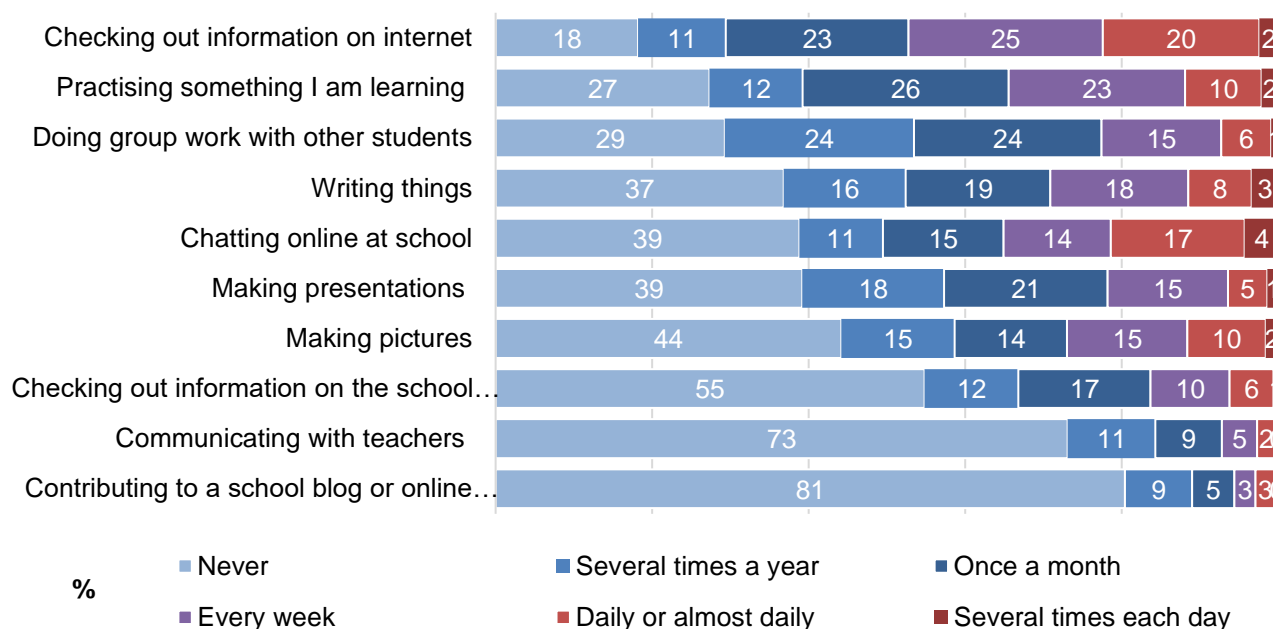


Figure 3.2.9: How often do you use the internet for the following activities when you are at school? (47% of children who stated to use the internet at school)



The school-related activities practiced outside of school show a similar picture: the majority of children use the internet for school-related activities less frequently than weekly, or do not use it at all.

The practice of communicating with teachers and contributing to a school blog or online discussions are the least present (over 70% never engage in online communication with teachers, and over 80% never contribute to a school blog or online discussion, either at school or outside of school).

Discussions in focus groups revealed that children find learning online much easier and more fun than learning from standard textbooks. This attitude is well illustrated by the statement of a 14-year-old girl:

“This is a smartphone time, and I am sure that no one would give advantage to book over the phone.”

Children use Wikipedia to find information they need for their homework, and YouTube to find instructions for solving maths problems. However, it was obvious that **children do not take enough advantage of the internet for school-related activities. They use the internet for school tasks when they are requested**

to rather than on their own initiative. In addition, the quantitative survey showed that children from families with higher SES use Wikipedia substantially more often than children from families with a lower SES – Wikipedia was found to be one of the most used internet-related services by 47% of children from families with high SES, by 35% of children from families with middle SES, and by only 27% of children from families with low SES.

Parents and teachers’ attitudes towards the role of the internet in learning and doing homework were found to be ambivalent. While parents and teachers find the internet to be very helpful and stimulating, on the other hand, they stress that the internet also provides numerous escape routes from the effort needed to acquire true knowledge and responsibility. According to parents and teachers, the internet is often used as a source of copy-paste school work (thematic texts or maths problems), which children just duplicate instead of making an effort to accomplish the tasks on their own. In addition, some mentioned that the internet stimulates cheating in exams. During exams, students forward test questions by Viber, and receive the solutions from an outside source.

Skills and practices

A vast majority of children in Montenegro (91%) use the internet. Four out of five parents of these children use the internet themselves (80%). This is the first indicator of the generation gap related to the internet, which is widened by the difference in online skills that children and parents have.

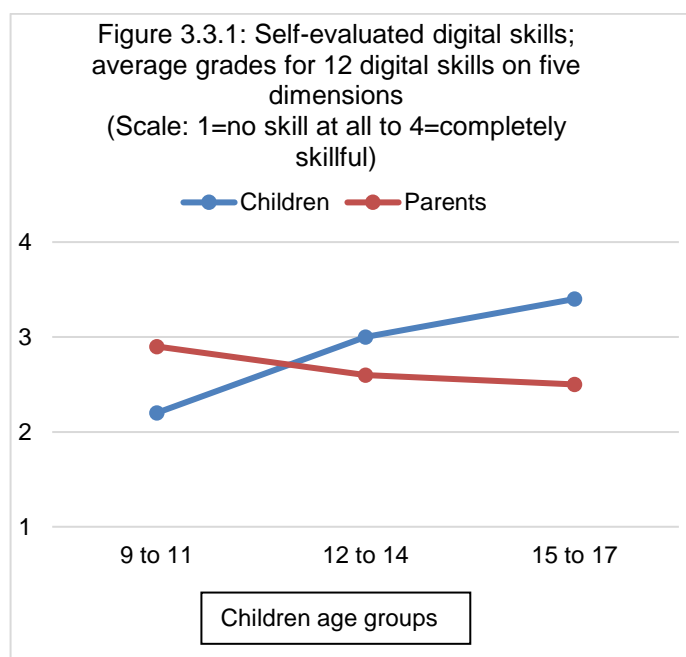
Generally speaking, children assess their digital skills as somewhat better than ‘average’ (on average, they gave a grade 2.9 on a scale from 1 to 4, i.e., slightly higher than the theoretical mean, which is 2.5). However, the assessment of their own skills significantly rises with age, so that the oldest children (aged 9 to 17) on average give quite high marks. On a scale from 1 to 4, for 12 digital skills assessed by all children, those aged 9 to 11 on average assess themselves with grade 2.2, those aged 12 to 14 gave their digital skills grade 3, while the oldest children (aged 15 to 17) gave themselves grade 3.4 (see Table 3.3.1).¹⁰

In this respect, the relation of self-assessed skills by children and parents changes. Parents of the youngest children assessed their children's skills generally somewhat higher than the children, but this difference changes in favour of the children aged 12 to 14, and it continues to increase with children aged 15 to 17 (see Table 3.3.1 and Figure 3.3.1)

Table 3.3.1: Self-evaluated digital skills; average grades for 12 digital skills on five dimensions (Scale: 1=no skill at all to 4=completely skillful)

	Gender			Age			SES		
	Total	Male	Female	9–11	12–14	15–17	Low	Medium	High
Children	2.9	3.0	2.9	2.2	3.0	3.4	2.8	3.0	2.9
Parents	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.9	2.6	2.5	2.4	2.6	3.0

Parents with higher SES assessed their skills higher than parents from low SES, while there were no differences observed among children.



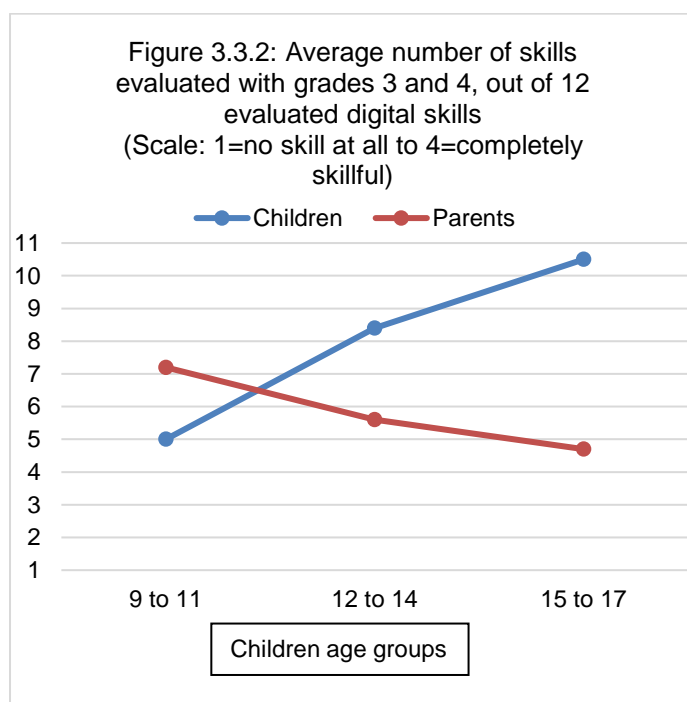
The difference in perception of their own digital skills between younger and older children, and between parents and children, are even more evident when the

¹⁰ Only 12 skills assessed by all respondents, parents and children were included. Although these are mean values, the differences in the number of skills assessed can lead to bias in comparison, as the skills were not equally hard. For details of average grades for all skills assessed by older children and parents. As the results show, the differences in average values obtained based on 12 rated skills and all assessed skills can be neglected.

same 12 skills are looked at through skills that both parents and children evaluated with grades 3 and 4 (see Table 3.3.2 and Figure 3.3.2).

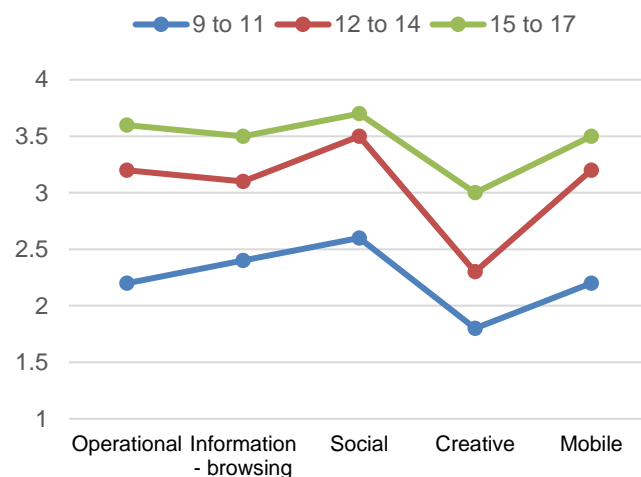
Table 3.3.2: Average number of skills evaluated with grades 3 and 4, out of 12 evaluated digital skills (Scale: 1=no skill at all to 4=completely skillful)

	Gender			Age			SES		
	Total	Male	Female	9-11	12-14	15-17	Low	Medium	High
Children	8.2	8.5	8.0	5.0	8.4	10.5	7.7	8.3	8.3
Parents	5.7	5.7	5.7	7.2	5.6	4.7	3.7	5.4	7.8



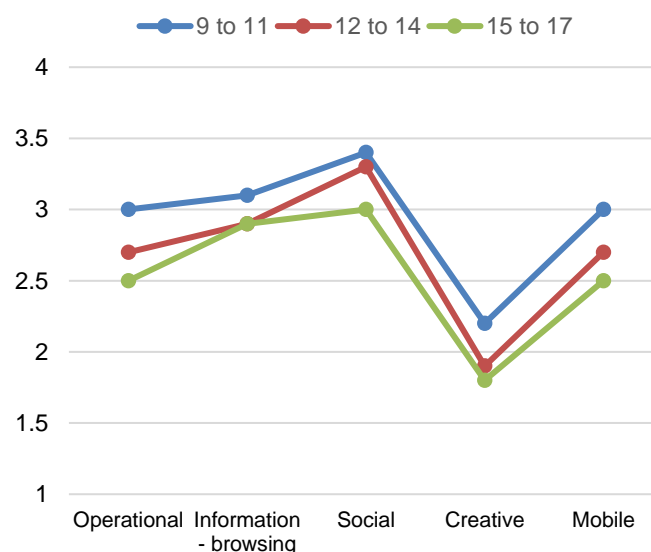
In terms of dimension, children assessed their skills closely, except for creative skills that were assessed as weaker than others. This relation between dimensions is the same for all age groups, but the values increase with children's age.

Figure 3.3.3: Average values of estimated core skills on five dimensions for children (Scale: 1=no skill at all to 4=completely skillful)



Constellation of values of assessed skills on five dimensions is the same for parents. There is a difference among parents of children from different age groups regarding skill level. This is due to parents' age: parents with younger children are themselves younger and more skillful online. These differences are not as visible as they are among children. It should be kept in mind that, as mentioned, all results on skills are given for parents who use the internet (80% of parents of children who use the internet).

Figure 3.3.4: Average values of estimated core skills on five dimensions for parents (Scale: 1=no skill at all to 4=completely skillful)



What core skills do children have on the internet?

The older the children, the higher they assess their basic online skills. Parents are more critical of themselves on this topic than older children.

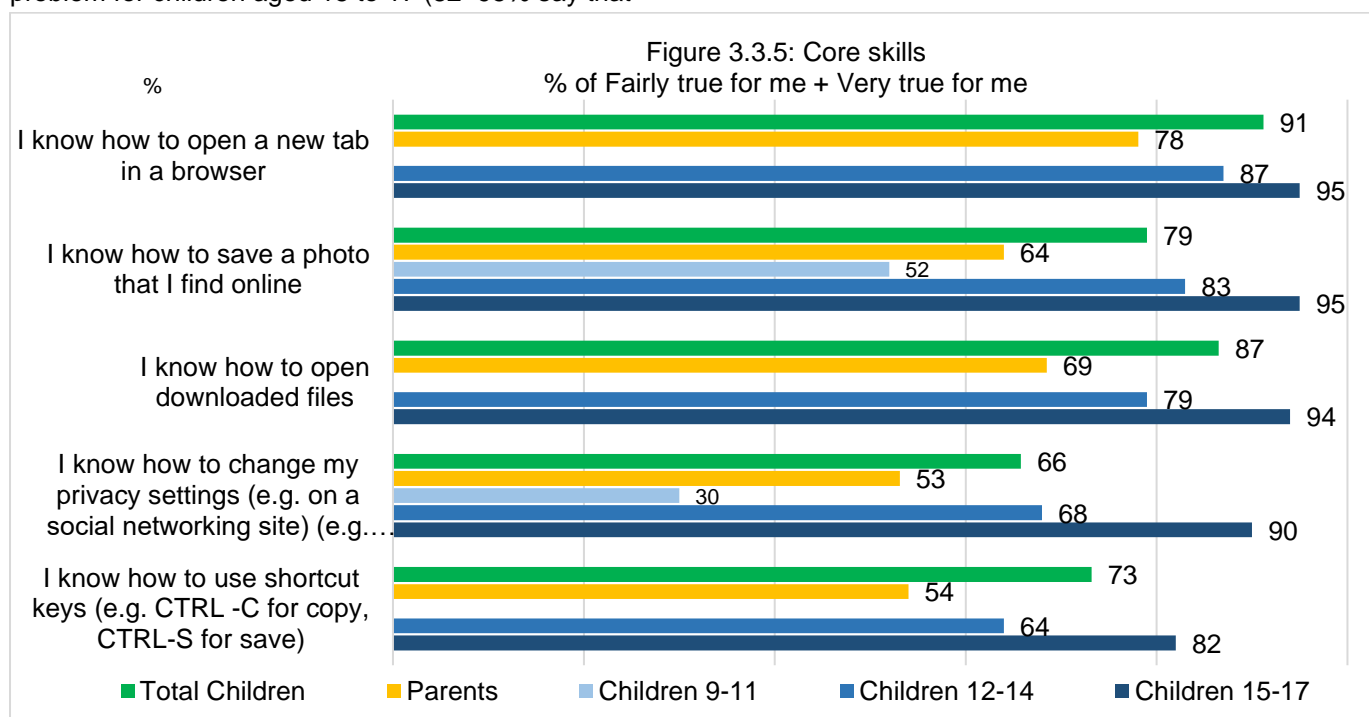
There are no significant differences on self-assessment of these operational skills between boys and girls, and nor is there a gender difference on other skills researched.

Older children claim that their internet skills are very developed, and do not express the need to acquire additional knowledge or skills. As for core operational skills on the internet, they represent no problem for children aged 15 to 17 (82–95% say that

they can perform assessed operations). Younger children make a difference in difficulty of skills: most (aged 12–14) can open a new tab in the browser (87%), save a photo that they found on the internet (83%) and open a downloaded file (79%), and two out of three can manage privacy settings (68%) and use shortcuts on the key board (64%).

Half of the youngest respondents (aged 9–11) state that they can save a photo (52%), and slightly less than a third that they can change privacy settings (30%).

Parents assess that they are more skillful than the children from the youngest group (9–11) on these internet skills, but less skillful than older children.



The knowledge that they have at the moment is mostly gained independently or with the help of more skillful family members or friends. Focus group discussions with pupils showed that **when they are faced with a problem** (whether on the internet or offline, **they look for the solution on the internet first, primarily on 'know how' YouTube video clips. Help by IT professionals is stated only as the last resort, when everything else fails.**

Information/search skills

Pupils, particularly older ones, are quite self-confident when it comes to internet search skills.

Almost all respondents aged 15 to 17 find key browsing words easily (96%). A somewhat smaller number of younger pupils think the same – 84% of those aged 12–14 and 68% of those aged 9–11. Furthermore, the majority of older children (15–17) can easily find the site they visited before (94%), which seems easy to just half of the youngest respondents (47% of those aged 9–11).

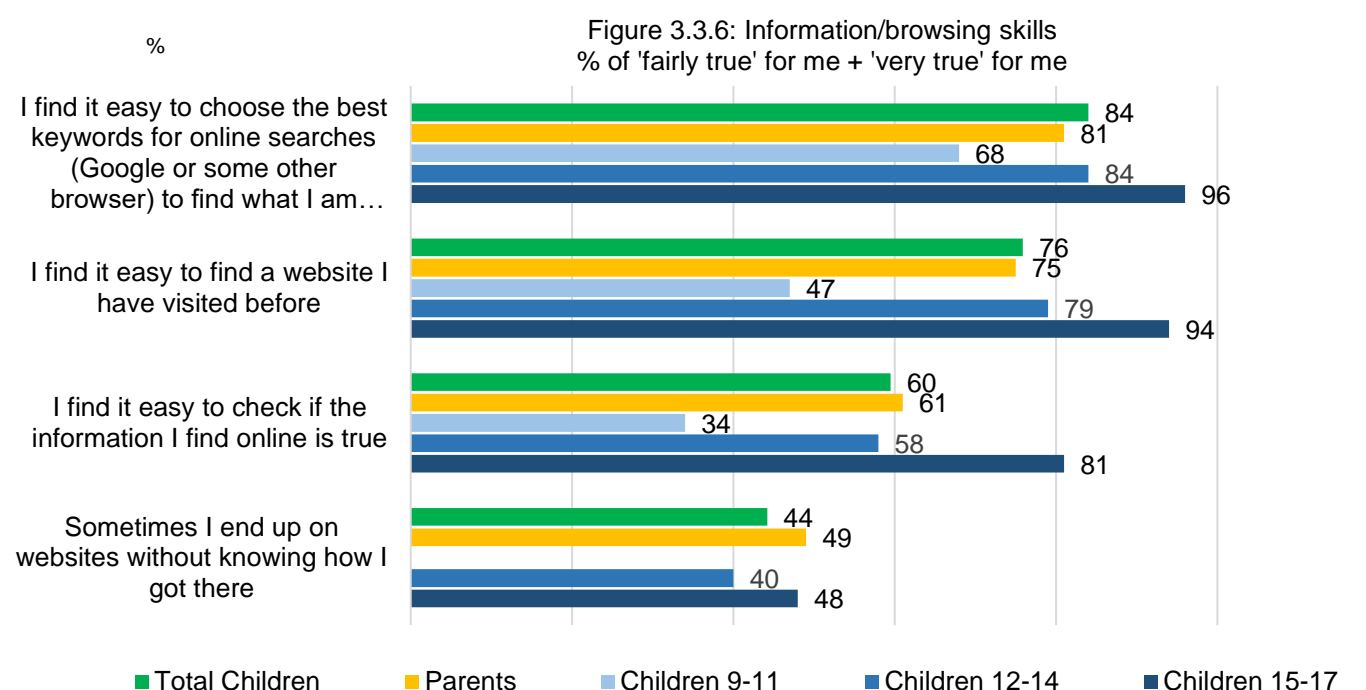
There are significant differences among children of different ages when it comes to checking whether the information they found on the internet is true or not: only a third of the youngest (34%), a higher number of those aged 12–14 (58%) and the great majority of the eldest (81%) can check whether the information is true

or not. This is further confirmed by the results of the qualitative part of the research where pupils aged 13–16 state a large number of strategies used to check the validity of the information, such as checking other sources on the internet. Wikipedia is most often stated as the benchmark, followed by reading comments below the text/video, checking reactions to posts (likes, dislikes), considering the trustworthiness of the source itself based on personal experience or popularity on the internet, etc., while the youngest respondents (9–11) do not state practically any of these strategies, but mostly judge the validity of the information without checking it. **Children from the northern part of Montenegro (46%) and with poorer SES (46%), in comparison to the average (60%), to a lower degree state that they**

know how to check whether the information they found is true. The situation is similar when it comes to parents: those from the northern part of the country (42%) and with low SES (39%) feel less capable of checking online information compared to the average (61%).

Despite being able to search the internet easily, somewhat less than half of the children aged 12–17 end up on websites without knowing how they got there.

Keeping their browsing skills in mind, and regardless of children's age, it is interesting that about the same percentage of parents and children (aged 9–17) report having these skills.



Although mostly older pupils (13–17) find the answers on the internet easily, **teachers state that the pupils seldom make an effort to use the internet for educational purposes.**

Examples of pupils' schoolwork is often the product of easily noticeable abuse of the internet ('copy-paste' examples of papers and homework).

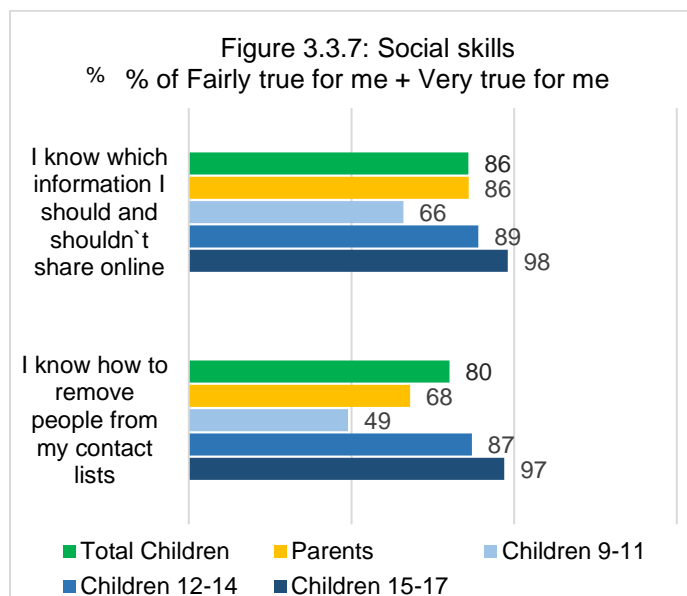
Knowledge and skills related to the digital footprint that children leave on the internet

Children report that they are aware of the information they can share on the internet, but it

appears that, when speaking about information sharing, they have in mind unknown people and the sites that they perceive as unfamiliar, **while they often feel free to leave much more personal information on social networking sites where they feel safer.** This, again, represents a problem, as many children have people on their contacts lists they have not met in person. During a conversation with pupils, we noticed **a difference between boys and girls in terms of the attention they pay to adjusting privacy settings – boys pay much less attention to this task** because, as some of them said, it is of no interest to them.

Parents report similar levels of awareness of sharing information, but less knowledge about controlling

privacy settings on social networking sites than children in total.



