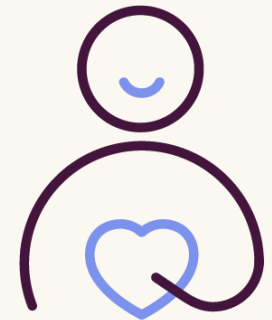
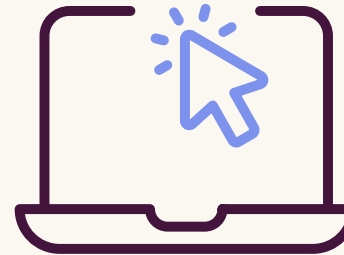
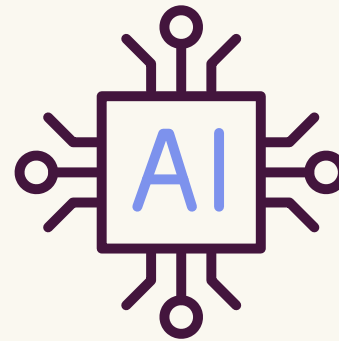




Professor Elisabeth Staksrud

PhD, MAE, Director, Centre for Studies of Children,
Youth and Media, University of Oslo, Norway

Coordinator EU Kids Online International
Research Network





"No informed person can say simply that television is bad or that it is good for children. For *some* children, under *some* conditions, *some* television is harmful.

For *other* children under the same conditions, or for the same children under *other* conditions, it may be beneficial. For *most* children, under *most* conditions, *most* television is probably neither particularly harmful nor particularly beneficial.

Scramm, W., Lyle, J., & Parker, E. B. (1961). Television in the lives of our children. The facts about the effects of television on children - based on studies of over 6,000 children. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, page 1.





