



# CHILDREN INTERNET SAFETY

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**Authors:**

Besianë Musmurati  
Teuta Zymeri

**Editors:**

Hamit Qeriqi  
Bedri Zymeri  
Liridon Latifi

**IMPLEMENTED by:**

Center for advanced studies – FIT  
Eqrem Qabej, no. 166  
10000 Pristina, Kosova/o  
info@internetisigurte.org  
www.internetisigurte.org

**Coordinated by:**

Dhurata Nixha  
Save the Children

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Save the Children  
Gazmend Zajmi, no. 01  
10000 Pristina, Kosova/o  
Tel: +381 (0) 38 23 26 91  
FAX: +381 (0) 38 23 26 93  
Scik@savethechildren.org  
<http://Kosovo.savethechildren.net>

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## **About Save the Children**

Save the Children is the world's leading independent organization for children, working in around 120 countries around the world. Save the Children in Kosova/o has been working since 1997 implementing both emergency responses and development programmes in education, child protection and child rights governance throughout Kosovo.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**G**iven the lack of research in the field of children internet safety in Kosovo, this report seeks to understand how children use the internet and explore possible risks of harm related to online activities. This single-country comparative report seeks to firstly describe children's online behavior and then elaborate the risks associated with internet usage. Data was collected from a survey with 1150 children aged 9-16 in Kosovo from seven biggest municipalities in Kosovo.

The overall objective of this report is to measure Kosovo children's online behavior and assess their knowledge regarding internet safety issues by first mapping their online activities and analyzing the risks associated with these activities. The report contains six chapters: Introduction, Internet Usage, Online Activities, Risks, Cyber bullying, and Recommendations. The introduction explains in detail the aim and the methodology used for the report. The subsequent chapters consist of the main bulk of information on the main online activities and the risks associated with these activities. To begin with, the report analyzes how much children use the internet, main online activities, the point of access, and children's digital literacy skills. Next the report addresses the risks associated with online activities such as watching pornographic content, meeting new people, misuse of personal information, and attach of viruses. Moreover, the report highlights the forms and effects of cyber bullying, as well as the coping mechanisms that children use after they were bullied online. The last chapter presents the conclusions of the study and recommendations for multiple stakeholders such as children, parents, teachers, the industry, and policy makers.

The findings from the survey suggest that children in Kosovo are very active users of the internet and mainly use it for entertainment and communication purposes. Most of the children have reported that their favorite activities online consist of social networking sites, YouTube, and listening to music. There is a lack of involvement from parents and teachers in monitoring and supporting children online and children are increasingly using the internet independently from adult supervision. While the majority of children have reported to use the internet very privately, be that in their own rooms or accessing through a mobile phone, it has become very difficult for adults to monitor their online activities.

Overall, the report assesses that the use of internet by children in Kosovo should be strengthened rather than restricted. Considerable increase in awareness raising campaigns, investment in and improvement of internet safety tools, and overall better familiarity with internet usage among families should result in better and safer use of the internet by children.



# INTRODUCTION

**M**ost children today begin their online experience at a very young age. As an increasing number of children use the internet, using a variety of electronic devices to surf the web, they are also exposed to different types of risks.

If used properly, internet access can help children learn more about the world and serve as a useful tool for their development. On the other hand, children internet access, if not used properly or left unmonitored by adults, can lead to serious physical and psychological dangers, thus presenting a challenge to Kosovo's society. The risk of children abusing the internet due to lack of control from their parents, teachers, and guardians has dramatically increased particularly with the advent of social networking sites. Encouraging safe and responsible use of the internet as well as understanding potential risks are key steps towards building a risk management platform to keeping children safe online.

According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, children have human rights such as "the right to develop to the fullest" and "the right to protection from harmful influences". We believe that this report will inform Kosovo policy-makers about the dangers of non-implementing these core human rights of children while highlighting an important policy issue that has hitherto remained largely neglected.

Dangerous activities such as child pornography, creation of false profiles on social networking sites, and other related cyber activities oftentimes affect children's mental development, sometimes leading to violent behavior among schoolchildren. Given the lack of research in this field in Kosovo, this report seeks to understand how children use the internet and explore some possible risks of harm related to online activities.

The overall objective of this report is to measure children's online behavior and assess their knowledge regarding internet safety issues. The report tackles issues such as how children in Kosovo use the internet, their most frequent online activities, online literacy, various risks and threats such as watching inappropriate content, meeting new people, and cyber bullying.

Children are Kosovo's most valuable asset as they represent the future of our country. Moreover, children are also the most vulnerable members of the society and their protection against crime must be a priority for the policy makers. Unfortunately the same enhancements in technology that allow our children to grasp more knowledge and develop new communication tools are also leaving them vulnerable to the exploitation and harm by various online activities. The following report aims at informing the children, parents, teachers, and policy makers in Kosovo about the complexities and risks from online activities.

## Methodology

The present study is a single-country comparative report which seeks to firstly describe children's online behavior and then explore the risks associated with internet usage. Given the lack of data on internet usage in Kosovo, we have developed a survey which was sent to seven primary schools in Kosovo. The following schools were chosen to participate in the survey: Ibrahim Fehmiu (Prizren), Migjeni (Mitrovica), Naim Frasheri (Prishtina), Ramiz Sadiku (Peje), Tefik Canga (Ferizaj), Thimi Mitko (Gjilan), and Zekeria Rexha (Gjakove). The sample size consists of 1150 schoolchildren aged 9-16 years old (grades 5-9) from seven municipalities in Kosovo.

Besides receiving permission to conduct the survey in schools from the Departments of Education of Prizren, Mitrovica, Prishtina, Peja, Ferizaj, Gjilan, and Gjakova, we have asked every child to have the permission of their parent to participate in the survey. For each respondent, a letter of interest explaining the objectives of the survey was given to the parents, who then confirmed their child's participation in the survey.

Two templates of the survey were developed to target different age groups. The survey for children aged 9-12 years old (grades 4-6) contained 47 multiple choice questions, while the one for children aged 13-16 years old (grades 7-9) contained 50 questions, including 3 questions about sexual content online.

Aiming to have the best possible answers in the survey, each question was first read by the interviewer after which the children had the opportunity to ask (out loud or individually) for more clarifications. This method was used for all the questions in the survey.

- A pilot survey was conducted to eliminate some questions that were more complex. Some of the questions were modified to be simpler and more easily understood. After the pilot survey, more instructions were added in the questions to facilitate respondents' answers.
- We tried to create a relaxed environment for children. The survey was held in classrooms with their teachers being present. We made it clear that children's names were not to be used, so their responses would remain confidential. Also, we offered refreshments to all children who participated in the survey.
- For more sensitive questions (such as the harmful content on the Internet with which children could come into contact, for example: pornographic visuals) their meaning was explained and enough time was given to clarify details of these questions.
- For sensitive questions that could be considered as more difficult or embarrassing to answer, the respondents were given the "do not know" or "I prefer not to tell" options. In general, a small number of those options were used; however, for purely ethical purposes it was important to make available such options.

## Limitations and challenges

All efforts were made to best design, administer, and analyze the survey in order to map children's internet usage in Kosovo. Inevitably, however, the report has limitations which should be considered when interpreting the data. In addition, there were several challenges during the implementation of the survey.

- *Time constraints* – given the complexities of obtaining permission from the Department of Education in each municipality, it was difficult for us to coordinate all efforts in contacting each municipality and school director. Several visits per municipality were made from our staff before starting the implementation of the survey and this was very time consuming. In addition, receiving written permission from each parent created more difficulties than expected.
- *Response rate* – although the response rate is substantial, several children aged 13 to 16 years old did not send the letter of interest to their parents to sign, leaving them outside the sample size. Their lack of interest to fill out the survey reduced the response rate from 1,500 children as planned to 1,150 children (or 77 percent).
- *Indirect questions* – there were several questions which because of their sensitivity were asked in a very indirect way. For instance, questions about pornographic content and cyber bullying were followed by a paragraph explaining what the concept mean.
- *Survey context* – every survey takes place within a certain social context. Although children were informed about the anonymity of the survey, given peer pressure in class, children might have given more 'socially desired' answers.
- *Sample size* – although the sample size is representative of the overall population in terms of geographic coverage, it is important to note that rural areas were not included in the sample.

# INTERNET USAGE

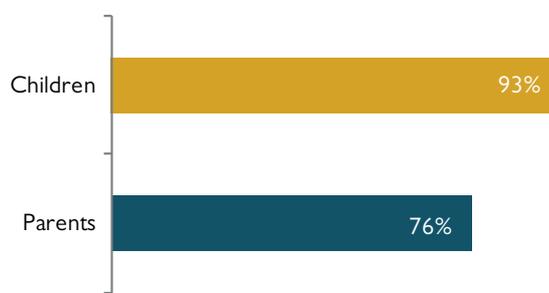
The survey included several questions about children's internet usage, which refers to all online activities from any of the devices used at any level. The extent to which children use the internet and how they access it are important factors to be considered when analyzing the risks related to internet usage. The devices that children use to access the internet shape the context in which they use the internet, consequently affecting their online activities.

In addition, how children use the internet as well as levels of internet usage can help policy makers in identifying the best policy tools and instruments in tackling this issue. Given the rapid change in the diversity of levels and methods of access, policy makers need to catch up in responding with policies and regulations to promote a safer online environment for children.

## How much children use the internet

As expected, children have declared that they use the internet more than their parents. From the table below we can see that 93% of the children use the internet, while only 76% of the children claimed that their parents use the internet. In general, there were no gender differences in using the internet, but as the graph shows children use the internet more than their parents.

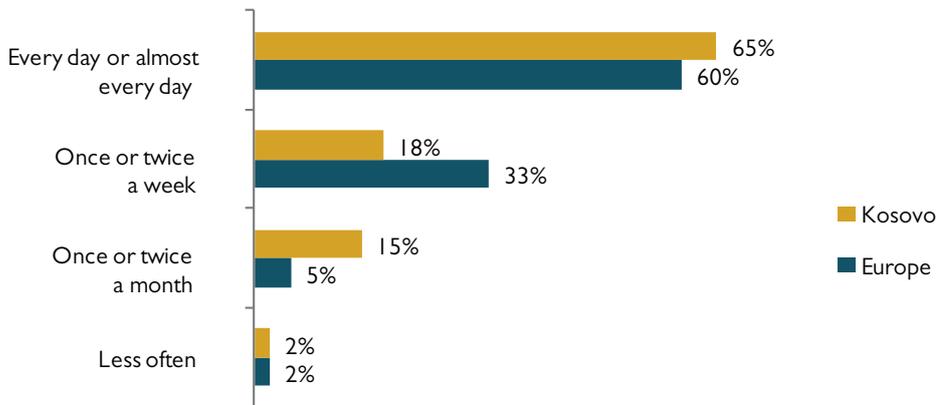
■ **Figure 1:** Internet use by children and parents



Base: 1,144

In addition, the respondents were asked to show the frequency of internet usage. As predicted, most of the children use the internet daily, for one to two hours. The survey has shown that the frequency with which children in Kosovo use the internet daily is more or less the same with their peers in other European countries. The following graphs show the Kosovo and European percentages taken from the EU Kids Online Survey.