Children's online creative skills

When it comes to online creative skills the results vary, depending on the type of skill, age of the child and interest in the field.

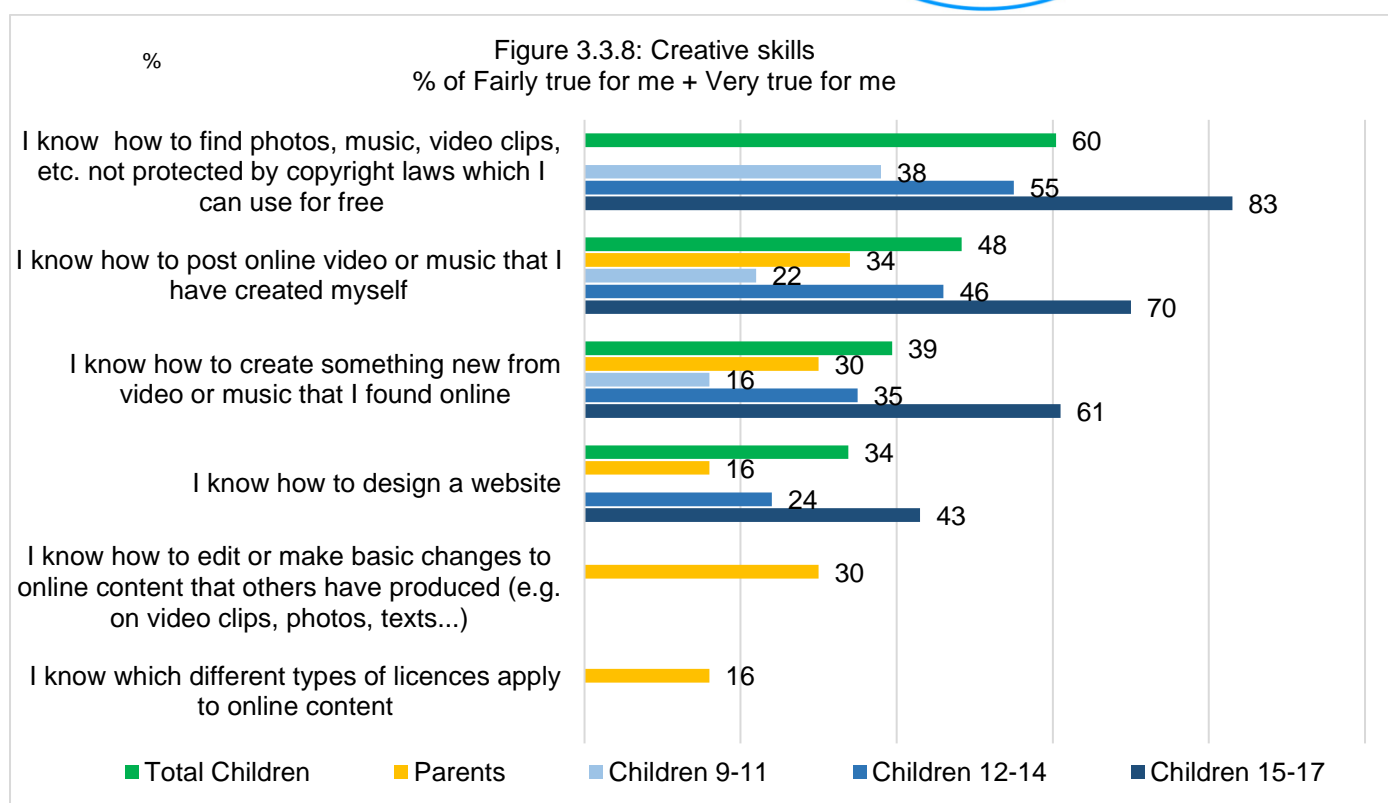
The majority of children state that they can find content not protected by copyright laws (60%). Among the oldest children this number is significantly higher (83%). This is a questionable finding since focus group

discussions showed that none of them paid any attention to whether the content they were downloading from the internet and using had been protected by copyright laws, and they also said that they never checked it. In the youngest group, it is possible that they were not familiar with the concept of copyright laws. Moreover, the pupils do not pay any attention to reading the conditions to application use.

A smaller number could create something new out of the content they found on the internet – only 16% of the youngest respondents (aged 9–11), every third respondent aged 12–14 (35%) and most of the oldest respondents (61%). It should also be taken into consideration that this is a very small number of pupils aged 12–14, since at the age of 11–12 they do have Computer Science as a subject at school, where they state they learn MS Office and PowerPoint, but it is also possible that when answering this question they actually meant editing audio and video material.

A slightly higher number in all age groups state that they know how to post new material on the internet (on average every other respondent – 48%). Every third respondent aged 12–17 stated that they could design a website (34%).

Self-reported parents' creative skills are between the levels of 9- to 11-year-olds and 12- to 14-year-olds.



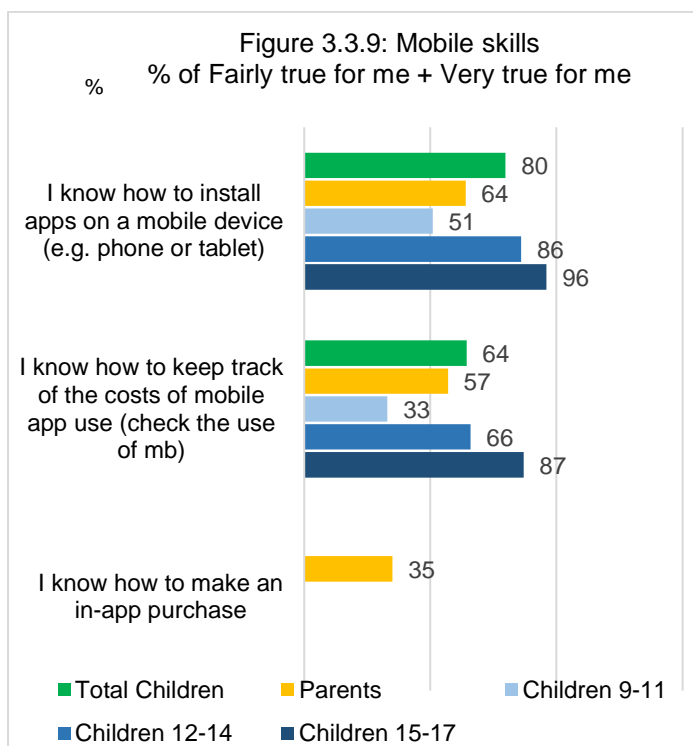
Children give a **special status of infamous (but 'respected') professionals to the so-called hackers**. 'Hacking' is perceived as something that only the most skillful internet users can do, and for majority of interviewed boys it was a desirable skill to have. **A few boys stated that they know how to 'hack' a video game, and almost all know someone who knows how to 'hack' a profile**. On the other hand, girls are more afraid of profile hacking, and would like to know more about protecting their profiles against hacking. **All children stated that desirable internet skills included Photoshop and computer programming**. According to a 16-year-old girl:

"If we hacked that Instagram profile we could have stopped [posting of insulting pictures]."

Mobile phone skills

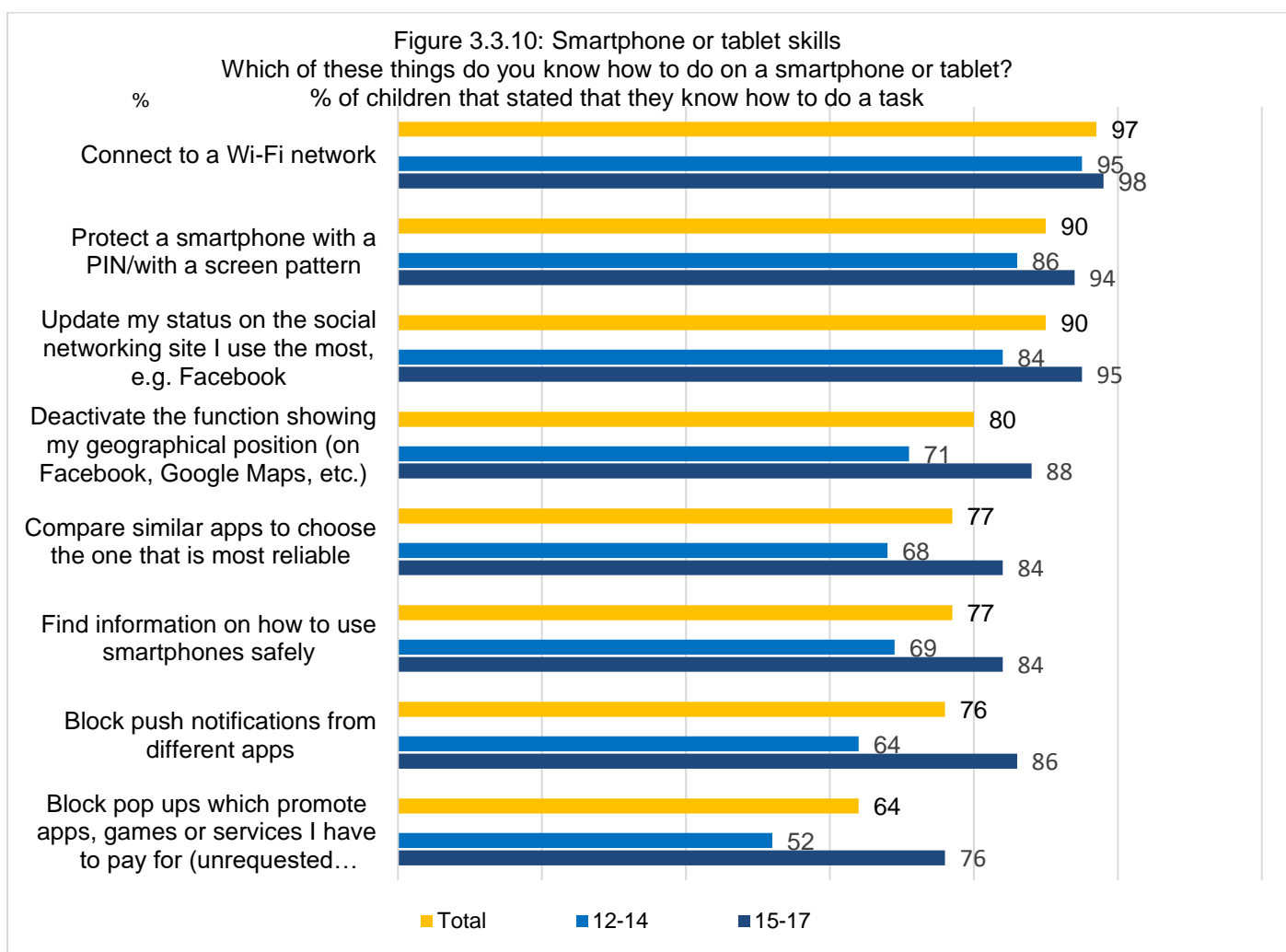
Mobile phone skills also depend on the children's age; by self-assessment parents have a higher level of online mobile skills than children aged 9–11, but a lower level than older age groups. On average, every other child aged 9–11 knows how to install apps on their mobile device (51%), while this percentage rises to 96% for older children (15–17). A somewhat smaller number of children, in all age

groups, know how to keep track of the costs of mobile apps usage: every third child aged 9–11, two out of three aged 12–14 and many more respondents in the oldest group (87%). The youngest participants of the focus groups state that they seldom use mobile phones at school, and some schools forbid the use of mobile phones in the first two educational cycles (grades 1 to 6) even during break times.



A great majority of children aged 12–17 state that they know how to connect to a Wi-Fi network (97%), how to protect their phone with a pin/password and how to update their status on a social networking site (90%). They are slightly less familiar with the deactivation of the location function (80%), comparison of apps, finding information on safe use of smartphones (77%), blocking push notifications from different apps (76%) and blocking pop-ups (64%). As with other skills, the older the pupils are the more often they state that they are familiar with these options.

As for deactivation of function showing geographical location, the children have mixed experiences: younger girls who turned on this option claim that their parents asked them to activate it so that they can always know where they are, while some older children state that they **turned off this option on purpose, exactly because they did not want their parents or others to know their whereabouts.**

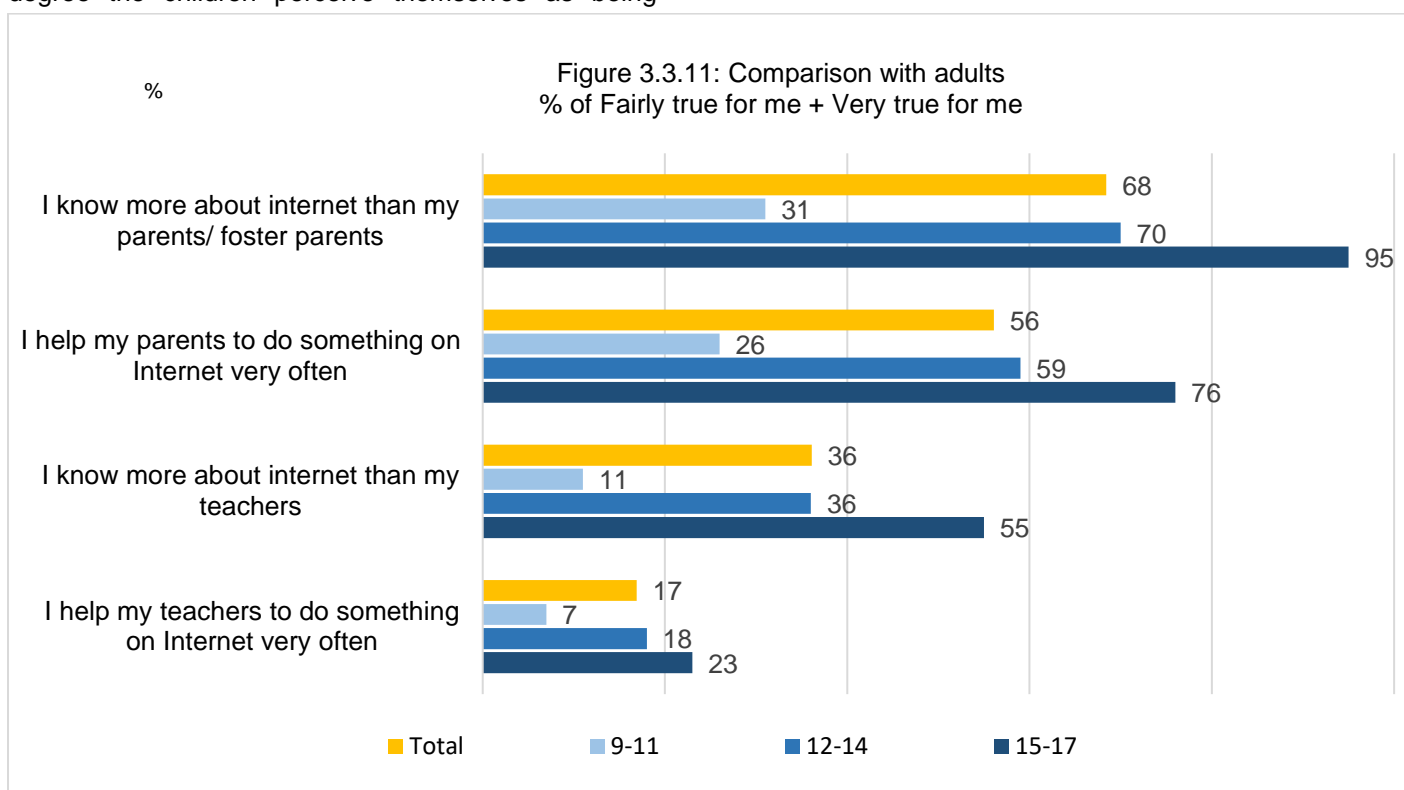


Comparison with adults

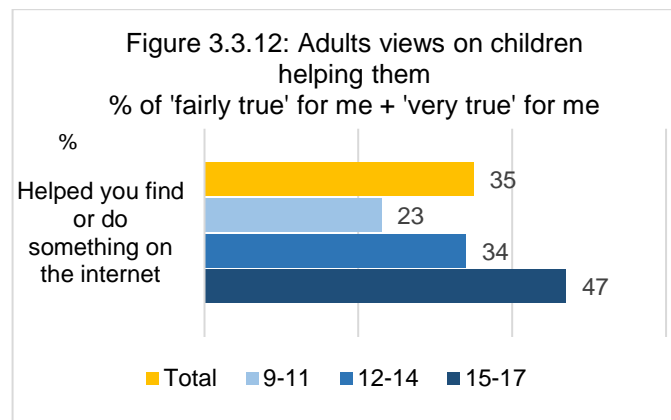
Both children and adults agree that older children are superior to adults when it comes to online skills, while younger children often need help with certain online tasks – which is closely connected to English language skills. In comparison to adults, older children are also very self-confident in assessing their own skills and knowledge required for internet use – 70% of children aged 12–14 and 95% of those aged 15–17 assess that they are more skilled than their parents. The reasons for this level of self-confidence may lie in the fact that most children actually help their parents to use the internet – 76% of the oldest and 59% of those aged 12–14. To a slightly lower degree the children perceive themselves as being

superior to their teachers in terms of internet use – slightly more than half of the oldest (55%) and a third of those aged 12–14 (36%).

On the other hand, younger children (aged 9–11) less often state that they are superior to adults (31% in comparison to their parents, 11% in comparison to teachers), and they help them less often (26% help their parents, 7% help their teachers). In conversation they stated that an obstacle to internet use is their lower level of English, and this was the main reason for them to turn for help to parents or other family members. On the other hand, older pupils claim that it was the internet use that indirectly helped them to learn English.



Both parents and teachers perceive older children as **superior** in internet use, even though parents much less often state that their children help them do something on the internet (35%). Parents also say that they help their children with the internet (a third claim that they help their children often or fairly often) – this is most often the case with younger children (half of the parents whose children are aged 9–11 help their children often or very often).

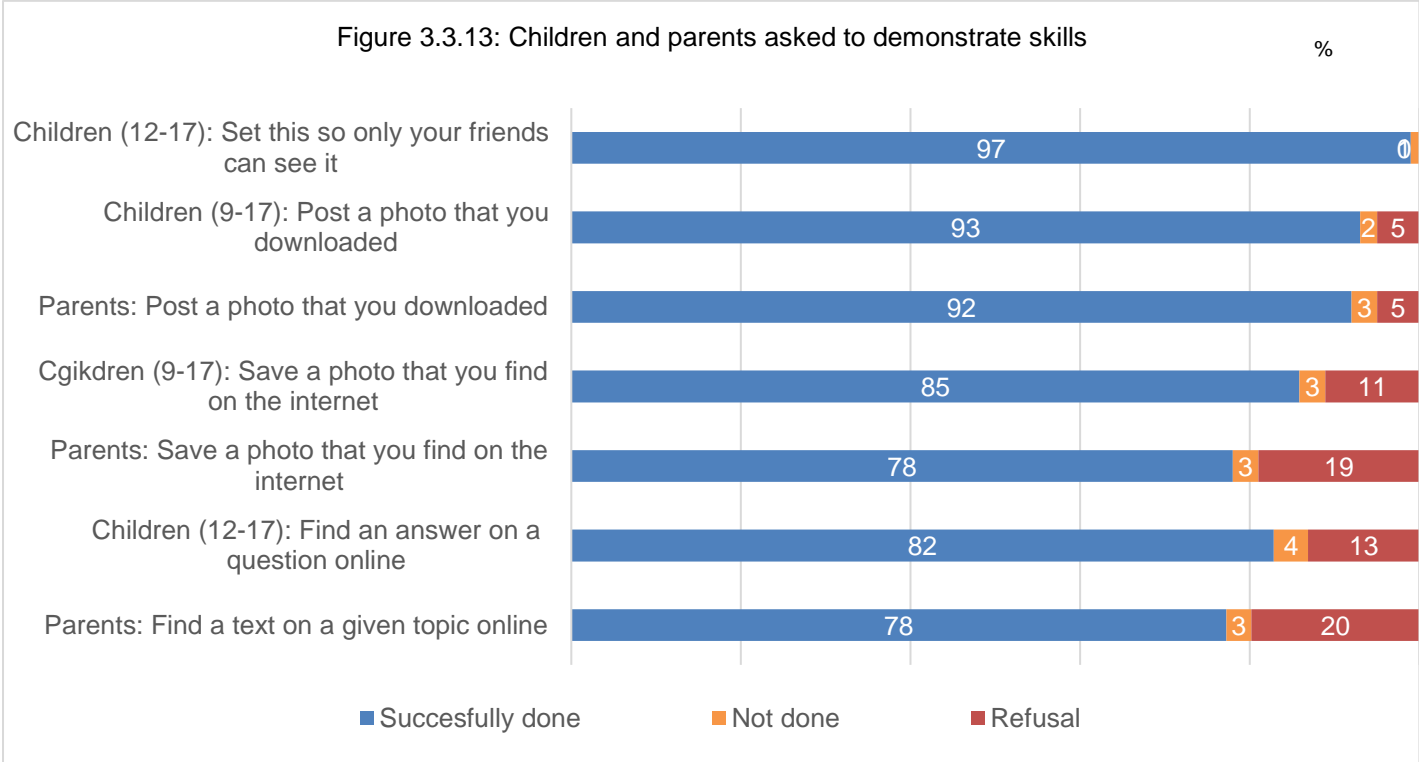


However, in focus group discussions, parents state that mainly older children (in higher grades of primary or secondary schools) are the ones to whom family members turn when they have a problem related to the internet.

How accurate are self-assessed internet skills?

Practical testing showed that self-assessment of internet skills was mostly accurate, both for children and parents. We asked respondents who stated in the survey that they were able to perform certain tasks related to internet browsing and social networking sites to demonstrate them for us. The results were affirmative, i.e., most respondents performed the tasks successfully on phones,

computers or other devices. The easiest tasks were related to posting photos on social networking sites (successfully performed by 93% of the respondents aged 9–17) and adjusting the posted content so that only their friends on that network can access it (successfully carried out by 97% of the respondents aged 12–17). Slightly worse, but still carried out successfully to a high degree, were tasks related to saving photos downloaded from the internet (85% of respondents aged 9–17) and finding an answer to a question online (successfully carried out by 82% of the respondents aged 12–17). It is interesting that there are no significant differences (in percentages) between children from different age categories who stated in the questionnaire that they were able to perform these tasks successfully. Parents show the same or slightly worse results when assessing their internet skills.



Risks

What do children think upsets them or their peers on the internet?

Children’s opinion on whether there are things on the internet that upset children of their age or bother them in some way is somewhat divided – only 37% are of the opinion that there are upsetting things on the internet, and older children share this opinion more often than younger children. Only 29% have the

opposite opinion, while a third show uncertainty about this or do not know how to answer.

Those who think that there are bothering or upsetting things on the internet mention various examples of it – 27% stated violence/fights, 19% inappropriate content for a certain age, and 13% arguments/insults/foul words, fake profiles/contacts by unknown people/harassment (11%) as well as pornographic/sexual content (11%). Girls, more often than boys, state that pornographic content is disturbing for children of

their age.

Figure 3.4.2: Do you think there are things on the internet that bother or upset people about your age?