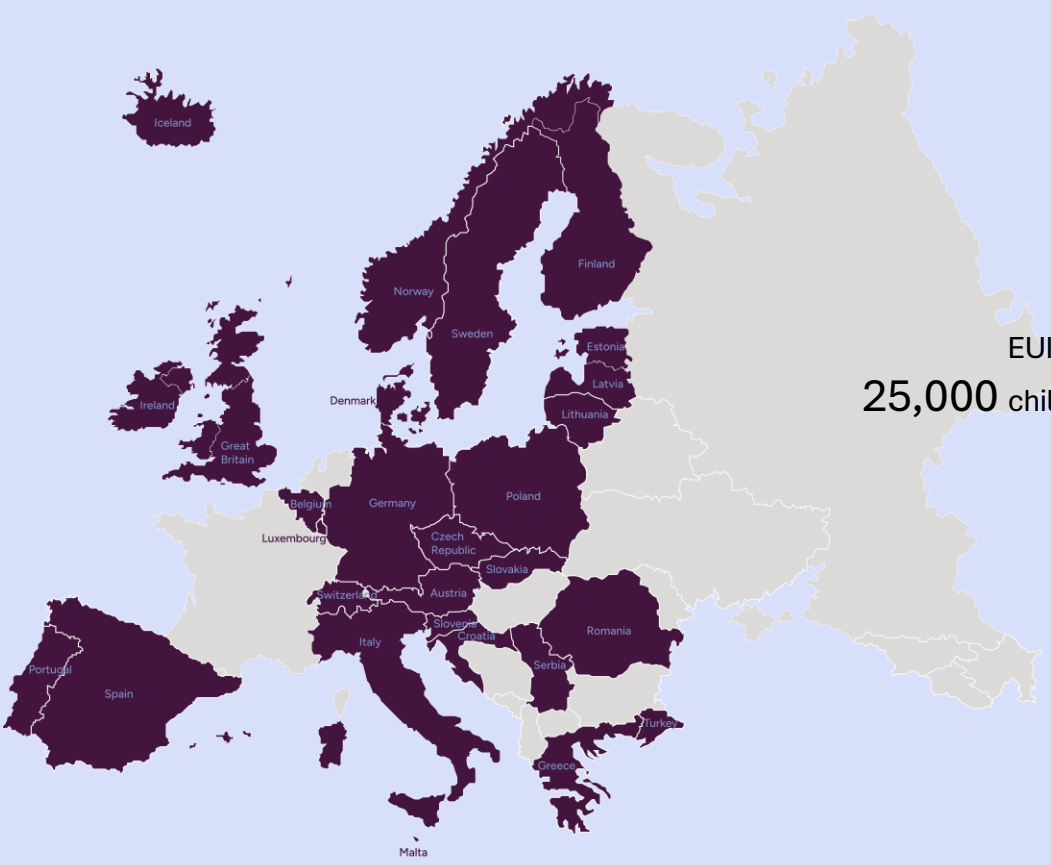
EU Kids Online

2006

2011

2018

2026



EUKO representativ survey
25,101 children, 19 countries

EUKO representativ survey