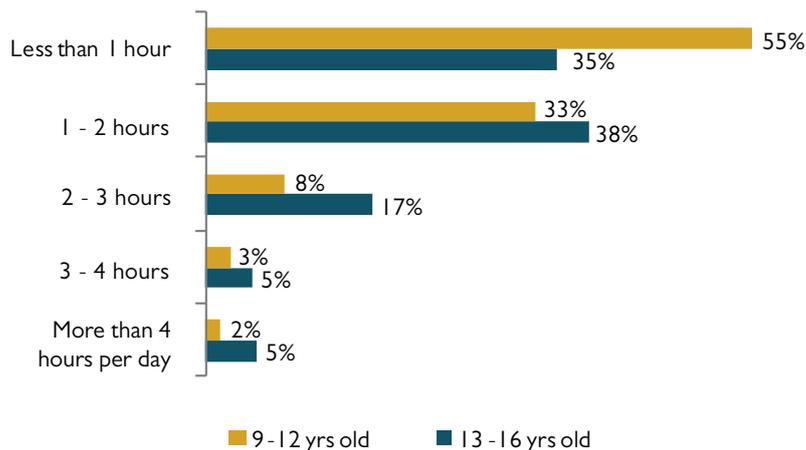
■ **Figure 2:** How often children use the internet



However, in terms of hours spent online daily, Kosovar children use the internet much more than their European peers. As seen from Figure 3, the majority of Kosovar children (49%) who use the internet daily spend more than 2 hours online, while the majority of children in other European countries (60%) spend less than 1 hour online.

Moreover, 5% of 13-16 years olds and 2% of the 9-12 year olds have declared that they spend more than 4 hours online daily. Studies have shown that the screen should not be the primary source for interaction and entertainment for children. Children learn and develop by playing outdoor activities so when they spend too much time online, they do not get enough exercise and mental stimulation. Several problems such as sleep deprivation, aggression, obesity, and violent behavior can emerge from spending too much time online.

■ **Figure 3:** How long do children use the internet daily

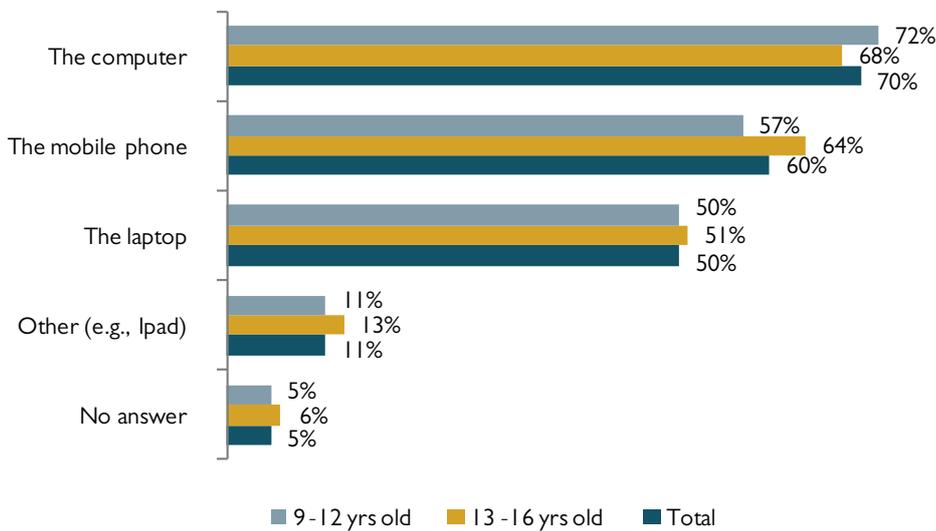


## Point of access

Until recently, internet was mainly accessed via a desktop computer, be that at home or elsewhere; however, with the spread of smart phones and other personalized devices, methods of using the internet have changed. More and more, the internet is being used more privately, leading to increased unsupervised access for children.

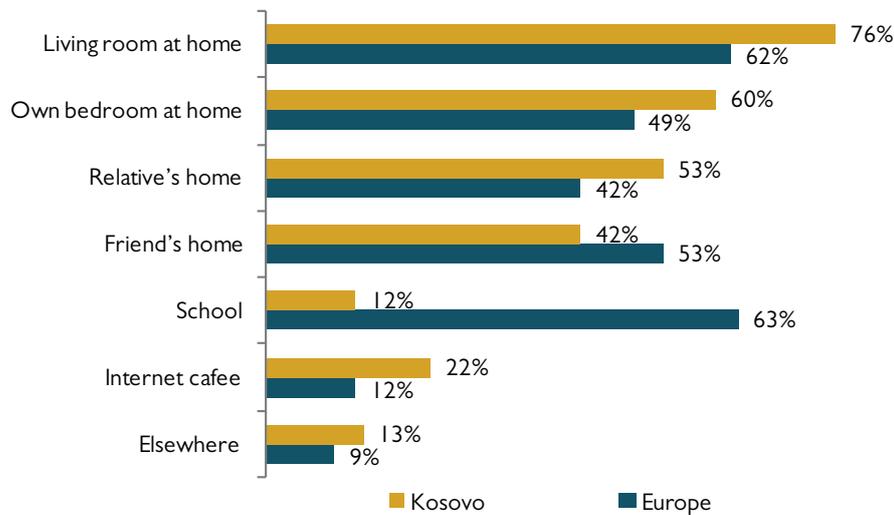
The findings from the survey suggest that the usage of mobile phones to access the internet has increased significantly in the last two years. A previous study done by Center FIT about children internet usage in 2012 revealed that 43% of children were using the internet from their phones, whereas now this percentage has increased to 60%.

**Figure 4:** Devices through which children use the internet



Children were also asked to identify where specifically do they use the internet and the following answers were given:

■ **Figure 5:** Where do children use the internet



As the Figure 5 shows, most of the time, children use the internet from their home. Using the internet from home has more risks than using it from shared spaces such as schools. As indicated in the EU Kids Online survey, in European countries children mainly use the internet from school (60%), which immediately reduces the risks as its usage as it can be easily be monitored or restricted by teachers. However, our survey has shown that in Kosovo, only 11% of children use the internet when at school. Given that children in Kosovo use the internet more than their parents, it becomes more difficult for parents to monitor children while surfing online.

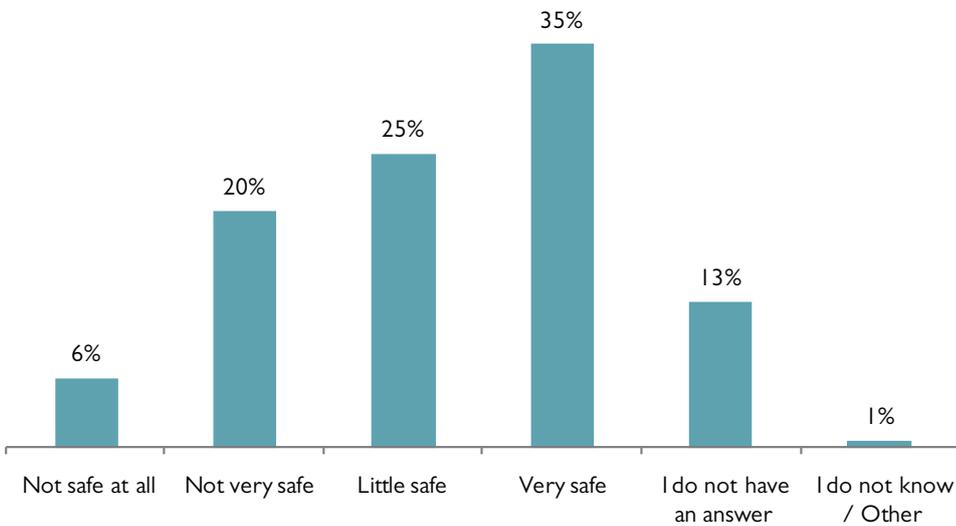
The data above show that internet usage by children in Kosovo is highly personalized and internet access and usage is more difficult to be monitored by teachers and/or parents. This is a very important finding for policy makers as it helps them identify better ways to promote internet safety. It shows that policy makers have to be more focused around strategies which aim at educating teachers about digital literacy so that they can pass on the knowledge to children and encourage self-protection.

## Digital literacy and safety measures

Digital literacy, broadly defined as the ability to effectively navigate and create information using a range of digital technologies, is among the most important factors shaping children's online activities. The depth and range of internet activities directly depends on the children's ability to understand the complexities of the digital devices as well as the internet. It is assumed that the more digitally literate children are, the better prepared they are to avoid or deal with online risks. When asked to show if they know and understand internet usage, 44% of the respondents have declared to have a good understanding, 42% an average understanding, while 14% have a limited understanding.

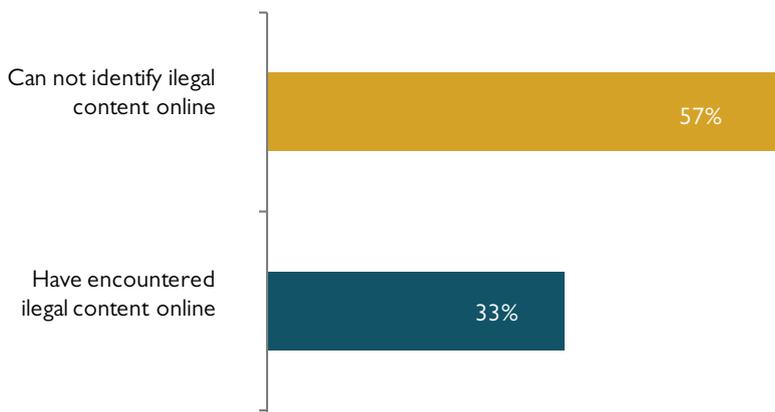
Digital literacy is also related to the safety measures used to protect oneself while using the internet. When asked if they feel safe while using the internet, children in Kosovo have reported the following:

**Figure 6:** How safe do children feel while using the internet



The findings suggest that children in Kosovo feel somehow safe when using the internet. Although 35% of children declared that they feel very safe, another 26% claimed the opposite. It is important to evaluate how much children know about internet safety so we have asked them if they can identify illegal online content, and if they were ever exposed to such content. The following answers emerged:

**Figure 7:** Identifying illegal content in the internet



As the table points out, the majority of children (57%) cannot identify illegal content or they are not sure if they can. This also explains the low percentage of children (33%) claiming that they were exposed to illegal content as they are not even aware when they are being exposed to such content. These findings suggest that children in Kosovo are not fully aware of the risks posed from the internet. Although they claim to have a good understanding of the internet,

their answers show that their understanding is limited as a good number of children reported that they do not feel safe online and the majority cannot identify illegal content online.