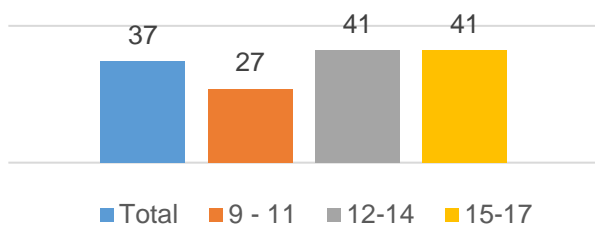
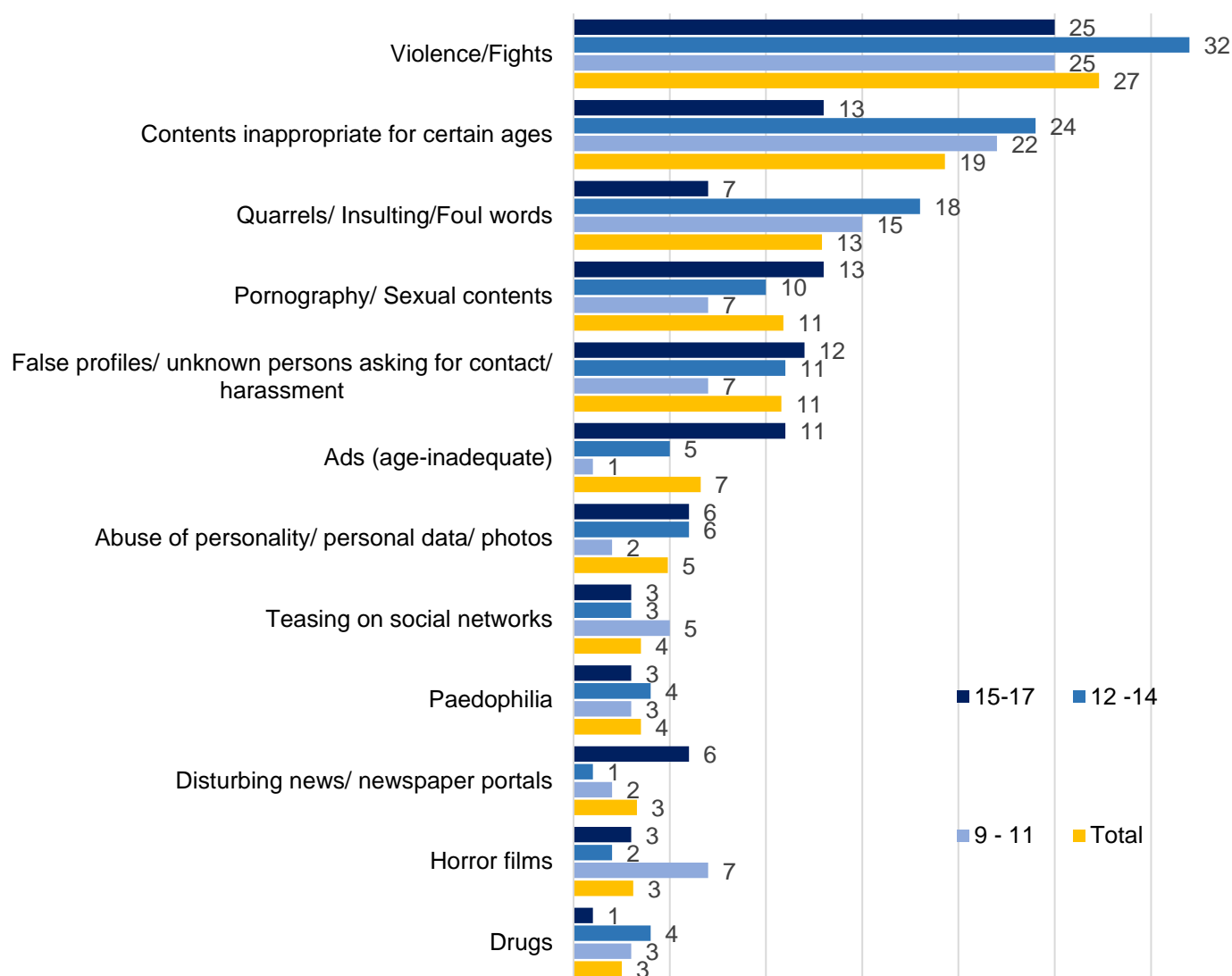


Figure 3.4.3: What things on the internet bother or upset people about your age?
(37% of children who think there are things on the internet that bother or upset people about their age)

% of the most frequent answers



Focus group discussions indicate that **social media fights are frequent** in Montenegro, and sometimes those that start on social media end up in physical fights. Our respondents state that causes for fights are most often **verbal statements – profile statuses –** and sometimes posted visual content – **photos aiming to tease or insult a certain person** (digitally changed photos are posted, showing a person in an awkward position). According to a 13-year-old girl from Podgorica,

“For example, someone posts a status and starts insulting people. As we all share friends, they all get involved and make things worse in their comments, so now you can’t quarrel with someone on Facebook because they will insult you, dare you to fight them, it’s a disaster!”

Focus group respondents also emphasised that ‘dark

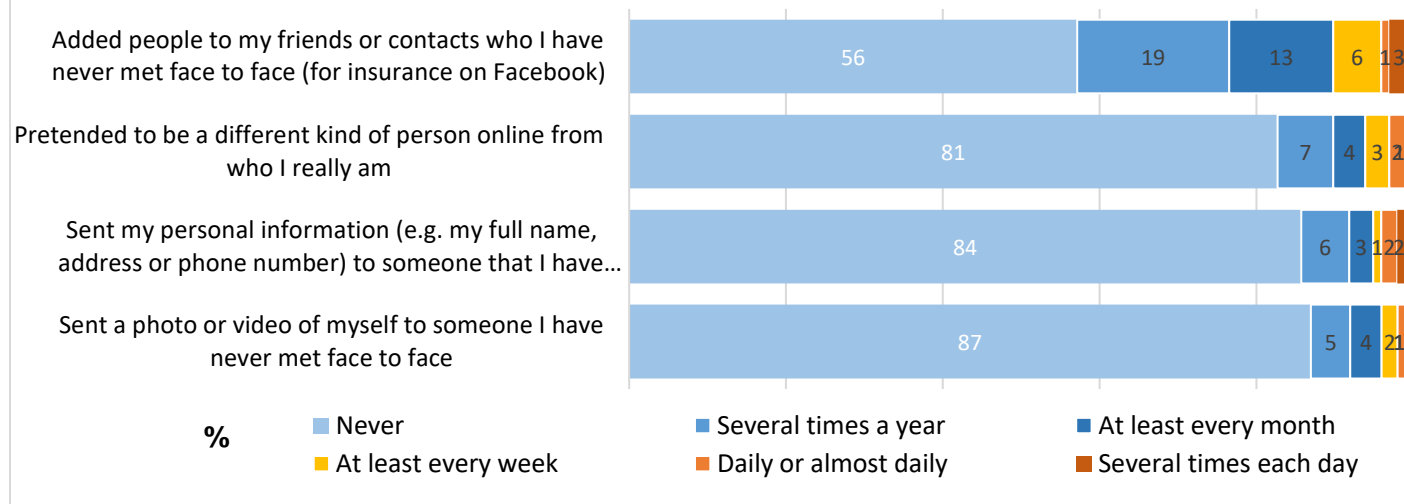
web’ websites might be particularly upsetting for children, as they contain explicit scenes of violence, access to illegal trade, etc. Although a small number of older respondents (aged 13–17) accessed these sites, many are aware that they are available.

Risky online activities

When it comes to risky online activities, the majority of the children aged 12–17 stated they had not performed it in the preceding year. The activity of **adding people to their friends or contacts whom**

they have never met face-to-face (e.g., on Facebook) is shown to be **the most frequent** of these activities (19% of children aged 12–17 have done this several times a year, 13% at least every month, 6% at least every week). However, it shouldn’t be overlooked that for every other risky activity, about 10% of children performed it at least several times in the past year.

Figure 3.4.4: In the PAST YEAR, how often you have done these things online?
Target population: Children aged 12–17 (72% of target population)



When it comes to the percentage of children who performed some kind of risky activity at least weekly in the past year, on average, **every tenth child aged 12 to 17 performed one to two of these activities.**

Figure 3.4.6: In the PAST YEAR, has anything happened online that bothered or upset you in some way?

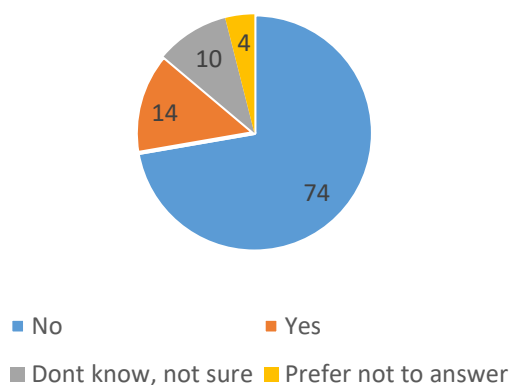
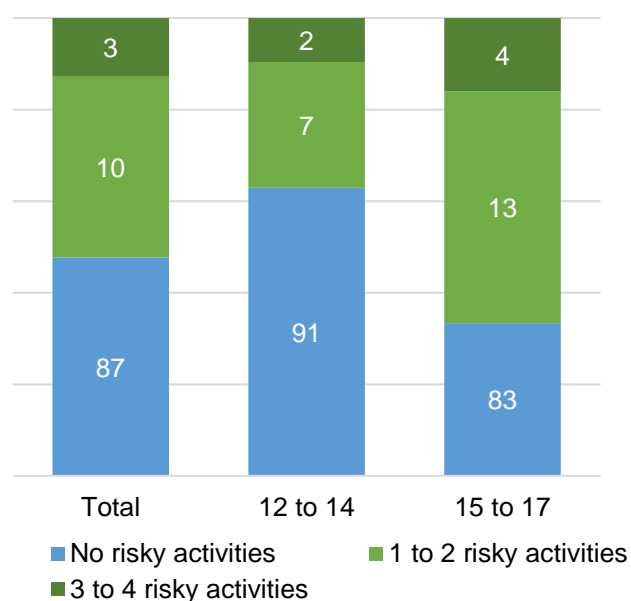


Figure 3.4.5: Percentage of children performing online risky activities at least weekly (max=4)



Discussions in focus groups revealed that **physical appearance** plays an important role in accepting or sending an invitation for friendship on a social networking site. Boys tend to search the profiles of girls on social networking sites until they find the one that they like and then start communicating with them. Consequently, girls report that they also accept friend requests from boys who they find to be attractive to them, and that they establish communication with these boys more easily.

How many children in the past year had an upsetting experience on the internet and how often did it happen?

When it comes to real experiences of this kind, **14% of the children were upset by something on the internet in the past year**, among which the lowest number relates to the youngest children (aged 9–11).

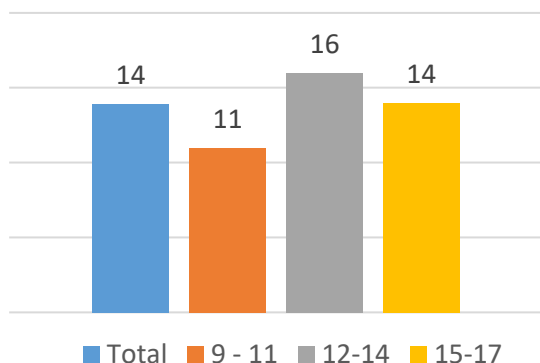
When it comes to frequency of these experiences, half of the children aged 12–17 state that they had such experiences once or twice during the previous year, while a third of them state having had such experiences several times during the preceding year.¹¹ **Regarding the total population, 7% of children aged 12–17 in Montenegro were bothered or upset by something on the internet once or twice in the past year, while 5% of them had this kind of experience several times in the past year.**

When it comes to parents' awareness about this, **12% of them state that their child was upset by something online or that something on the internet bothered them in the past year a few times**, while 5% don't know the answer to this question.

Thinking about the future, about a third of parents don't think something upsetting or bothering could happen to their child online, while somewhat more of them find it not likely to happen. If anything bothering or upsetting happened to their child, every fifth parent could not help him/her to cope. **Only 41% of parents feel very confident with their ability to help their children, stating that they could definitely help their child to cope with anything that bothers or upsets them**, while 35% feel they could help their child a fair amount.

¹¹ The question 'In the PAST YEAR how often did this happen?' refers only to children aged 12–17.

Figure 3.4.7: In the PAST YEAR, has anything happened online that bothered or upset you in some way?



Thinking about their children's ability to cope with an upsetting or bothering experience, 73% of parents think that their child would be capable of this, while 23% think their child could not cope with this or at least not very much.

How do bothering or upsetting incidents on the internet make children feel?

More than half of the children who had an upsetting or bothering experience stated that they were a bit upset (58% out of 14%), while 36% claim to have been upset to a greater extent.

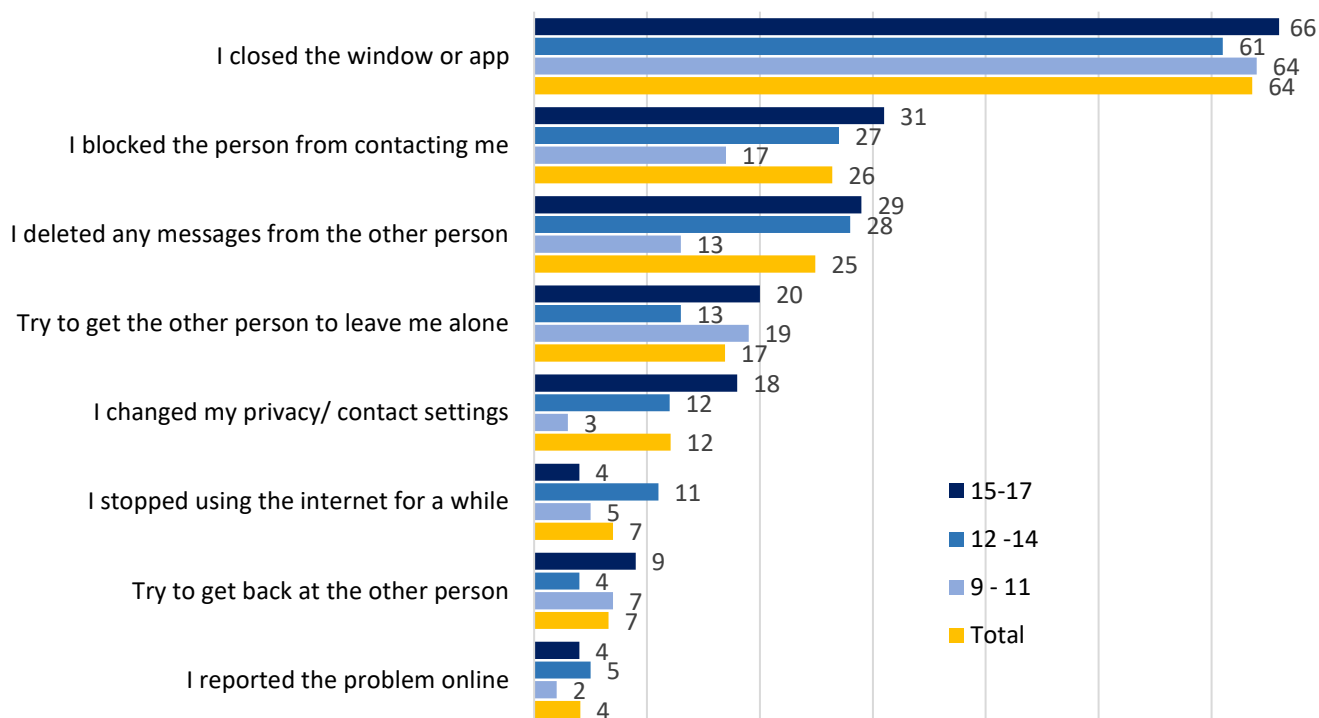
About half of the parents who stated that their child had this kind of experience think that their child was somewhat upset about it, about 30% said their child was at least rather upset, while every fifth parent thinks this kind of event was a bit upsetting for their child.

What do most children do after something on the internet upsets them?

The activity that children who **most often** do when something on the internet bothers or upsets them is **closing the window or application that contained upsetting scenes (68% out of 14% of the children were upset by something on the internet in the past year)**, followed by blocking a person (26% out of 14%) or deleting messages from the other person (25% out of 14%). Other strategies for dealing with these experiences are much less used (figure 3.4.8). **The least number of them state that they reported the problem online**, which is in accordance with the qualitative part of the research where children state that they rarely turn to IT professionals in the case of upsetting situations.

Figure 3.4.8: The last time something happened online that bothered or upset you in some way, did you do any of these things afterwards? (14% of children who said something happened online that bothered or upset them in some way)

% of the most frequent answers



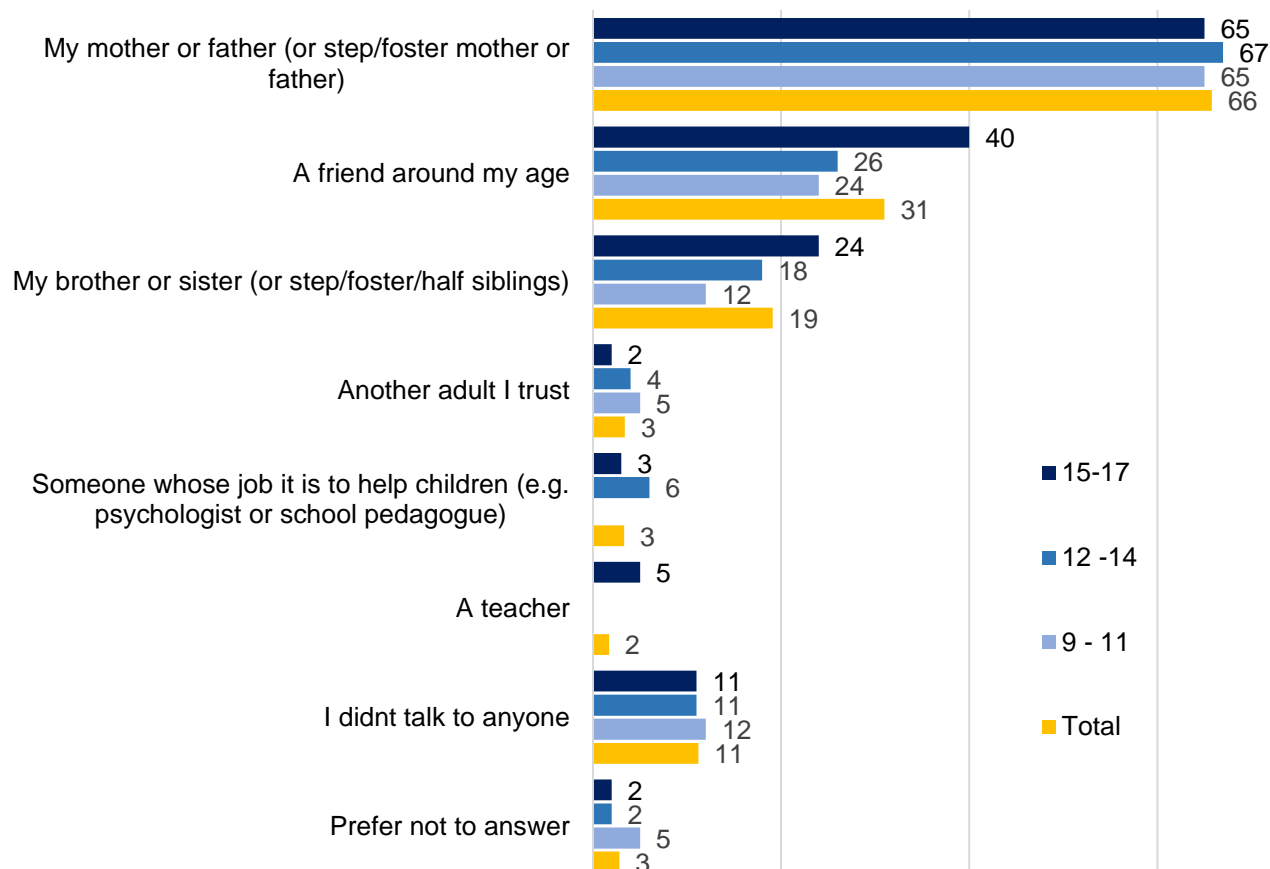
Who do the children mostly talk to when they are upset by something on the internet?

Parents are the safe zone for children who had a negative experience on the internet – **68% who got**

upset by something on the internet talked with their parents about it. The children also point out that they talk to their friends about it, while almost no one talked about this with their teachers or someone whose job it is to help children (e.g., school psychologist or school pedagogue).

Figure 3.4.9 : The last time something happened online that bothered or upset you, did you talk to anyone of these people about it? (14% of children who said something happened online that bothered or upset them in some way)

% of the most frequent answers



About every tenth child who experienced something upsetting or bothering on the internet did not share his/her problem with anyone. The impression we got in focus group discussions is that **boys rarely talk to parents about their negative internet experiences and try to solve their problems independently or with the help of their friends.** We also had examples of boys not telling their parents about the problems because of threats by the bully involved.

In the focus groups, the children also stress that they rarely seek help from their teachers. A small number of girls turned to their teachers – girls whose internet profile had been hacked turned to teachers in order to get help in establishing better communication with their friends, and were satisfied with the help they received, while boys turn to teachers much less frequently.

Although focus group findings show that the children mainly share their negative experiences with friends and less often with family members, **discussions with the children also gave us the impression that assessment of the seriousness of a certain situation plays a role in deciding who to turn to. In incidents such as profile hacking or sexual messages, the girls most often turned to their parents, siblings or close friends.**

Almost a quarter of the parents state that their children very rarely or never talk to them about the upsetting experiences, while 8% state that their children do this very often. To most of them the children talk about the upsetting experiences sometimes (45% of parents state this).

When it comes to advice about how children should act online, less than 25% of the parents state they

were asked for this kind of advice often or very often, while 50% state they were never or very rarely asked for this kind of advice and a bit more than a quarter of the parents state they were asked for this kind of advice sometimes during the past year.

Treating children in a nasty or hurtful way

During 2015, 12% of children in Montenegro have been treated in a nasty or hurtful way at least once. And while 3% of parents state their children have been treated in a hurtful or insulting way by someone in the past year, every tenth parent doesn't know if this happened or not.

As the children state, this has happened most frequently face-to-face (in about half of the cases). The next most common way of treating someone badly is via social networking sites (in about a third of cases). Other ways of treating someone in a

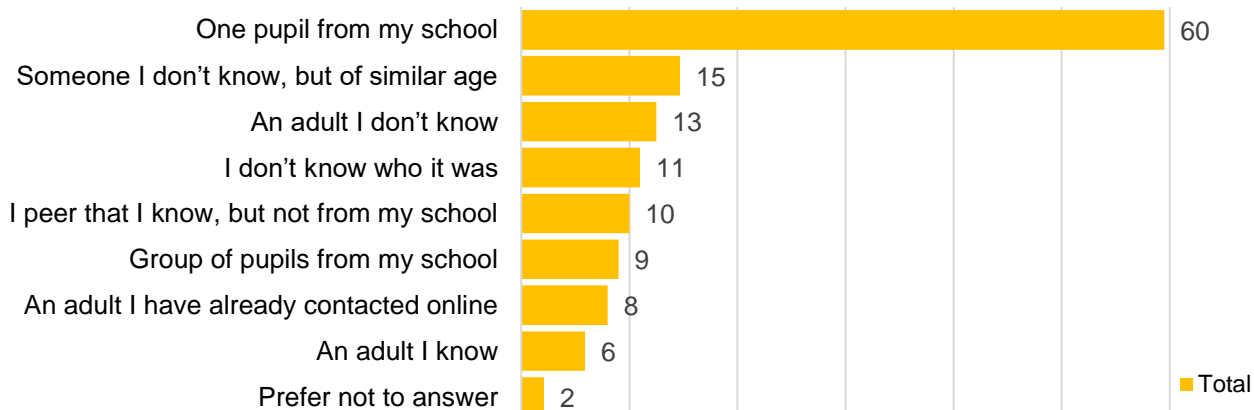
hurtful or nasty way (through text messages sent on mobile phones, in a video game, etc.) are mentioned less frequently.

To most of the children aged 12–17, this happened once or twice in the past year, while very few of them experienced this almost each month as well as almost daily.¹²

Treating children in a hurtful or rude way is usually the result of peer violence – 69% who were treated like this state it was done by another peer from school, one pupil or a group of pupils, while 10% of them were treated this way by a peer but not from the same school. Adults are mentioned as someone who treated children this way in 21% of cases. Most parents also state this was done by their child's peers, while every fifth parent said it was done by an adult their child didn't know. Most parents (78%) don't know what the reason for this kind of treatment was.

Figure 3.4.10: Who treated you in a hurtful or nasty way online? (Children who were treated in a hurtful or nasty way at least once -12% of target population)

Multiple answers- % of the most frequent answers



When asked whether they treated anyone in a nasty or hurtful way in the past year, **only 4% of children said they had done this, and only 1% of parents stated their child had treated someone this way.** Children say that this mostly happened face-to-face, on social networking sites and in online games. According to both parents and children, this was also mainly aimed at peers.