25,000 children, 25 000 parents, 25 countries

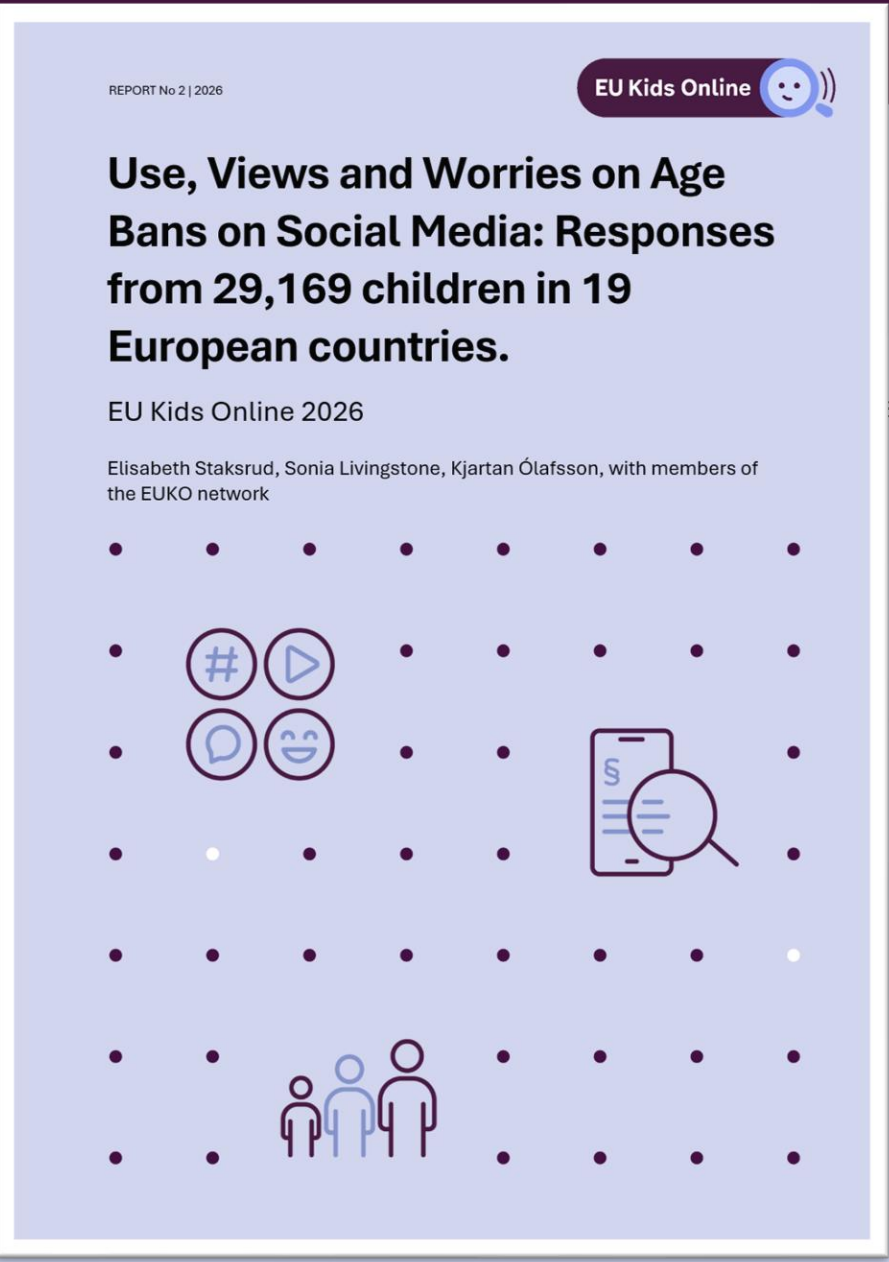
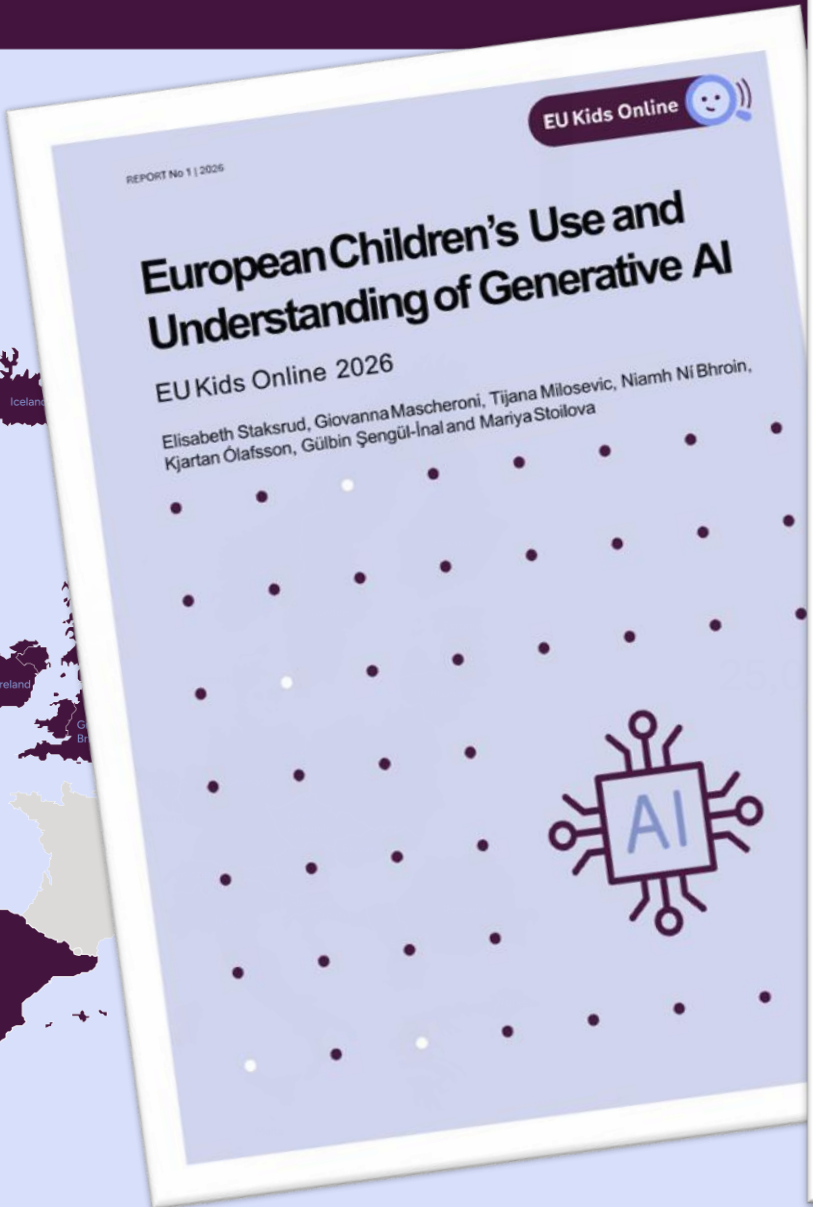
EUKO representativ survey
30 000+ children, 20 countries