## (Un)supervised internet usage

This section focuses on the ways that children learn about safety measures in the internet and the degree to which they can be supervised. Children were asked if they ever received any information or tips regarding safe ways to use the internet and 70% of them have declared to have received some kind of information. In addition, we have asked them about the teacher's tips on the issue and the following data have emerged:

■ **Table I:** Teachers' mediation of child's internet safety (in percent)

	Yes	No	I do not know	Total
Told you how to act in the internet	54	41	5	100
Helped you when you faced difficulties	58	38	6	100
Explained why some webpages are good or harmful	60	33	7	100
Suggested ways how to safely use the internet	55	37	7	100
Suggested ways how to act with people online	47	44	9	100
Explained what you should do when you find disturbing content online	39	51	10	100

Generally, online safety measures can be taught to children in school by their teachers or peers and at home by their parents or siblings. The table above shows that teachers play an important role in educating children about internet safety. In most of the cases, children have reported that their teachers help them in identifying risks online; however, 61% of the children reported that their teachers have never explained to them what should be done when they find disturbing content online. This should draw the attention of policy makers about training teachers about ways of responding to online risks.

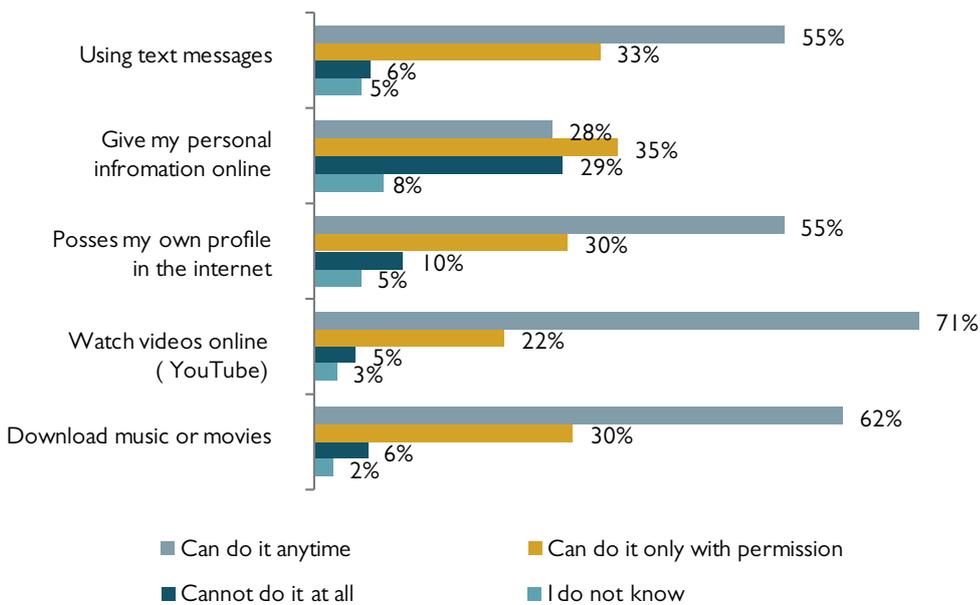
Nevertheless, the picture is not this optimistic with parents' involvement in the process. As previously mentioned, the majority of children in Kosovo use the internet at home; so the input from parents on children's education on internet safety is even more important than that of the teachers.

The survey has shown that parents in Kosovo have a more limited understanding of the internet than children themselves. Although 76% of the children have claimed that their parents use the internet, 70% have also reported that they have a better knowledge of internet usage than their parents. These statistics show that it is very difficult for parents to monitor and manage children's online activities when they are still in the 'catching-up' with their children.

In addition, children were asked if their parents know about their online activities and 34% have reported that their parents do not know a lot about their online activities. Despite the fact that the majority of children declared that their parents know about their online activities, the

parents do not manage their children’s internet usage. This is best shown by the results of the question on the activities which are allowed by parents to their children.

**Figure 8:** Children’s allowed online activities



As the figure above shows, children in Kosovo perform most of their activities online without the supervision from their parents and only a few activities, such as sharing personal information online, are actually supervised by the parents. Effects of unsupervised internet usage will be further elaborated in the following sections.

# ONLINE ACTIVITIES

In the survey we have asked children about which online activities they take up, in order to understand the opportunities they have and provide a context to identify and explore online risks. Understanding the nature and range of online activities can help policy makers, teachers, and parents in identifying risks associated with internet usage. Several studies have shown that the more children use the internet, the vaster are the possibilities to learn new things, but also the risk exposure is higher.

## Main activities

Internet usage differs depending on the age of the user. Research has shown that parents mainly use the internet to check their emails as well as do research online; whereas, children use the internet to communicate with others via social networks, listen to music, or play games. The results from the survey show children's main activities online revolve around Facebook, listening to music, watching YouTube videos, and playing video games.

**Table 2:** Children's preferred online activities

	Gender		Age		Total
	Male	Female	9 - 12 yrs old	13 - 16 yrs old	
Facebook	79.7	67.9	70.3	80.7	74.2
Music	64.9	77.1	71.3	69.4	70.5
YouTube	59.6	58.1	58.2	59.9	58.9
Games	52.1	38.5	52.7	34.6	45.8
Chat - Messenger	23.4	20.7	17.4	29.7	22.1
Instagram	19.6	25.0	16.6	31.1	22.1
Wikipedia	19.6	19.0	19.1	19.6	19.3
Web Search	16.5	13.4	12.8	18.7	15.0
I do not know/Other	4.5	6.0	5.3	5.1	5.2

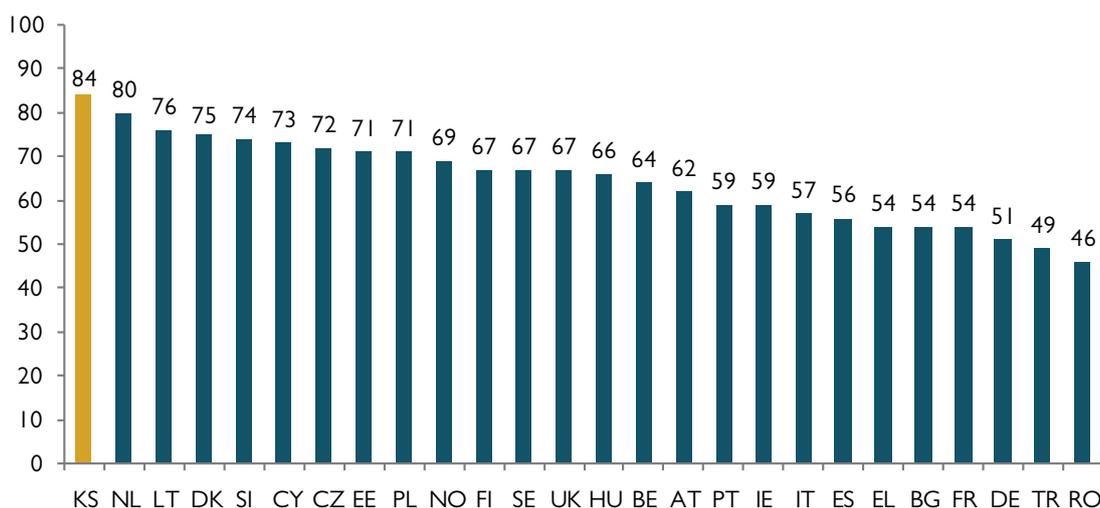
From the results above we can conclude that children in Kosovo mainly use the internet for entertainment purposes (e.g. Music 70.5%) and to communicate with each other (e.g. Facebook 74.2%). Social networking is among the most popular activities, whereas searching the web for other functions was not very popular. It is important to note that using the internet for educational and academic searches contains less risks for children than using it for networking. For this reason, the more children use the internet for communication (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) or entertainment (listening to music, watching YouTube videos), the higher their exposure to online risks such as cyber bullying, meeting new people, and abuse of personal data.

## Social Networks

Certainly, social networking sites have attracted the attention of youth and adults worldwide and Kosovo is no exception. The usage of these sites has also rapidly increased due to these sites compatibility with smart phones. Arguably, there are various benefits for children when using social networks but sharing information online has also widened the scope for online harm. By integrating messaging, photo albums, videos, and other functions, social networking sites have also created more space for online risks. For instance, downloaded pictures from the internet can contain hidden viruses, posting pictures online creates space for misusing these pictures, instant messaging and comments facilitate cyber bullying, video-chatting encourages children to meet with strangers, fake profiles are very easily created and children can be victimized by other children or adults. Meeting with strangers from social networking sites poses serious threats to children and can lead to offense, bullying, harassment, and even rape. In other words, social networking sites offer a platform for communication which can be easily misused by adults and can lead to serious offenses for children which may permanently impact their childhood and lives. For this reason, it is very important for policy makers to address this problem and raise children's awareness on privacy settings in social networking sites and internet safety in general.

As predicted, the number of children in Kosovo who use social networking sites is very high, especially if compared to other European countries. Among all 9-16 year olds across Kosovo, 84% have reported to have an active Facebook or Twitter account. However, as reported in the EU Kids Online Survey, in European countries only 59% of the 9-16 year olds have their own social networking profiles. The following figure summarizes the percentages of children who have an active profile in any social networking site for different European countries.

**Figure 9:** Children with social networking profile in Kosovo and Europe

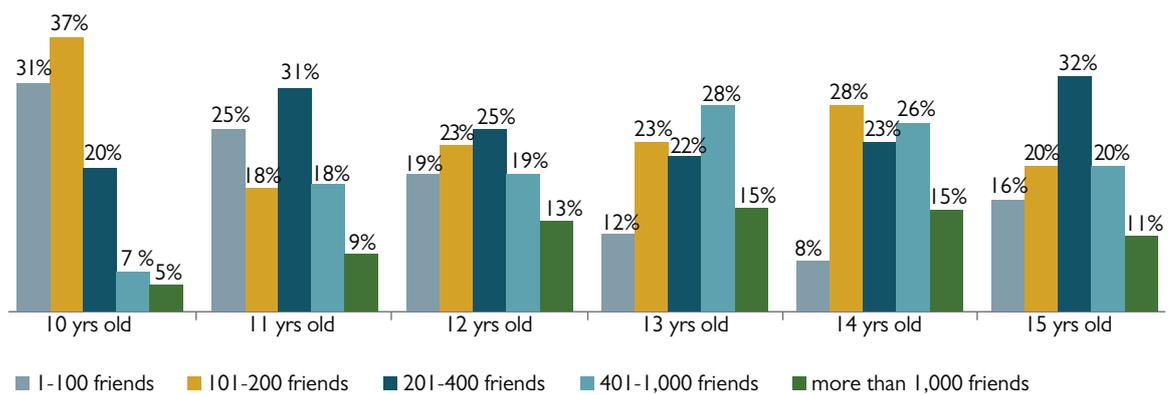


As seen from the figure, Kosovar children are the heaviest users of social networking sites. When compared with other regional countries such as Bulgaria (54%), Romania (46%) and Turkey (49%), children from Kosovo are far more active in such platforms. Social networking seems more popular in Prizren (91%) and Gjilan (89%), and least practiced in Gjakova (76%) and Mitrovica (78%). In addition, the findings suggest that boys (91%) use social networking sites

more than girls (76%); however, there is no major difference in the response between the age groups, 9-12 years olds (82%) and 13-16 years olds (88%).