Most of the children who treated someone in a

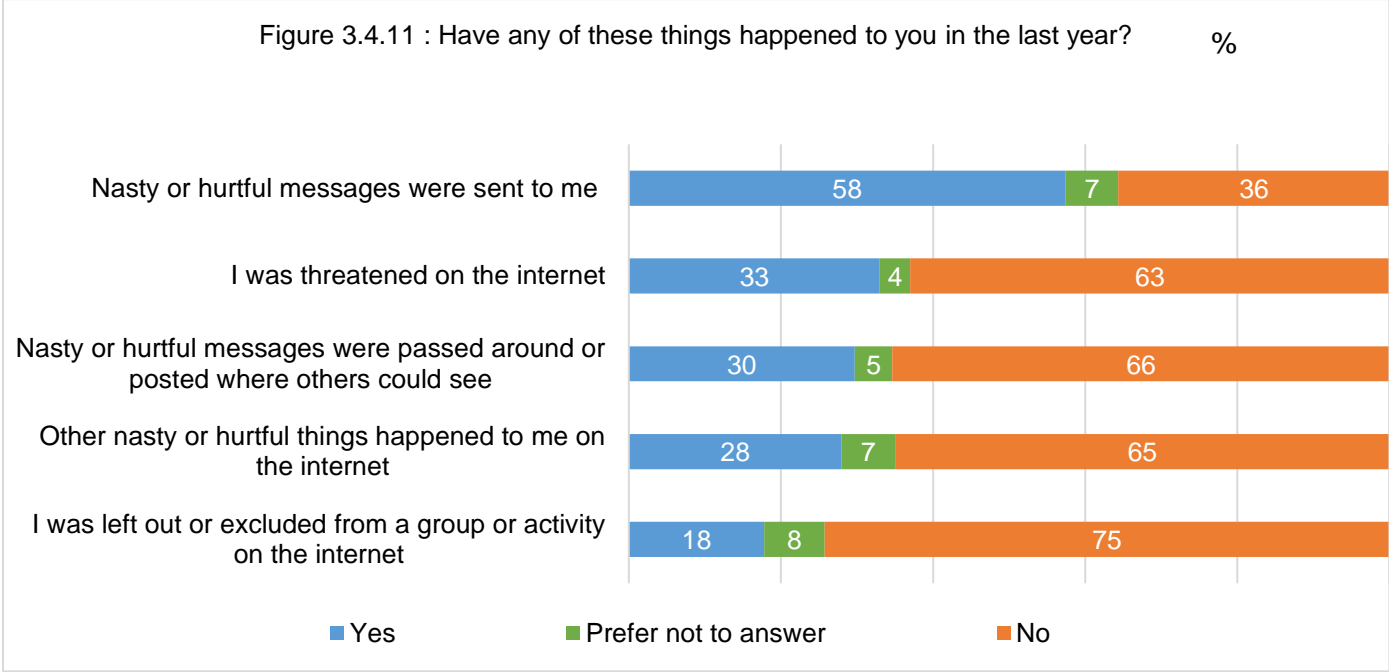
hurtful or nasty way state that they did not start the conflict first, but were **provoked** to do so, while 77% of parents didn't know what the reason for this kind of behaviour was. Even if children filled this part of the questionnaire in private, the tendency to give socially desirable answers should be taken into account, aimed at presenting themselves in the most positive way.

Getting nasty or hurtful messages is something that

¹² The question 'In the PAST YEAR how often did this happen?' refers only to children aged 12–17.

happened to children most. It happened to more than half of those who reported being treated in a hurtful or nasty way – 58% – while the rarest experience of this type is omission or expulsion from a group or some activity online – 18%. Passing around nasty or hurtful

messages or posting them so that others can see them happened to 30% of children who have been treated in a nasty or hurtful way, and a somewhat higher percentage have experienced a threat over the internet (33%).



Most of those who were threatened on the internet were children aged 9–11. Focus group discussions also revealed that receiving disturbing messages with threatening content is somewhat common among younger children (aged 9–12), and that these messages are usually sent via Viber. In these messages children are forced to forward the received message to a certain number of people, and the messages explicitly state what will happen to them if they do not do so.

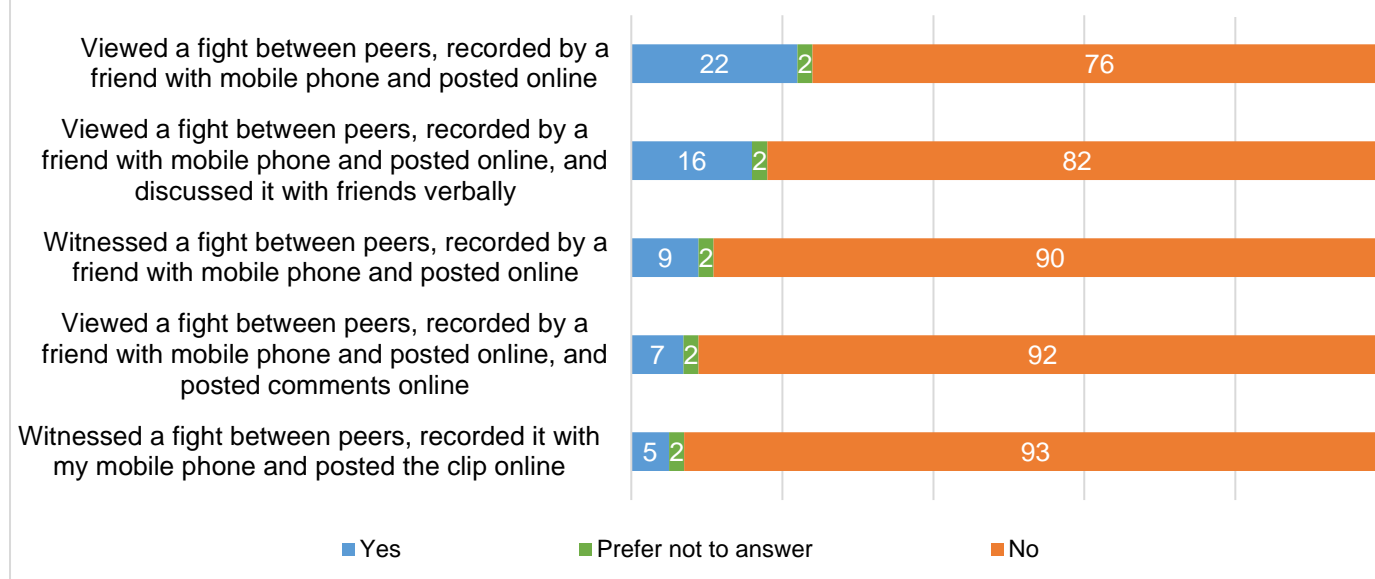
Fights between peers and the internet

When it comes to fights between peers, about **5% of children stated that they had witnessed a fight between peers, recorded it with a mobile phone and posted the clip online during the past year.** These were mostly older children (12–17), and mainly

boys. A slightly larger number witnessed a fight that was later posted online but was recorded by a friend (9%). **On the other hand, significantly more children have seen a video of a fight that had already been posted and which was recorded and uploaded by some of their friends (22%),** while 16% of them stated that, besides seeing these videos on the internet, they also discussed them with their friends, and 7% of them posted comments on the internet related to the fight.

There are more boys than girls among those who watched a fight posted by some of their friends, and more older (15- to 17-year-olds) than younger children. Furthermore, the fights are most often discussed with friends or commented on the internet by older children, and mainly by boys.

Figure 3.4.12: Have you been in the following situation over the past 12 months? %



The focus groups showed that **social networks were used to organise fights**, very often mass fights, as well as to **share clips of these fights**. It is also revealed that content like this attracts the attention of all children, and that comments contain insults for the 'loser' or praise for the 'winner'.

Experience with sexual content on the internet

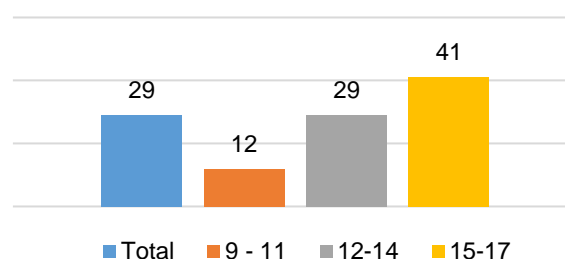
Sexual images on the internet

A total of 29% of the children have seen images on the internet that were obviously sexual at least once in the past year. Most of them were children aged 15–17.

These images have been seen most frequently within a film, followed by social networking sites, television and on some websites – each one of the mentioned ways was mentioned by 50% of the children. Less frequently they mention pop-ups and commercials (30%), while every tenth child who has seen sexual images came into contact with them in video games or by visiting adult/X-rated sites.

Getting in contact with sexual content on the internet varies substantially depending on the age of the children.

Figure 3.4.13: In the PAST YEAR, have you seen any images on the internet that are obviously sexual at least once ? %
YES



When it comes to children's feelings about this, not every child finds this kind of content upsetting. About **two-thirds of children who saw this kind of content in the past year were not upset at all or were a little upset by seeing it, while 12% were very or fairly upset by it.**

Most of those who stated they were not upset at all were found among the oldest ones (15–17). Focus group discussions revealed that boys and girls have a different emotional perception of the experience of this kind. Boys very often state that they watch sexual content often or share it with friends, while girls are more reserved on this question.

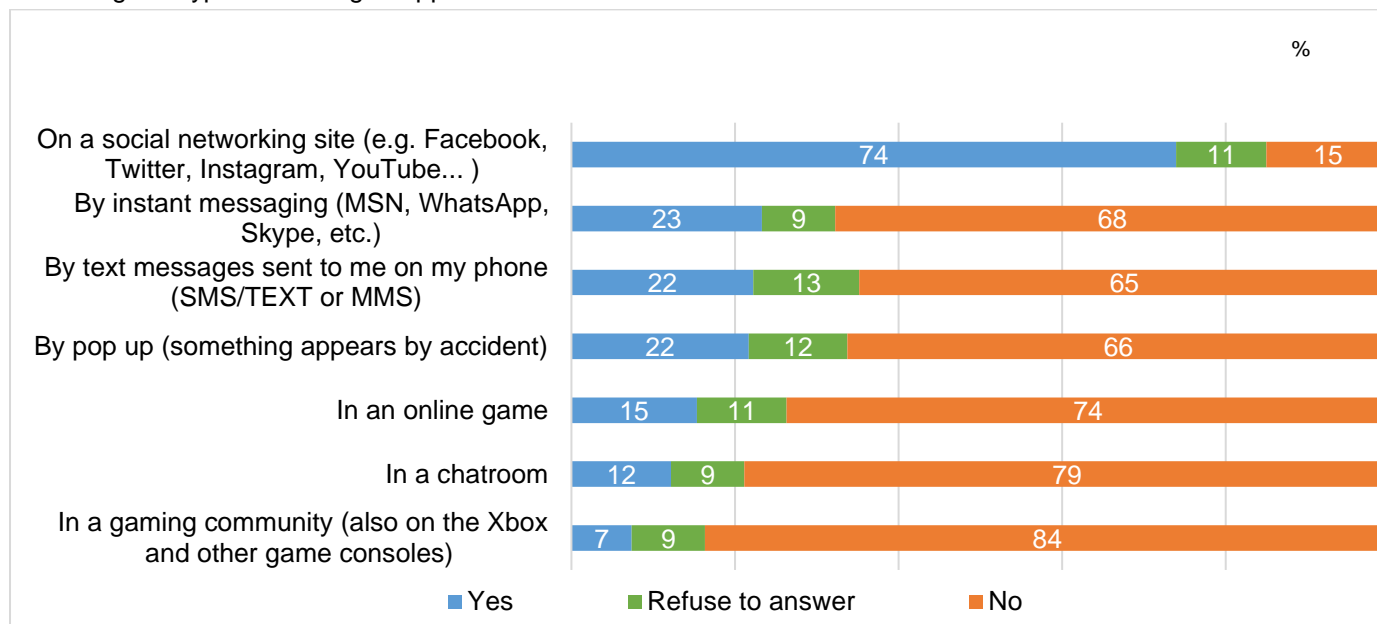
Sexual messages

When it comes to sexual messages, **7% of children have received them in the past year at least once,**

while **only 2% of children said they had sent or posted sexual messages in the past year at least once.**

Receiving this type of message happened in most

cases **on social networking sites (74% received sexual messages).** Other ways of receiving this kind of message, such as by IM, by text messaging or by pop-ups, were mentioned much less frequently.



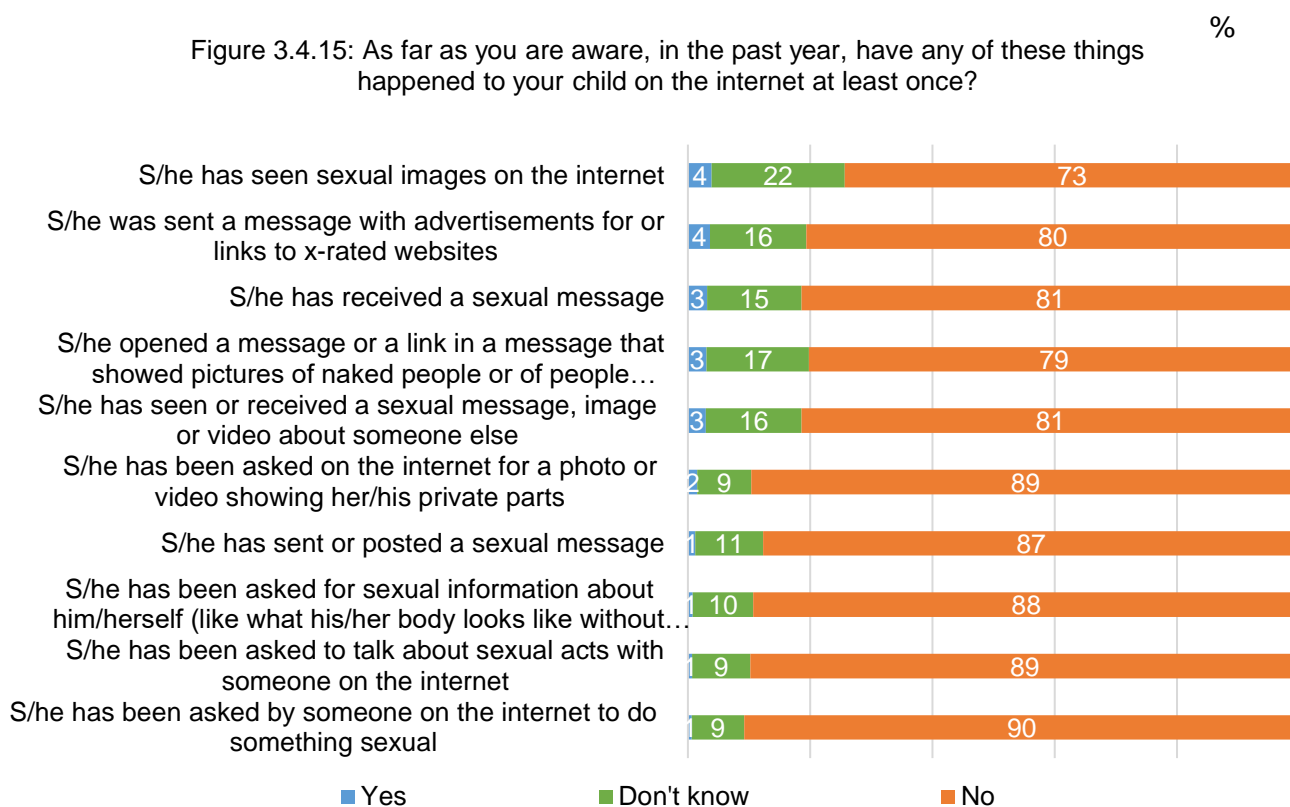
Receiving messages with sexual content is more upsetting for children than seeing sexual images – 25% of those who have received sexual messages in the past year stated they were at least fairly upset. About half of them said they were not upset at all and, as in the case of seeing sexual images, these were mostly older children. The rest of those who received sexual messages state they were a little bit upset by this.

Also, **these messages are more upsetting for girls than for boys** – among the children who were at least

fairly upset are significantly more girls than boys (48% of girls and 12 % of boys).

For most of the things on the internet that include something sexual (see Figure 3.4.15), the majority of parents in Montenegro state that these did not happen to their children in the past year. However, parents are not completely informed about these things – for about half of the things mentioned above, about every tenth parent doesn't know if it happened or not, and they are the least informed about their children's experience of seeing sexual images on the internet – 22% of them stated they didn't know if it happened or not.

Figure 3.4.15: As far as you are aware, in the past year, have any of these things happened to your child on the internet at least once?



Contact with strangers

A total of 27% of the children reported having contact online with someone they hadn't previously met in person. Among them are more boys than girls, and more older than younger children – getting into contact with people children haven't met in person gets more common with ageing.

Figure 3.4.16: Have you ever had contact on the internet with someone you have not met face to face before? % YES

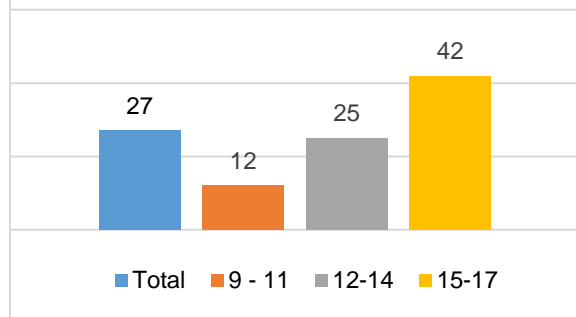
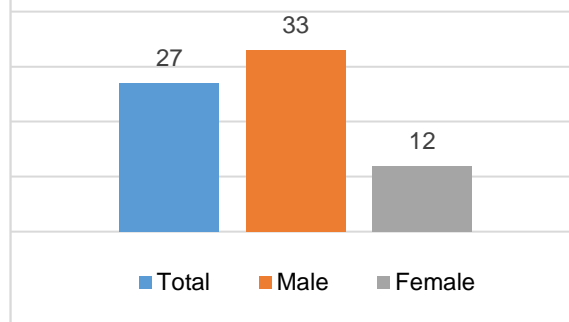


Figure 3.4.17: Have you ever had contact on the internet with someone you have not met face to face before? % YES



It seems that parents are not fully aware of children's activities of contacting people on the internet they have never met face-to-face, since, unlike children, only 13% of them said their child had contact with someone unknown on the internet, while 19% of parents didn't know if this had happened or weren't sure about it.

When it comes to meeting someone face-to-face who children first come to know on the internet, 13% of them had this experience. Among those are more boys than girls, and this activity increases with ageing.

Figure 3.4.18: In the PAST YEAR, have you at least once met anyone face-to-face that you first got to know on the internet? % YES

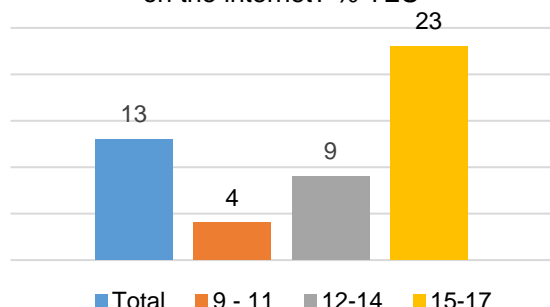
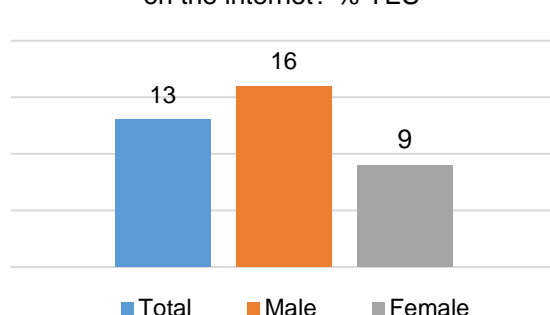


Figure 3.4.19: In the PAST YEAR, have you at least once met anyone face-to-face that you first got to know on the internet? % YES



When it comes to meeting someone face-to-face that children first got to know on the internet, it **seems that parents are not fully aware of this activity since, unlike the children**, only 6% of them said their child had met someone unknown face-to-face, and 12% of parents didn't know if this happened or weren't sure about it.

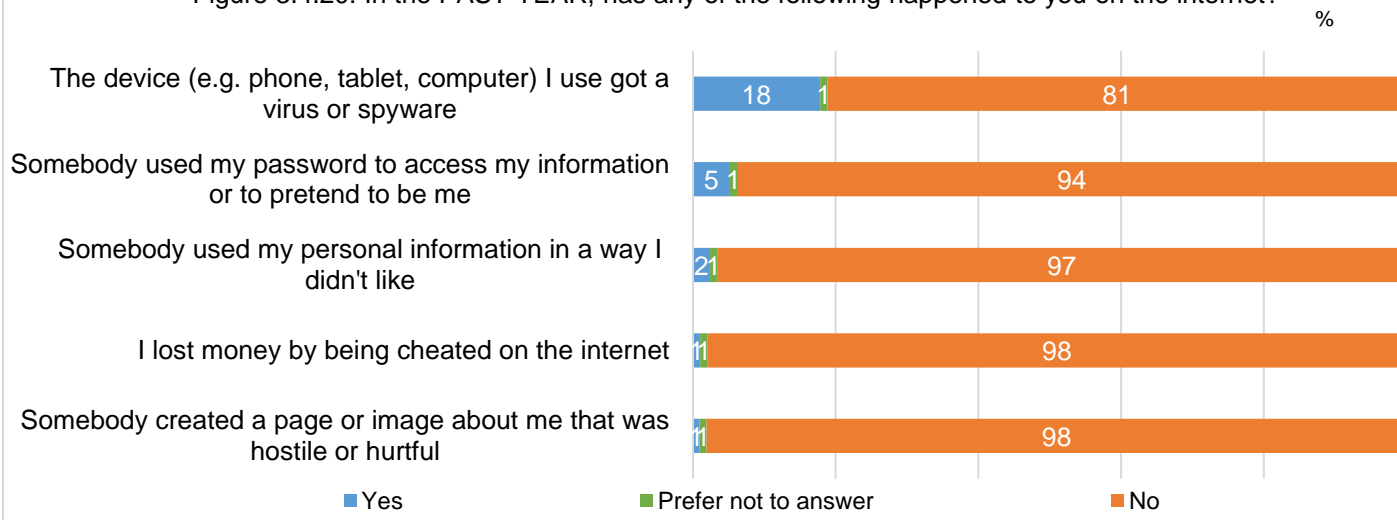
When meeting someone face-to-face that they first got to know on the internet, most of the children were **not upset at all (69%) or were a little bit upset (17%)**, while **6% of them stated they were fairly upset** and the last time they were bothered by meeting someone in this way, the person they met was usually someone about their age – in 66% of cases (23% said that the person they met was younger than them, and 11% said the person they met was a teenager or older than them).

Other bad experiences on the internet

Vary rarely have children experienced losing money by being cheated on the internet as well as creating a page or image of them that was hostile or hurtful for someone else – only 1% of children have experienced each of these things in the past year. Also, the experience of using their personal information in a way they didn't like by someone else is not something that happened to many children during the past year (2%). More often children have been in a situation when **somebody used their password to access their information or to pretend to be them (5%), and mostly older children**.

