DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION FROM A PARENT'S PERSPECTIVE

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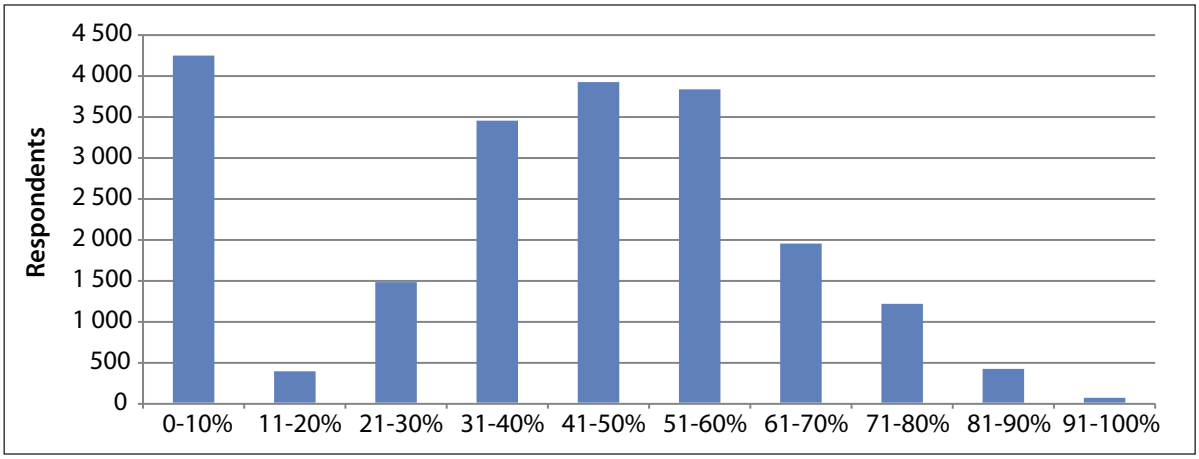
Executive summary

In 2019, the Council of Europe's Digital Citizenship Education (DCE) working group set out to discover more about how parents support the competence-building process to help their children become responsible digital citizens. The goal was to understand the topics of most concern to parents, where they turn for information and their wish-list in terms of tools and guidance. A survey questionnaire was developed in 2019 and tested in five focus groups, in Belgium, Croatia, Germany, Greece and France, which were attended by approximately 20 parents each. It was launched on 15 May 2020 and ran for six weeks. Initially produced in five languages, 16 national organisations translated the survey into their native language and helped disseminate it in their country.

A total of 21 042 responses were received from all 47 member states of the Council of Europe, including 8 943 respondents from Croatia, 3 778 from Malta, and more than 1 300 from both Armenia and Poland. Responses from all countries are included in the analysis; countries with fewer than 500 responses are grouped under "other countries". The 22 survey questions are multiple choice or polls, and an open space is provided for proposals from participants wherever appropriate. Points were attributed to certain questions, and parents were given a fun profile at the end with metaphorical images of how they are navigating their children's digital practices. Built on ideal responses, which are obviously not adapted to all parental approaches, it is interesting to see that point attribution follows a standard normal distribution pattern, showing that scoring is balanced.

Figure 1 – Distribution pattern of attributed points



Given the timing, two questions were added just before the launch, asking parents about their experience with remote schooling during the Covid-19 crisis. Two thirds of respondents report that although remote schooling has been a new experience, as previously few schools had integrated digital tools or remote learning into the classroom agenda, they are coping well. Around 1 in 2 parents find juggling their work with their children's schooling challenging, and are having difficulty balancing their children's screen time with physical activity; 2 in 5 parents are worried about the long-term impact on their children through lack of face-to-face peer and social interaction; and 2 in 5 also state that the distance learning offer from schools needs to be improved. Almost a quarter of Greek parents report not having suitable IT equipment to satisfy their family's requirements, and that connectivity is a barrier.

In general, parents are most concerned about privacy, ensuring that their children understand their rights and responsibilities online, and that they behave ethically and responsibly. Less than 13% of parents talk with children about dealing with cookies, and less than 1 in 3 check their children's digital footprints with them. On the other hand, between 70% and 80% of parents check out the websites, apps and games that their children, and even their teenage children, use or wish to use. Bullying is high in the minds of parents. It is a topic that 3 in 4 parents discuss with their children as a preventive measure, although less than 1 in 2 parents know all their children's online/offline friends. Although certain questions have been included in the survey to cross-check responses and see the strategies parents use to address with their children issues of concern, for example cookie management to help protect privacy, there seems to be no clear link between concerns and strategies. This appears to underline the need for awareness campaigns that focus on the "how" as well as the "what", if they are to really empower parents and children.

Most survey respondents apply between two and four rules about digital technology in their home, with Icelandic parents setting the most rules and Armenian the least. The top rule parents apply is that their children come to

them whenever they see something weird or scary online that upsets or bothers them (66%). Other top rules are never to shop online without a parent being present (64%) and a parent must be asked before sharing personal information online (60%). Only 1 in 3 parents say they apply rules about limiting children's screen time, apparently not placing this as high a priority as in countries such as the UK and USA, although this may have been influenced by the timing – it is difficult to limit screen time when remote schooling is the order of the day. Issues around content appear to be a weak point for European parents. Critical thinking, cross-checking facts, creating content and respecting the creative content of others seem to rate low on their agenda. This is an important area that needs to be addressed at home and at school. These are fundamental skills for digital citizens, and the filters used to think critically are largely based on the values and attitudes they learn at home in early childhood.

The final section of the survey aimed to cross-check findings on earlier questions and fine-tune our understanding of the information and tools parents say they need to help their children become digital citizens. Almost two thirds of respondents want more information on protecting privacy. Avoiding fake news and hate speech ranks second (54%), closely followed by how to tackle bullying (slightly less than 54%). Almost 1 in 2 parents ask for activities for children that can be easily implemented at home (48%), 2 in 5 ask for videos by experts on a dedicated video channel, a website for parents, and a rating or recommendation system to rapidly find suitable tools and content. Parents' knowledge of current technological terms is often somewhat superficial, and more than 3 in 5 do not understand "big data" or "machine learning". Contrary to expectations, those aged 18 to 30 score lower on five of the seven technical terms cited. Are they more aware that they do not really understand the complexity of such terms and their far-reaching impact on society?

The survey findings confirmed the need to conduct follow-up interviews with parents across a sample of the 47 countries to obtain more qualitative data to render the findings more granular. Almost 100 interviews and consultations were therefore conducted from November 2020 to January 2021 in 24 of the 47 countries that participated in the survey. Findings from the qualitative data gathered are presented in Part II of this publication. They show that evolutions in the use of digital technology have been accelerated by the Covid-19 crisis rampant across these European countries in the intervening six-month period, and that satisfaction of parents in the remote learning provided by schools has also improved. Parents show a greater awareness of the impact of digital technology in their own lives and that of their children, although the conversations with parents underline a lack of understanding of how the mastery of digital citizenship competences could impact their children's lives.

The granular information obtained from the interviews confirms the preliminary findings about the type of support parents would appreciate from the Council of Europe to help them guide the online activities of their children. Another area highlighted by interviewees is the discrepancy in the availability of resources from one country to another. Many underline that because information and resources from the Council of Europe are of such high quality and trustworthiness, the Council has a responsibility to ensure equal access to all families in its member states by having resources translated into national languages.

Overall, the findings offer clear guidelines on steps that the Council of Europe's DCE working group could take to support parents (and schools) in the development of children's competences to help them become active, responsible digital citizens. Several recommendations emerge from the findings.

- Learning about digital technology is a two-way street – children can learn from parents and vice versa. Families need easily accessible, brief "how to" information with activities they can do alone or together to develop strategies to deal with issues rather than just raising concerns about them.
- Good practice exists across Europe; the challenge is to facilitate exchanges between countries and experts, perhaps with short, regular publications of "Best-of" to facilitate replication and scaling up of successful experiences. The DCE survey findings shine a spotlight on such practices; for example, the high take-up of coding in Malta and the rules applied in Iceland that appear to facilitate family discussions. The large disparity in certain countries' responses indicates that they are tackling risks quite differently, and this calls for further investigation.
- School-adapted, child-friendly resources are necessary to ensure that schools continue fulfilling their essential social purpose, even at times when schooling moves online. Not all families can support their children's online activities due to lack of time, experience or other, and the school and the community must bridge the gap. The role of the school is not just to build knowledge or develop skills, but also to enable children to master digital competences to fully participate in society, and social competences to interact meaningfully with others. More resources and tools, and perhaps also teacher education, are therefore required if schools are to fulfil their role in supporting families to prepare children as digital citizens.

The following chapters provide a detailed analysis of the DCE survey findings (Part I of this publication) and interview findings (Part II). Each chapter begins with a brief summary and relevant recommendations, followed by statistical data, observations and comparisons with similar studies conducted over recent years.

Part I

Survey findings

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1. Background

The Council of Europe's intergovernmental project entitled Digital Citizenship Education (DCE)[1] was launched in 2016. Implemented by the Education Department (within the Directorate General of Democracy), it aims to empower children through education to acquire the competences required to become "digital citizens", that is, citizens able to use digital technology ethically and responsibly to participate, co-operate and become lifelong learners and active members of today's digital society.

Children participate in a broad range of digital activities and, to be as comprehensive as possible, the Council of Europe has subdivided these activities into 10 different areas, or domains, which are broadly grouped into three clusters: Being online, Well-being online and Rights online.

Figure 2 – The 10 digital citizenship domains (see Appendix I)

1. www.coe.int/dce.

Digital citizenship competences are built on four essential pillars: values, attitudes, skills, and knowledge and critical understanding. Parents play an important role in supporting the development of their children in all four areas, and therefore constitute a key target group for the Council of Europe's DCE programme.

To learn more about parents' view of digital citizenship, the issues they face with their children's online activities, and the types of support that truly match their needs, the Council of Europe implemented an online survey in its 47 member states from 15 May to 30 June 2020.

1.2. The survey

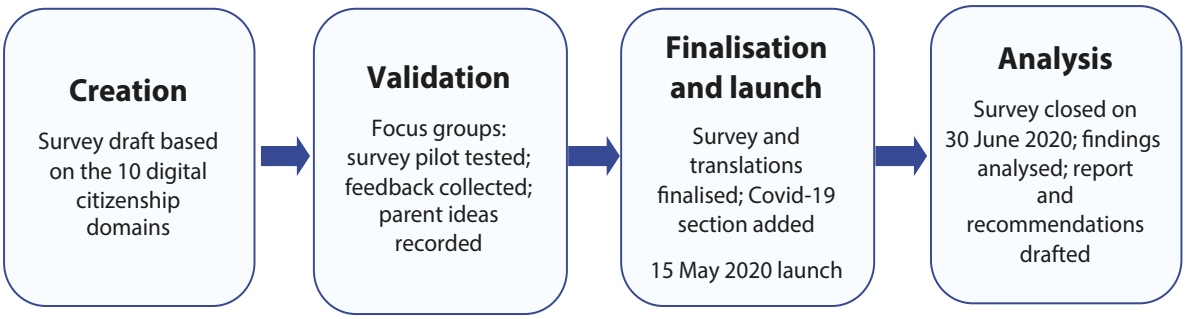
The survey was developed over a period of more than a year, beginning early 2019 and finally being launched on 15 May 2020. It was drafted by experts from the Council of Europe's DCE working group, and comprises 22 questions, mainly multiple choice and poll questions, in other words questions where respondents are asked to give their opinion by selecting options from a given list. At the same time an informative leaflet was developed describing digital citizenship, the competences involved and providing tips to parents on how to support their children to become responsible digital citizens.[2]

Both documents were translated into four languages (Croatian, French, German and Greek), in order to be pilot tested in five focus group meetings that took place in Croatia, France, Belgium, Germany and Greece in the second and third quarters of 2019. Approximately 20 parents of various ages, backgrounds and digital knowledge attended each meeting. The meetings were led by Council of Europe experts who began the sessions by disseminating the leaflet, describing the DCE project and goals, and asking participating parents to fill out the first draft of the survey. They then facilitated group discussions based on the survey questions, and finally collected all feedback and proposals for enhancing the survey.