When asked to indicate the number of friends in their accounts in one of the social networking profiles, children have reported disturbing statistics. The figure below reports the number of friends for every age group:

■ **Figure 10:** Children's number of friends in social networks



As the fourth bar indicates, the number of children with more than 400 friends increases with age, peaking at the age of 13 years old. The same trend is witnessed in the number of children with more than 1000 friends. Facebook requires all its users to be at least 13 years old before they can create an account (in some jurisdictions, this age limit may be even higher). In addition, the findings suggest that in general boys have more friends than girls. It can be inferred that children aged from 9-12 years old exaggerate their age in order to obtain a profile in age-restricted websites.

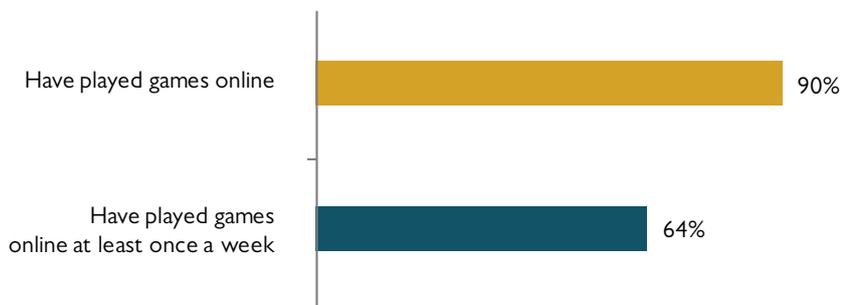
Evidently, the higher the number of friends, the higher the risk for misuse of personal information, cyber bullying, and other risks. Also, the younger the children are, the less they know about account privacy settings; hence, they are more exposed to online risks. Only 9% of the children in other European countries have declared to have more than 300 friends on their social networking profiles.

It is extremely difficult to draw the line between online activities that facilitate positive outcomes and those which increase the risk of harm; however, these findings should serve as a warning to policy makers to start educational campaigns with children and teachers about the effects of overusing social networking sites.

## Online games

Besides social networking sites, online games also offer an attractive platform for children to interact. Nowadays, due to enhanced technologies, online gaming systems incorporate chat-rooms, voice-enabled chat, and message boards. Worldwide, players can connect with other to play together while they can also chat and exchange information. Moreover, some games allow voice-chat with other players and children can hear and speak to other players. Hereby, when playing games online, children can be exposed to the same online risks as when using social networking sites. Most famous threats coming from online gaming systems are cyber bullying, theft or misuse of personal information, and enticement. Playing video games online is also a very frequent and preferred online activity for children in Kosovo as well. The following figure summarizes their answers:

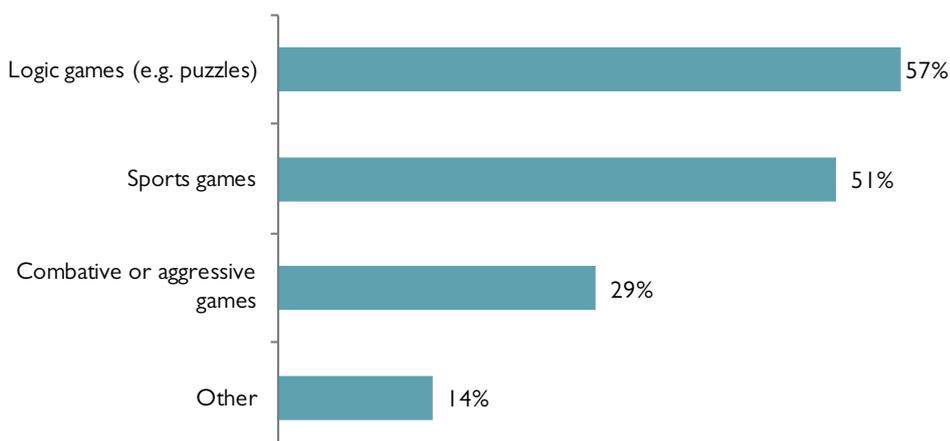
■ **Figure 11:** Child has played online games



Online gaming may involve both social risks and technological risks. In terms of social risks, given that most online games have integrated video-chats and instant messaging in their websites, intruders may use the social interaction in trying to capture personal information, steal identity, credit card information, or harass children. 7% of children in the survey have declared that they have been bullied while playing games online. Technological risks include but are not limited to, viruses and worms and installing malicious software which compromise the security of computers.

Children were also asked to identify which types of games do they mostly play and the following results were reported:

■ **Figure 12:** What kind of games do children play?



The results show that 29% of children play combative or aggressive games. Research has shown that exposure to violence on TV or playing violent video games increases aggressive behavior in children. Several authors stated that children who play violent video games for extended periods of time tend to be more aggressive, are more prone to conflict with their peers, teachers, or parents, and see a decline in school achievements.

Potential harm from online gaming can be minimized if parents minimize or limit the amount of time children play as well as control the types of games they play. Teachers can discuss the inappropriateness of violent video games and how they encourage aggressive behavior in real life.

# RISKS

Undoubtedly, the internet has significantly changed the way children interact with each other and the world. Now, more than ever, children have access to in-depth knowledge and tools to express their creativity and connect with each other. Yet, along with offering new ways to connect and interact with the world, the internet also offers new risks for its users. Encouraging safe and responsible use of the internet as well as understanding potential risks are key steps towards building a risk management platform to keeping children safe online.

Some websites contain illegal materials which children can access anytime. Although it is very difficult to measure how much content online is harmful for children, to illustrate, just in 2012, the UK Internet Watch Foundation has identified 9550 web pages worldwide which contained child sexual abuse content. This statistic alone shows the great possibilities for children to be exposed to inappropriate content online and be affected by dangerous activities or excessive violence.

Some of the risks addressed in our survey and also in this report are watching inappropriate content online (pornography, sexual content, aggressive videos), meeting with new people, misuse of personal information, and attack by viruses.

## Pornographic content

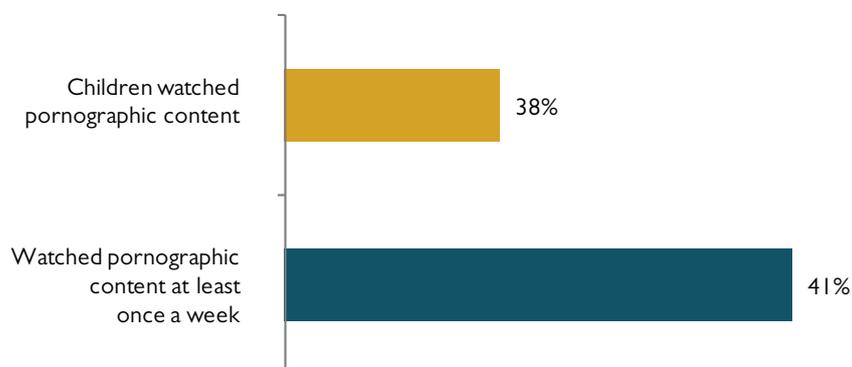
Some websites contain illegal materials, while others may be legal, but are meant only for adults or have unregulated advice which can be harmful for children. Generally, children may access inappropriate pornographic content accidentally or intentionally from curiosity. For ethical purposes, questions about pornographic content cannot be asked explicitly to children, for to do so might induce new ideas to children who might not be aware of such phenomena. For this reason, questions related to sexual content were omitted from the survey for children under 13 years old. Questions about sexual content given to 13-16 year olds were introduced to children in the following way:

*“In the last 12 months, you might have seen different images- photos, videos, etc. Sometimes, these images might be inappropriate (for instance pornographic images).”*

To contextualize online pornography within the wider context of exposure to pornography across all media channels, children were asked two questions:

*“In the past 12 months, have you watched anything of this kind? (for instance inappropriate photos or videos (pornographic))”* and *“How often have you seen such content?”* The figure below summarizes their answers.

■ **Figure 13:** Child has seen images with pornographic content in the past year

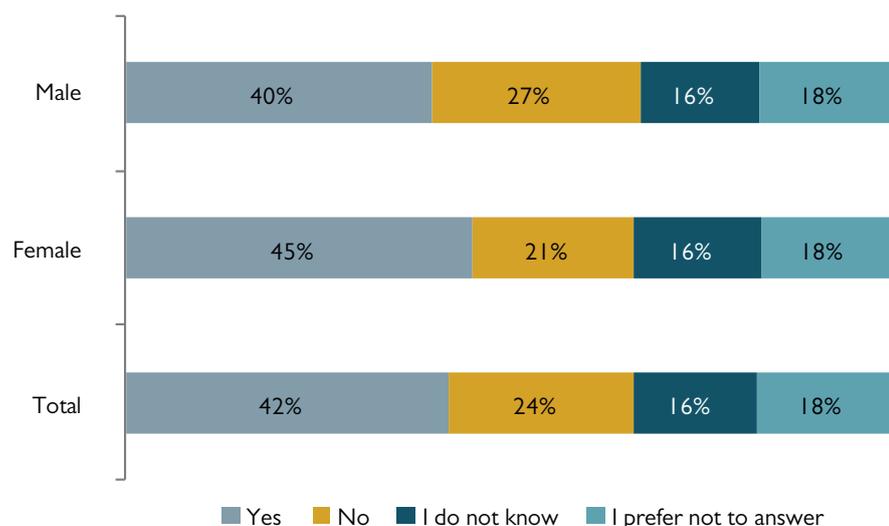


In terms of gender, boys (45%) have reported to have watched more (both in percentage and frequency) pornographic content than girls (31%). The greatest exposure to online pornographic content is among children in Gjilan (61%), Prizren (48%), Gjakove (43%), and Ferizaj (33%); whereas, least exposure is in Prishtine (32%), Peje (29%), and Mitrovice (25%), and.