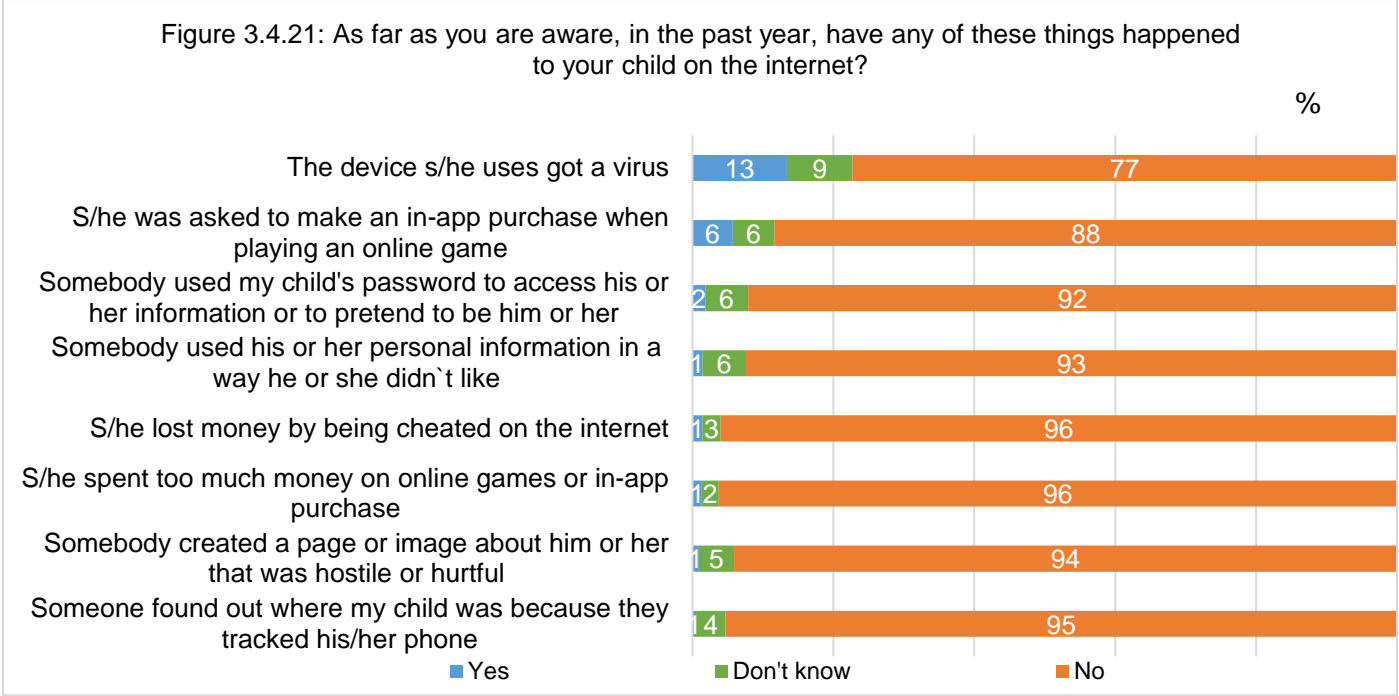
On the other hand, a significantly higher percentage of them said they had been in a situation when **the device they used had got a virus or spyware (18%)**. This had also been happening more often to older children than to younger ones. Focus groups revealed that commercials and pop-ups are perceived as the most common transferors of viruses.

Figure 3.4.20: In the PAST YEAR, has any of the following happened to you on the internet? %



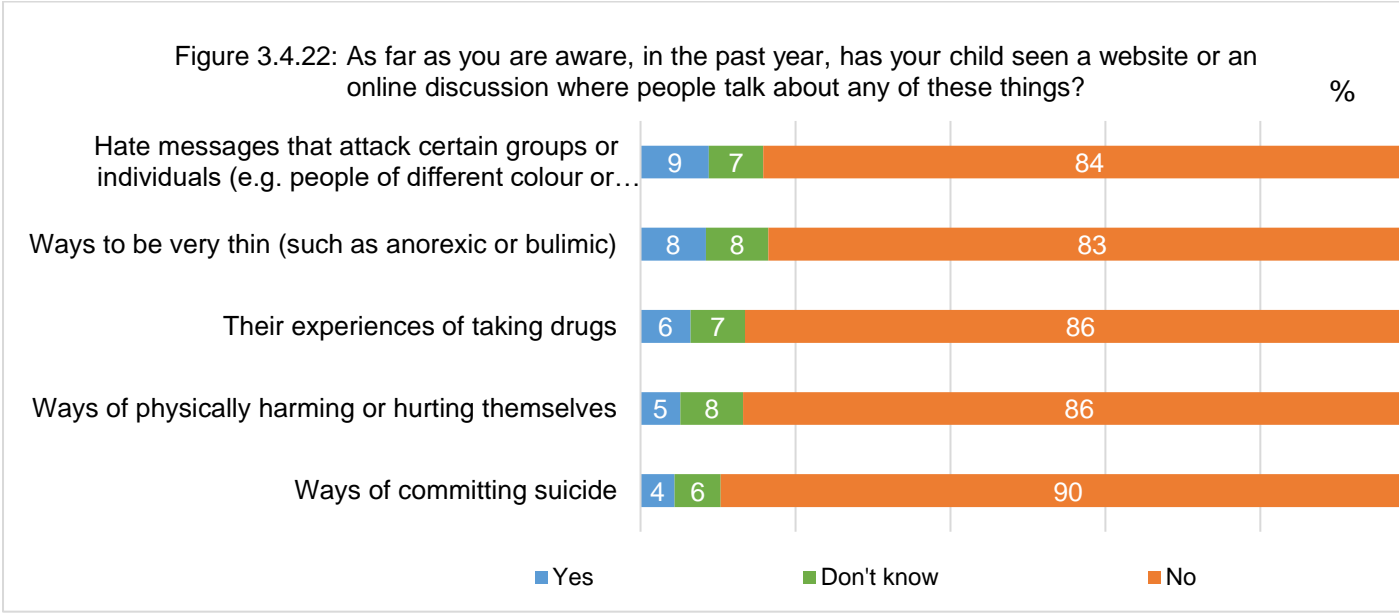
When it comes to parents' awareness of the things on the internet that could have negative consequences for children (see Figure 3.4.21), the majority of parents state these did not happen to their children in the past

year. What stands out from the other things is that the device that the children used got a virus, which is most usually mentioned by the children as well.



When it comes to parents' perception of their children's exposure to dangerous content online in terms of information on ways of harming themselves or hate speech, the majority claim their children haven't seen anything like that online, but a small number know of their child seeing hate messages (9%), anorexia

advice (8%), drug-related information (6%), ways of physically harming (5%) themselves and even suicide (4%). Parents are certain in their answers – less than 10% don't know if their children have been exposed to these contents.



Profile hacking as one of the negative things that could happen on the internet was often stated by respondents in focus groups, and in conversation with them we got the impression that this incident was

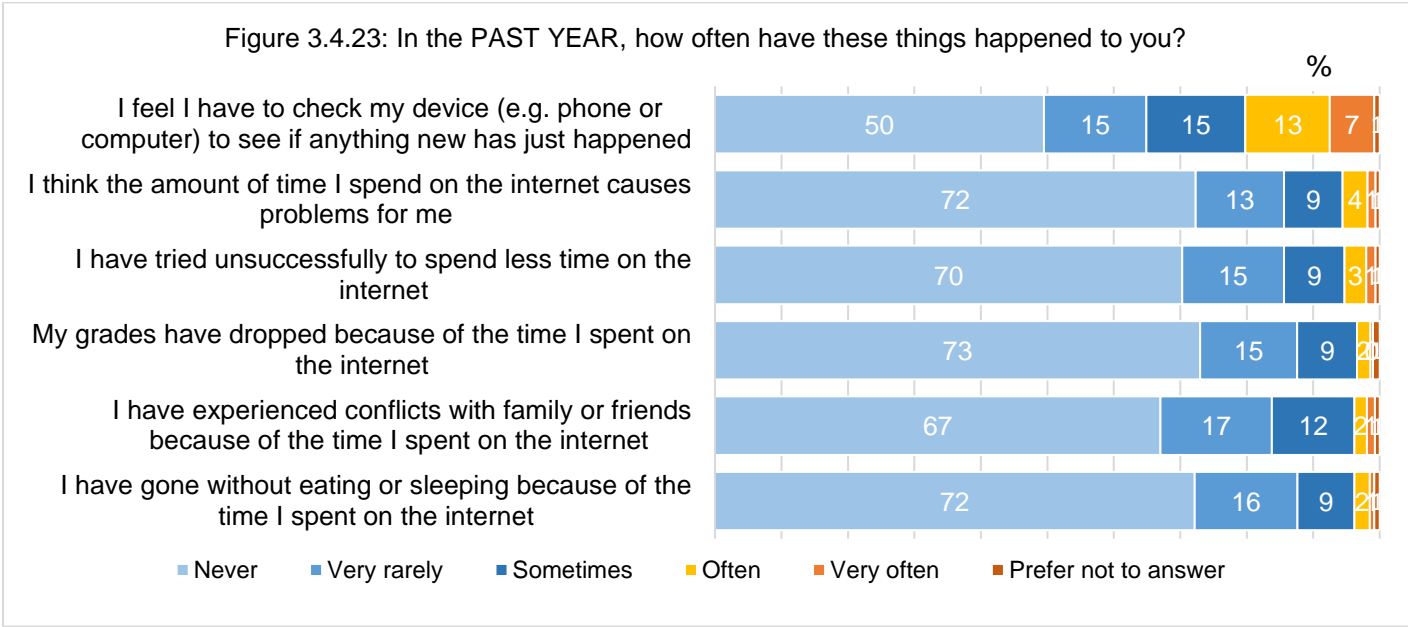
much more present among older children (aged 12–17) than among younger children (aged 9–11). From focus group discussions we also got the impression that hacking a profile is something that is happening

more often to girls than to boys. This is further supported by the finding from the quantitative part of the research previously mentioned, that the skill of hacking a profile is much more appealing to boys than to girls, who are afraid of it and would like to know more about how to protect their profiles from being hacked.

Excessive internet use

It seems that for the majority of children in Montenegro, the time spent on the internet has no negative effects, in terms of their relationships with family and friends, eating habits, sleeping

patterns or school grades – between 80% and 90% state that the time spent on the internet had never made them quarrel with family members or friends, made them eat or sleep less or affected their school grades. Also, most of them state that time spent on the internet does not create any problems for them. However, between 9% and 15% said the things mentioned above happen to them at least sometimes. On the other hand, **the urge to check their internet devices constantly in order to see news** is more widespread – unlike other mentioned points, only 50% state that they have never experienced this urge, **13% state that they have this feeling often, while 7% state that this happens very often.**



On an average of 6 indicators of excessive internet use children assess themselves very low, with all grades less than 2 (never to very often). The oldest

children (15–17) give slightly higher grades than the others, but still under 2.

Table 3.4.23a: Children: Average for 6 indicators of excessive internet use (Scale: 1=never to 5=very often)

Gender			Age			SES			Region			Type of settlement	
Total	Male	Female	9–11	12–14	15–17	Low	Medium	High	North	Central	South	Urban	Rural
1.6	1.6	1.5	1.3	1.6	1.8	1.5	1.6	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.7	1.6	1.6

Vulnerabilities and protective (enabling) factors

Children's wellbeing

A significant majority of children in Montenegro have a positive attitude towards their current life.

On an imaginary scale from 1 to 10, most children (85%) evaluated their life with a very positive grade – 12% rated it with grade 7, and grade 8 was rated by 22%; a smaller percentage (17%) rated it grade 9, whereas a significant majority of children believe that they have the best possible life at the moment, i.e., it was rated 10 by 41%.

The children stated their satisfaction with their homes, as well as their environment. Almost all (97%) stated that they more or less easily manage to find a place to learn within their homes, and even 86% stated that finding such a place is extremely easy for them. As many as 94% stated that they feel safe in their neighbourhood, and 88% consider that the people in their environment can be trusted. Such a positive attitude is evenly presented among the children, regardless of their sex, age and SES.

Material and other support provided by parents

As for material and other support provided by the parents, it is evident that it varies subject to the socio-demographic groups to which the children belong.

When it comes to **buying new clothes**, the children in Montenegro are somewhat divided – 47% stated that they receive new clothes once a few months, 43% of them stated that this happens once a few weeks, whereas shopping that is not that common is also stated more rarely. The group of children that receive new clothes within a period of a few months includes more children aged 9–11, living in the north of Montenegro; children with a high SES receive new clothes once a few weeks.

Similar results were also obtained in **terms of toys and games purchases** – 28% of the children allege rare occasions in receiving such presents, and mostly include children aged 15–17, from a low SES. Nevertheless, when interpreting this result, bear in mind that children of this age group do not find toys

and games interesting. Furthermore, 18% stated that they receive these presents once or twice a year and children from the north part of Montenegro are highly prominent in this group. Almost a third (29%) receive such presents once a few months, as is the case with the purchase of new clothes, and this statement is more frequent with children who belong to the age range 9–11 and children of higher SES coming from the south part of Montenegro. Finally, 17% of them stated that they receive such presents once a few weeks – and this group mostly includes the youngest children of a high SES coming from the central part of Montenegro.

A significant majority of the children **(62%) get pocket money on a daily basis**; this group more frequently includes children from the north part of Montenegro. One-fifth of the children (21%) receive pocket money several times a week, 9% once a week, whereas a small percentage of children state that they get pocket money more rarely. It is certainly important that not only the frequency but also the amount of pocket money is established, to get a more complete picture on this issue.

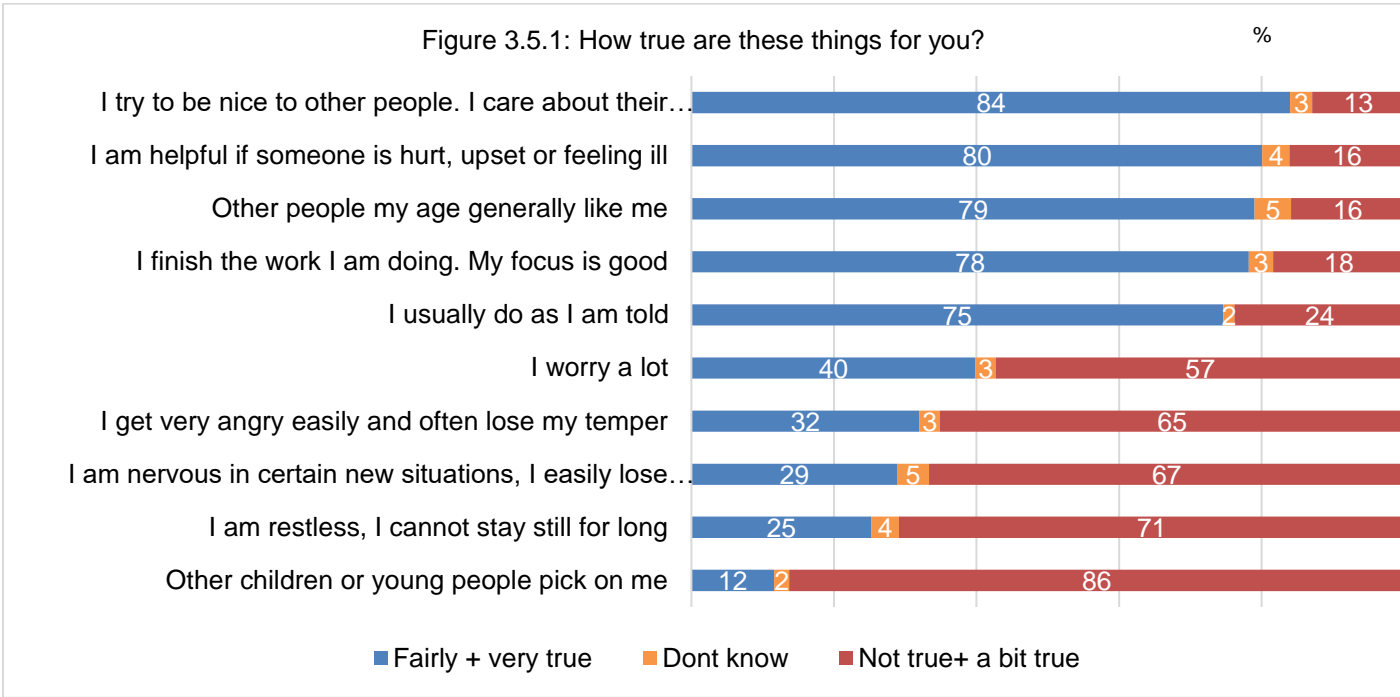
Going on holiday also varies, depending on the socio-demographic characteristics of the children. The highest percentage (58%) stated that they go on holiday once or twice a year, and a significantly smaller percentage of children (19%) do this more frequently; this group includes more girls than boys, children of higher SES and children living in the central part of Montenegro. An even smaller percentage of children state that they go on holiday once in a few years (12%), and 8% children that they almost never go on holiday; this group commonly includes children of a low SES who come from the south part of Montenegro.

Psychological vulnerability

Children in Montenegro try to present themselves in the best possible manner. Although their answers were provided anonymously, the social desirability of their answers and the children's care about personal answers should also be taken into account. In the same token, the children evaluated themselves very positively – 84% stated that they took care of others and their feelings, 80% try to help others if needed, 79% believe that their peers like them and 86% believe that their peers do not hold a grudge against them. Such opinions are equally presented among all

children, regardless of their socio-demographic characteristics. Self-evaluation of successful achievement of tasks and a focus on tasks (78%) and obedience (75%) were also highly represented. In comparison with the average, children of low SES and coming from the north part of Montenegro commonly

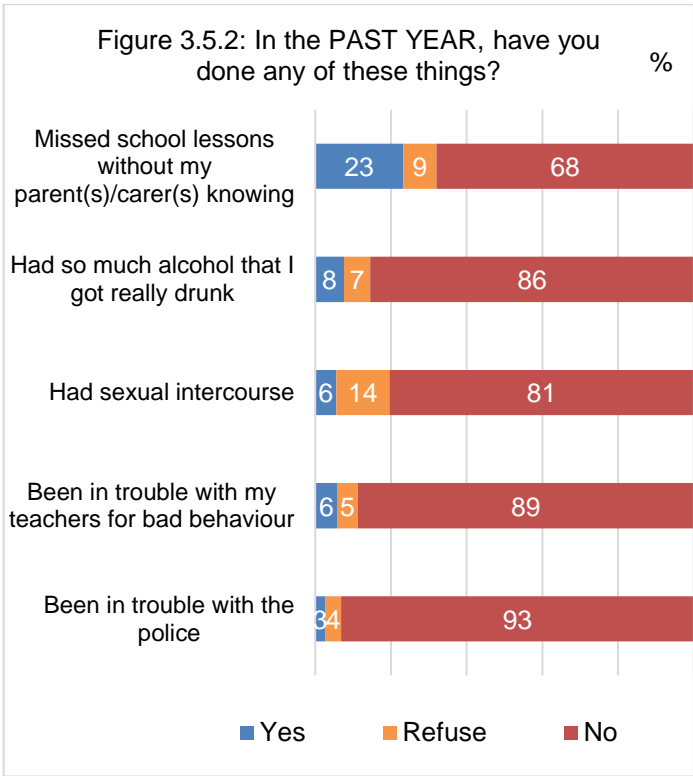
evaluated themselves as obedient – a possible consequence of dominant traditionalism and patriarchal relationships in such families. One-third to one-fourth of the children reported certain indicators of neuroticism (worries, neuroses and slight anxiety).



Children also showed self-confidence in comparison with others. Almost all (91%) stated that they have never been offended by other children; 83% consider that other children are not in a better position compared to themselves. At the same time, only 10% believe that other people think that they are smarter than they are; even fewer children – 7% – think that other people believe that they are better than they are. Such an opinion is slightly more present with children who come from the south part of Montenegro.

Risky behaviour of children

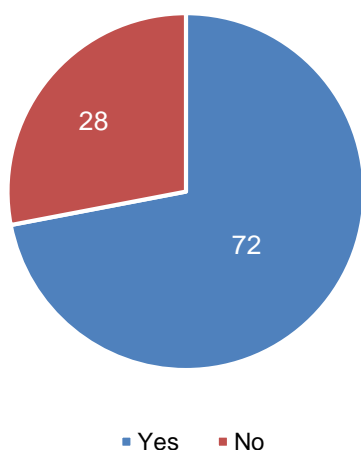
Children rarely report being prone to risky behaviour over a period of a few years. The only risk that was more frequently reported (23% of children) is skipping class without their parents' knowledge, which is the most frequent behaviour in children aged 15–17.



Digital environment

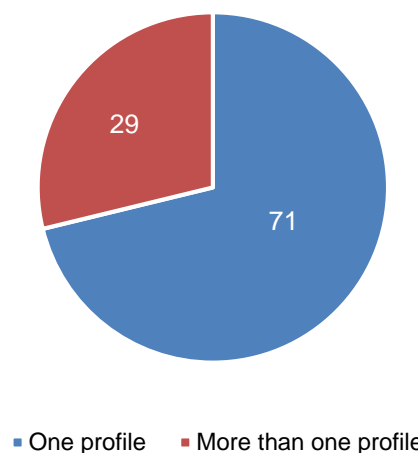
In terms of the children's digital environment, it seems that children in Montenegro are very committed. More than two-thirds (72%) own their own profile on social networking sites or gaming websites. A significant majority (71%) have profiles on only one social networking site, whereas children who have a social networking profile more often include those aged 15–17. Children who do not have their own social profiles (28%) more often than average include

Figure 3.5.3: Do you have your own profile on a social networking or social media or gaming site that you currently use?



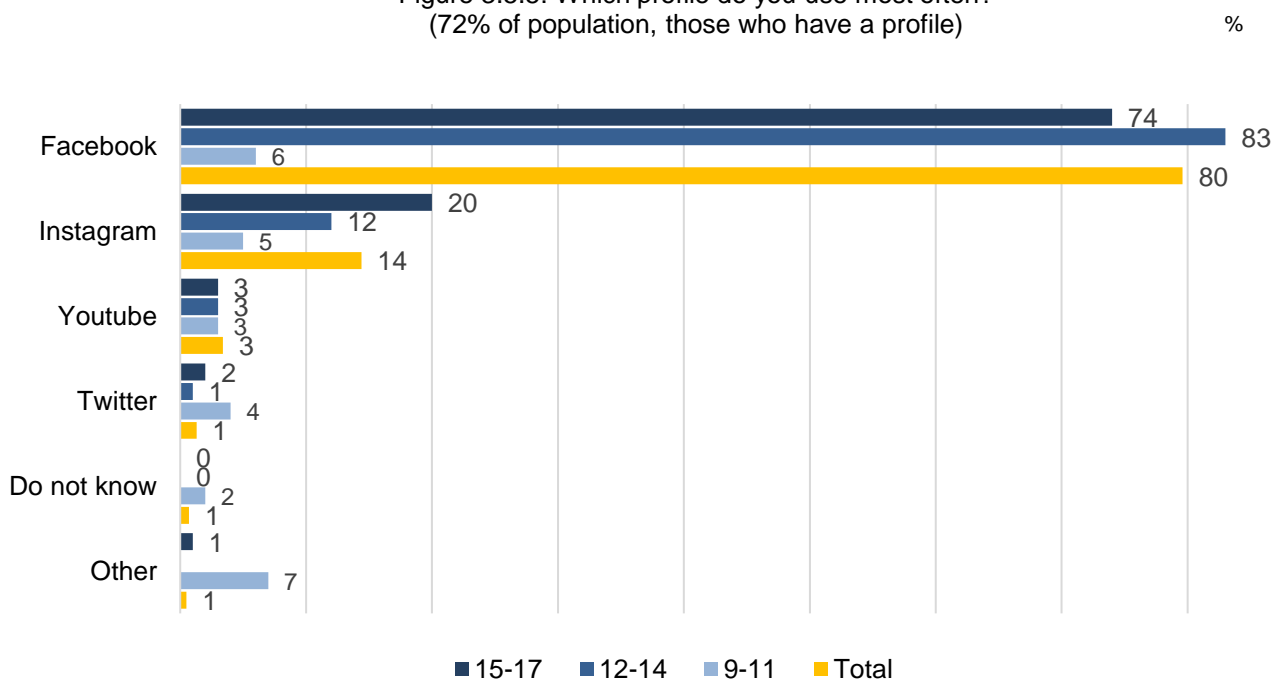
children who are aged 9–11 and who come from the south part of Montenegro.

Figure 3.5.4: How many profiles do you have (on the same site or different sites, one or more than one)? (72% of children who said that they have profile)



As already stated, **Facebook stands out as the most popular social networking site with children – 80% stated that they have a Facebook profile.** A significantly lower percentage (15%) use **Instagram**, which is more popular with children aged 15–17, whereas other social networks were rarely reported.