EU Kids Online

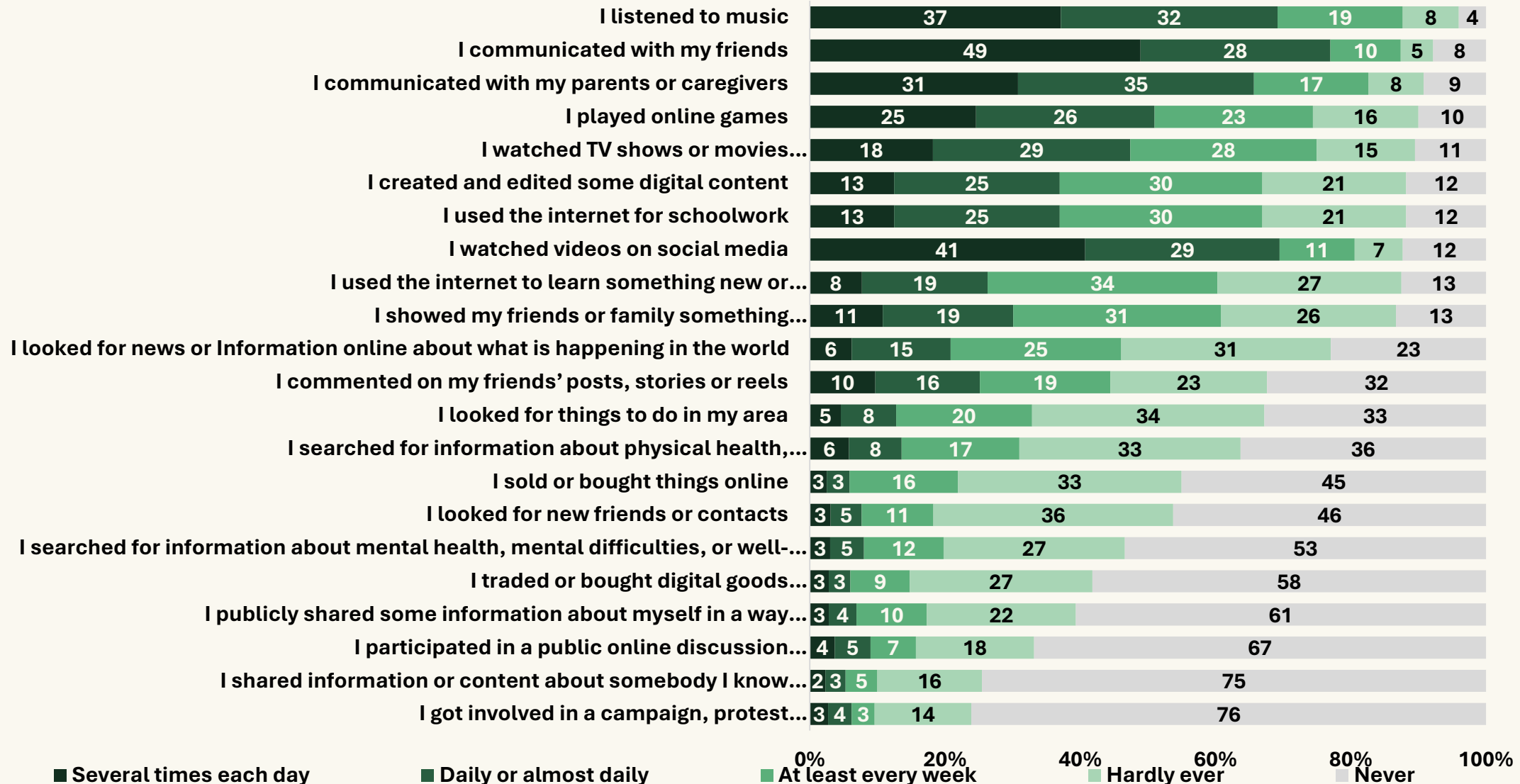
2006

2026



EUKO representativ survey
0 000+ children, 20 countries

Opportunities



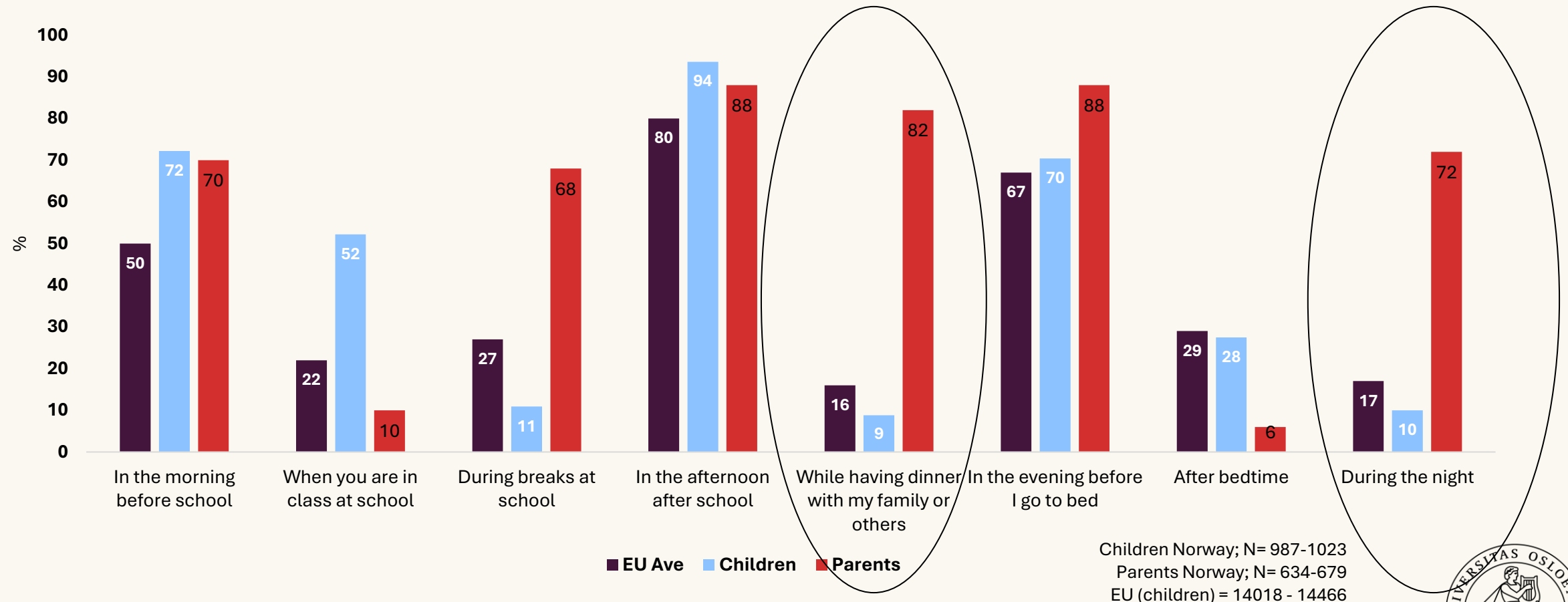
QC9 and QC10 How often have you done these things ONLINE in the PAST MONTH?

Base: All children aged 9-16 (number of respondents from 26,901 to 28,033).

Staksrud et al. (2026)