Seeing sexual content in the internet may or may not have the same impact in every child. Unless one implies that seeing sexual content is inevitably harmful to all children, it must be mentioned that there might be children that may be exposed to sexual content without any adverse effects. For this reason, we asked all children if they had seen sexual content online and were negatively affected. The question was formulated as follows:

*“Seeing sexual images online may be fine or not fine. In the last year, have you seen any sexual images that made you feel uncomfortable, upset, or you felt that you should not have seen them?”*

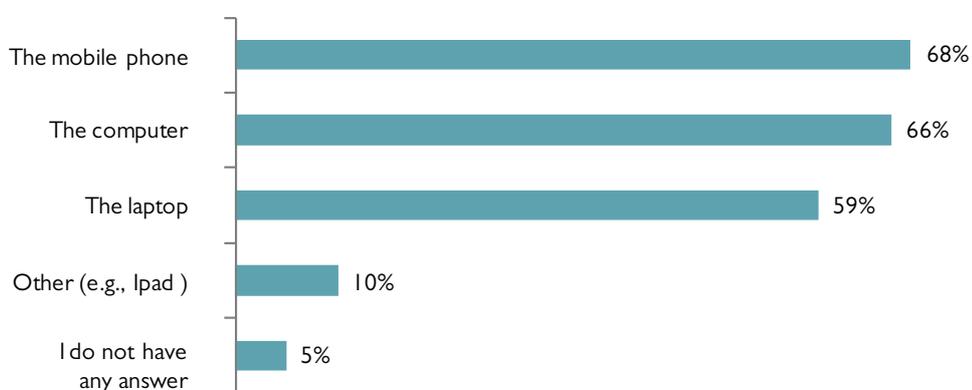
■ **Figure 14:** Child was bothered/ disturbed from seeing sexual images online



As the figure above shows, 42% of all children claimed that they have been bothered in some way by pornographic content online. From the findings we can conclude that girls are a little less likely to see pornographic visuals than boys (31% vs. 45%) but they are more likely to be bothered/disturbed by it (45% vs. 40%).

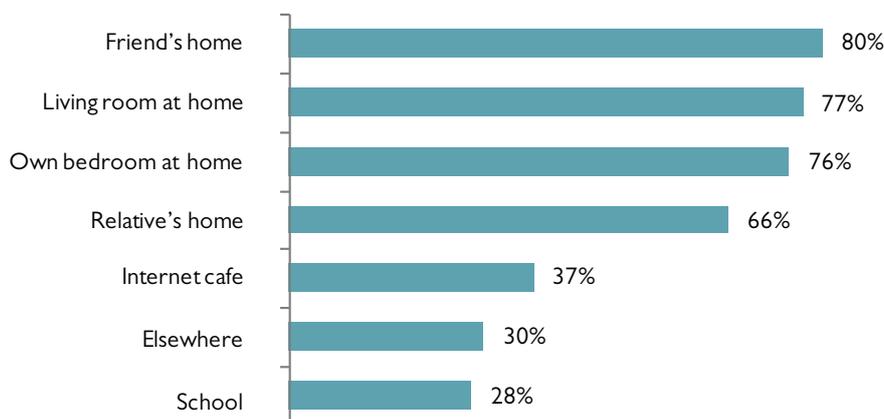
Access to online pornography is of course determined by the device children use to go online as well as their point of access. The following figure, a cross tabulation between two variables, shows the percentage of children who have watched pornographic content and were disturbed by this and the device used to watch such content.

■ **Figure 15:** Device used to watch disturbing pornographic content



An interesting finding came forward from this question. The majority (68%) of children in Kosovo who reported to have been upset or disturbed by watching pornographic content online, have used their mobile phones to watch such content. The second most used device, the computer (66%), although not used as much as phones, still represents a major access device for watching pornographic content. Besides knowing about the device used to watch disturbing pornographic content, the place of internet access is also important to be examined.

■ **Figure 16:** Place of internet access used to watch disturbing pornographic content



The majority of children (80%) who have watched pornographic content have done so from a friend's house. This is important as it shows that children have watched inappropriate content while accompanied by their peers. Children have also reported that they watch such content at home, be that at their living room (77%), or at their own bedroom (76%).

In general, as stated in the sections above, when children use the internet from public spaces on shared computers from school or internet cafes, it is more difficult for them to access inappropriate content. On the other hand, when they use private computers, the risks are higher as they are less supervised.

The fact that 28% of children have reported to have watched disturbing pornographic content from school is very worrying. This means that internet access in schools is not supervised by teachers and restrictions to various dangerous web pages do not exist. This finding should serve as a warning to policy makers to educate teachers in ways of restricting internet usage in schools.

Overall, internet usage by children in Kosovo is highly personalized and internet access and usage is very difficult to be monitored by teachers and parents. The fact that children watch pornographic content in schools, internet cafes, their own, friend's, or relative's home, show that neither parents nor teachers are able to put restrictions in terms of what web pages children can access. In addition, the use of very personal devices such as phones or personal PCs and laptops furthermore proves that children in Kosovo can make the difference between inappropriate and appropriate content, as they use more personal devices (which are difficult to be monitored) to access such content.

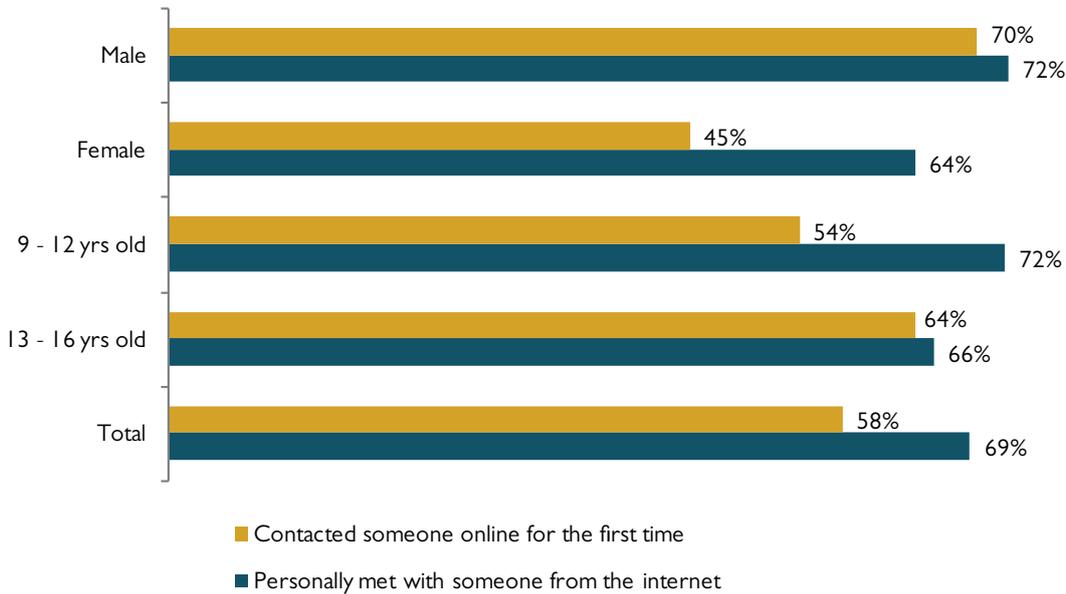
## Meeting New People

Generally, the biggest public and policy concern about children's internet safety focuses on the risk that children will meet someone online who then will abuse them in face to face meetings. Results from the survey show that such a concern is valid as children in Kosovo meet with strangers quite frequently. As previously indicated, children in Kosovo mainly use the internet to communicate with others. They have reported that using social networking sites is the most popular activity online, with 84% of children declaring to have an active Facebook or Twitter account. Moreover, 32% of the children, most of them under 13 years old with little information about privacy settings, claimed that they have more than 400 friends/followers in their social networking profiles.

It is evident that social networking sites offer a platform for communication which can be easily misused by adults and can lead to serious offenses for children which may forever impact their lives. Data from the survey suggest that it is a fairly common practice for children in Kosovo to show identifying information of some kind (photos, name of school, e-mail) in their social networking site profile, making them relatively easy targets of online predators.

Considering the importance of tackling the issue of meeting strangers from internet, the survey included six questions to further elaborate this issue. The survey focused on the practice of making new friends from the internet which leads to meeting such people face to face and, then, elaborates further if these meetings pose a risk of harm for children.

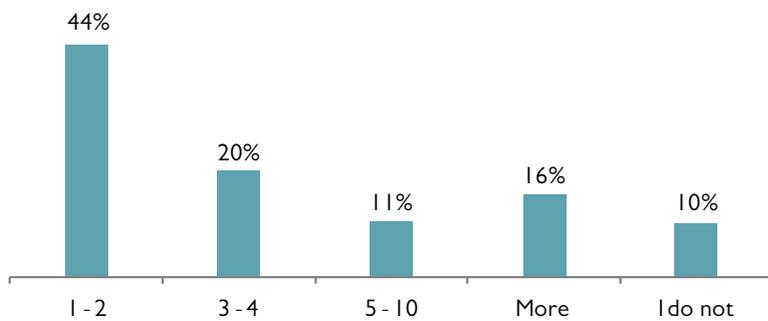
**Figure 17:** Child has contacted someone online, or went to meet face-to-face with stranger



The findings show that 58% of children have contacted online with someone they did not previously know and 69% of these children have also gone to a face to face meeting with someone they first met online.

Following up on the children’s experience of going to face to face meetings with people first met online, we next asked only those who answered positively, how many people they had met in this way. It is important to note that this question was asked only to those who have reported such a meeting, which consists of a 44% of the overall population of children who use the internet.

**Figure 18:** Number of online contacts children met offline



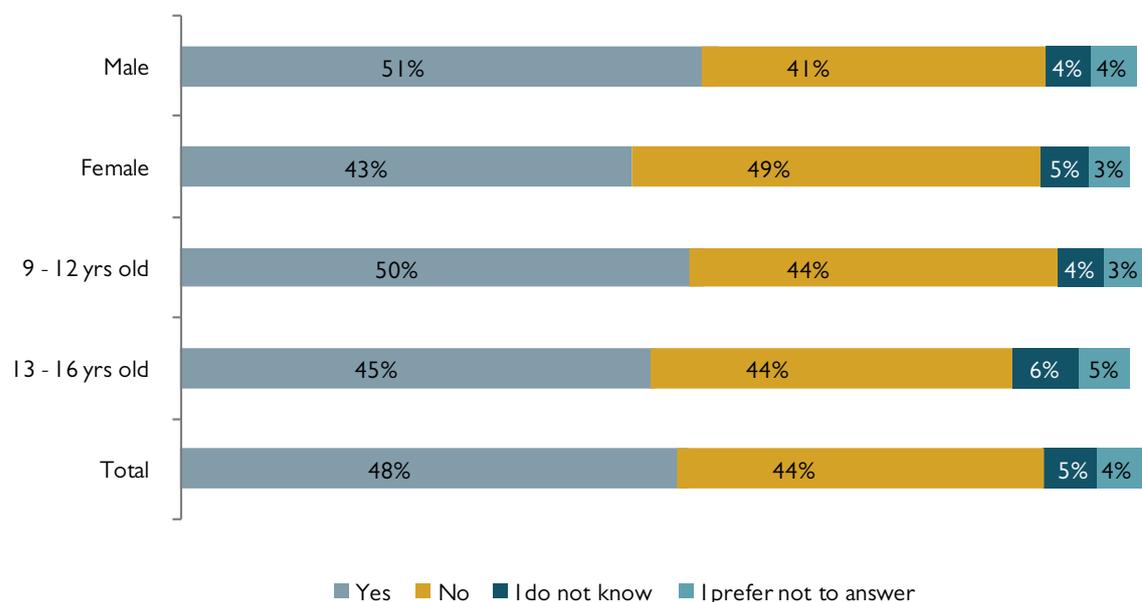
As the figure shows, 44% of those who have gone to a meeting with someone they first met online declare that they met just one or two people this way in the last 12 months. 20% say that they met three or four people, 11% say that they met five to ten people, 16% met more than ten people, and 10% declared that they do not know.