Figure 3.5.5: Which profile do you use most often? (72% of population, those who have a profile)

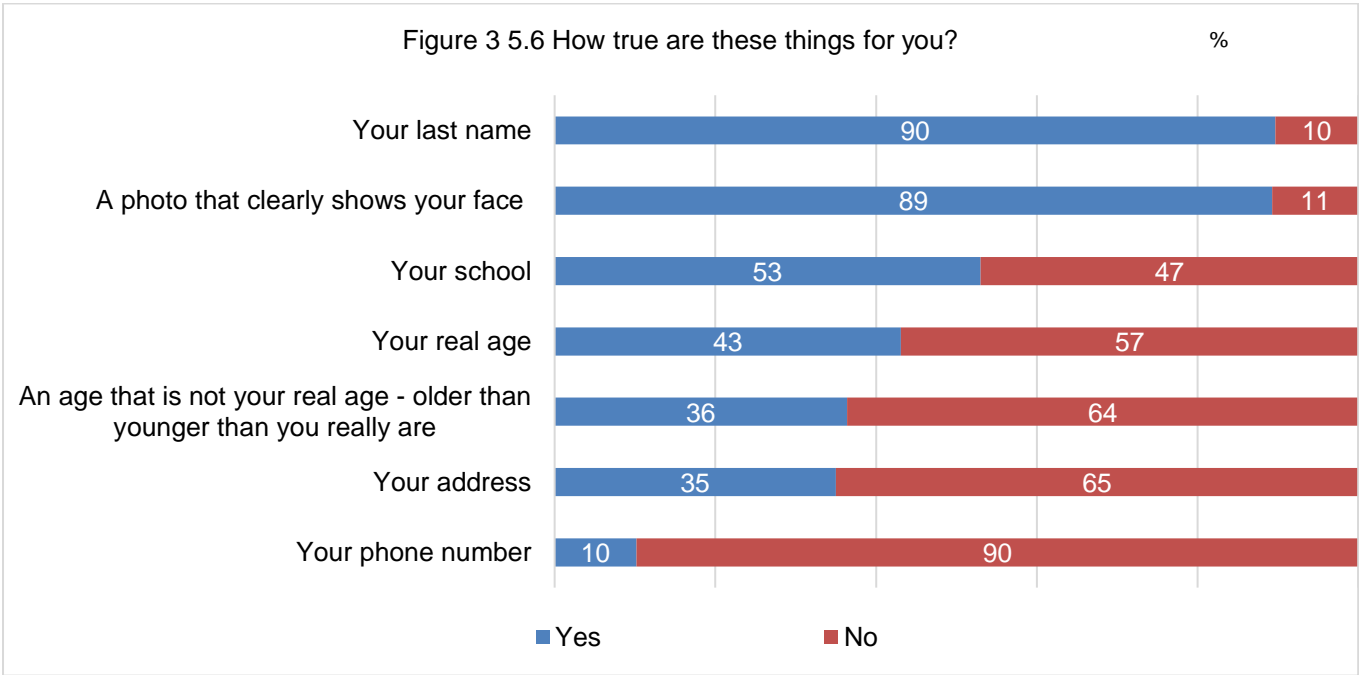


Availability of information on social networking sites

Privacy settings for posts on social networking sites is a topic of divided attitude among children in Montenegro. The largest percentage of children (38%) stated that their posts on social networking sites are visible only to their friends, and a slightly smaller percentage (34%) stated that their posts are also available to friends of friends. However, it seems that one-fourth of children (26%) do not consider the

privacy issue significant; consequently, their posts are public and visible to everyone, and this group of children includes children coming from the north part of Montenegro and of a low SES.

Personal family names and a photo with a clearly visible face represent personal information that almost all children share on their profiles. More than a third of the children (35%) have put data about their address, whereas every tenth child also stated that they put their telephone number as well.

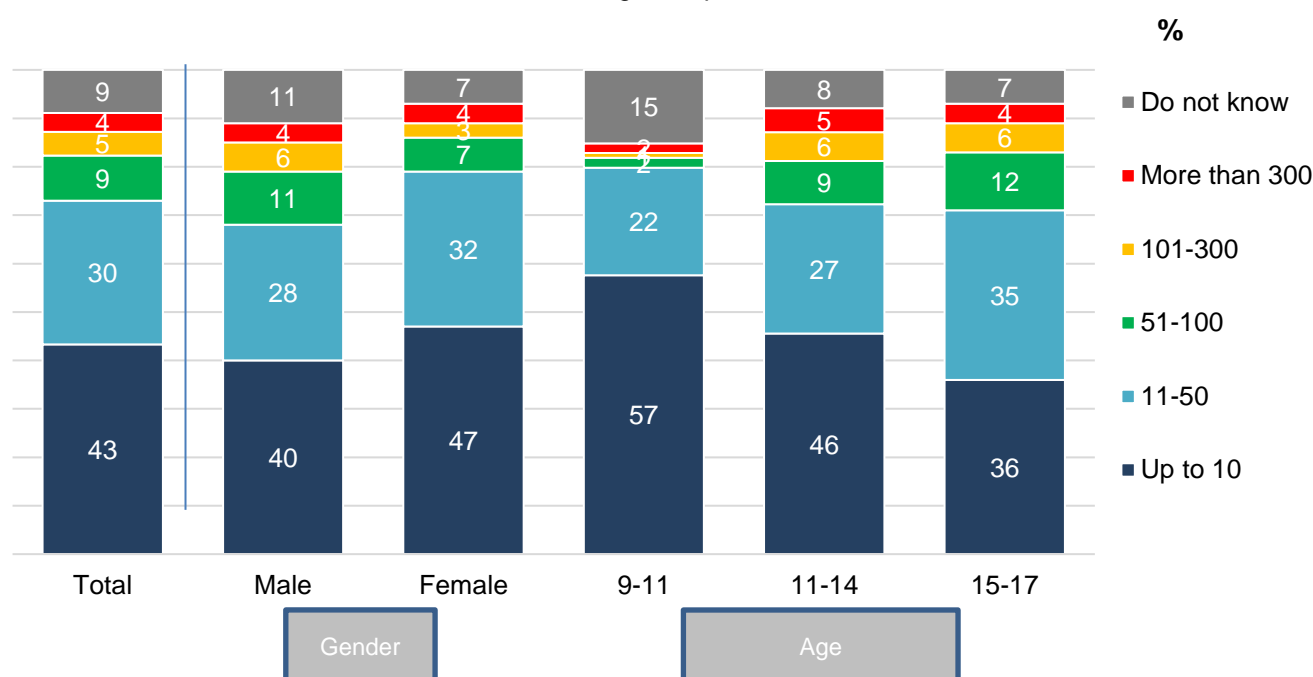


Social networking communication

Communication is frequent, but the number of friends with whom children in Montenegro actively communicate on social networking sites varies significantly – almost half of the children (43%) state

that they do not communicate with more than 10 friends, which is significantly more common with children aged 9–11; 40% stated that they communicate with up to 100 people, and only 9% stated that they communicate with more than 100 people on social networking sites.

Figure 3.5.7: Thinking of the profile you use most often, about how many people are you in contact with when using [named profile], with how many people do you exchange messages through this profile?

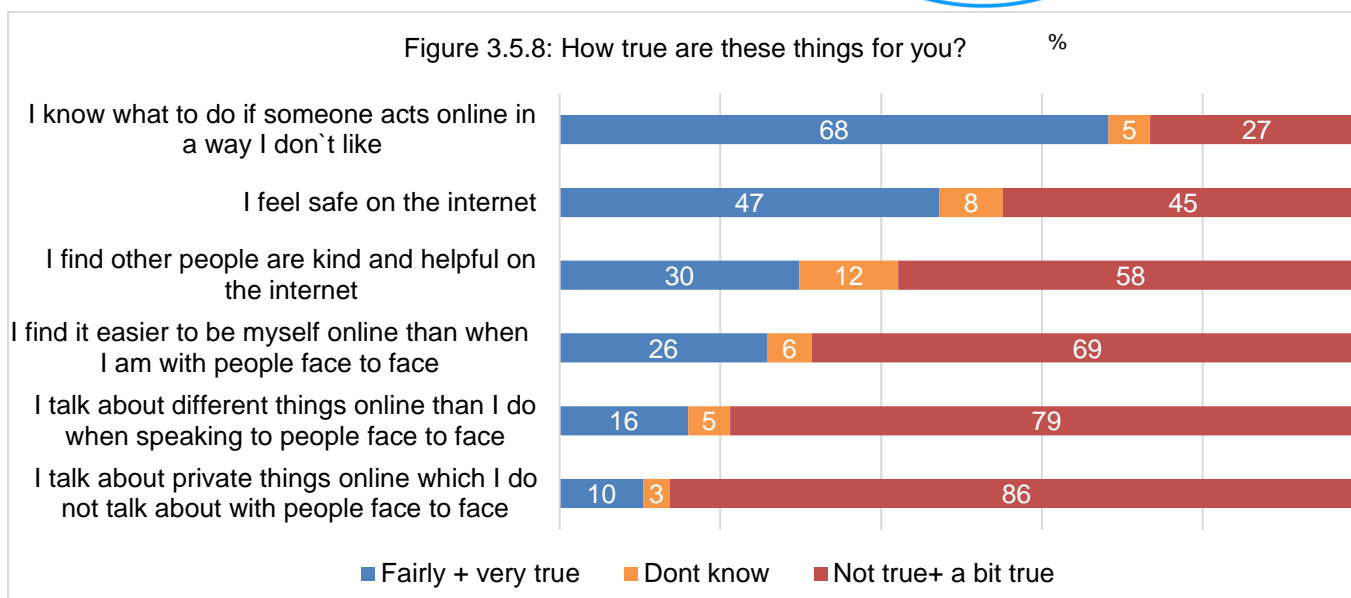


Most children in Montenegro stated that communication on social networking sites is not much different from everyday face-to-face communication – 86% said that they do not communicate private things on the internet that they do not tell their friends in person, and only one-fourth of children (26%) stated that it was easier for them to communicate on the internet than in person.

Although more than two-thirds of children (68%) **believe that they know how to react to someone's inappropriate behaviour on the internet**, the children are, at the same time, divided in their opinions relating to evaluation of internet safety – **47% said that they feel safe, and 45% are of the opposite**

attitude. A slightly lower degree of confidence in safety on the internet is present with the youngest children.

In focus group discussions, **girls aged 9–11** exhibited the **highest degree of fear from potentially negative things on the internet**. The most frequently reported fears were kidnapping or rape resulting from contact with strangers on social networking sites. Generally, **the boys showed a lower degree of concern in terms of the above-mentioned risks**, and it seems that they have a more **indifferent reaction to such risks** since they often believe that the risks cannot happen to them.



(Non)-accepted requests for friendship on social networking sites

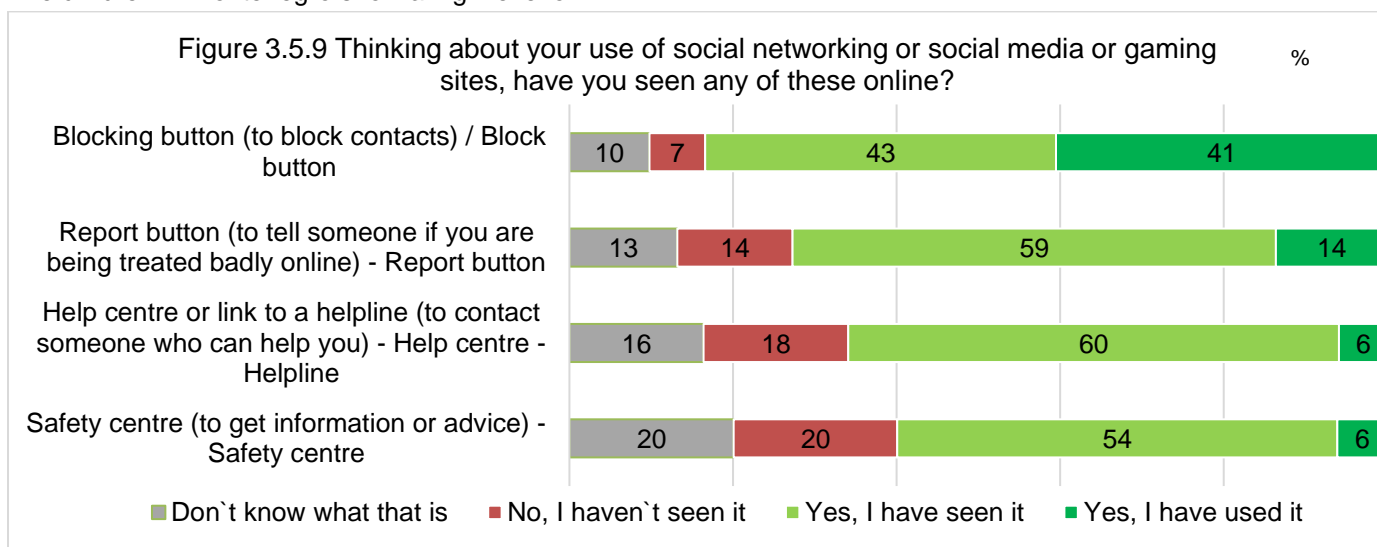
More than half of the children (54%) said that they accept friendship requests on social networking sites **only from people they personally know**. On the other hand, almost a third (**32%**) have slightly lower criteria for making friendships on social networking sites, so they **accept friendship requests from those with whom they have mutual friends**, although they do not know them in person. **Only 13%** stated that they accept all friendship requests they receive, and such behaviour is more present **among boys than girls**.

Use of options on social networking sites

The children in Montenegro show a high level of

knowledge relating to a **block option** – **43%** said that they know about this option, and **41%** said that they have used it. Every tenth child is not familiar with a block option on social networking sites, and this group of children includes significantly more children aged 12–14, of a low SES, and coming from the north part of Montenegro. In focus group discussions, the children reported frequent use of a block option – most often **when they are contacted by strangers or in the case of unwanted content**.

A safety centre is the least known option for children in Montenegro – **40% stated that they have either not heard of or have not seen it on social networking sites**; repeatedly, this group of children includes more children aged 12–14, of a low SES, coming from the north part of Montenegro.



The role of parents in the protection of children on the internet

As for life insolvencies, the general picture is that most children (77%) stated that their parents represent their safe oasis and those with whom the children would talk first. In line with this, as many as 89% of the children stated that they find it easy to talk about disturbing

issues with their parents; this prevails especially among children aged 9–11.

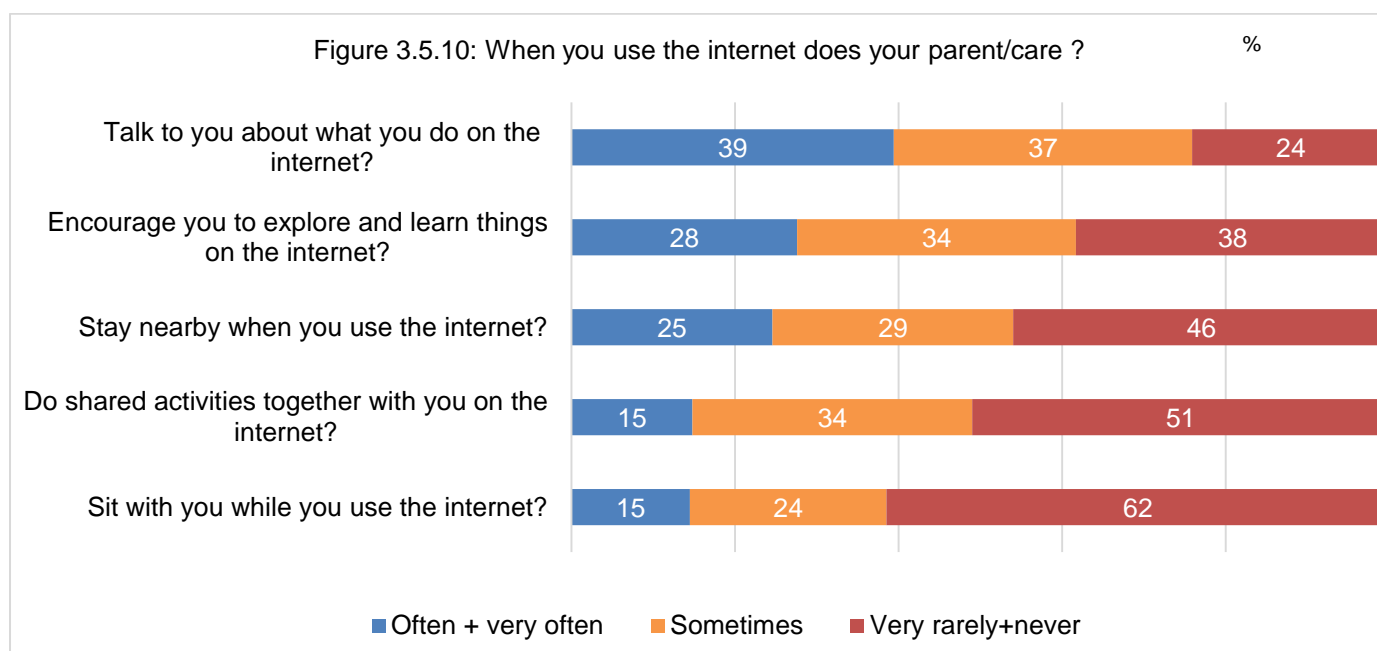
However, children's activities on the internet are performed somewhat far from the sight of their parents. Parents' mediation in the use of the internet was rated medium on average; a slightly higher degree of parents' mediation is noted in children aged 9–11 (see Table 3.5.10a).

Table 3.5.10a: The average parents' active mediation on the internet – average for 5 items of parental active mediation of internet use (Scale: 1=never to 5=very often) – Children's evaluation

	Gender		Age			SES			Region			Type of settlement	
Total	Male	Female	9–11	12–14	15–17	Low	Medium	High	North	Central	South	Urban	Rural
2.8	2.7	2.9	3.2	2.7	2.5	2.6	2.8	2.9	2.7	2.8	2.9	2.8	2.8

Slightly more than a third of the children (38%) stated that their parents talk to them about their activities on the internet, and only 28% stated that their parents encourage them to learn and undertake internet surfing. This is significantly rarer in the case of children coming from the north part of Montenegro, of lower

SES, that report rare parental involvement of the kind. There is usually no **direct monitoring**, so only 15% of children stated that their parents frequently accompany them during their internet surfing; one-fourth (25%) stated that their parents are nearby while they surf the internet.



However, parents self-reported a higher degree of active mediation than their children. For every activity, more than 50% stated that they do it at least sometimes, except for sitting with their children while they are on the internet – 41% stated that they

do this at least sometimes. In general, parents with low SES, from the north, and parents of children aged 15–17 reported that they are less frequently than average involved in the active mediation of their children.

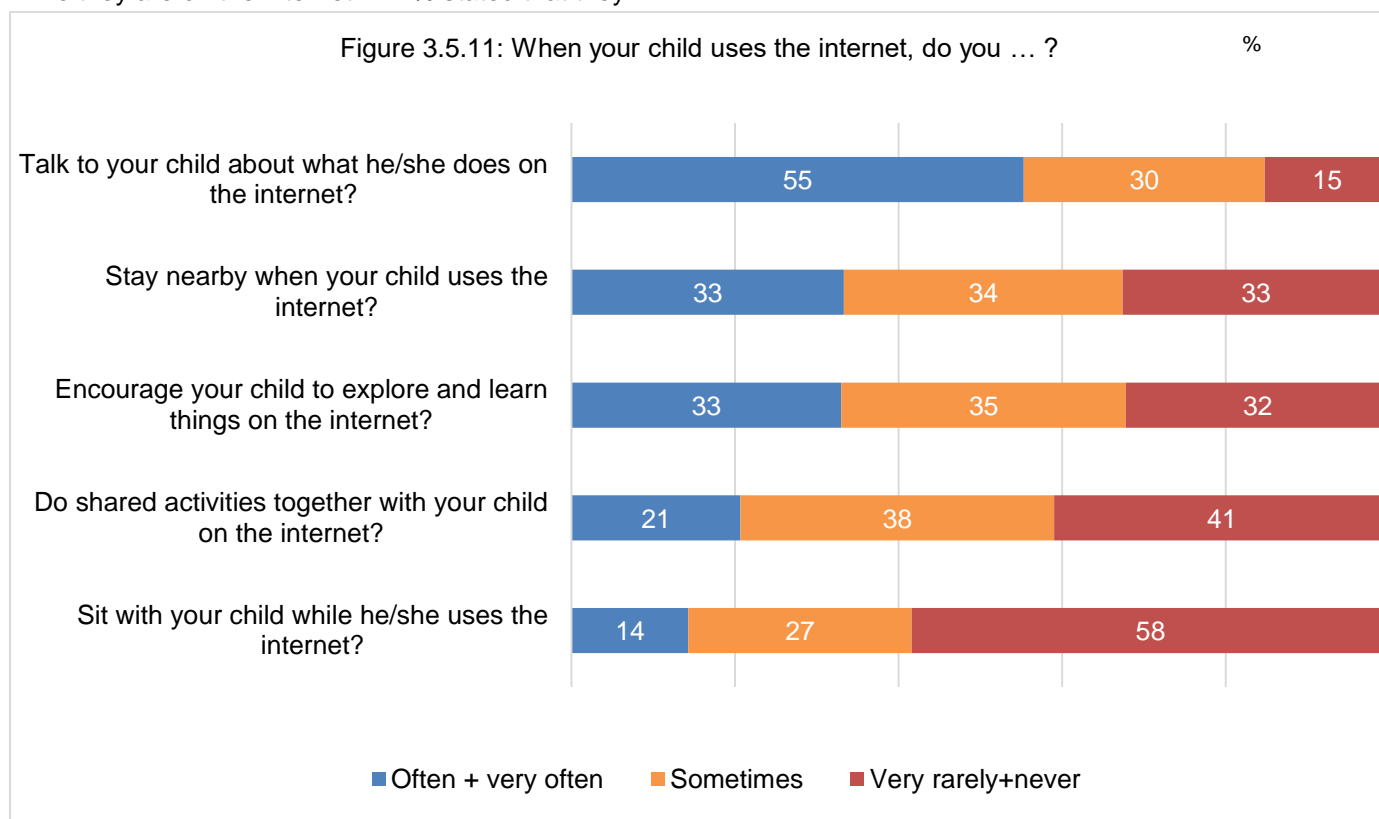


Table 3.5.11a presents the average scores for parents' active monitoring activities. It can be seen

that they are similar to the average scores that the children gave.