The focus groups proved invaluable, firstly because they provided a deeper understanding of the target group, their interrogations and their concerns. They highlighted the areas most useful to include in the survey to fully meet the objectives of the Council of Europe, resulting in a more effective formulation of questions and response options. They clarified terms that parents prefer to use, and revealed some cultural sensitivities around expressions in the leaflet or first draft of the survey, for example, negative connotations attached to the term "digital citizenship" in Germany. The parents consulted also underlined the need to make the survey questions and the leaflet as concrete as possible. They supplied examples for applying the provided information to get families reflecting on highly practical issues, because many consider the term "digital citizen" to be rather hazy and difficult to understand when applied to the education of children.

Once all the input had been gathered and presented for discussion to the experts in the DCE working group, a revised formulation of the leaflet and survey questionnaire was made, and a second round of pilot testing began. Though a somewhat lengthy process (summarised in Figure 3 below), both the questionnaire and the leaflet underwent extensive modifications until they were considered fully fit for purpose. The various rounds of consultation also led to an element of fun being introduced into the survey, with participants scoring points on certain questions to arrive at their playful profile at the end. The profiles relate to navigating on the seas of digital technology (see Appendix II, page 109).

Figure 3 – DCE survey: a four-stage process



2. The final version of the informative leaflet integrating modifications suggested by parents is available at https://go.coe.int/NXiZw.

1.3. Survey launch – another impact of Covid-19

At the scheduled time of launch, the Covid-19 pandemic broke out and distance education became a focal point for parents, educators and governments alike. An extra section "Your experience with the Covid-19 crisis" was therefore developed and pilot tested, delaying the scheduled launch of the survey (see Appendix III) to 15 May 2020.

The online survey reached 21 042 parents, grandparents and carers (hereinafter referred to as parents) of children under the age of 18 years. It was made available at www.coe.int/education in 23 language versions (English, French, Albanian, Armenian, Azerbaijani, Bulgarian, Croatian, Finnish, German, Greek, Icelandic, Italian, Latvian, Macedonian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Slovenian, Spanish and Turkish). The translations from the original English, French and German versions were made mainly by national parent or educational organisations, checked for validity by experts, and in many cases also disseminated directly to the public via the website of these organisations. In all, 47 countries responded to the survey, and several countries stand out for having managed to get a very high number of responses: 8 943 were received from Croatia, for example, 3 778 from Malta, and well over 1 000 from Armenia and Poland (1 397 and 1 553 respectively).[3]

The following chapters present an analysis of the main findings from the survey, which was rolled out on the SurveyMonkey platform. Almost all 21 042 respondents completed the first two sections of the survey relating to their profile and Covid-19 experience. Several technical checks were run to avoid disruptions by bots, etc. and our analysis seems to indicate that incomplete responses may be explained by connection breakdowns as they are more prevalent in countries known for poor internet coverage. Results are mostly presented in bar graphs. The eight countries with at least 500 responses are indicated separately: Armenia, Croatia, Greece, Ireland, Malta, Monaco, Poland and Spain. Iceland is also shown separately, given the number of responses received from Icelandic parents compared to the total national population and the fact that this is the only Nordic country represented.

Responses from the other 38 countries are grouped under "other countries". The other participating countries are: Albania, Andorra, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine and the United Kingdom.

Figure 4 – Number of responses per country

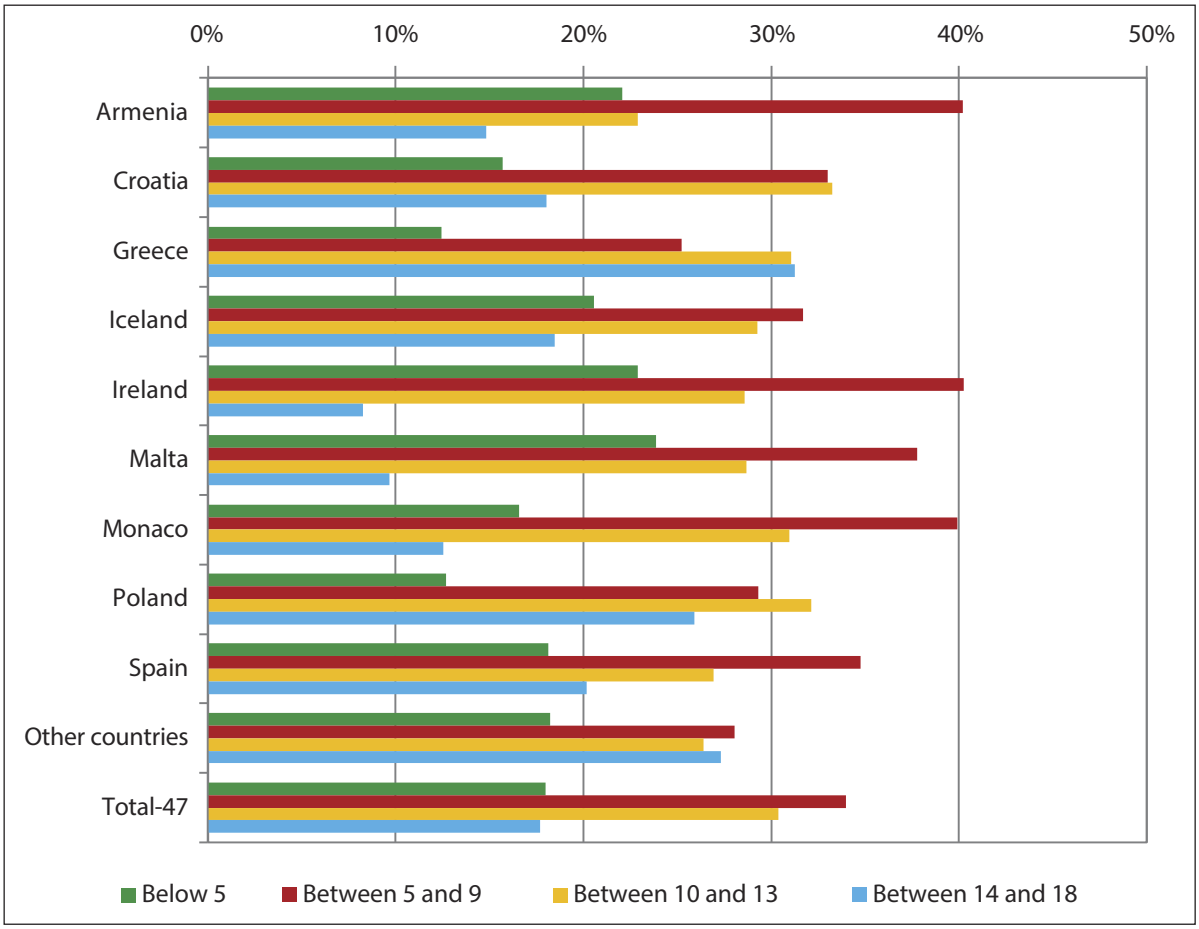
Albania	15	**Estonia**	8	**Lithuania**	16	**Russian Federation**	235
Andorra	6	**Finland**	21	**Luxembourg**	13	**San Marino**	6
Armenia	1 397	**France**	167	**Malta**	3 778	**Serbia**	19
Austria	20	**Georgia**	6	**Republic of Moldova**	3	**Slovak Republic**	10
Azerbaijan	4	**Germany**	119	**Monaco**	965	**Slovenia**	88
Belgium	29	**Greece**	563	**Montenegro**	10	**Spain**	590
Bosnia and Herzegovina	10	**Hungary**	5	**Netherlands**	17	**Sweden**	4
Bulgaria	21	**Iceland**	287	**North Macedonia**	215	**Switzerland**	5
Croatia	8 943	**Ireland**	777	**Norway**	5	**Turkey**	106
Cyprus	176	**Italy**	16	**Poland**	1 553	**Ukraine**	6
Czech Republic	9	**Latvia**	61	**Portugal**	331	**United Kingdom**	36
Denmark	6	**Liechtenstein**	48	**Romania**	317		

3. The large variations in participant numbers per country are possibly due to differing levels of importance given to digital citizenship and the outreach capacity of the volunteer organisations disseminating the survey.

1.4. The profile of respondents

Two thirds of the 21 042 respondents (69%)[4] are aged between 31 and 45 years, and mainly mothers of children aged 5 to 13 years. The 46 to 60 age bracket accounts for 26% of responses, with 4% of respondents aged 18 to 30 and 1% over 60 years. An overwhelming majority (85%) of women responded, and just 14% of males; 1% preferred not to respond on the question of gender. The age of respondents' youngest child ranges from under 5 years (18%), 5 to 9 years (34%), 10 to 13 years (30%) to the highest age bracket, 14 to 18 years (18%). At this point, it is important to note that the age of the respondents' youngest child varies considerably from country to country, which has an obvious impact on the responses to some of the questions. In particular, the parents who responded from Malta have most children under the age of 5 (24%), with Greece having the least (12%); most respondents from Armenia, Iceland, Ireland, Malta, Monaco, Spain and other countries declared their youngest child to be between 5 and 9 years of age (with percentages varying from 28% to 40%). In Croatia and Poland, most respondents indicate that their youngest child is aged between 10 and 13 years (33% and 32% respectively); only in Greece most respondents' youngest child is between 14 and 18 years of age (31%).

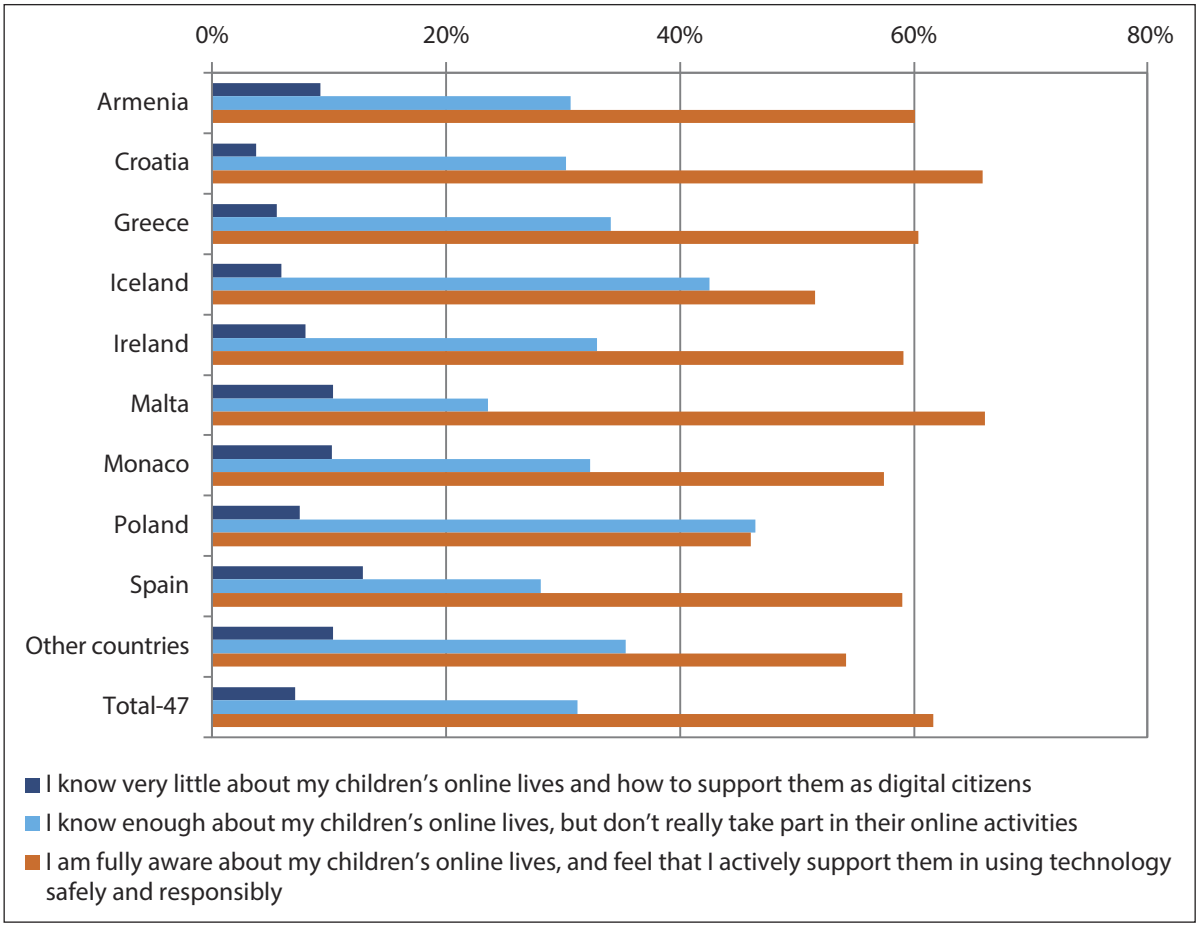
Figure 5 – Q4: What is the age of your youngest child? (country comparison)



A total 62% of respondents state they are fully aware of their children's online life, and are actively supporting them to use technology safely and responsibly; 1 in 3 claim to know enough about their children's online lives, but do not really take part in their online activities; and 7% admit to knowing very little about their children's online lives and how to support them as digital citizens (Figure 6). The number of parents involved in their children's online activities reflects findings from other research in the UK[5] and USA,[6] showing that parents are increasingly concerned and talking with their children about what they are doing online. Specific areas of concern cited in such research are the content children may be exposed to, screen time and bullying, which interestingly correlates to a certain degree with findings from this DCE survey.