Even though the percentage of children who met more than ten strangers from the internet is not high per se, it is still an alarming finding. It shows that, 81 children (16%) meet with more than strangers annually. When compared to the rest of Europe, where 77% of children declared that they meet less than four people annually, Kosovo children are more predisposed to being faced with various offenders and more exposed to harm.

Besides analyzing the frequency of these meetings, it is also important to understand and evaluate how children perceive harm from meeting online contacts. Making new contacts on the internet and then meeting them face to face is, perhaps, one of the more contested online activities for children. Such meetings can be harmless, leading to a wider social circle for the child, but can also be dangerous mean of contacting abusive offenders. We asked the question about subjective harm as follows:

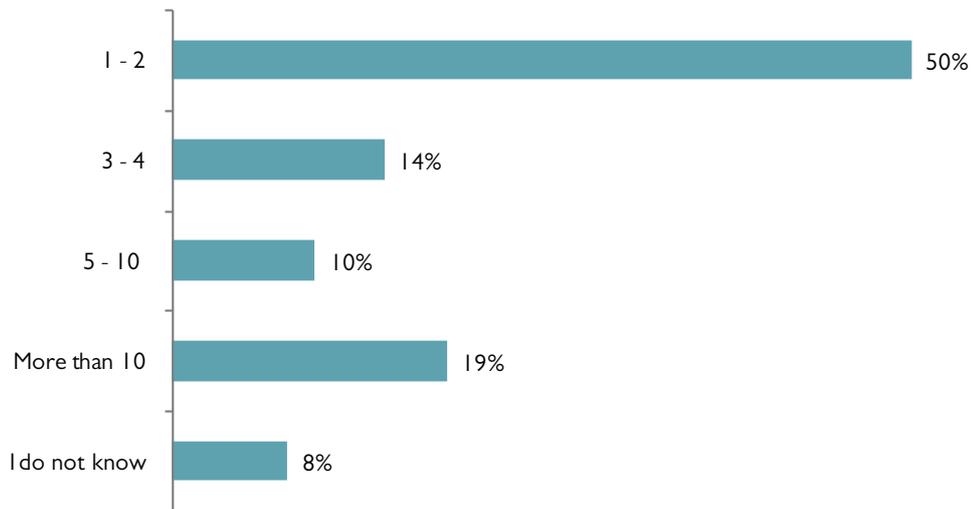
*“Face to face meetings with strangers that you first met online may be fine or not fine. Have you met someone in this way that made you feel uncomfortable, upset, disappointed, sad, or felt that you should not have met them?”*

■ **Figure 19:** Child was bothered when met face-to-face with online contact



Among all the children who have met a stranger from the internet, 48% have declared that they were bothered by such a meeting. As expected, the youngest group age (9-12 year olds) was bothered more from meeting strangers. However, contrary to the often vocalized public fear that girls are more endangered in such meetings, girls reported less negative experiences than boys. The following figure summarizes the results of the number of online contacts who children meet in person for the first time.

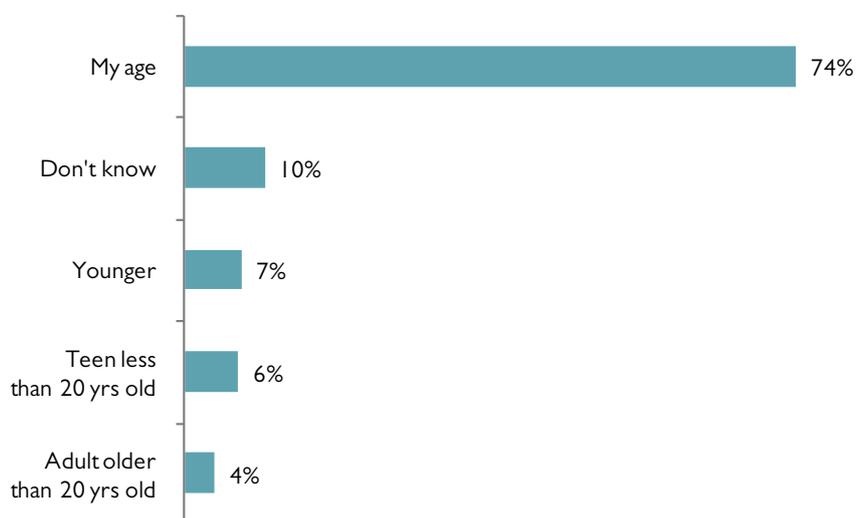
■ **Figure 20:** Number of online contacts children met offline and were bothered by the meeting



The figure shows that the majority of children (50%) meet with one to two strangers. 19% of children who met online contacts offline and were bothered by such a meeting declared that they have met more than ten people in the last year. Meeting regularly with strangers from social networking sites poses serious threats to children and can lead to offense, bullying, harassment, and even rape. Once the child's confidence has been won by an adult, and the face to face meeting is arranged, the child is in great danger of physical and psychological harm. Fake profiles can be created very easily and offenders can lie about their age in attempts to trick children in meeting with them. But who do Kosovar children meet with?

Children have reported that they mostly meet with boys/men (61%) rather than with girls/women (39%). The following figure shows the age of the people that children met with:

■ **Figure 21:** Age of the online person that children met online and were bothered by the meeting



Of those who were bothered by meeting a stranger in person after contacting them for the first time online, 74% met with someone their own age, suggesting that the majority of face to face meetings happen among peers. The risk of harm from meeting peers is lower than meeting with older people. Data from the survey has shown that 10% of the children who were bothered from meeting online contacts in person meet with older people, 4% of which meet with adults more than 20 years old. The possibility of both physical and psychological harm is higher for children when they meet with children older than themselves, and even greater with adults.

The consequences for children who meet online contacts face to face and have been bothered but this should be carefully examined. A range of reactive and proactive policy interventions are needed to address this problematic issue. Although only 10%, or 29 children, have reported that they met with strangers older than themselves, the risks of potential physical or psychological abuse remains high and needs attention from policy-makers, parents, and teachers. Recommendations include, but are not limited to, educate children in the risks associated with meeting strangers by organizing media campaigns online and offline.

## Other risks

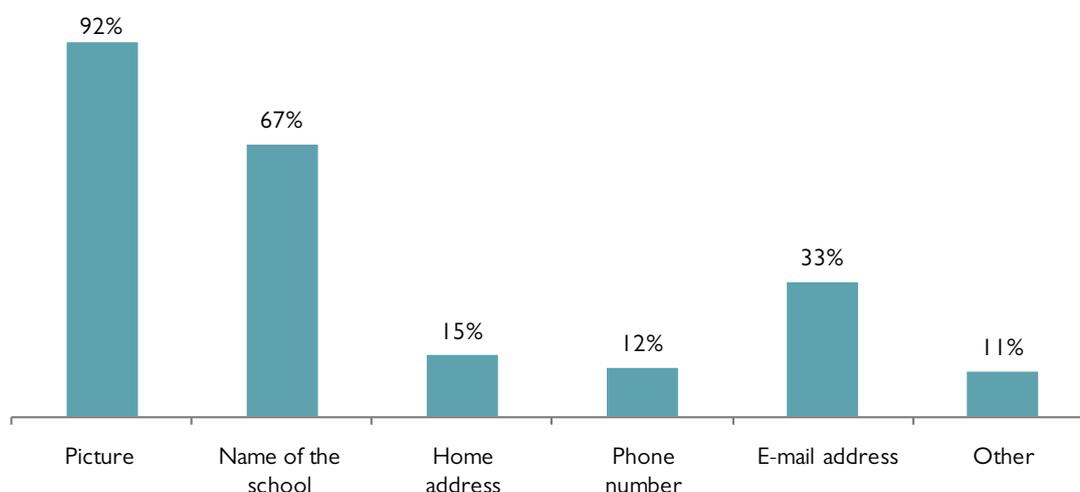
In the sections above, we have explained several risks related to internet usage such as: exposure to inappropriate content, pornography, online gaming, and meeting new people. These risks are mentioned in almost all world-wide reports about children internet safety. However, there are other risks which need the attention of the policy makers but because of financial and time constraints were not able to elaborate in great details as the other risks.

### Publication of personal data online

Many factors may influence the child's exposure to online risks, one of them being the openness of activities online or the control of privacy settings. Do wide circles of friends in their social network profiles imply that children in Kosovo do not restrict their account privacy settings and include strangers in their friend list?

The survey shows that it is a fairly common practice for children in Kosovo to show identifying information of some kind (photos, name of school, e-mail) in their social networking profiles. Privacy issues were elaborated further and children were asked to indicate if they post pictures, their email, phone number, and address in their profiles and the following results were reported:

■ **Figure 22:** Type of personal information children put in their profiles



The results show that most children put their personal picture and name of school on their social networking profiles, with about 92% and 67% of children respectively. The most concerning statistic is the percentage of children (12%) who post their phone number in their profiles. Making the phone number publicly available through the social networks poses a serious threat to children and facilitates their personal contact with strangers.

Generally, boys publish more personal data online than girls. Boys have a greater tendency (about 17% of them) to publish their phone number online compared with girls (about 6% of them). In addition, 39% of boys post their personal email in their social networking profiles, whereas only 25% of girls do so.

Overall, children in Kosovo over-use social networking sites and consequently become overly exposed to various online threats. Considering their vast number of friends, posting personal information in their profiles and the lack of restricted privacy settings can negatively impact children of any age. Their posts are automatically seen by hundreds or thousands other people who may contact them afterwards and their personal information may be misused.

## Misuse of personal information

Viruses, misuse of personal information, e-mail hacking, posting unpleasant materials, bullying, and the feeling of threat are the other risks that children may be faced with while surfing on the internet. We have asked children to indicate whether one of the following has happened to them: their computer was attacked by a virus, personal data was misused, e-mail was hacked, someone posted unpleasant content in their wall, they were offended, bullied, or threatened. The table below summarizes their answers:

■ **Table 3:** Child has experienced misuse of personal data in the past year (in percent)

	Yes	No	I do not know	Total
My computer was attacked by a virus	55.1	37.0	7.9	100
My personal data was misused	14.6	79.5	5.9	100
My e-mail was hacked	19.1	77.5	3.5	100
Somebody posted unpleasant content in my wall	14.6	78.7	6.6	100
I was offended	19.5	76.4	4.1	100
Somebody made me feel in danger or threatened me	12.1	83.3	4.6	100

The results show that more than half of the children (55%) stated that their computer was attacked by a virus. Computer viruses are software programs that are purposely designed to interfere with computer operations, corrupt data, delete data or spread themselves to other computers and throughout the internet. These functions of viruses interfere with the security and privacy of the children which may cause various negative impacts. There were no significant differences in terms of gender as both, boys and girls, reported that their computers were attacked by some kind of virus.