Table 3.5.11a: The average scores for active mediation – Average for 5 items of parental active mediation of internet use (Scale: 1=never to 5=very often) – Parents' evaluation

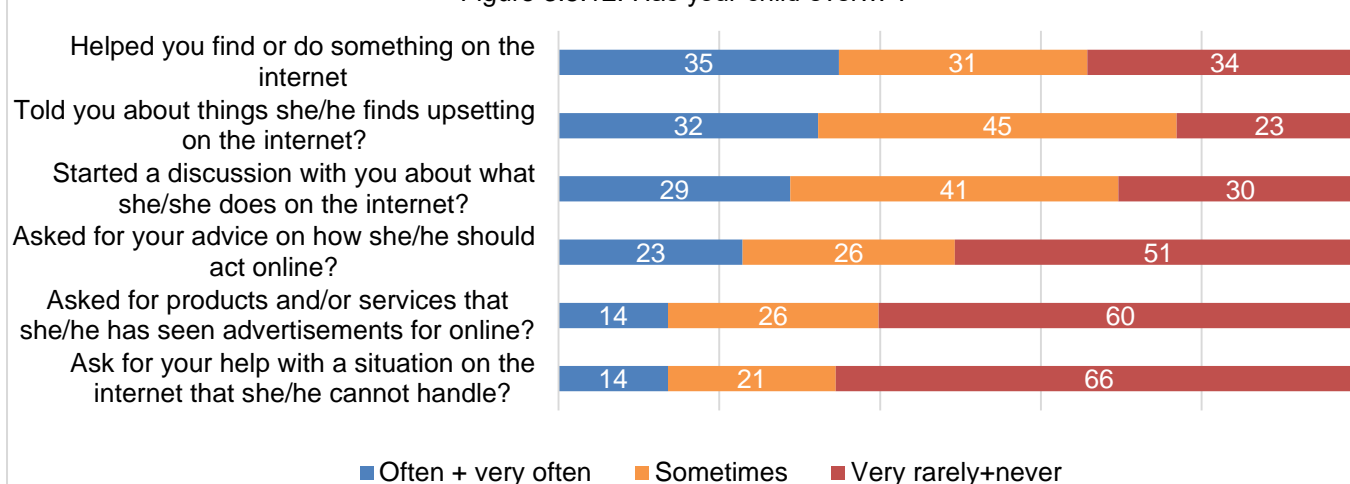
Gender			Age			SES			Region			Type of settlement	
Total	Male	Female	9–11	12–14	15–17	Low	Medium	High	North	Central	South	Urban	Rural
2.9	2.9	3.0	3.1	2.9	2.7	2.7	3.0	3.0	2.6	3.0	3.0	2.9	2.9

On the other hand, the children stated that they rarely start a conversation with their parents about various topics – only one-fourth of children (26%). More than half of the children stated that they very rarely or never ask for a product they have seen on the internet from their parents (57%); a similar percentage stated that they never or very rarely talk to their parents about something that disturbed them on the internet (52%). Again, this group of children includes

more children from the north part of Montenegro and children of a lower SES.

Parents also report that their children do not talk very much on their own initiative about the following themes, but they also admit that their children help them on the internet – 66% reported that their children do this at least sometimes.

Figure 3.5.12: Has your child ever... ?

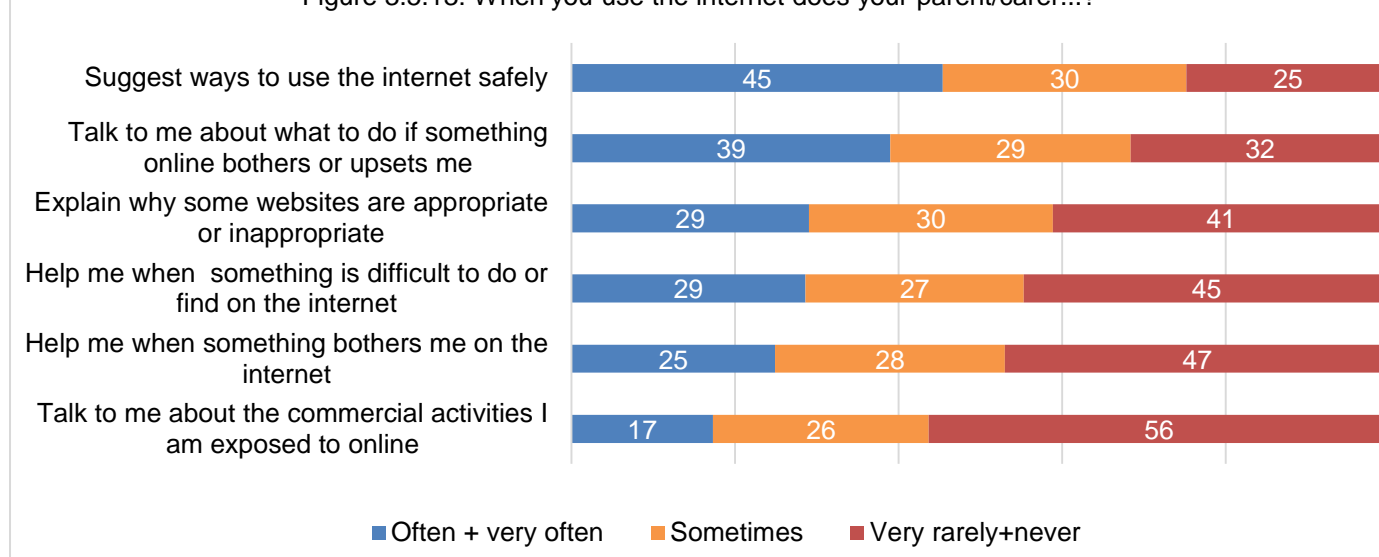


Parental advice and help

The advice parents give to their children relates mostly to their internet safety – 45% of the children stated that they generally get such advice from their parents to a higher or lower extent. Parents are the least involved in terms of advice on commercial

internet content, so more than half of the children (56%) said that they never or very rarely get such advice from their parents. Generally, children of a lower SES and those coming from the north of Montenegro more frequently report low parental involvement when it comes to these topics.

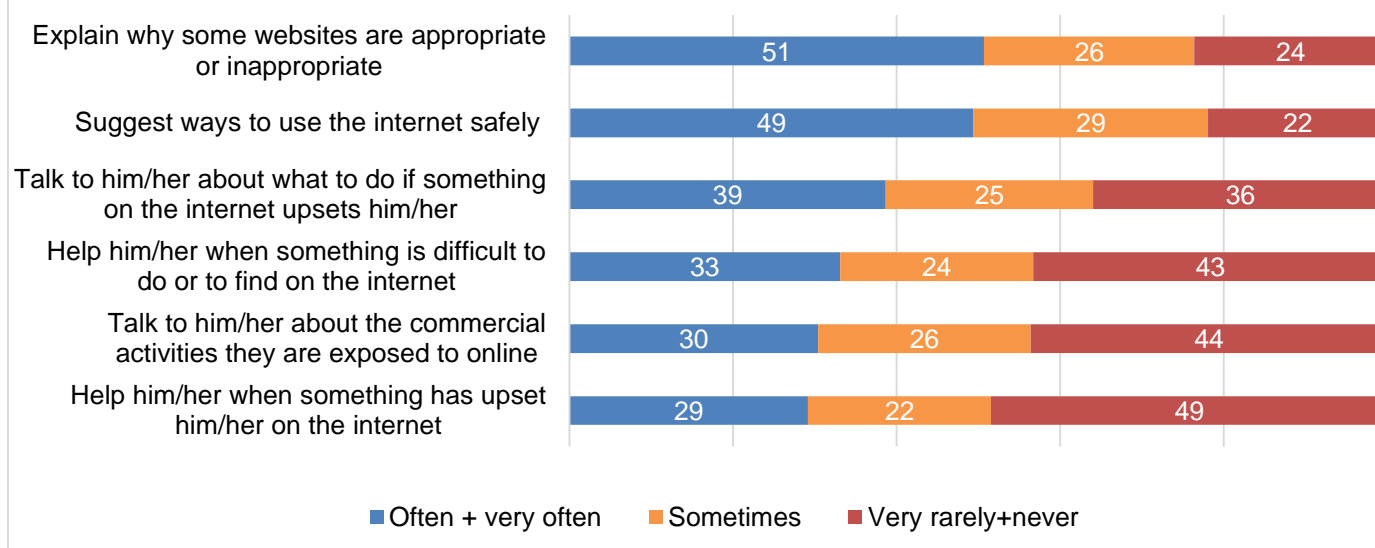
Figure 3.5.13: When you use the internet does your parent/carer...?



On the other side, **parents reported that they frequently talk to and help their children regarding various things about the internet. The greatest discrepancy between parents and children is**

reported for the frequency of giving parental advices about appropriation of some websites – 51% of parents stated that gives this advice frequently, while only 29% of children stated the same.

Figure 3.5.14: How often do you do any of these things with your child? %



In focus group discussions that included parents, most of them stated that they do not trust their own knowledge and skills that are required for various forms of direct protection of their children on the internet. Their role was mostly of an advisory nature, generally about good things on the internet, as well as about the ways they can protect themselves from bad internet content. **The most frequent safety advice given to children by their parents is the advice that the children often do not follow: not to accept friendship requests on social networking sites that are sent by strangers, and not to communicate with strangers.**

Parental control

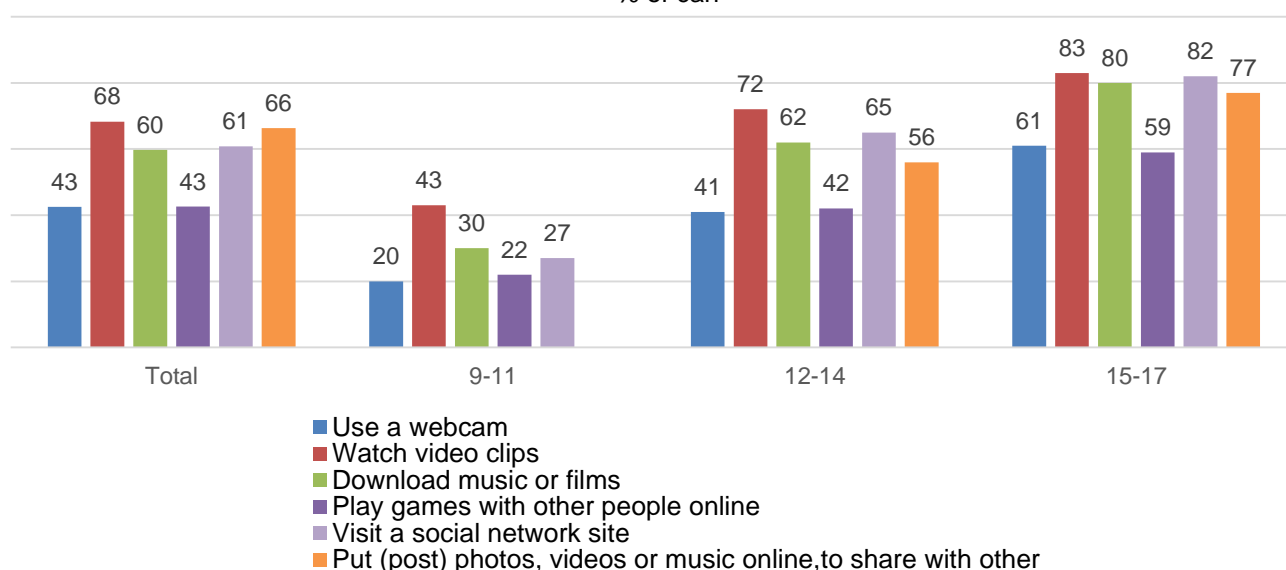
When it comes to use of the internet, **mothers set the**

rules for use of internet content in most households (60%); the role of fathers in that respect

is less (29%); 7% of children say that their siblings provide the rules, whereas 4% said that there are no such rules in their home. It is evident that the group of children who stated the absence of such rules includes more children aged 15–17, of a low SES, coming from the north of Montenegro.

Still, the majority of children are involved in various internet activities without any special permission given by their parents. Only 11% reported that they are strictly forbidden internet gaming with other people; this group includes mostly the youngest children, aged 9–11, of a high SES, coming from the south of Montenegro, whereas there are no strict prohibitions for other types of activities.

Figure 3.5.15: For each of these things, please indicate if your parent(s)/carer(s) CURRENTLY let you perform them whenever you want, or let you do them but only with your parent(s)/carer'(s) permission or supervision, or NEVER let you do them?
% of can



The average evaluation of prohibition, i.e., permit to use certain internet content, is shown in Table 3.5.15a.

Table 3.5.15a: Average restrictive parental involvement in internet mediation – Average for 5 items¹⁴ of parental restrictive mediation of internet use (Scale: 1=never to 5=very often) – Children's evaluation

Gender			Age			SES			Region			Type of settlement	
Total	Male	Female	9–11	12–14	15–17	Low	Medium	High	North	Central	South	Urban	Rural
1.3	1.3	1.4	1.8	1.3	1.2	1.3	1.3	1.5	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.3	1.4

Even parents reported that children do the majority of activities on the internet without any special permission. It can be concluded that parents are restrictive for those activities in which children can be exposed to direct contact with unknown people: playing online games, spending time in virtual worlds and communicating in chatrooms. For every one of this

activities, more than 25% of parents stated that they are forbidden to their children. In general, parents of children aged 9–11 are more restrictive than average, while parents with low SES more frequently than average show a lack of knowledge about their children's activities on the internet. Table 3.5.15b shows the averages for restrictive mediation.

Table 3.5.15b: Average restrictive parental involvement in internet mediation – Average for 11 items¹⁵ of parental

¹³ On 'Put (post) photos, videos or music online to share with others', respondents were only children aged 12–17.

¹⁴ The average is calculated for the first 5 items on which all children responded.

¹⁵ Question: 'For each of these actions, please indicate if you CURRENTLY let your child perform them whenever she/he wants, or let her/him perform them but only with your permission or supervision, or you never let her/him perform them – use a webcam, watch video clips, download music or films, play games with other people online, visit a social networking site, visit a chatroom, use instant messaging, read/watch news online, use the internet for school work, spend time in a virtual world, post photos videos or music online to share with others.'

restrictive mediation of internet use (Scale: 1=never to 5=very often) – Parents' evaluation

Gender			Age			SES			Region			Type of settlement	
Total	Male	Female	9–11	12–14	15–17	Low	Medium	High	North	Central	South	Urban	Rural
1.5	1.5	1.6	2.0	1.5	1.2	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.5	1.6

Both children and parents pointed out that software options for parental protection on the internet are applied extremely rarely (see Figures 3.5.16 and 3.5.17). Such results may consequently result from the fact that parents have scarce internet knowledge about them. The focus groups that included parents also provided similar results – **none of the participants used software options for parental**

internet protection, and most of them have not heard of these options for protection. Fewer parents who know about these options are those whose job is closely connected with internet use; they justify non-application of the options by the fact that their children do not have a bad experience while surfing the internet.

Figure 3.5.16: Does your parent/carer make use of any of the following ...?

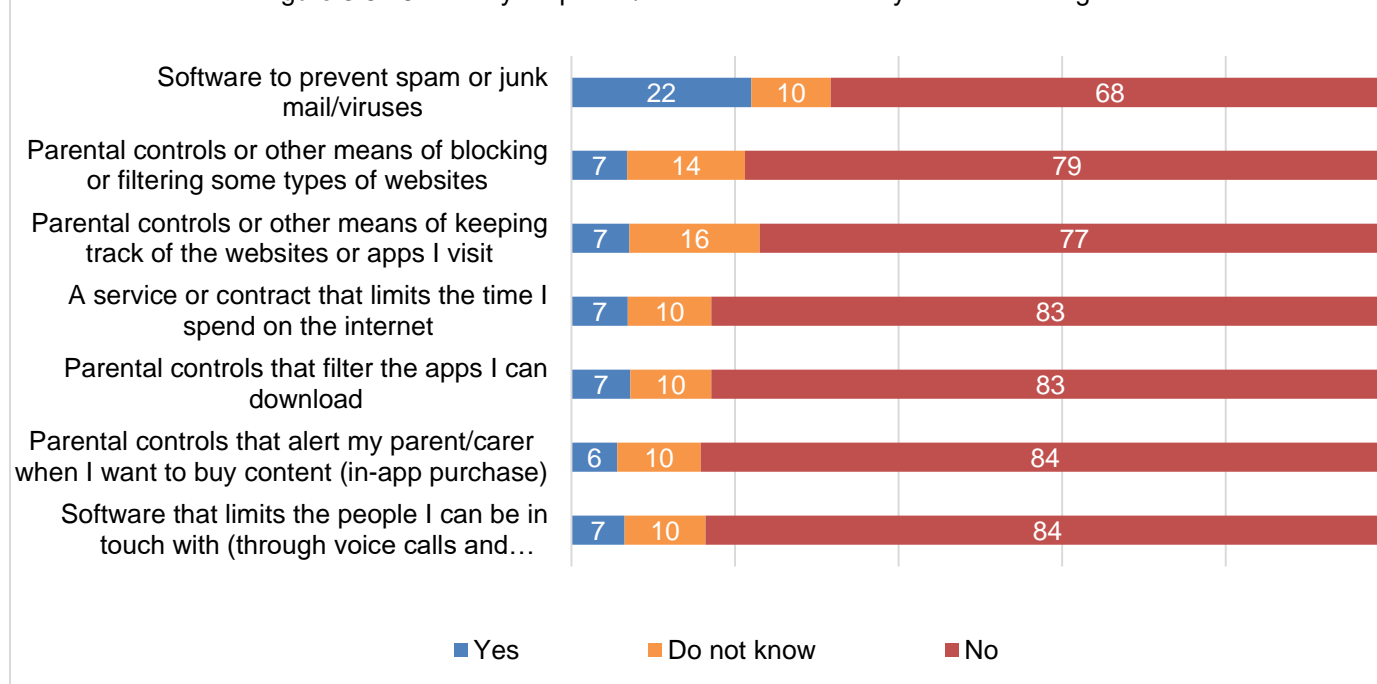
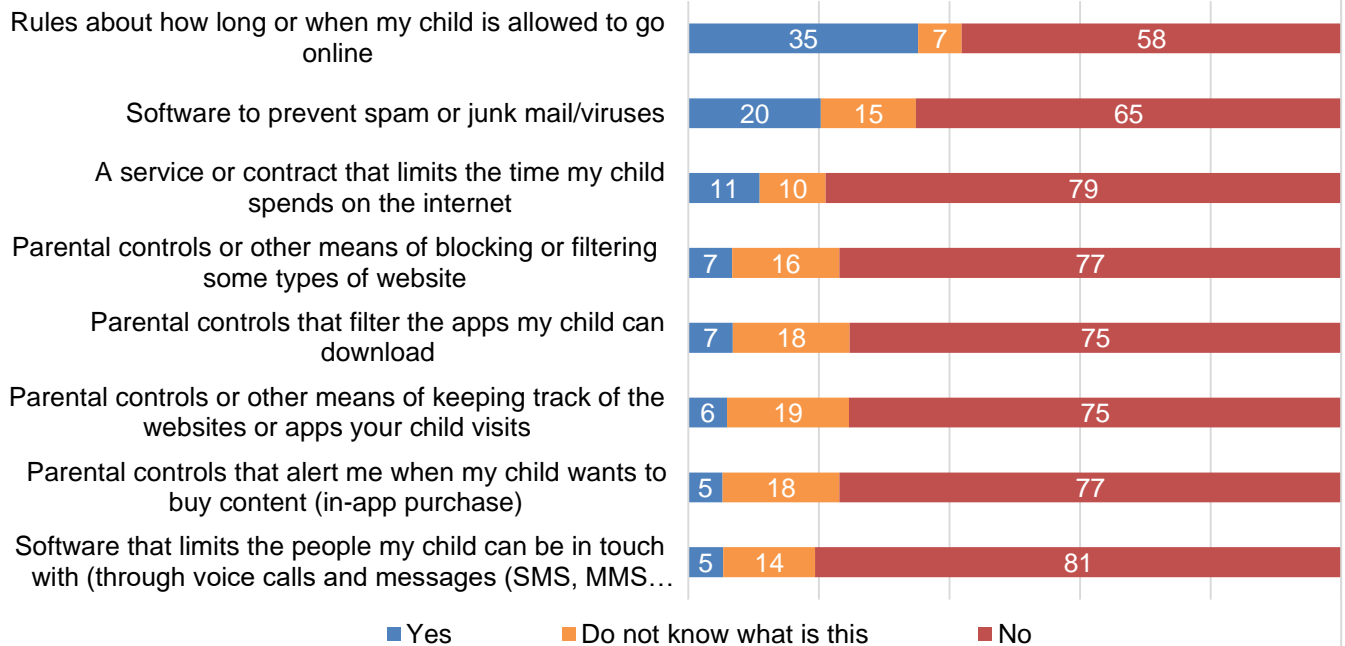


Figure 3.5.17: Parental technical mediation ...?

%

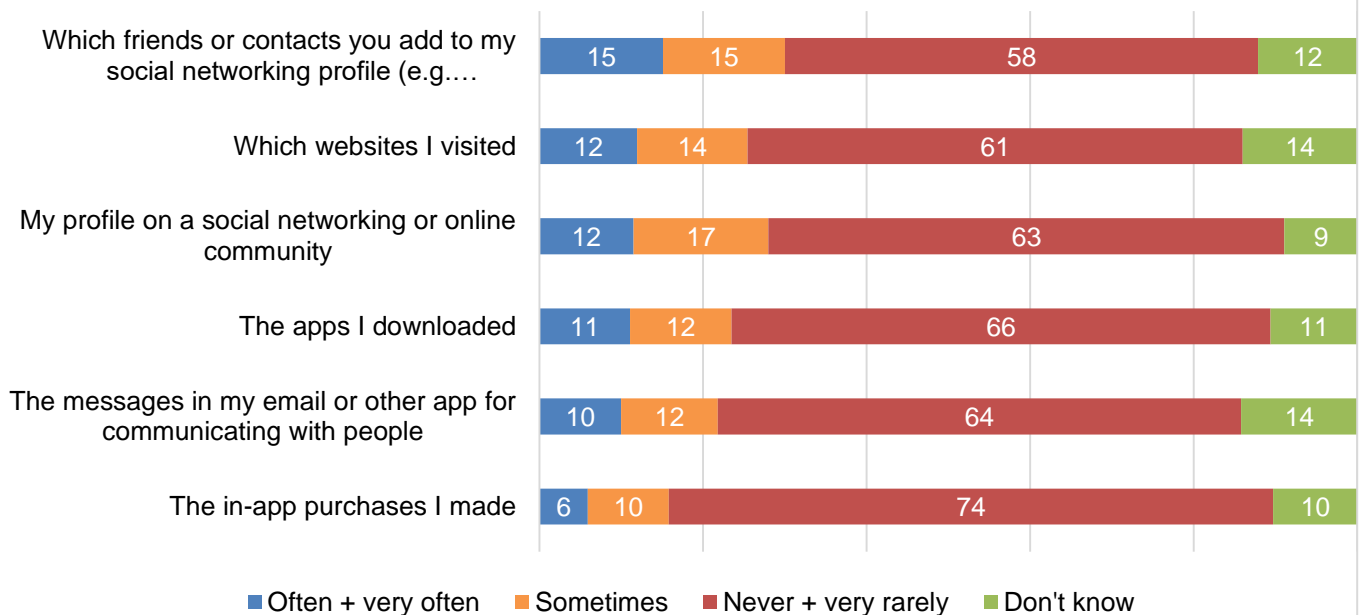


The other form of protection – **checking the devices children use for the internet or access to social networking sites** – is also rarely used. Only 15% of children stated that their parents check their friends on social networking sites, and girls reported such checks

in a percentage that is above average. Every tenth child stated that their parents check their messages on social networking sites, and they more often include children who are aged 9–11.

Figure 3.5.18: When you use the internet, how often does your parent/carer check the following things afterwards?

%



On the other side, parents reported that they do this type of activity more frequently than their

children perceived it, but still these activities are not often.

Figure 3.5.19: When your child uses the internet, how often do you (or other parent/carer) % check the following things afterwards?