4. Percentages throughout the document refer to the relative frequency statistics; the percentage figures are rounded up or down to the nearest integer. The summary responses for all 47 countries can be found in Appendix III.
5. Ofcom (2020), "Children and parents: media use and attitudes report 2019", available at https://bit.ly/3cRcjcS.
6. Pew Research Center (2020), "Parenting children in the age of screens", available at https://pewrsr.ch/3iAGvul.

Figure 6 – Q5: How would you define your profile? (country comparison)



Chapter 2

The Covid-19 crisis – managing children's education

2.1. Recommendations – what the findings tell us

According to the UN,[7] the education of 60% of all students globally and almost 90% of students from low- and middle-income brackets at all levels of schooling has been impacted by the closure of schools during the Covid-19 crisis. Parents were often struggling too, to continue their own professional activities remotely, but also had to take on the role of managing their children's education. Many challenges for schools are evident, among others the lack of preparedness of teachers to conduct distance learning when digital technology has not yet made it into everyday class routine, and the lack of school-adapted technological platforms resulting in teachers filling the gap with inadequately secure commercial platforms. However, the findings from the two Covid-19-related questions in the DCE survey also highlight challenges within the home. Moreover, these findings underline the great disparity between countries.

Education is an unalienable right for all children, and is at the root of a range of other human rights. Digital technology is an increasingly essential element in today's society and children will only be able to fully exercise their rights and responsibilities as digital citizens if they master learning, gathering information and communicating fluently with contemporary tools. Analysis of the findings from these two questions gives rise to several recommendations, also taking into account that respondents are perhaps not a representative population, since they are sufficiently adept and informed to respond to an online survey. To overcome the major issues that have become apparent in the findings, we therefore urge governments, industry and civil society to work together to:

- support schools to update their tools, platforms and pedagogical approaches, and adapt their organisation to the requirements of distance learning. Some elements of distance learning could be incorporated as an integral part of the school programme. The current pandemic has highlighted environmental and other advantages in citizens being able to learn and work from home at least part of the time;
- facilitate exchange of good practice between countries. The large gap between countries indicates that some education systems have been coping much better than others with the sudden need for distance learning;
- support families to close the gap in IT and internet access by lowering costs, providing better connectivity for all households, and creating awareness and information campaigns to motivate the whole population to engage in the digital world and acquire the digital skills that have proven so necessary in this crisis;
- research the short- and longer-term impact of the lack of peer interaction and balance between physical activity and time spent online that this health crisis has brought about, and to find measures to counteract the ill-effects that are noted by parents in this survey.

2.2. Learning online in the time of Covid

A total of 19 075 parents responded to this section of the survey relating to the Covid-19 crisis, which contained just two poll questions, each with half a dozen options. The first of these asks parents about challenges in managing their children's education during the crisis. The responses are illustrated in Figure 7 below.

When schools closed in March 2020, the biggest challenge for more than half of participating parents (51%) was juggling their work organisation with their children's. Percentages vary little across countries, with a difference of just 4% between Ireland and Spain, the highest scoring countries, and Croatia, the lowest.

Balancing children's screen time with physical activity ranked overall the second most challenging issue for almost half (47%) of participating parents, but with marked differences across countries. Greek parents appear to have experienced the most difficulties in this area (65%). Ireland, Malta, Monaco, Poland and Spain also rank this challenge higher than the overall average, with ratings ranging from 52% to 56%. On the other hand, just 1 in 4 Armenian parents (25%) indicate that balancing screen time with physical activity is an issue.

7. United Nations (2020), "Policy brief: Education during Covid-19 and beyond", available at https://unsdg.un.org/resources/policy-brief-education-during-covid-19-and-beyond.

On average, almost 2 in 5 parents (38%) found their children's lack of face-to-face contact with other children to be a problem, a figure that increases to 6 out of 10 parents in Ireland but drops to 3 out of 10 (31%) in Croatia. Polish and Greek families place much more emphasis on this challenge, with 53% and 47% respectively selecting this option.

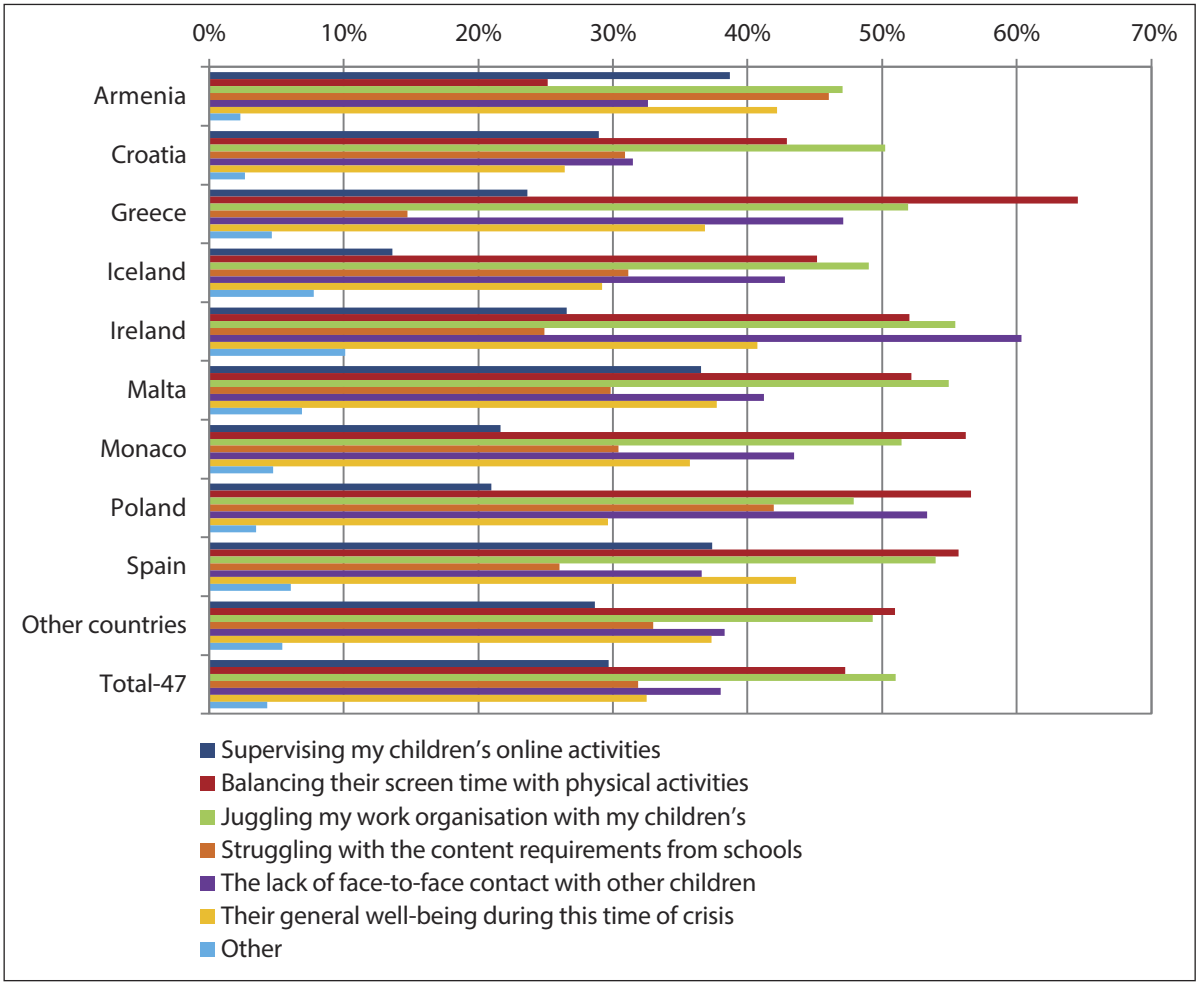
Children's general well-being rates fourth on the list of challenges across all Council of Europe member states (32%). However, once again there is a large variation between countries, ranging from Croatia (26%) to Spain (44%). Armenian and Irish parents scored their children's well-being higher than 40% too. These latter two issues possibly reflect sociocultural differences between countries, a point that will be further investigated in the qualitative interviews that will take place to enrich the findings of the survey.

Struggling with the content requirements from schools (32%) and the supervision of children's online activities (30%) ranked lowest overall on the list of parental priorities. Greek parents appear to have had the least problems with content requirements, with less than half (15%) of the overall average (32%). This may be linked to the fact that, in the next question, more parents from Greece than any other country state that their children's school already introduced some distance learning before the Covid-19 crisis. Armenian (46%) and Polish parents (42%), on the other hand, apparently found this to have been a bigger struggle.

Once again, we see large variations across countries when we look at the percentage of parents who consider supervising their children's online activities as a challenge. In Iceland, only 14% parents cite this as a challenge, whereas in Armenia, Malta and Spain approximately 4 out of 10 parents do. Is this a low priority because, as we saw in Figure 6, 62% parents already supervise their children's online activities and another 31% feel they know enough about their activities although they don't really take part in them?

Responses from other countries account for 10% of all responses on Q6, and vary little from the overall average, except in the area related to children's general well-being. Here the other countries score around 5% higher than the overall average, and considerably higher than Croatia, Iceland and Poland.

Figure 7 – Q6: If you have been managing your children's education during this time, which aspects have been most challenging for you? (country comparison)



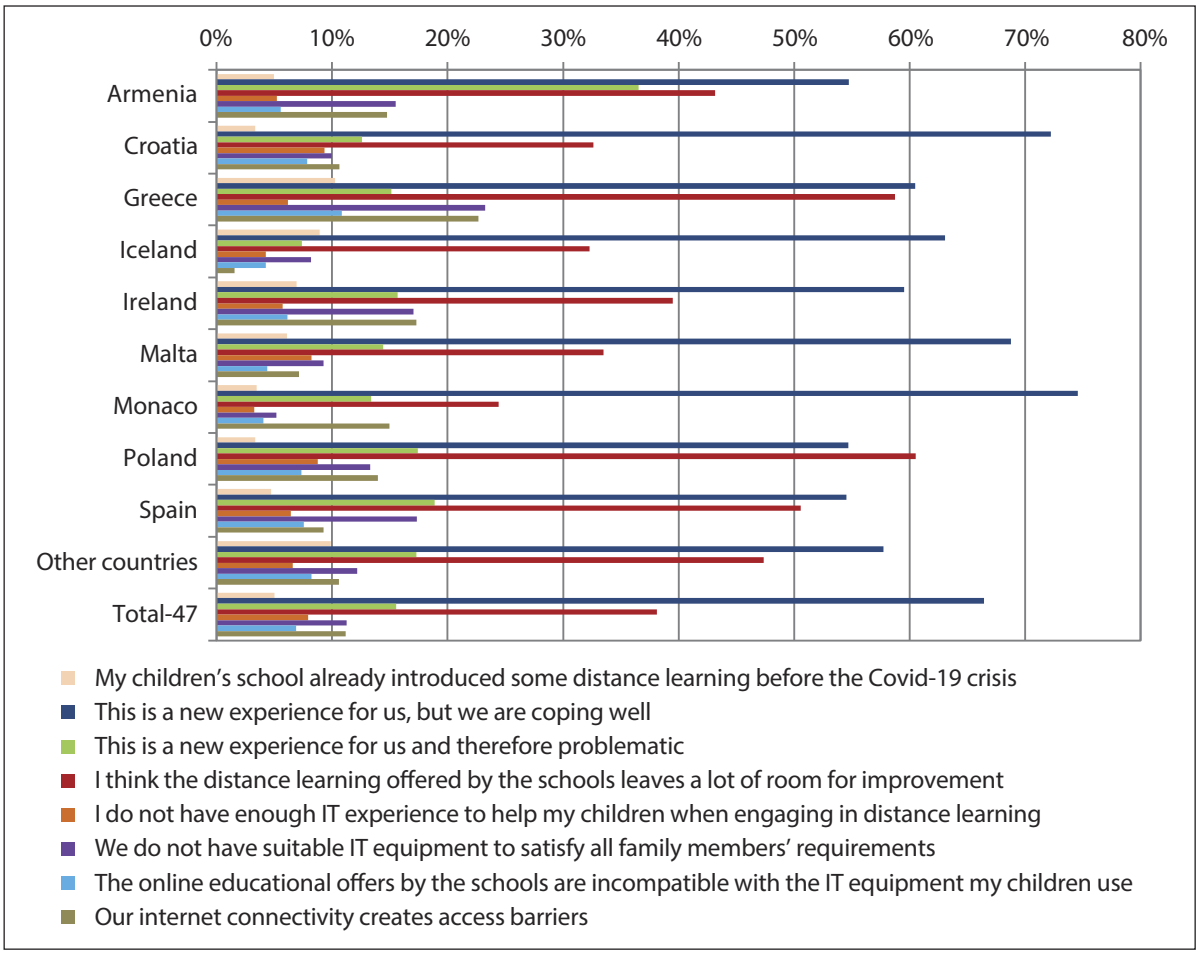
2.3. Distance learning offered by schools