Misuse of personal information was also reported and 15% of the children have stated that their personal data were misused online; 17% of which were boys and 12% girls. In addition, about 19% of the children stated that someone stole the password to their personal email, while 15% declared that someone has posted unpleasant content in their wall in their social networking profiles. Moreover, 20% of children, of which 25% boys and 14% girls, declared that somebody has offended them by calling them with unpleasant names.

Although the percentage of children who have reported to have been threatened online or felt in danger in the last 12 months seems to be low, only 12% of children, it still means that 131 children were threatened online in the past year. We have also asked children if they often feel frightened and 12% declared that they are very easily scared and oftentimes feel frightened. Technology and the internet have given children a whole new platform for communication and raised their exposure to threatening messages and texts which have a negative impact on the health of the child.

# CYBER BULLYING

Cyber bullying is the usage of electronic devices to intentionally harass, intimidate, humiliate, and or threaten others via messages, pictures and posts in the internet. According to U.S. Legal Definitions, cyber bullying could be limited to posting rumors about others in the internet bringing about hatred in other's minds; or it may go to the extent of personally identifying victims and publishing materials severely humiliating or defaming them. With the increase in use of these technologies, cyber bullying has become increasingly common, especially among children and teenagers. Cyber bullying is present in all age groups but children are affected more as they are less able to cope with forms of cyber bullying, consequently, becoming victims of depression, fear, and isolation.

There are several reasons why cyber bullying can be even more dangerous than physical bullying. Cyber bullies can be people whom the victim knows or online strangers who can remain anonymous using their email accounts, nicknames in chat rooms, cell-phone text messaging, and other internet communication platforms to mask their identity. Because they can hide their identity, cyber bullies do not feel bound by social and normative behavior constraints, consequently, becoming even more dangerous. The lack of supervision in electronic forums by state authorities, parents, or teachers, enables offenders to target and contact their victims very easily and frequently. Hurtful messages and images can be distributed very quickly to a wide audience via social networks and it can be very difficult for the authorities to trace the source. Also, deleting these messages becomes extremely difficult once they have been posted or sent to many people.

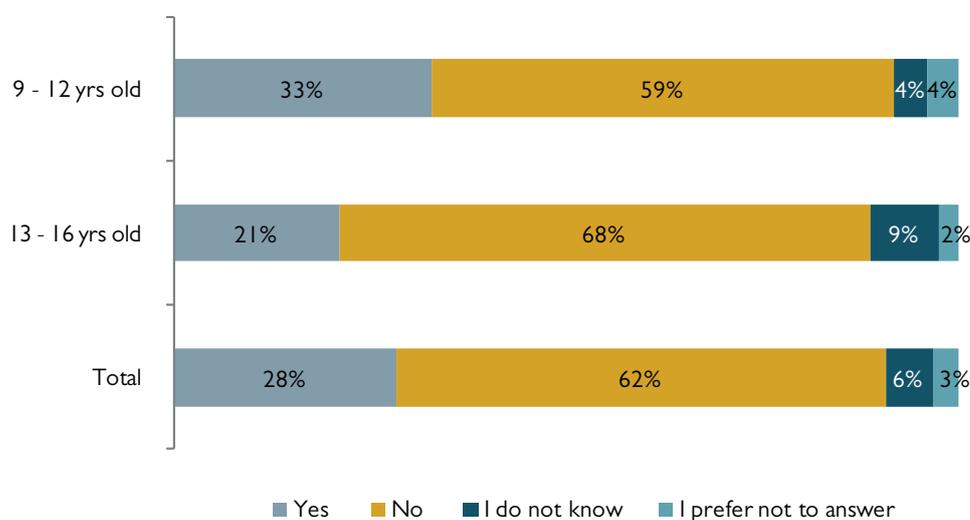
## Mapping cyber bullying

There are several terms which are used to describe cyber bullying in Albanian. Words such as harassing, molesting, offending, bothering, and irritating others are often used to refer to bullying. Because cyber bullying is a difficult term for children to grasp, we have offered a definition in the survey to help children in understanding the questions. The following explanatory statement about the meaning of cyber bullying was placed above each question:

*“Sometimes children or teenagers do or say harmful or unpleasant things to one another. People that act this way towards others can do so in several ways: for example, face to face (personally), through a mobile phone (messages, calls, videos) or via the Internet (e-mails, messages, social networks, chats).”*

After the children were given with the definition and instructions about questions related to cyber bullying, there were asked if they someone has acted in such a hurtful way towards them in the last 12 months.

■ **Figure 23:** Child has been bullied online or offline in the past year



As the figure points out, 28% of children have experienced bullying in the last 12 months. When analyzing the answers for age groups, 9 to 12 years olds (33%) and 13 to 16 years olds (21%), the findings suggest that younger children are more exposed to cyber violence. Also, boys (34%) experience more cyber bullying than girls (22%). Children were also asked to show how often they were bullied and concerning statistics were reported.

■ **Table 4:** How often was the child bullied in the past year?

	Gender		Age		Total
	Male	Female	9 - 12 yrs old	13 - 16 yrs old	
Every day or almost every day	12.4	9.5	13.7	7.0	12
Once or twice a week	14.8	13.8	12.3	19.0	14
Once or twice a month	15.2	9.5	14.5	10.0	13
Less often	41.4	47.4	45.8	38.0	43
I don't know	16.2	19.8	13.7	26.0	17

The frequency of being bullied varies among age groups and gender. In total, 12% of children claimed that they have been bullied every day or every single day, whereas 14% claimed the same for once or twice a week. From the above results, it can be implied that children under 13 years old (14%) are bullied more often than children above 13 years old (7%).

The findings from the survey suggest that 39% of children in Kosovo (from the 28% who have reported to experience bullying) are bullied at least once a month. This means that annually, 128 children are bullied at least once a month. Several reports have indicated that children who experience bullying are more likely to skip school, have lower grades, more health problems, and less self esteem.

## Forms of bullying

To contextualize cyber bullying in relation to other types of bullying, the 28% of children who declared to have experienced bullying were asked to indicate of how this happened. The most common form of bullying was reported to be in person face-to-face: 37% of children claim that someone has acted in a hurtful way towards them in person compared to 22% who say that this happened in other forms. In order to find out whether particular online communication platforms such as e-mails, social networks, chat rooms, etc. provide a context for bullying we have asked children to indicate in which way they were bullied online.

■ **Table 5:** Ways in which children have been bullied online in the past year

	Frequency	In percent
Social media	118	53.2
Internet messages	77	34.8
Chat - Messenger	59	26.7
E-mail	35	15.8
Game Webpages	19	8.6
Phone call, SMS or video	20	9.1
Other	23	10.5
I do not know	32	14.5
	<b>383</b>	-

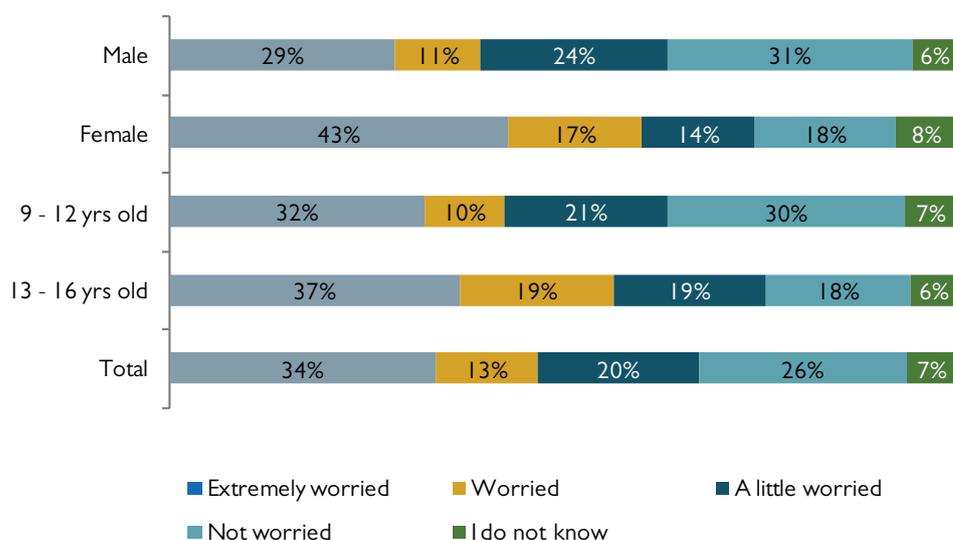
Although the majority of children were not bullied on the internet; those bullied online were more likely to have been bullied via the social networking sites (53%) or by online instant messaging (35%). Game webpages and phone calls, texts, or videos seem less popular platforms used for cyber bullying. Given the popularity of social networking sites and their capacity to integrate photos, personal information, and messaging options, it is natural that they are used more by bullies. In addition, they offer the possibility to send information very quickly to all contacts, this way accelerating the process of disseminating harmful content.

As seen from above, most of the children in Kosovo use the internet for entertainment purposes and social networks are very popular. It is evident that social networking sites such as Facebook have created an easy platform for bullies who can tag someone in an abusive or embarrassing picture, post messages on their walls, send threatening private messages, create public pages about their victims, or post hurtful or nasty comments on photos or updates.

## Coping with cyber bullying

Besides analyzing the forms of cyber bullying present in Kosovo, we have focused on exploring how children are affected by cyber bullying and what are their coping mechanisms. Focusing on children's online bully experience, we have asked them to indicate the severity of this experience (how worried the children were) and how did they respond to this experience (what did the children do about it).

■ **Figure 24:** Child was worried from online bullying



Although rather few children are bullied online, when this happens, it is a fairly upsetting experience for the majority of children. As the figure points out, in total 67% of the children who were bullied online were somewhat worried. The findings suggest that girls (74%) and children older than 13 years old (75%) are more worried or feel more upset from being bullied online boys (64%) and children younger than 13 years old (63%). However, policy makers should focus in children who are not worried at all (20%) because this could mean that 20% or 83 children are not aware of the risks of being cyber bullied and the effects that it might have on their health.

Nevertheless, how do children in Kosovo respond to cyber bullying? The table below highlights some of the mechanisms that children who were bullied online use to avoid cyber bullying in the future or cope with this experience.