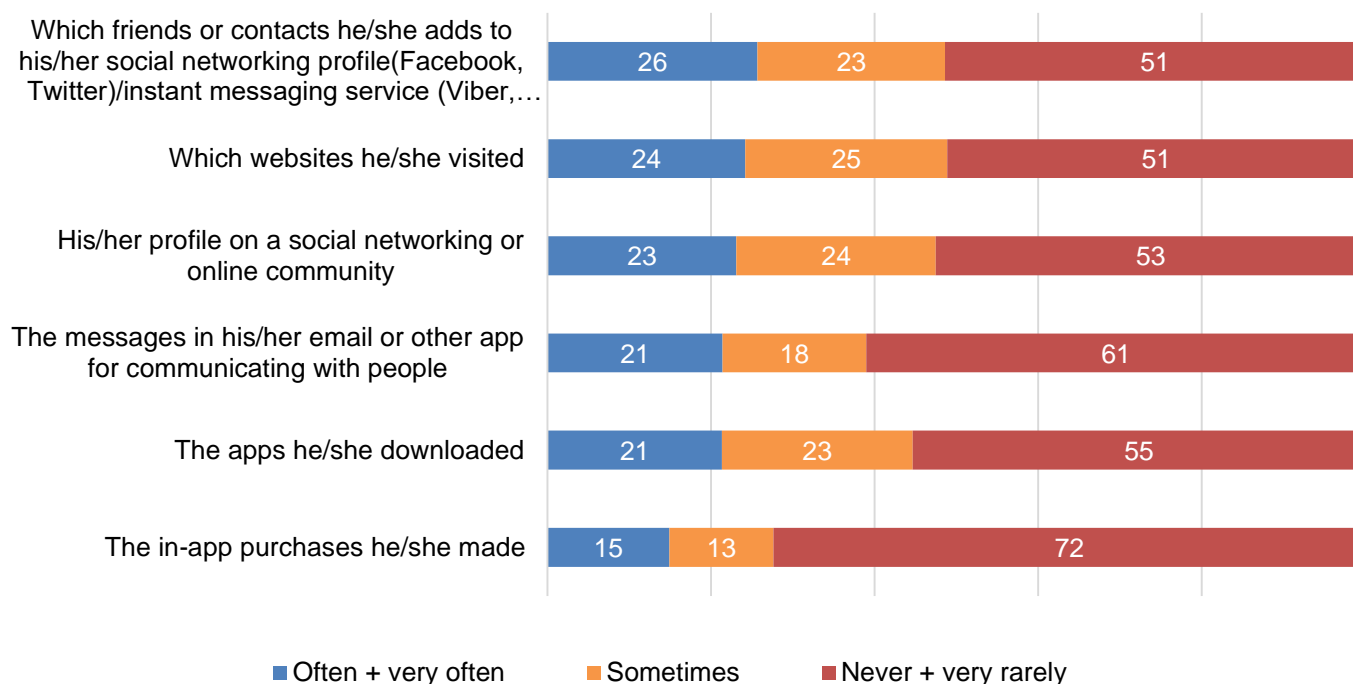


Table 3.5.19a presents average scores for parental monitoring. In general, parents of children aged 15–17,

with low SES and from the north less frequently reported that they do any of the following activities.

Table 3.5.19a: Average for parental monitoring – Average for 6 items of parental monitoring of internet use (Scale: 1=never to 5=very often) – Parents' evaluation

Gender			Age			SES			Region			Type of settlement	
Total	Male	Female	9–11	12–14	15–17	Low	Medium	High	North	Central	South	Urban	Rural
2.3	2.3	2.3	2.5	2.4	2.0	2.2	2.4	2.4	2.2	2.4	2.3	2.3	2.4

On the other hand, it was noticed in the focus groups discussions that included parents that a significant majority of parents, especially those of younger children, perform such checks. According to them, these checks are significantly efficient, which is also evidenced by the experience of one of the parents:

“I logged into my daughter’s profile to see who she is chatting with and I saw a boy I did not know. When I read their messages, I saw that something was wrong, you can simply see by expressions that it is not a child, but an adult. I started chatting with him from my daughter’s profile and the conversation headed in other

direction step by step. I blocked that person and explained to my daughter that there are troubled persons on the internet and pointed that someone’s photo on the internet means nothing and that she should not accept strangers as friends.”

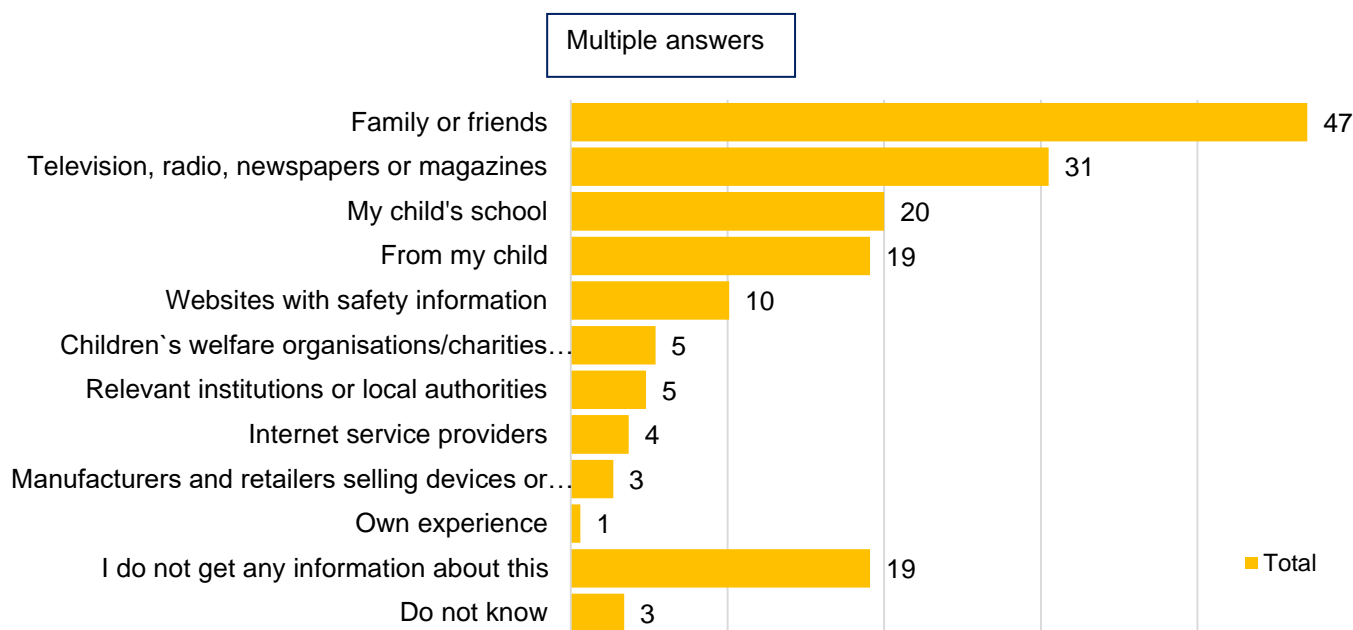
Parents' source of information

The majority of parents are inform about the ways to helping their children with the internet through communication with their friends and family members (47%). A third of them stated that they do this through media, while every fifth parent stated that

they are informed through their child's school, or by communication with their child. Additionally, every fifth parent stated that they don't have information about

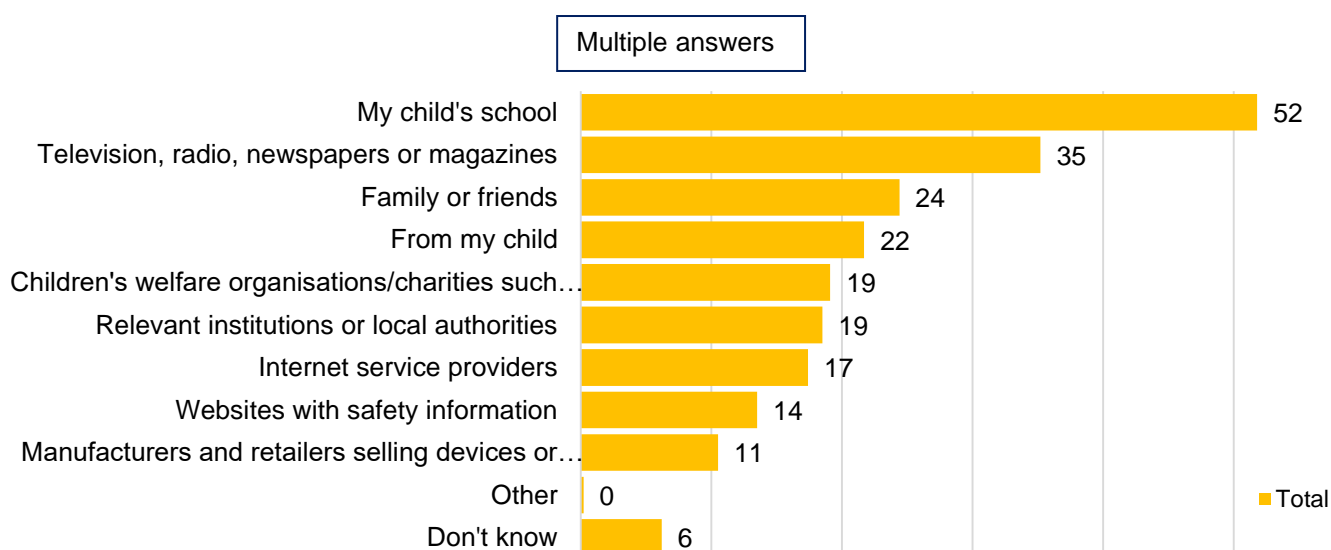
this theme, and this was stated more frequently by parents from the north of Montenegro and with a low SES.

Figure 3.5.20: In general, where do you get information and advice on how to help and support your child on the internet and keep him/her safe?



The most desirable way for providing information or advice about the following themes is in the children's school – according to 52% of parents. This is a clear sign that collaboration from parents and teachers from school is needed, and that parents recognised this.

Figure 3.5.21: In general, where would you like to get information and advice on how to help and support your child on the internet and keep him or her safe in the future?



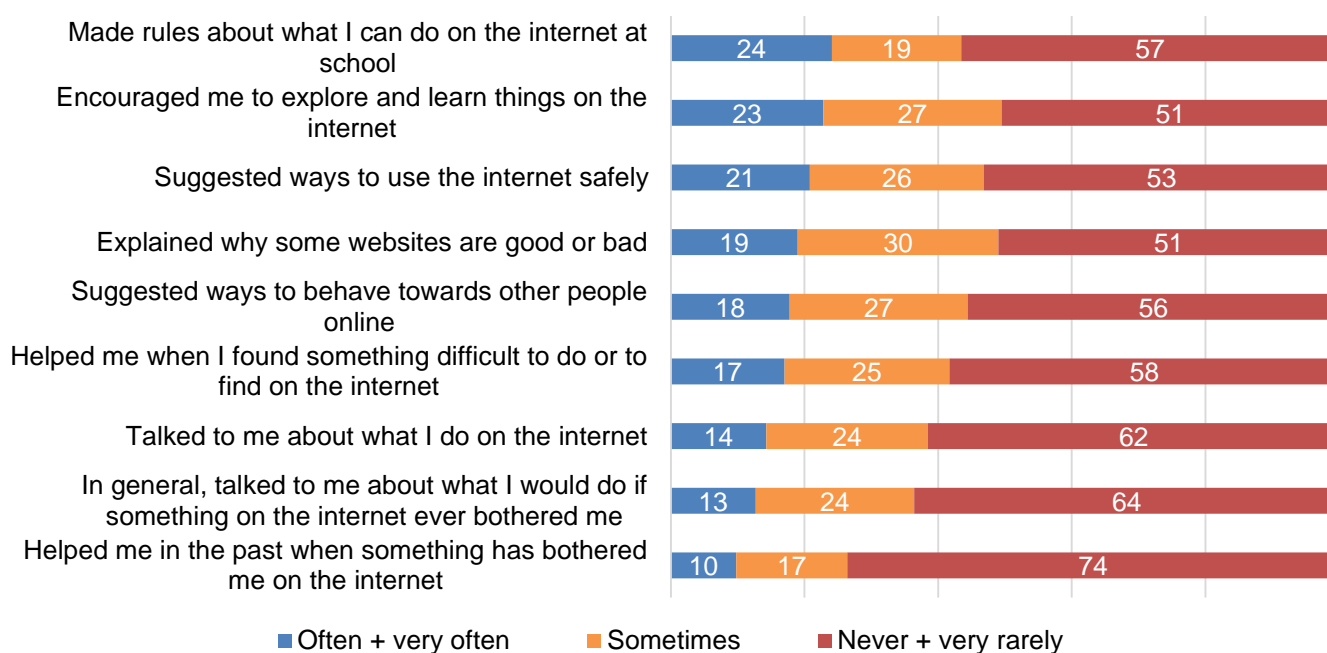
The role of school in children's internet safety

Generally, children feel safe and secure in the schools they attend. The children showed a slightly more negative attitude towards their teachers – 11% do not agree with statements that their teachers care about them as people and that there is at least one teacher to whom they can turn when they have a problem, and this opinion is more frequently present with children aged 15–17.

However, when it comes to internet use, teachers do not play a significant role for children in Montenegro. More than half of the children stated

that their teachers rarely or never communicate with them about various topics related to the internet (topics about safety, the acceptability of content displayed on the internet, etc.), as well as that they rarely or never provide help in various forms. In particular, the highest percentage of children (74%) reported that teachers rarely or never helped them when something on the internet upset them. Children aged 12–17 did not answer this question. The highest inclusion of teachers is registered in terms of setting rules for internet use in school – 24% of children stated that their teachers set these rules. As previously stated, it is forbidden to use a mobile phone within school, so this is what they were probably referring to under setting rules.

Figure 3.5.22: Have any teachers at your school done any of these things? %



Despite the banned use of mobile phones, which implies internet use in schools, both parents and teachers are aware of such misuse. The participants in the focus groups said that the **children often take photos of tests and homework and send them to each other, or adults who helped them resolve the problem said that in this way they get high grades with little effort.** According to a high school teacher in Podgorica, and then a parent,

“There is a woman who gives private classes, children send her the tasks they get in class and then she does the tasks for them and sends them solution through Viber.”

“My child attends seventh grade and she is good with mathematics, she achieves good results. The child who sits next to her takes a photo of the test, sends it to a mother, she does the tasks and the child copies what she has done through Viber. What’s the logic behind that?”

Only 5% of children said that they had the opportunity to help their teachers do something on the internet, and this type of help related predominantly to finding a certain website or information, or settings for social networking sites and mobile phones. However, these results should not suggest that teachers have sufficient knowledge and skills when it comes to internet use.

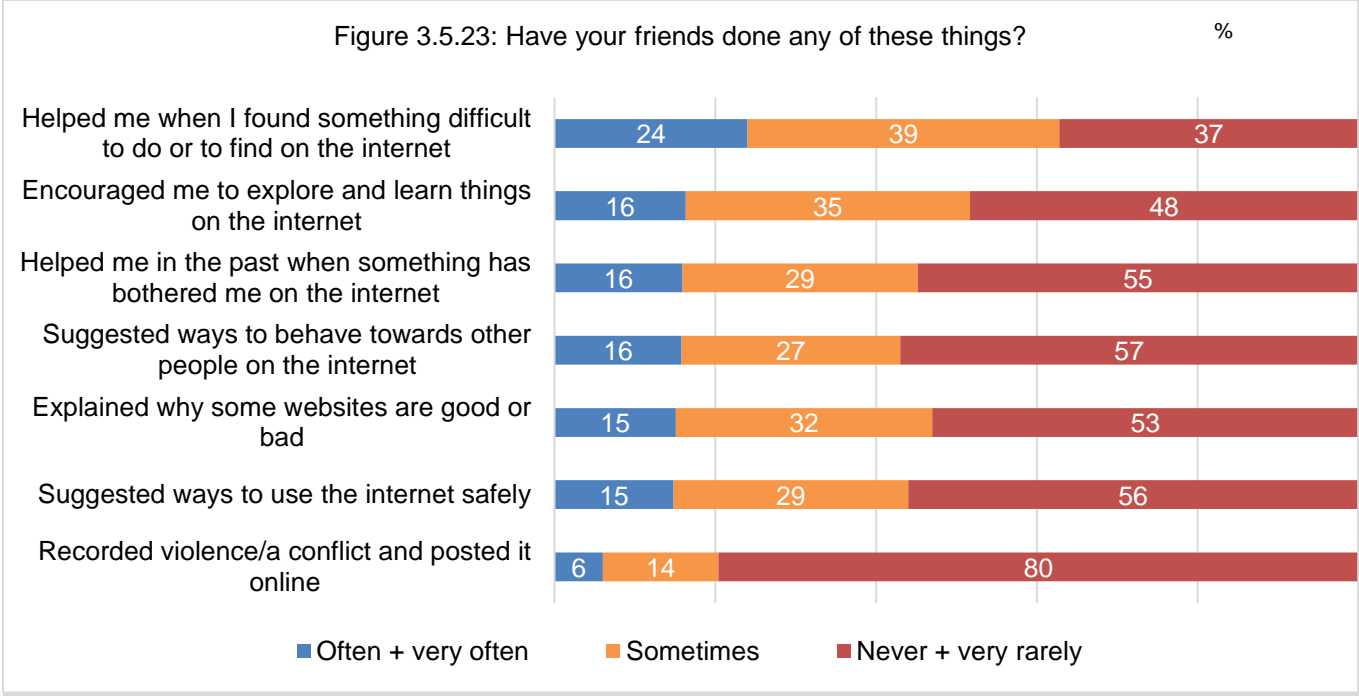
Most teachers in the focus groups openly stated their doubts regarding their own capacities, not only regarding internet use, but also in improving children’s safety on the internet. The impression is that teachers’ predominant role in this process relates to education, whereas they leave the pedagogical upbringing role to parents. The advice they give to children in the terms of internet use relates mostly to the negative impacts of spending too much time surfing the internet, and also including advice on safety on social networking sites – similar to the advice the children already receive from their parents.

Role of peers in child internet protection

Most children reported a highly positive relationship with their peers. Peers, i.e., friends, are

observed as someone willing to give a hand (84%), someone they can count on (86%), and someone they can trust (79%). However, slightly more than a third of the children (37%) reported that they become anxious when thinking about expectations from their peers, and are concerned as to whether they are to be ridiculed by them as a consequence. These slightly more negative attitudes are more present with girls and children with a high SES.

When it comes to help provided by peers on the internet, as well as in the case of parents and teachers, it is also not that frequent. The highest degree of peers’ assistance has been registered in the case of support when it comes to something difficult to perform or to find on the internet – 24% of children reported this happens frequently. Commonly, there are no other forms of help and advice; results generally indicate that the youngest children aged 9–11 less frequently rely on peers’ help. As previously stated, this conforms with the results obtained from the qualitative segment of the study, which indicated that for the most part, the youngest children rely on parental help.



Average grade of the frequency of provision of help is shown in Table 3.5.23a.

Table 3.5.23a: An average of a peers' internet mediation¹⁶ – Average for 3 items of peer mediation of internet use (Scale: 1=never to 5=very often)

Gender			Age			SES			Region			Type of settlement	
Total	Male	Female	9–11	12–14	15–17	Low	Medium	High	North	Central	South	Urban	Rural
2.5	2.4	2.6	2.3	2.4	2.7	2.5	2.5	2.6	2.3	2.5	2.6	2.4	2.6

Similar results were also obtained from children's self-evaluation of how frequently they suggest safe use of the internet to their friends – just every tenth child said that they do this with a varying degree of frequency. More than half (57%) stated that they do not do this, and the largest number of children in this group are those aged 9–11 from the north part of Montenegro. One-third of children reporting that they do this occasionally includes more children who live in the south of Montenegro.

¹⁶ Average grades have only been presented for key variables to which all children provided answers: 'Helped me when I found something difficult to do or to find on the internet', 'Suggested ways to use the internet safely', 'Helped me when I found something difficult to do or to find on the internet'.



CONCLUSIONS, KEY RECOMMENDATIONS AND LOOKING AHEAD

The internet has without doubt become an integral part of the everyday life of children in Montenegro. A more intensive use of the internet brings along more risks of children being exposed to risky activities and unwanted and harmful experiences. The use of smartphones, as the main device to access the internet, enables children to access the internet at any moment and without any adult control.

A large number of children (72%) have a profile on a social networking site where they reveal information about their real identity to a high degree. Social networking sites are one of the main channels of exposure to risky experiences. According to the children, in the past year, **37% of them had at least one risky experience on the internet.**

Neither the children nor their parents are, however, aware to a satisfactory degree of the risks that children are exposed to on the internet.

Although the parents express a general concern about the online safety of their children, **in practice, their control is relatively low** and most of them were of the opinion that it is very unlikely that a certain risky incident will happen to their child. As for the children's opinion, only somewhat more than a third believe that the internet contains content that could be upsetting for children of their age.

Insufficient awareness of the use of the internet is also reflected in the reactions to risky online situations. A small number of children stated that these events are really upsetting for them. The most frequent reaction is closing the site or the application with unwanted content. Out of the small number of children who stated they were upset by some internet experience, the majority claimed that they shared this with their parents. But apparently, **neither the parents nor the children found these incidents alarming enough to report them or talk to official institutions about them.**


In different ways, all groups of children are exposed to these risks, regardless of their gender, age and SES.

Some indicators show that younger children, compared to older children, are less exposed to online risks, while other indicators suggest just the opposite – that they are more vulnerable.

Younger children spend less time on the internet, a significantly smaller number have profiles on social networking sites and are in contact with a smaller number of people. Younger children state a smaller number of upsetting or harmful experiences in the previous year as opposed to older children. Younger children are also more controlled by their parents. Other indicators, however, show that younger children are much more aware of the online risks and much less equipped in terms of digital skills related to internet safety (e.g., in terms of revealing information and removing unwanted contacts from their contacts lists, adapting their profile privacy settings, etc.). Finally, just half of the younger children and a great majority of older ones stated that they knew what to do if someone on the internet treated them in an undesirable way. With older children, the situation is just the opposite. Older children are more protected due to better digital skills and higher awareness of internet risks. On the other hand, they had a significantly higher number of risky experiences, because they are more active and more open on social networking sites and communicate with a much larger number of people without as much adult control.

As far as SES is concerned, **at least some indicators show a higher vulnerability of children from families with a lower SES.** A lower percentage of these children believe that the internet contains risky content. Furthermore, they show much less familiarity with protection options and ways to improve safety on social networking sites (blocking the person, reporting, contacting the help centre or helpline). These children claim to a lower degree that they were upset by incidents on the internet. Their parents are much less digitally skilled, and up to 34% of them do not use the internet at all (while this is the case with only 7% of the parents with a high SES), and according to the children, their parents are much less involved in their internet activities.

As for differences between boys and girls, boys



more frequently than girls engage in risky behaviour on the internet: they more often state that they accept all friend requests on social networking sites and more frequently communicate with unknown people. In general, boys are more inclined to meet face-to-face with people they have previously met on the internet. However, focus groups show that older girls, from the northern part of Montenegro, tend to meet people this way, showing low awareness of the risks involved in such contact. **The boys most often had negative experiences on the internet, but the girls have stronger reactions to these experiences.** In general, 42% of the boys and 35% of the girls claim that they had at least some negative experience on the internet. The girls are more upset by all negative content, and in particular, content with sexual connotations. Finally, the boys are much less likely to turn to their parents regarding their internet activities, and parental control is much less frequent with boys than with girls.

All of the above findings indicate that the programmes and policies of prevention and protection on the internet should be directed at all children. The school, as the educational and instructional institution that includes a large number of children, is probably the best positioned institution for efficient implementation of these programmes and policies.

Survey findings show that schools can play a key role in directing children towards safer internet use. The majority of the children expressed very positive emotions related to school. Over 90% said they had a feeling of belonging to their school and that this was where they felt safe; over 80% felt that their teachers cared for them as people and that there was at least one teacher they could turn to when faced with a problem. Most parents, both in quantitative research and in focus group discussions, also expressed the view that they trust school in the matter of their children's use of the internet.

However, at this point, the role of schools in directing, controlling and protecting children in their internet use is relatively small. Lacking programmes and policies that would more clearly define the role of schools in this area, teachers' engagement is mainly based on their personal initiative. Under such circumstances, it is not surprising that the engagement of teachers in directing, controlling and supporting pupils in their internet use is

mostly sporadic. More than half of the children state that their teachers are not in any way involved in their internet use practice, either at school or outside it. **Furthermore, schools do not sufficiently take advantage of the opportunities that the internet offers in terms of learning or any educational activities.** On the other hand, the majority of children agreed that learning with the help of the internet is much easier and more fun.

In short, **the survey findings suggest at least a few guidelines for creators of programmes and policies of prevention and protection of children on the internet:**

- Raise awareness of both parents and children regarding the risks and dangers of internet use.
- Train parents and children on appropriate reactions to upsetting experiences on the internet.
- Encourage parents and children to report upsetting online problems to the institutions that deal with these problems.
- Raise awareness and trust in help centres, as well as official institutions that offer support and safety (both online and in personal contact).
- Improve digital literacy, particularly digital skills related to online safety (especially for parents, teachers and younger children).
- Strengthen the role of schools as institutions that should make parents and children aware of online safety problems and the best ways to overcome them.
- Involve schools to ensure the widest scope of campaigns and actions related to safe internet use.