It is evident from parents' responses that few children have previously experienced distance learning; however though, as mentioned earlier, 1 in 10 parents (10%) in Greece inform us that their children's school had already introduced some distance learning before the Covid-19 crisis. Across all countries, children of just 1 in 20 parents (5%) have previously experienced some form of distance learning. In Croatia, Poland and Monaco only 3% of parents state that their children's school had previously introduced it (Figure 8).

While distance learning offered by their children's school is new for the large majority of respondents, two thirds (66%) rate the experience positively, choosing the option "This is a new experience for us, but we're coping well"[8] (Figure 8). National percentages vary considerably, from Spain (55%) to Monaco (75%). This finding correlates with the very low (3%) response from Monaco on the option, "I do not have enough IT experience to help my children when engaging with distance learning". On average, 8% of parents feel they do not have enough IT experience, with Croatia showing the highest percentage (9%) of parents saying they have insufficient IT experience.

Nevertheless, a considerable number of parents find the new experience of their children's distance learning problematic, as attested to by an average of 16% of respondents. The figure rises to 37% for Armenia. Even in Iceland, 7% consider the experience problematic. Was the issue due to the quality and way the learning process was conducted, or to the inexperience of children and parents? On average, almost 4 out of 10 parents (38%) express dissatisfaction with the distance learning offered by schools by scoring the option "the distance learning offered by the schools leaves a lot of room for improvement". There is a large (36%) variation between the countries showing the highest and lowest percentages. In Poland and Greece, around 6 in 10 parents are dissatisfied (61% and 59% respectively). In Spain, the percentage of dissatisfied parents is 51%, compared to just 1 in 4 parents in Monaco (24%). In the other countries group, 47% of parents choose this option.

Figure 8 – Q7: Many schools reacted to the crisis by using distance learning. What have your (and your children's) experiences with this been so far? (country comparison)



8. In a Harvard Graduate School of Education (HGSE) study in June 2020 on 1 319 American adults, 68% of the 284 participating fathers reported feeling "closer" to their children since the pandemic began: see www.studyfinds.org/unsung-heroes-80-of-parents-have-new-respect-for-teachers-thanks-to-coronavirus-quarantine/ and https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20210503005350/en/Harris-Poll-finds-82-of-parents-have-a-greater-appreciation-for-teachers-since-the-start-of-the-COVID-19-pandemic.

Despite Greece being ahead of the field in regards to previous experience of distance learning, the remote schooling experience seems to have been hindered more than in other participating countries by a lack of suitable IT equipment and internet connectivity. A study from Greece[9] corroborates this finding, showing that 29% of the Greek population is still not using the internet. Telecom fees, too, are still rather high in the country. The percentage of Greek parents (23%) stating "We do not have suitable IT equipment to satisfy all family members' requirements" is more than double the overall average (11%). Even in Monaco, where the percentage is lowest on this option, 5% of parents are unable to meet their family's IT requirements.

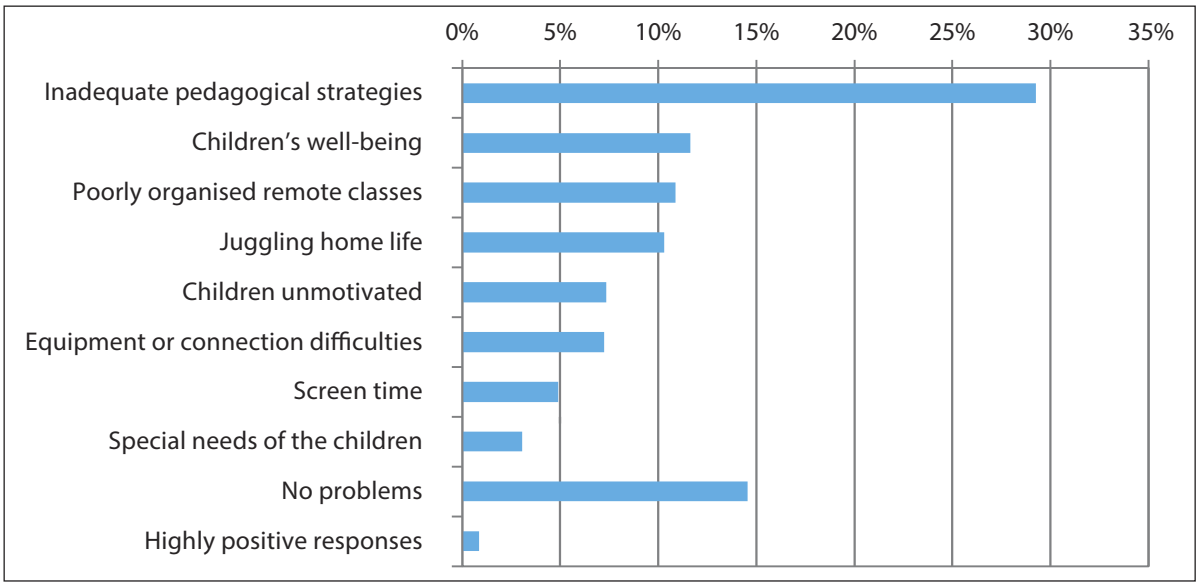
In another survey by the University of Iceland, 25% of teachers reported that student households lacked either adequate access or the equipment to deal properly with distance learning during Covid-19.[10] However, their experience was generally positive. They felt it had given them the opportunity to use new teaching tools and techniques, and encouraged students to become more independent and responsible.

Access barriers created by internet connectivity are apparently twice as prevalent for Greek parents (23%) compared to those in all other countries (on average, 11%). It is furthermore the only country with a two-digit percentage (11%) on the option "The online educational offers by the schools are incompatible with the IT equipment my children use". The overall average percentage is 7%.

2.4. Distance learning – what parents tell us

In Question 6, participants were invited to express their opinion freely in an option entitled "Other, please specify", and 817 parents took this opportunity to comment on their families' experience (Figure 9). Twenty-five parents (3%) deplore the fact that schools and teachers simply did not take into account the specific needs of children and families who are usually assisted by learning support educators, whether for children with autism, ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder), or because the family does not yet speak the national language. Concern for their children's health and well-being is felt by 1 in 4 parents. Of these, 5% worry about the extra time children are spending in front of the screen, 7% about their child's apparent loss of motivation for school, and 12% about their children's general well-being impacted by the lack of social interaction and physical exercise, or the stress due to isolation from peers, friends and relatives. Only 10% of parents commented on difficulties in juggling their own jobs or home life while having to supervise their children's learning. Comments from this group mainly related to having two or more children of different ages to supervise at the same time, and the impact on the parent–child relationship when the parent becomes the teacher.

Figure 9 – Q6: If you have been managing your children's education during this time, which aspects have been most challenging for you? (comments under "Other")



9. World Internet Project Greece (2020), "The internet in Greece", available at https://bit.ly/2EWJSOo (in Greek).
10. https://www.visir.is/g/20202010830d.

The biggest issue that 2 in 5 respondents raise relates to the way schools and teachers have handled the situation. More than 1 in 10 (11%) complain about organisational aspects, with different platforms being used by teachers of the same class, forcing children to register on several platforms, usually business-oriented platforms with inadequate security measures in place. Homework, activities and deadlines to submit work had to be searched for on a variety of platforms too. Some children never heard from their teachers throughout the duration of the lockdown. Very young children were struggling with a keyboard, which they had never previously used in school as they were still mastering reading and writing. Another 29% of parents complained about the pedagogical strategies of teachers, which they consider totally unsuited to the remote schooling environment. Lessons need to be more motivating and interesting than ever to encourage students to actively participate; however, according to parents, it seems that most teachers went back to the old "chalk and talk" methodology, talking at their students rather than interacting with them.

Only 15% of parents commented that they find remote schooling no problem at all, with statements like "Our school is doing their best for our children". A further 1% find that remote schooling offers new opportunities for children, who become excited about learning when outside the constraints of the classroom. One parent says: "I see a big difference in my son, he is happy working from home. I'm told he doesn't want to know about school, which I never understood. But online lessons were great. So, I want to thank everybody, they worked hard from home for our children. 5 stars for all the school staff".

Student-centred remote pedagogy requires a very different approach to traditional classroom methods, focused on project work and learning by doing rather than simply learning by listening. Further education and training would help teachers adapt their approach, and at long last enable them to take on the role of coach and mentor which has been advocated by educational leaders for the past quarter of a century at least.

Chapter 3

Building digital citizenship competences through online activities

3.1. Recommendations – what the findings tell us

This section looks at the activities that parents and children do together online, what parents say their children do online, and the means by which parents are supporting their children in developing some of the competences necessary for digital citizenship. The key findings are as follows.

- Parents cite the top three activities they do together with their children as: 1. exploring educational sites or resources for homework; 2. communicating; and 3. watching videos or listening to music. They report that their children's top three online activities are: 1. watching videos and listening to music; 2. playing games; and 3. communicating. Less than 1% of parents say that they do not know what their children do online.
- Almost 50% of Armenian parents play games with their children to trigger their creativity, imagination, participation and critical thinking skills, as often as they can or 1-2 hours weekly. This is way above the average 28% across all countries.
- Around 42% of parents in Europe either intend to or have already enrolled their children in coding or similar activities, to acquire or improve their technological skills. Malta (60%) leads the field.

The findings indicate that parents are aware of what their children are doing online, although perhaps they underestimate the time spent on certain activities. They dedicate time to exploring sources for their children's homework, as it is something their children need to do, but they seem to find it less important to explore the internet with their children to help them learn new things. It also appears that parents and children do not understand that posting online is content creation. Moreover, parents seem to have a blurred understanding of the wide range of tools that fall into the category "social networking". Developing their children's creativity by exploring new things, creating content together, playing games as a family and learning to master digital technology do not seem to be on the agenda of many parents. Yet these are important steps on the path to becoming a digital citizen, to build competences such as critical thinking, problem solving and interpersonal skills, all contributing to resilience. We recommend that the Council of Europe, together with industry and the civil sector:

- creates a short, easy-to-read online tool (for example a simplified version of the "Internet Literacy Handbook")[11] where families can rapidly find information on the apps and platforms their children use, to help them understand, evaluate and discuss informatively with their children the capabilities, advantages and risks of such tools;
- provides information for parents on how to choose online games, to help safeguard the well-being and safety of their children and raise parental awareness of accredited systems such as PEGI[12] that can help them. Parents need a better understanding of the potential challenges children may face in online games (grooming, bullying, harmful content, etc.);
- builds better public understanding of how children, and the broader public, can acquire the technological skills and the necessary competences to use digital technology more meaningfully as digital citizens. Mastering the use of tools intuitively is just a small part of digital literacy. The way these tools are used depends on families and schools supporting children in developing the values, attitudes, skills and knowledge and critical understanding to use them astutely in their daily life.