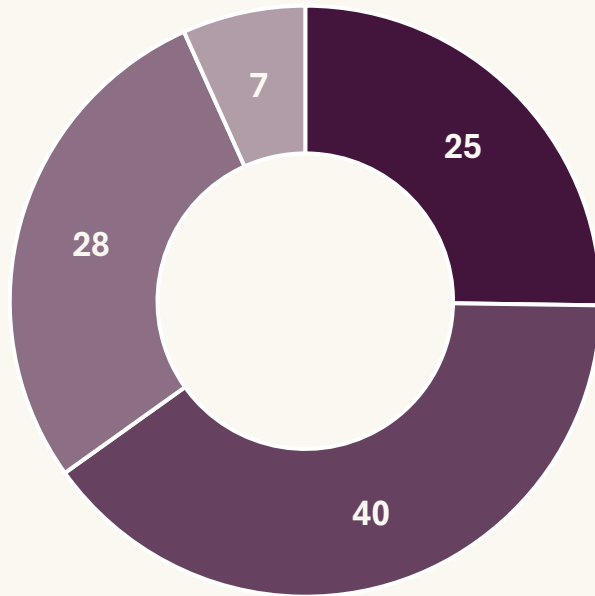
In the PAST MONTH DURING A REGULAR WEEKDAY, how often did you use any type of screen, such as TV, mobile phone, computer games or tablets? (those who do this daily)



Parents are diverse:



From what age do Norwegian parents believe their children are mature enough to have a social media account?