■ **Table 6:** What did the child do after being bullied online

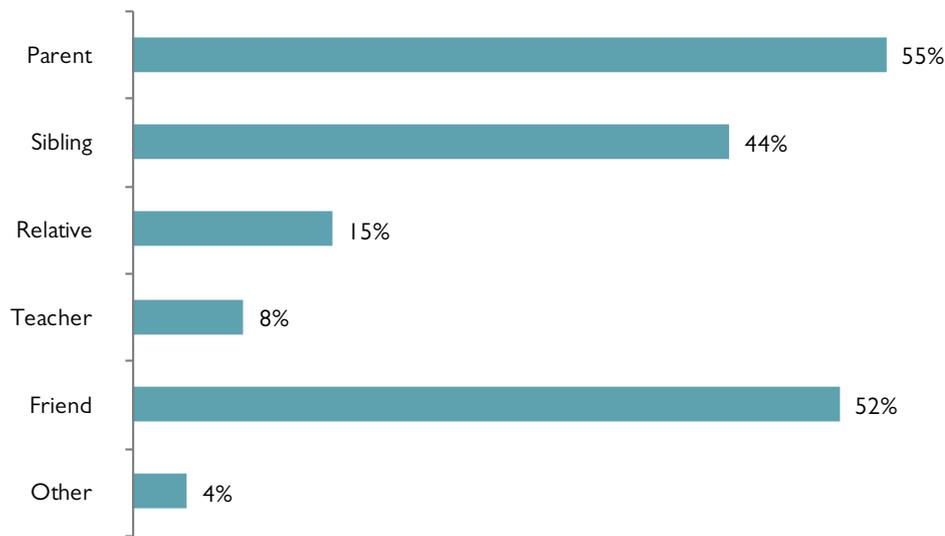
	Frequency	In percent
I have stopped using the internet for a while	88	28.2
I have deleted every message from that person	152	48.6
I have changed my privacy settings	48	15.3
I have blocked the person that contacted me	176	56.2
I have reported the problem	45	14.4
None of the above	46	14.7
I do not know	34	11.0
	<b>589</b>	-

From the answers we can imply that children in Kosovo mostly respond to cyber bullying by blocking the bully (56%) and deleting the messages sent by the bully (about 49%). This means that the most common response to being bullied online was fatalistic- the child tried to fix the problem him/herself. It is important to note that only 15% of children claimed to have changed their privacy settings and only 14% have reported the problem. This means that in general, children have very limited capacities to deal with cyber bullying as they respond only to the bully. But there are cases where the hurtful message has already gone viral in the internet, and even if the child blocks the bully, or the source of the message, it will not stop or delete the message.

One of the forms that children use to cope with cyber bullying is through the social support. When asked if the children have talked to someone about being bullied online, 61% have claimed that they have done so. Girls (66%) report the problems more than boys (58%) although boys are bullied more than girls. This also supports the previous finding that girls are more worried about being bullied than boys.

Table 5 clearly shows that children in Kosovo hesitate to report the problem. To clarify, children are willing to discuss the problem but they hesitate to report it. A decent explanation for this is the lack of awareness of children about tools available to them to deal with cyber bullying. Therefore, this can be considered as a very important finding for the policy makers who should find ways in raising awareness in children about the tools and instruments (contacting the police, or the legal framework in place) that they can use to protect themselves from cyber bullying.

■ **Figure 25:** Who did the child talk to after being bullied online?



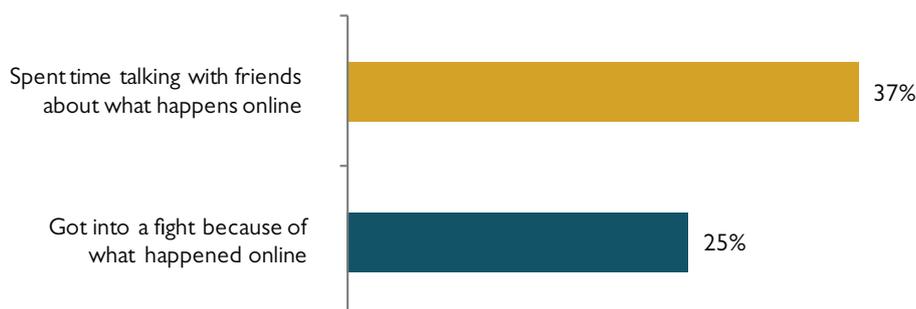
Children who do talk to someone prefer to talk to their parents (55%), friends (52%), and siblings (44%). Only 8% of the children have claimed to have discussed their bullying experience with their teacher, which implies that issues of internet safety are not discussed in class. Teachers need to focus their attention in creating a class environment where children can openly discuss their negative online experiences with their teachers, as well as receive advice on how to avoid such negative experiences.

## Effects of cyber bullying

Unquestionably, cyber bullying has a negative impact on its victims. The reactions that children have to being bullied online are very similar to those provoked by other types of bullying. However, research has indicated that because cyber bullying can involve public embarrassment or humiliation of children across a wider audience it may induce more severe responses in children. Studies have shown that some of the most common negative responses of children include experience of negative emotions such as anger, fear, sadness, embarrassment, and feeling hurt. In addition, being bullied online can induce behaviors such as poor concentration, low school achievements, and develop anti-social behavior.

To illustrate how abusive, hateful, or hurtful content online can influence the child, we have asked children to indicate if they spend a lot of time talking with their friends about what happens on the internet or on social networks. In addition we have also asked them if they engage in fights with other children because of what previously happened on the internet or on social networks.

■ **Figure 26:** Children’s response to online content



Furthermore, to understand some sociological and psychological characteristics of children we have also asked them to indicate how true the following statements are for them.

■ **Table 7:** Children’s sociological and psychological characteristics

	Not true	A little true	Very true	Total
I have at least one friend	22	16	62	100
I often feel sad, bored or unhappy	48	39	13	100
I often feel sad, bored or unhappy	19	31	49	100
I am often accused for lying and fraud	69	20	10	100
My friends do not even notice me	72	20	8	100
I have more fun with older people than people my age	58	27	16	100
Sometimes I feel afraid or I get scared easily	60	28	12	100

Interesting data emerged from the question where 22% of the children declared that they do not have any friends, 52% sometimes feels sad, bored or unhappy; 19% claimed that their peers do not like them, while 40% reported that they sometimes feels afraid and get scared easily.

It cannot be speculated about the reasons behind the answers that children have given on these questions, as they can be caused by many factors which might not be related to cyber bullying. However, we decided to include these questions in order to inform policy makers, parents, and teachers about how children feel most of the time.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

Part of the drafting of this report, Center FIT in collaboration with Save the Children organized a debate in May 2014 to present main findings from the survey as well as gather stakeholders dealing with children internet safety to discuss possible recommendations. Representatives from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Personal Data Protection Agency, the industry, departments of education from several municipalities, school directors, teachers, and children from participating schools in the survey were present in the debate and gave their input on the following recommendations. Based on the results from the survey and the debate we found out that policy priorities should include the whole spectrum of stakeholders involved in policy making and implementation of internet safety practices. We have provided recommendations for five key stakeholders: children, parents, teachers, the industry and policy makers.

One important overall finding from the survey concerns the lack of involvement from parents in monitoring and supporting their children online. Most of the children have indicated that they know more information about the internet than they parents; thus, parental awareness of safety online needs to be enhanced. In addition, our findings show that the majority of children use the internet at home, so they need internet safety support from their parents. Policy makers should raise the awareness of parents about the nature of risks that children may face online. Increasing parental understanding of the overall usage of internet, ways to restrict harmful web pages, and potential risks have to be a key focus for awareness raising campaigns.

Generally, children in Kosovo begin using the internet at a very young age. The results show that only 10% of 9 year old children do not have internet access. Digital literacy in children of this age is very low as they lack proper understanding of internet usage. Accordingly, there needs to be policy focus on raising awareness designed to suit the needs and knowledge of younger children. In this respect, primary schools and teachers of younger children (grades 1-5) should receive information about internet safety which they would transfer to children.

Children are increasingly using the internet independently from adult supervision. While the majority of children have reported to use the internet very privately, be that in their own rooms or accessing through a mobile phone, it has become very difficult for adults to monitor their online activities. For this reason, policy makers need to focus their efforts on developing self-protection and self-responsibility mechanisms for children. It is very important to educate children in being more responsible internet users and inform them about potential risks which might threaten their own safety. Encouraging children to learn more about dangers associated with misuse of personal information, effects of cyber bullying, as well as consequences of meeting new people, could be potential self-protection mechanisms which can be used by policy makers.

The findings suggest that children in Kosovo mainly use the internet for entertainment and communication purposes. Most of the children have reported that their favorite activities online consist of social networking sites, YouTube, and listening to music. When internet usage is limited only to excessive use of social networking sites, its benefits can turn into possible risks for children. Consequently, it is important to inform children about ways on how they can improve

their internet usage to research about their hobbies or about their school activities. Moreover, it is imperative that children are informed about the dangers of meeting face-to-face with people whom they only know through the internet. This is a serious matter, and parents, caretakers, and teachers should advise children accordingly.

The involvement of the industry is also very important as it could facilitate all stakeholders in better protecting children online. Internet service providers (ISPs) in Kosovo already offer the option to receive filtered broadband connection; however, parents and teachers seem not be informed about such options. For this reason, ISPs should make information about browser filtering readily available and more visible for parents and teachers. Broadband connection in schools should be installed directly with filtered options which would not allow children to access inappropriate content at all.

Unsurprisingly, many of the issues arising from the survey relate to awareness raising campaigns about the forms of internet safety, risks of excessive internet use, and target groups. At the national level, the government is responsible for regulatory and legislative controls, especially with regards to issues of children protection, illegal content, data protection, industry regulatory mechanisms, education policy as it is the main institution to support internet safety for children. The government should encourage and finance more awareness raising activities about internet safety targeted at children, teachers, and parents.

Teachers also play an important role in educating children about internet safety. In most of the cases, children have reported that their teachers help them in identifying risks online; however, the majority of the children reported that their teachers have never explained to them what should be done when they find disturbing content online. This should draw the attention of policy makers to train teachers about ways of responding to online risks and possibilities to filter online content as well as improve safety settings of browsers and websites. For instance, awareness raising campaigns about cyber bullying should also include coping and response mechanisms for children. Instead of just informing the teachers, educational authorities should also provide them with certain resources and tools which enable them to respond to incidents of cyber bullying.

Also, the government should sponsor legislation curbing online pornography. Many countries (including the U.K) have developed policies which obligate internet service providers to opt in if they want to view sexually explicit web pages. Similar policies can be applied to Kosovo.

Overall, several steps can be taken by each stakeholder to improve internet safety in Kosovo. The government, more specifically, the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology should mainstream the efforts of the parents, teachers, the industry, and civil society in creating a better and safer internet usage for children. Parents and teachers should be more involved in supervising children online; whereas the industry should inform them about online content filtering and privacy options.

In conclusion, we feel that the use of internet by children should be strengthened rather than restricted. Considerable increase in awareness raising campaigns, investment in and improvement of internet safety tools, and overall better familiarity with internet usage among families should result in better and safer use of the internet by children.

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