11. https://rm.coe.int/internet-literacy-handbook/1680766c85k.
12. https://pegi.info/.

3.2. Children's online activities and parental concerns

Before looking more closely at family rules and practices related to children's online activities, it is interesting to compare the activities parents say they share with their children with the activities they tell us that their children mainly do, as shown in Figures 10, 11 and 12.

Figure 10 – Q8: I spend time with my children online to …

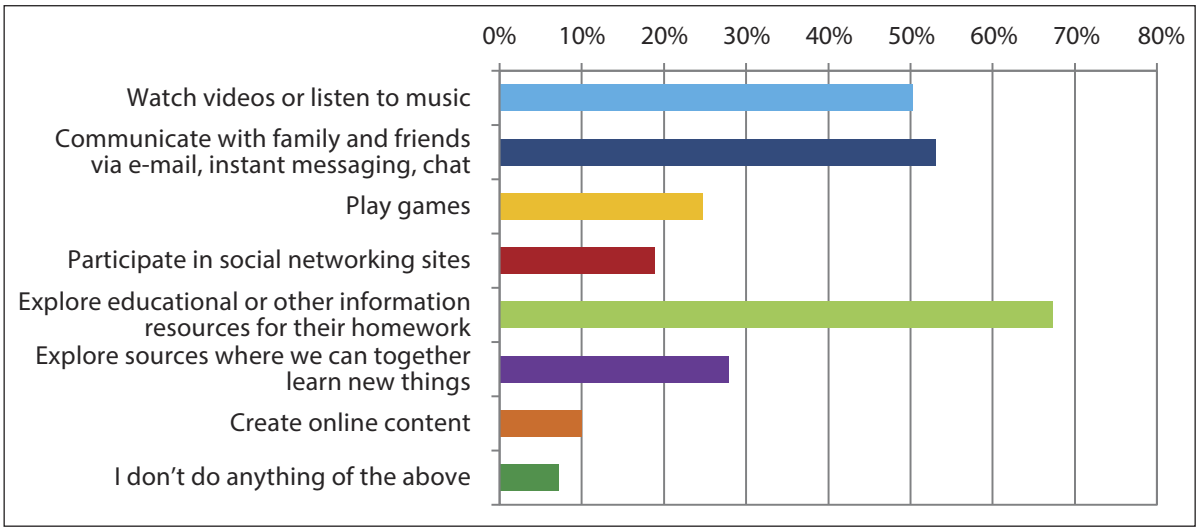
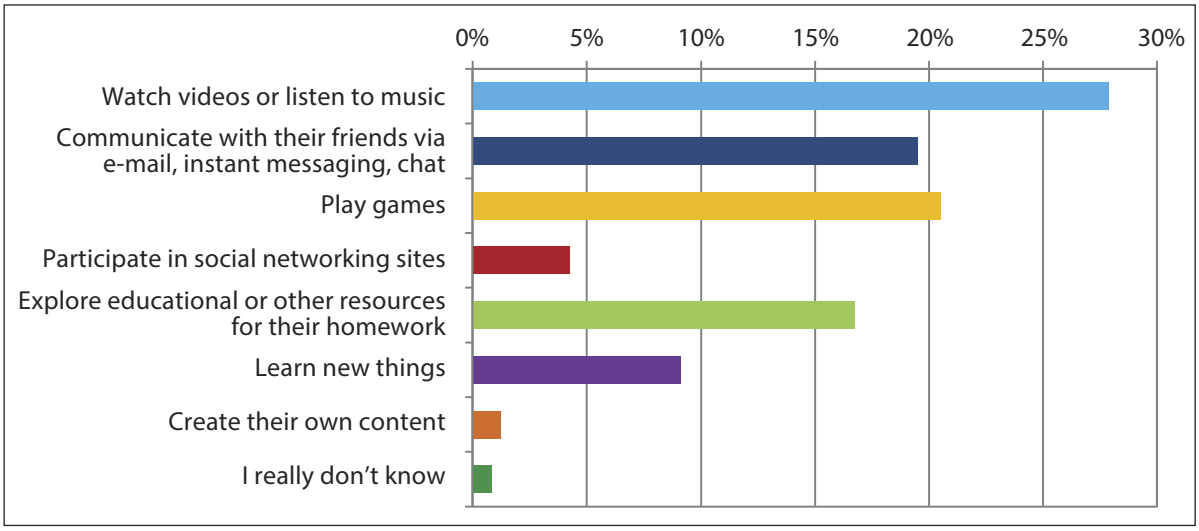


Figure 11 – Q10: My children mainly use the internet to …



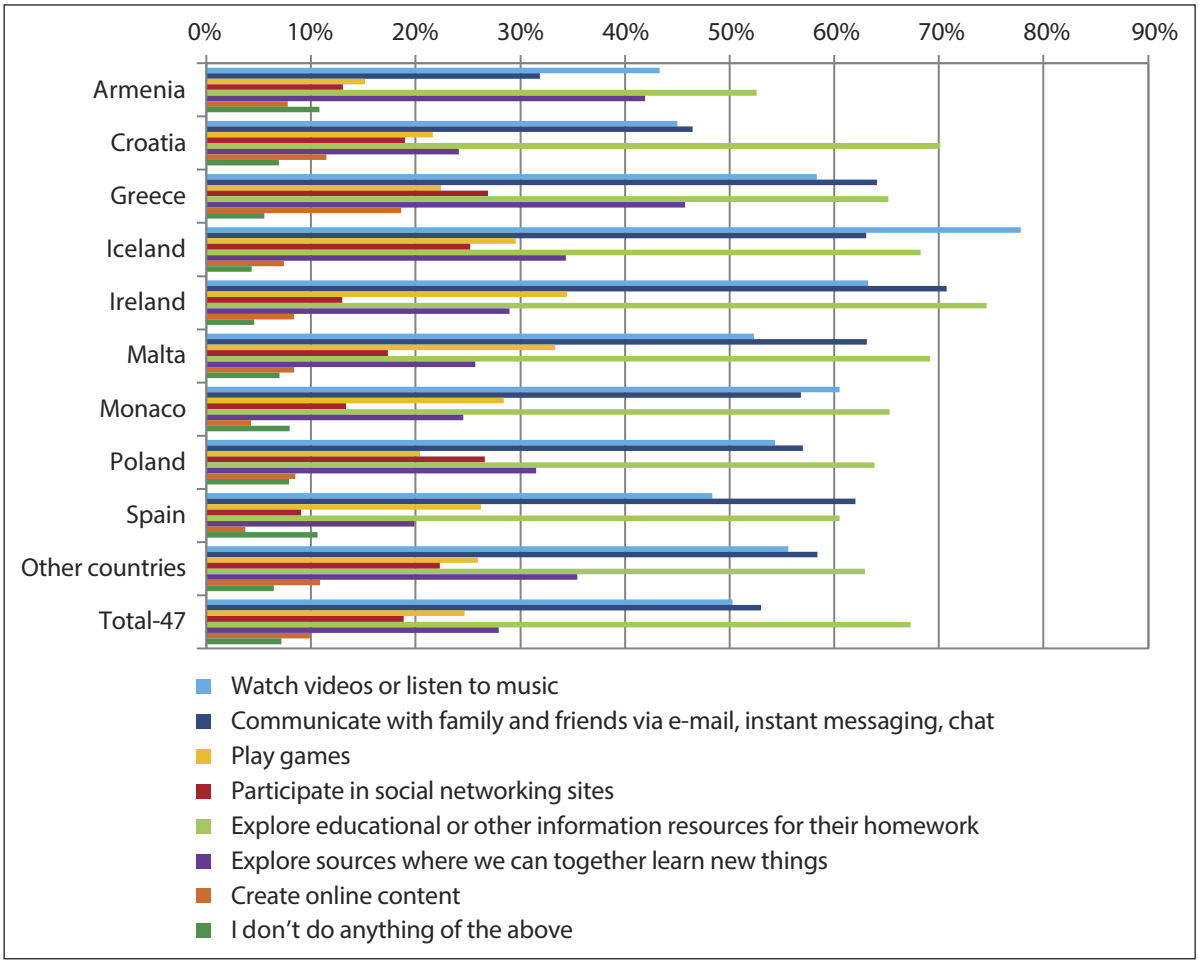
Almost 7 in 10 parents (67%) nominate exploring educational or other information sources for homework as the top activity they spend time on with their children (Figure 10). National responses generally vary little, although 3 out of 4 Irish parents (75%) spend time with their children on this activity whereas only 1 in 2 Armenian parents (53%) do (Figure 12). Yet just 17% of parents include this among the activities their children mainly use the internet for (Figure 11), with little variation across countries.

Again, about 3 in 10 parents (28%) state that they "explore sources where we can together learn new things". The percentage is much higher in Greece (46%), and in Spain drops to (20%). Yet less than 1 in 10 parents (9%) say their children mainly use the internet for learning new things online, and once again national percentages generally vary little. Around 22% of Armenian parents count this among their children's main online activities, whereas in Iceland we see a very low 3% (Figure 13).

It comes as no surprise to see that 1 in 2 parents (53%) list communicating with family and friends (via e-mail, instant messaging, chat) to be an activity they share with their children (Figure 10). Ireland takes the lead with 7 out of 10 parents (71%) whereas, at the other end of the scale, only 3 out of 10 Armenian parents cite this activity (32%) (Figure 12). Looking at all family activities online, the biggest disparity between countries (39%) is on this option. Surprisingly, only 20% of parents state that their children spend time online communicating

with friends via e-mail, instant messaging, chat (Figure 11). Do parents in Greece and Croatia, where the percentage rises to almost 23%, have a more realistic view of what their children mainly do online (Figure 13)? In a recent study on the online activities of more than 5 000 children aged 11 to 15 years,[13] digital technology emerged overwhelmingly as a communication and entertainment tool above all other usages.

Figure 12 – Q8: I spend time with my children online to … (country comparison)