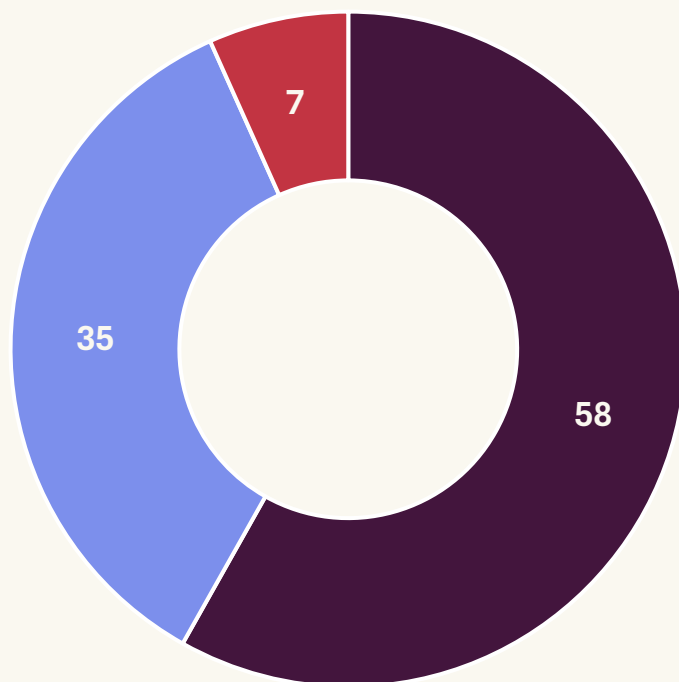


■ From 12 years or younger ■ From 14 year
■ From 16 years ■ From 18 years

One in four parents thinks they child is mature enough from 12 years or younger.

65 percent of parents think they child is mature enough from 14 years or younger

Most children use social media



- Children who have a social media profile
- Children who use social media without a personal profile
- Children who do not have a SoME profile and do not use SoME

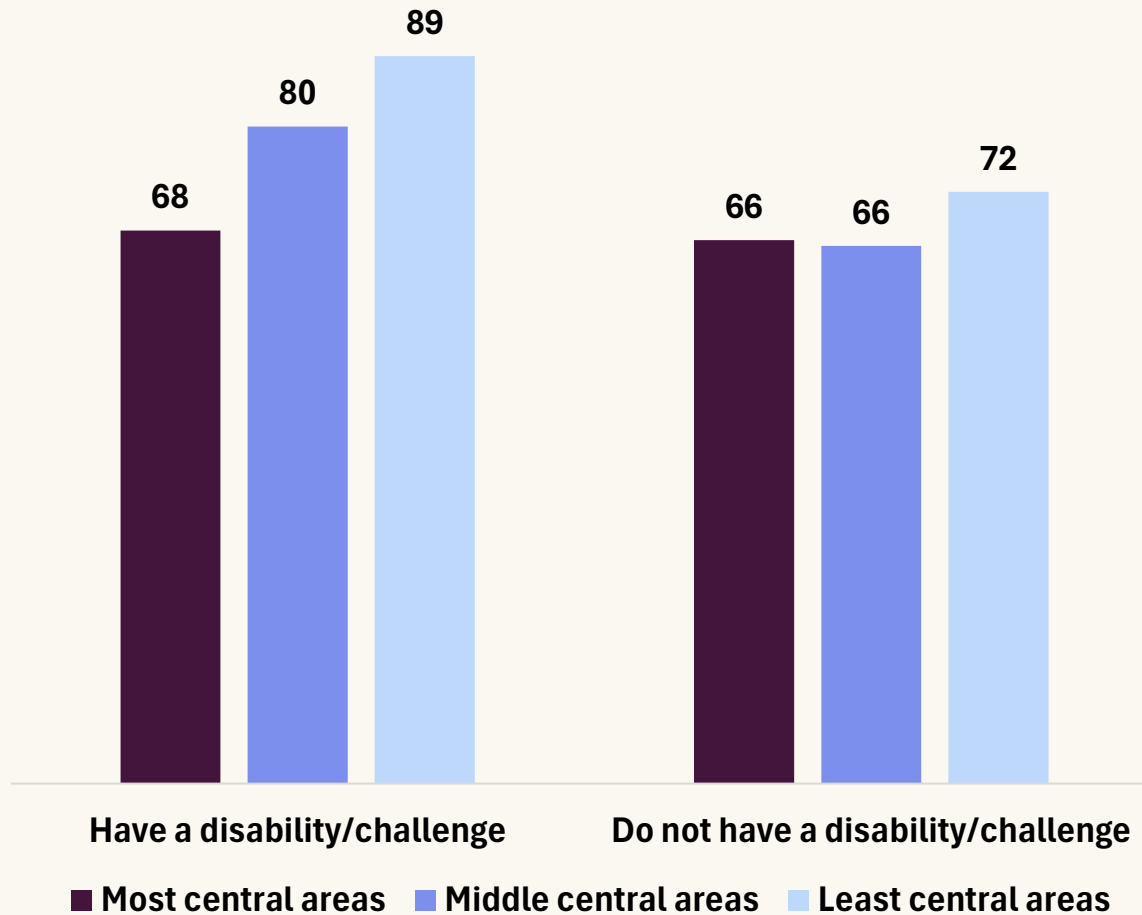
Today, **very few children and young people do not use social media in some form**. Considerations of regulation and intervention (including their effectiveness and legitimacy) should therefore be cautious, taking into account not only who has a profile, **but also how social media is accessed and used without one**.

Base: Weighted responses from children aged 9–16 years (n = 876)

Staksrud et al (2026, forthcoming [Norwegian EUKO Social Media Report])