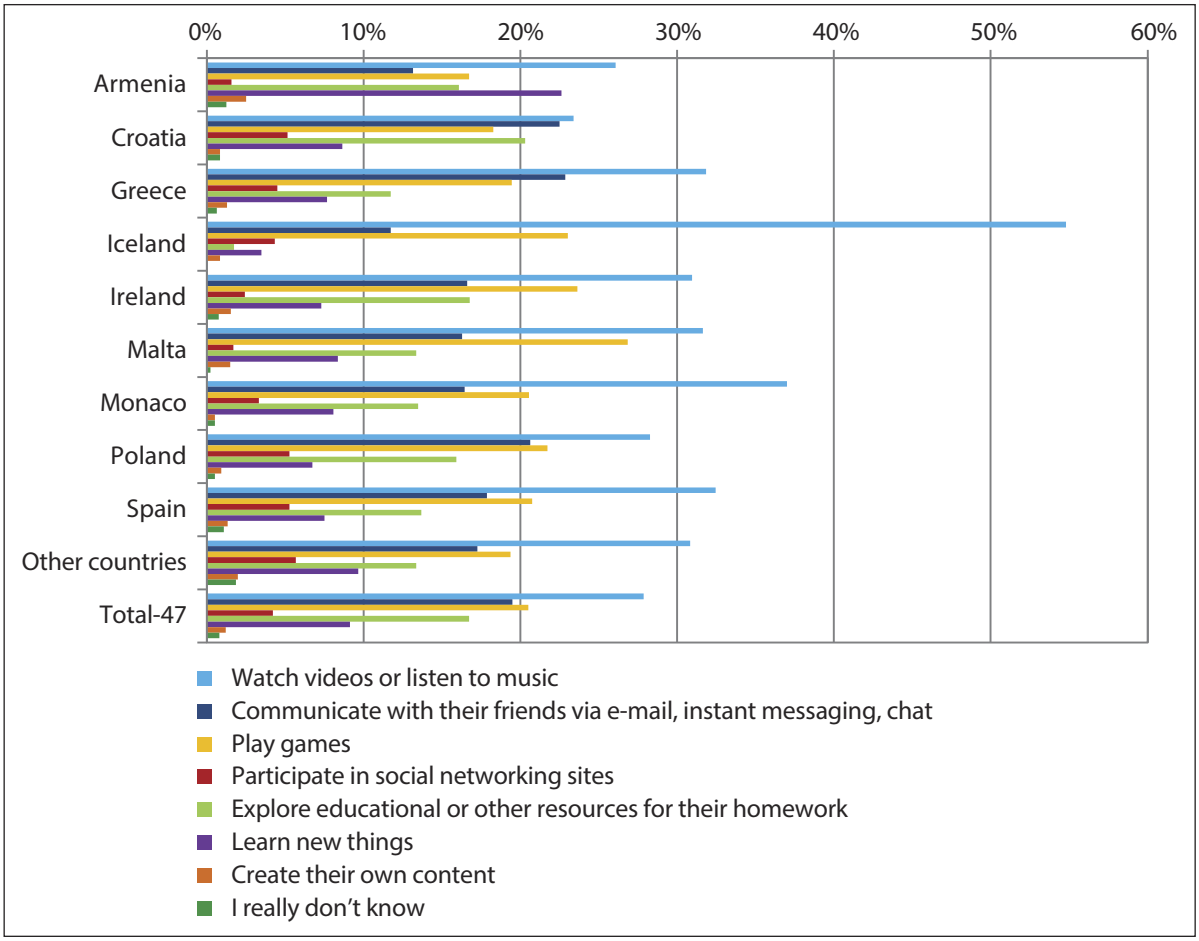


Watching videos or listening to music is the third most popular activity that parents in all countries spend time with their children on, at an overall 50% average (Figure 12). The figure rises to 78% in Iceland, and 63% in Ireland. Considerably less parents (28%) report that their children mainly use the internet for watching videos or listening to music. Although this is the top-rated of children's online activities in all countries, the figure does not show the depth of the phenomenon that we see in statistics in the 2019 Ofcom report.[14] This indicates, for example, that in the United Kingdom, 51% of 3 to 4 year olds, rising to 89% of 12 to 15 year olds, watch between 8 and 11 hours of YouTube respectively per week. The EU Kids Online 2020 survey report[15] indicates that watching videos is a regular online activity for 66% of 9 to 16 year olds.

On average, 19% of parents say they spend time with their children to participate in social networking sites, with Greece standing out with 27% and Armenia with just 13%. Similarly, just 4% of parents say that their children mainly use the internet to participate in social networking sites, a figure that is even lower in Armenia and Malta (around 2%) (Figure 13). This could also be due to a discrepancy in terminology, discussed at length during the focus group sessions, as parents are often not sure which apps that their children use (for example Snapchat, TikTok, Instagram are included in this term). It could also relate to a lack of understanding as to which apps are actually social networks (such as WhatsApp).

13. Richardson J. (2020), "SmartBus – Empowering young people online", available at https://bit.ly/34bDvRd.
14. Ofcom (2020), "Children and parents: media use and attitudes report 2019", available at https://bit.ly/3cRcjcS.
15. www.lse.ac.uk/media-and-communications/assets/documents/research/eu-kids-online/reports/EU-Kids-Online-2020-March2020.pdf.

Figure 13 – Q10: My children mainly use the internet to … (country comparison)



The time parents spend together with their children to participate in social networking sites could be explained by the big concern of parents to talk with their children on how to protect their privacy and the privacy of others (Figure 19). This seems to be the chief concern for a majority of parents, with almost 7 in 10 parents (67%) stating that they talk to their children about it. Only 7% of respondents chose the final option "I don't do anything of the above", though it appears that this could be the case mainly for parents with older or very young children. Just 4% of Icelanders chose this option, with Armenia and Spain showing the highest ranking at 11%. When asked about the activity their children mainly use the internet for, responses on the option "I really don't know" are encouragingly low, ranging from 0% in Iceland to 1% in Armenia.

3.3. Creativity and play – what are the trends?

Learning and creativity is one of the three domains that make up the "Being online" cluster in the Council of Europe's digital citizenship education model. Two creative activities were therefore included in questions 8 and 10: creating online content and playing games. On average, 1 in 10 parents (10%) say they create online content with their children (Figure 10). Greece stands out with 19% of parents saying they do this (Figure 12). Spain is at the other end of the scale with 4%. Croatia and the countries grouped under the term "other countries" show percentages slightly above average, at 11% respectively. Just 1% of respondents say their children use the internet mainly to create their own content, a figure that varies only slightly across countries (Figure 13). This concurs with findings from other recent publications, and relates to one of the recommendations in this section of the report. There is a growing concern, especially among educators, that digital technology is accentuating a trend towards consumption rather than creation, yet creativity is an essential element in competences such as critical thinking and problem solving. These are the skills rated by the World Economic Forum[16] to be among the top five required by citizens to thrive in today's world.

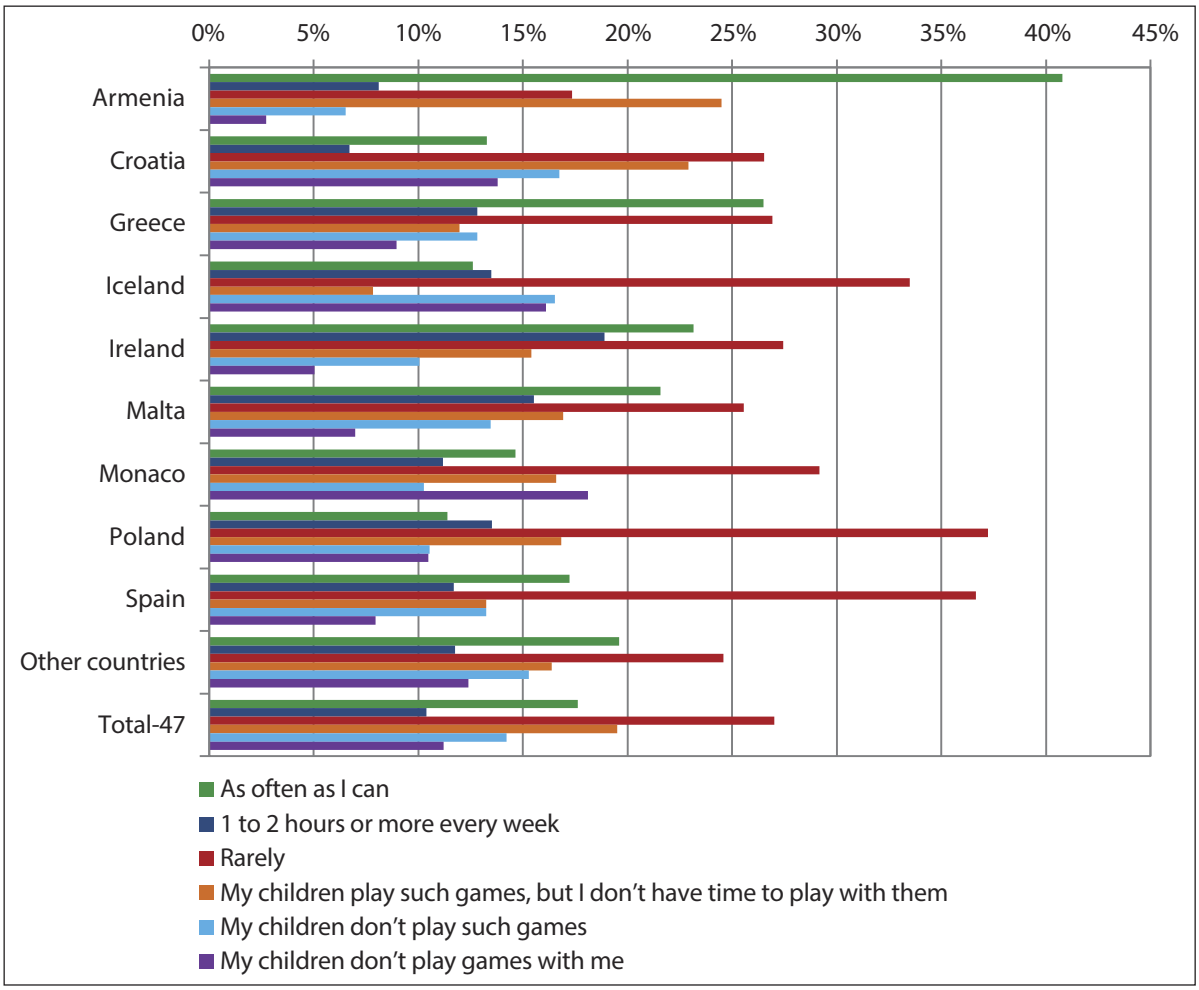
16. World Economic Forum (2020), "These are the top 10 job skills of tomorrow", available at https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/10/top-10-work-skills-of-tomorrow-how-long-it-takes-to-learn-them/.

"Play games" is the fifth most popular activity that parents spend time online with their children on (Figure 10). Not only does game playing contribute to creativity when family members play together, it also helps children learn to negotiate social rules, and develop interpersonal skills. Game playing as an activity their children mainly spend time on is cited by 1 in 5 parents (21%, Figure 11). The results vary widely from country to country, with just 17% of Armenian parents stating that their children spend time on the internet playing games, compared to 27% of Maltese parents and 24% of parents in Ireland (Figure 13).

The Ofcom report (2019),[17] which draws heavily on fieldwork with children and parents, gives quite different figures for online game playing across the United Kingdom. Children begin early, with parents stating that 17% of 3-4-year-olds, 35% of 5-7-year-olds, 66% of 8-11-year-olds and 72% of 12-15-year-olds play online games regularly.

Given the importance of playing games in children's development of skills and attitudes closely related to digital citizenship competences, a further question on this topic was included in the survey to understand the frequency of such activities in families. Question 9 states: "I play board and/or online games together with my children to trigger their creativity, imagination, participation and critical thinking skills" (Figure 14). Almost 1 in 3 parents state that they do this as often as they can (18%), or at least one or two hours a week (10%), although this varies considerably from country to country. Armenian respondents top the scale with 49%, followed by Ireland (42%). Croatia is at the lower end (20%). However, 72% report that they rarely play games with their children, do not have the time, their children do not play such games, or do not play games with them. As already stated above, playing games rates fifth in the activities that parents do with their children online.

Figure 14 – Q9: I play board and/or online games together with my children (country comparison)

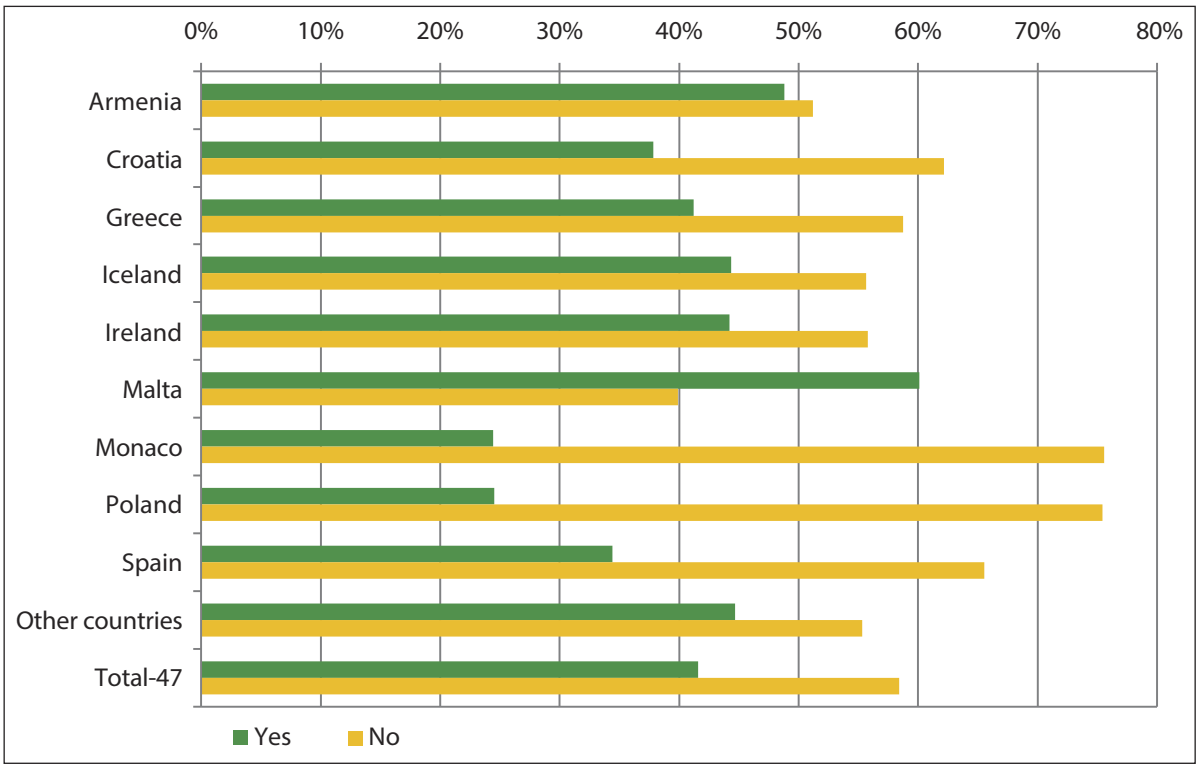


Coding contributes to developing creativity, enables children to create different types of online content, and considerably enhances their understanding of digital technology. Around 4 in 10 parents report that they enrol/intend to enrol their children in coding or other similar activities to acquire or improve their technological skills.

17. Ofcom (2019), "Children and parents: Media use and attitudes report 2019". Available at: https://bit.ly/3cRcjcS.

Malta (60%) stands out with 6 in 10 parents declaring to do so, whereas in Monaco and Poland only 24% and 25% respectively do (Figure 15).

Figure 15 – Q11: I enrol my children/intend to enrol my children in coding or other similar activities to acquire or improve their technological skills (country comparison)



Chapter 4

Parental guidance for young digital citizens

4.1. Recommendations – what the findings tell us

Sharing digital experiences, discussing online activities and applying family rules to guide the things children do and the people they interact with in the digital world are the most effective ways to help children embark successfully on the path to digital citizenship. The key findings below give a glimpse of how families tackle these essential pillars.

Most survey respondents apply between two and four rules about digital technology in their home, with Icelandic parents setting the most rules and Armenian the least. The four top rules set by parents are: 1. to ask parents whenever they see scary or weird things online; 2. never shop online without a parent present; 3. ask a parent before sharing personal information; and 4. always act responsibly and ethically online.

One of the main topics that parents speak about with their children is privacy, although the strategies they use to protect this is not evident from the findings. For example, taking care with cookies is not a priority. Similarly, they are concerned about children understanding their rights and responsibilities, and ethical and responsible online behaviour. Hopefully, the follow-up interviews to gather qualitative information will shed light on how they help their children understand what these concepts imply. Critical thinking, cross-checking facts, creating content and respecting the creative content of others seem to rate low on the list of priorities for parents. This is an important area that needs to be addressed at home and at school.

The vast majority of parents say that their children talk to them about what they are doing online, either often or sometimes (91%). The figure once again correlates with findings from children in the "EU Kids Online 2020" survey, where most say that their parents engage at least sometimes in active mediation (talk to them, encourage them, help them and suggest ways to use the internet safely), although apparently more with a focus on safety than encouraging them to explore the opportunities that the internet offers. In the DCE survey, 10% of parents report that they do not know how to speak to their children about online issues, as they do not know much about them themselves, with another 4% saying that they do not have the time to do that.

The above key findings, along with the analysis of findings later in this section, accentuate the need for parents to be informed and able to continually update their knowledge to keep up with the evolutions of digital technology and the new tools and platforms that emerge (for example virtual reality). They need to know how to help their children, to avoid them seeking help and advice from unknown or doubtful sources rather than coming to their parents for help. To ensure that parents are able to respond competently to their queries and calls for help, we recommend the following.

- A series of short, practical "how to" webinars on the strategies that will help them discuss more effectively with their children topics such as dealing with cookies, shopping online, choosing suitable online games, checking facts, dealing with weird or scary content, respecting responsibilities, getting permission to use the creative works of others. Self-explanatory titles and easy-access routes would facilitate the just-in-time approach parents usually need to apply in the heat of the moment.
- Easy-to-read information sheets for parents with clear signposts to alert children and adults when rights (privacy, copyright) may be infringed or jeopardised. These sheets would aim to help parents to build a deeper understanding of issues such as fact-checking, cyberattacks, cookies and profiling. They could be based on the information contained in the Council of Europe's "Internet literacy handbook".[18]
- Awareness campaigns – there appears to be a marked difference in priorities between countries where successful awareness campaigns have taken place over the past years, and those that have not benefited from such opportunities. Successful campaigns are generally built on the exchange of good practice and

18. https://rm.coe.int/internet-literacy-handbook/1680766c85.

experience, as we see in Iceland, Greece, Croatia, Malta and several other countries. The Council of Europe could facilitate exchanges between experts to develop campaigns around issues related to content. For example, effective awareness campaigns to encourage more focus on critical thinking, fact-checking, content creation, algorithms and profiling, and the importance of a healthy balance between children's on- and offline activities could make a difference in the way young digital citizens approach content.

4.2. Rules families apply about children's online activities

Most families appear to feel the need to monitor their children's online activities. A comparison by the age of the youngest child of respondents shows that more parents set rules for the 5 to 9 and 10 to 13 age groups than they do for the under 5 and 14 to 18 age groups (Figure 16). A comparison by age group of respondents shows that the over 60 age group, probably grandparents rather than parents, sets slightly fewer rules than the 18 to 30 age group (Appendix IV).

When asked to choose which rules they apply, four rules stand out as being widely used by a majority of parents:

1. always ask a parent if they encounter something weird or scary online (66%);

2. never shop online without a parent being present (64%);

3. ask before sharing any personal information online/via their mobile phone (60%);

4. respect safety rules and act ethically and responsibly online (59%).

Respecting other people and their privacy online seems to be slightly less important to parents, at 53% (Figure 18). Icelandic parents apply more rules about their children's online activities, followed by Greece, Ireland and Poland (Figure 17). Across countries, less than 1 in 20 respondents report that none of the rules apply for their family. Respondents in Armenia apparently apply fewer rules than any other country, with 20% stating that none of these rules apply, compared to the overall average 5% on this option.

Figure 16 – Q14: Choose the rules that apply for your children (comparison across children's age groups)

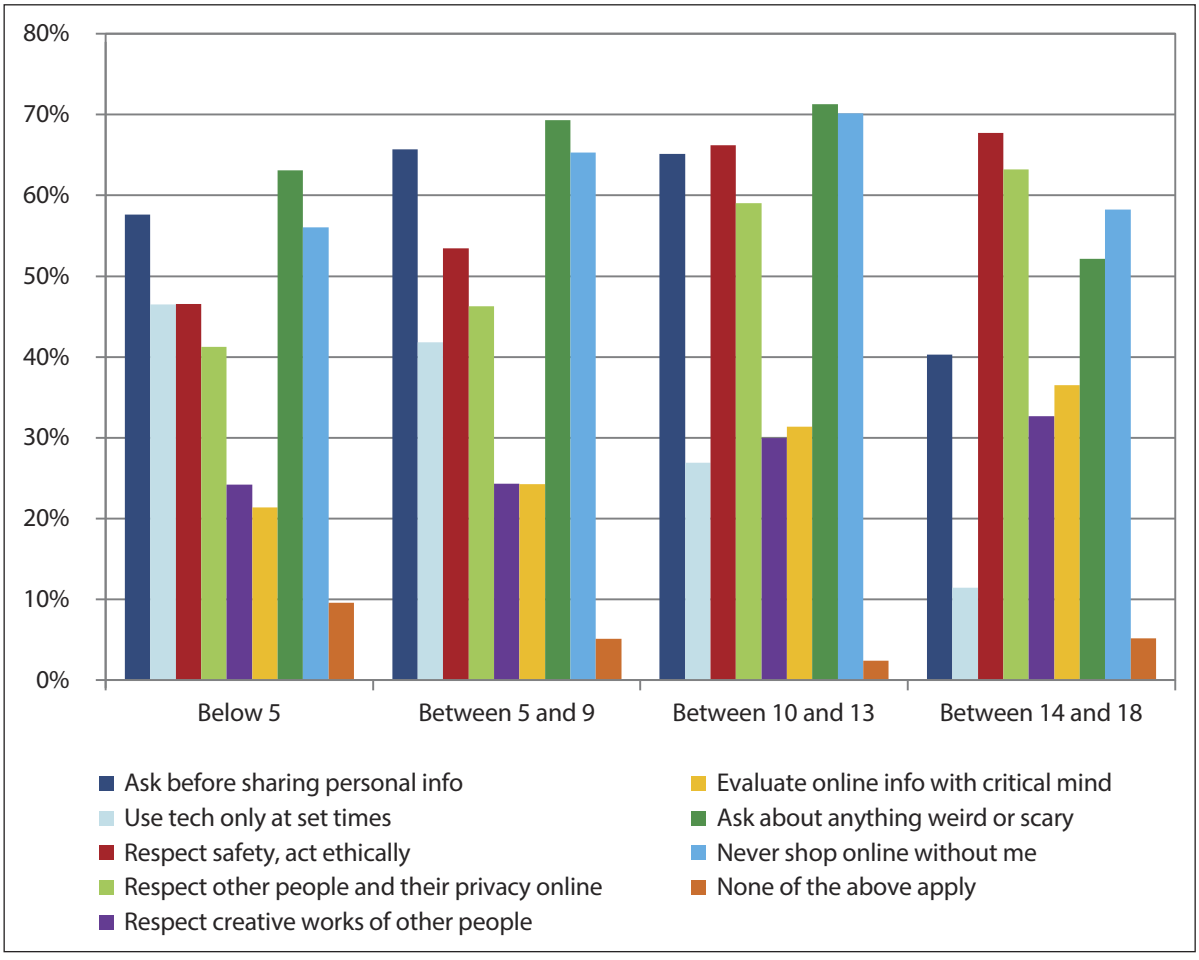


Figure 17 – Q14: Choose the rules that apply for your children

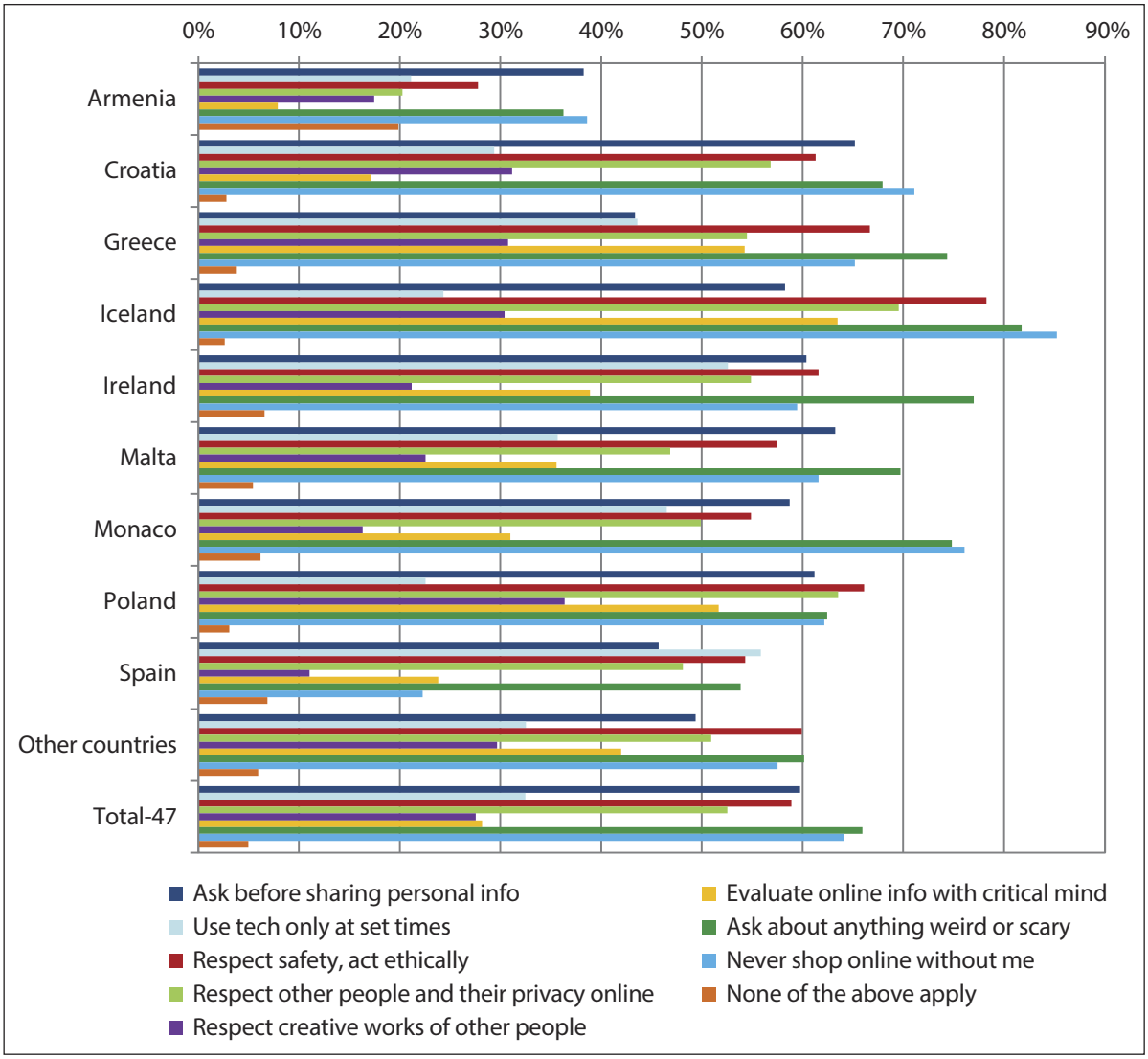
Rules	Armenia	Croatia	Greece	Iceland	Ireland	Malta	Monaco	Poland	Spain	Other countries
Ask before sharing personal info	38%	65%	43%	58%	60%	63%	59%	61%	46%	49%
Use tech only at set times	21%	29%	44%	24%	53%	36%	47%	23%	56%	33%
Respect safety, act ethically	28%	61%	67%	78%	62%	57%	55%	66%	54%	60%
Respect others' privacy online	20%	57%	54%	70%	55%	47%	50%	64%	48%	51%
Respect others' creative works	17%	31%	31%	31%	21%	23%	16%	36%	11%	30%
Evaluate online info critically	8%	17%	54%	63%	39%	36%	31%	52%	24%	42%
Ask about anything weird/scary	36%	68%	74%	82%	77%	70%	75%	62%	54%	60%
Never shop online without me	39%	71%	65%	85%	59%	62%	76%	62%	22%	57%
None of the above apply	20%	3%	4%	3%	7%	5%	6%	3%	7%	6%