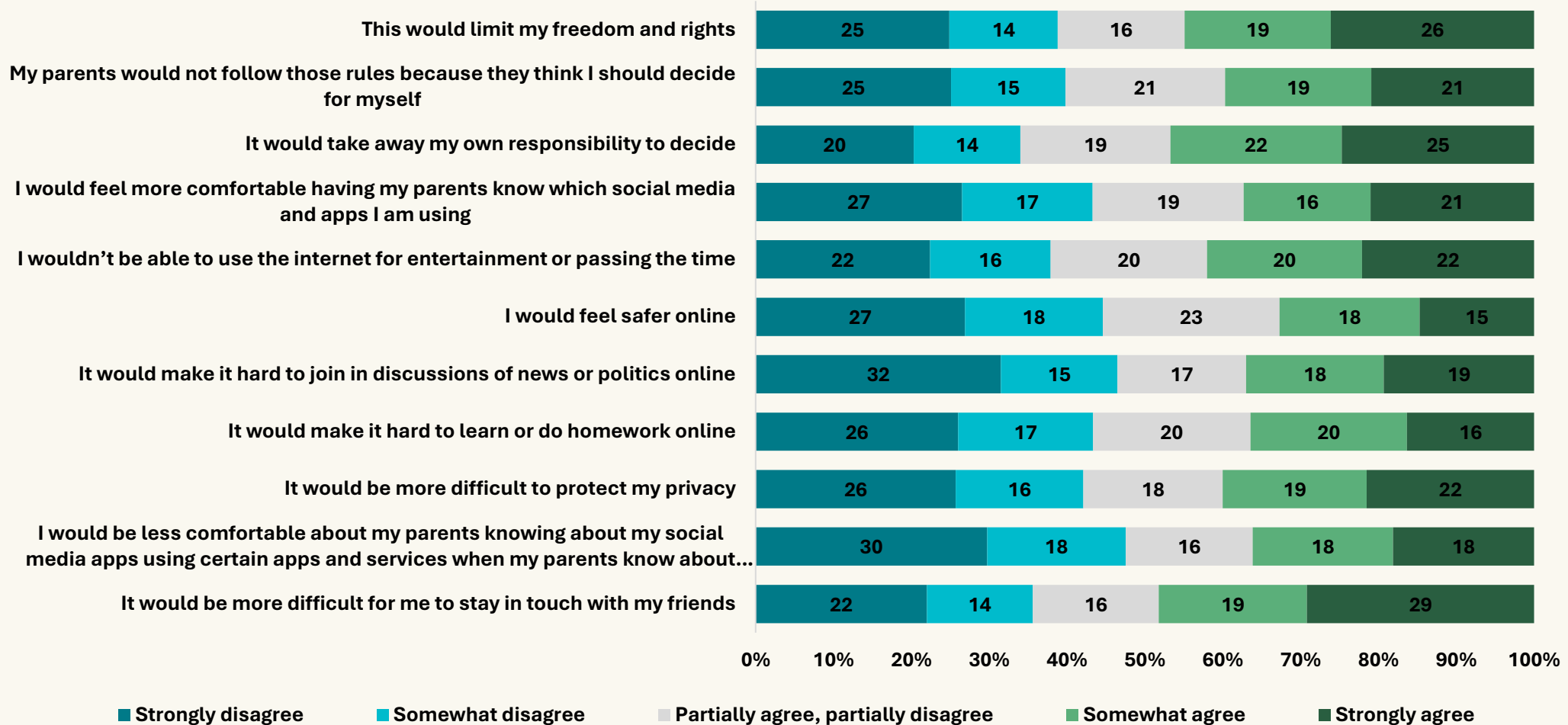
Regulation is complicated: Having social media accounts



The findings suggest that disability/challenge and geography may interact, with children with disabilities or challenges in less central areas appearing particularly affected by a blanket ban.

This is an example that points to the need for policy measures that consider adverse consequences and both individual vulnerability and local context, rather than treating children as one uniform group.

Children's views on age bans of social media



QO47 *The government might make a law that says children under 16 can only use social media if their parents give permission. What do you think about this?* Base: **Children from Ireland, Norway, Poland and Romania aged 9-16** (number of respondents from 2,419 to 2,993).

(Staksrud et al. 2026)



Children are diverse



- Children's views are **not strongly one-sided**. Many see parental rules as potentially limiting their **freedom, responsibility, friendships and privacy**, while fewer clearly say such rules would make them feel safer online.
- **Highest agreement:** Nearly half say rules could make it harder to stay in touch with friends, reduce their own responsibility, or limit their freedom and rights.
- **Ambivalence is important:** Around 16–23% are neutral across items, suggesting uncertainty or context-dependent views.
- **Children do not reject protection, but they are concerned** about protection that reduces autonomy, privacy and participation.





Effective policy making, in line with the requirements and expectations set out by human rights provisions, requires a nuanced understanding of:

- What children and young people actually use social media for;
- Which groups may face heightened risks or vulnerabilities and under which conditions;
- The quality and limitations of current evidence on harms;
- The potential unintended and adverse consequences of regulation, bans, or age restrictions on different groups of children, families, and societies at large;
- Where children might mitigate to, if not on major social media platforms, and how to assess and understand the short- and long-term effects of this
- How to ensure legitimacy, proportionality, and rights-based governance.
- The effectiveness, enforceability and trustworthiness of different regulatory instruments for the public, for parents, and most importantly for children themselves.





And it requires courage





Thank you!

Our reports can be found here



Suggested citation for this presentation

Staksrud, E. (2026, June 4). Social media and children's mental health [Keynote presentation slides]. Council of Europe, Thematic Dialogue on Social Media and Children's Mental Health.

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/children/thematic-dialogue-on-social-media-and-children-s-mental-health>