Although screen time features as a top concern for 43% of British parents (Ofcom report 2020, see footnote 14), and 71% of American parents (Pew Research Center 2020, see footnote 6) are very or somewhat concerned about it, only 1 in 3 European parents applies rules about using technology at set times (32%). Spain (56%) and Ireland (53%) are the main exceptions here. Armenia, Poland and Iceland seem less concerned than other countries about screen time, scoring 21%, 23% and 24% respectively (Figure 18).

In Iceland, 85% of parents apply the rule "never shop online without me being present", 82% "always ask if you see something weird", and 78% "respect safety rules and act ethically and responsibly". It is one of the few countries that scores higher on "respect other people and their privacy online" (70%) than "ask before sharing any personal information" (58%), alongside Greece, Poland and other countries. These figures may indicate an example of good awareness-raising practices that could be helpful to experts in other countries.

Less than 1 in 3 parents set rules about respecting the creative works of others online (28%). Polish parents (36%) set most rules about this, followed by Croatia, Greece, Iceland and the "other countries" group who score between 30% and 31%. In Spain, only 11% of respondents apply a rule about this, and in Armenia 17%. Copyright is a challenging topic, for the education sector too. Parents and children need a brief, easy-to-read information sheet with signposts to alert them when they may be infringing copyright rules.

Figure 18 – Q14: Choose the rules that apply for your children (country comparison)



4.3. Privacy, a key parental concern

When asked to indicate the topics they speak about with their children (Q15), responses from parents correlate closely to the main rules they say they apply in their family. Most findings are similar across all parent-age categories, and show that most parents take the time to speak to their children about important issues concerning their online activities (Figure 19). The same pattern as previously mentioned is evident when we look at the age of children, with the main focus on the middle and older age brackets (10 to 18 years) and far less on those under 5 (Appendix V). The main topics discussed:

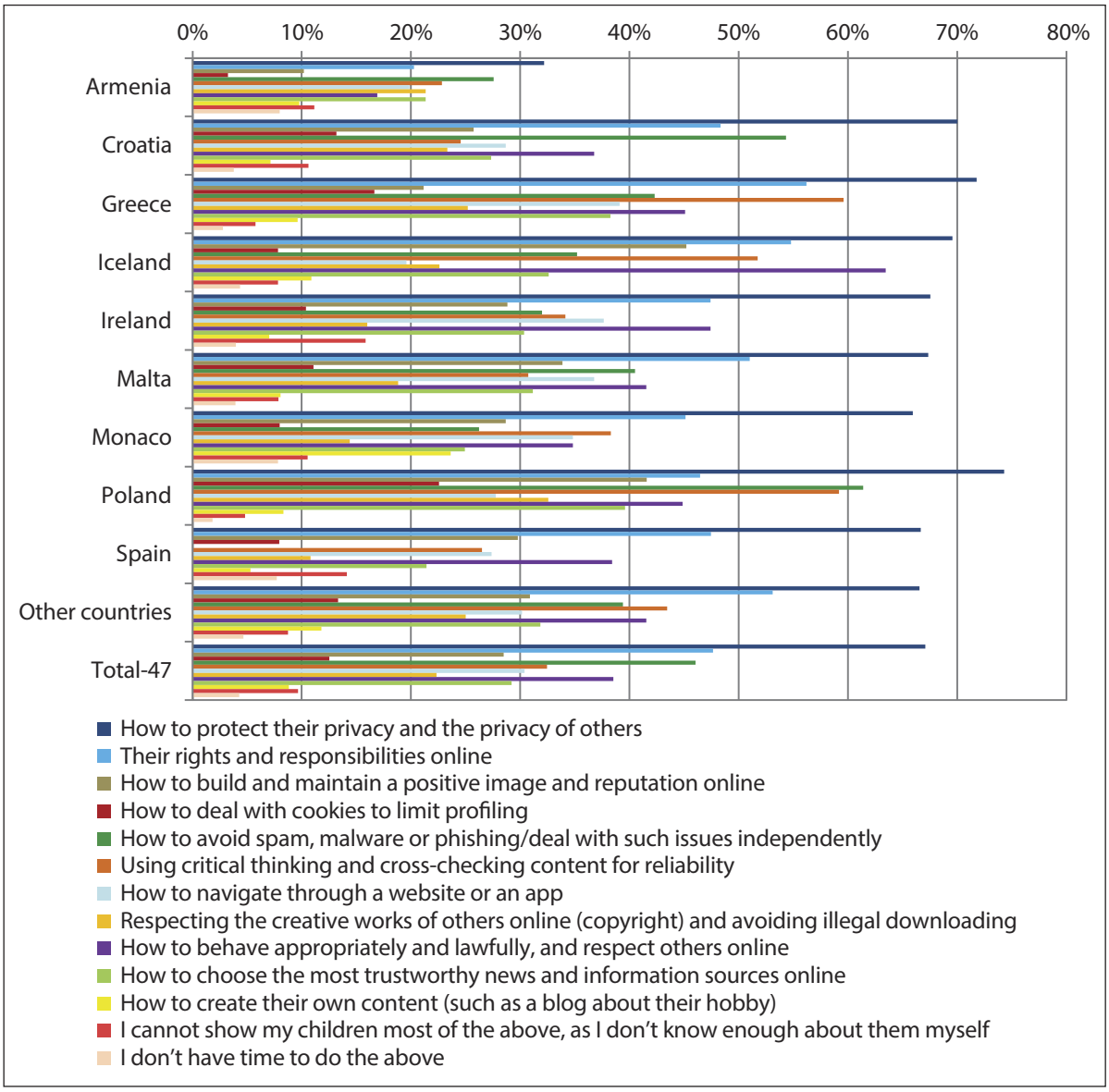
- how to protect their privacy and the privacy of others online (67%);
- rights and responsibilities online (48%);
- how to avoid spam, viruses, malware or phishing (46%);
- how to behave appropriately and responsibly, and respect others (39%).

In most countries, almost 7 in 10 parents consider privacy an important point of discussion with their children (67%), with less than a 7% variation between Poland, the top scorer at 74%, and all other countries except Armenia (32%). While percentages from Armenia in this area are generally lower than other countries, Armenian respondents prioritise privacy over all other topics on the list. Are the low percentages due to limited access to a full range of online opportunities for young people in Armenia? (The World Bank reports[19] that households with lower incomes are still using slower mobile-based internet services.)

19. Raja S. and Malumyan G. (2020), "Internet use in Armenia: how might connectivity shape access to opportunity?", World Bank Blogs, available at https://bit.ly/3jqgqPR.

A little less than 1 in 2 respondents speak to their children about rights and responsibilities (48%), with a slightly higher percentage in Greece (56%), Ireland (55%) and the countries grouped under "Other countries" (53%). This underlines the great amount of work still to be done to make digital citizenship a reality across Europe, since most citizenship competences are built around rights. Other options in this question, and in the following section of this report, examine more closely what parents include under the umbrella of rights and responsibilities, and how they tackle these issues. Behaving appropriately and lawfully, and respecting others online is one such topic that depends on children having a solid knowledge of rights and responsibilities. Almost 4 in 10 parents (39%) speak about this with their children. Iceland leads other countries by far with 63%, while only 17% of Armenian respondents say this is a topic they speak with their children about.

Figure 19 – Q15: I speak to my children about … (country comparison)



Almost half of the survey respondents talk to their children about how to avoid spam, viruses, malware or phishing (46%), with Poland taking the lead with 61% of parents, and Spain showing the lowest percentage (27%). Parents often explain this out of concern for family equipment. However, they need to be aware that, because children are generally more trusting than adults and may have a low technical understanding, they can be quite vulnerable to malware and cybercrime attacks. They often frequent chat rooms, social media, online games and video streaming, too, and these are places where cybercriminals are most active. According to a 2020 Europol report,[20] Covid-19 sparked an upward trend in cybercrime, with criminals exploiting the pandemic for online scams, among other criminal activities.

20. Europol (2020), "Internet organised crime threat assessment (IOCTA)", available at https://bit.ly/348XZKi.

Although 3 in 10 parents (30%) show their children how to navigate through a website or an app, less than 13% speak to their children about how to deal with cookies to limit profiling. Polish parents score slightly better with almost 23%, approximately 20 percentage points ahead of Armenia (3%). This seems to indicate that, while parents wish to protect their children's personal information, they do not fully understand what information they are giving away when they do not pay attention to cookies.

4.4. Content, an Achilles' heel in awareness raising?

Content is an increasingly important area of focus for children growing up in a digital world. Besides the risk of their coming across harmful or unsuitable content their parents would prefer them not to see, misinformation and fake news are currently unavoidable online plagues, able to jeopardise democracies and lead to health, social and economic disruption. Yet just 1 in 3 parents (32%) report discussing critical thinking, cross-checking and evaluating the content they read in terms of reliability, truth and accuracy with their children (Figure 19). Greece, Poland and Iceland score above most other countries with 60%, 59%, and 52% respectively, while only 2 in 10 parents in Armenia include this topic in discussions with their children. Poland (40%), along with Greece (38%) also stands out when it comes to showing children how to choose the most trustworthy news and information sources online. In Armenia and Spain, the percentage drops to 21%.

Three other topics linked to content creation rate low in parents' discussions with their children:

- how to build and maintain a positive image and reputation online (28%);
- respecting the creative works of others online (copyright) and avoiding illegal downloading (22%);
- content creation (9%).

Other recent reports underline the significant proportion of children lacking content creation skills, and suggest that fewer than half are able to edit or make basic changes to online content.

Nevertheless, in Iceland almost 1 in 2 parents place a focus on helping their children maintain a positive online reputation (45%), compared to just 1 in 10 parents in Armenia. Except in Poland (33%), 8 in 10 parents are not overly concerned with respecting the creative works of others online (copyright) and avoiding illegal downloading. Content creation fares even worse in all countries except Monaco (24%), which almost triples the overall average of 9%. Percentages on these two options correlate with findings on the rule-setting question above.

It is interesting to note that, when analysed by age category of respondents, those aged 46 to 60 and those aged over 60, generally discuss topics with children more than younger respondents (Figure 20). However, they apparently consider that they lack knowledge by double the percentage shown by the two younger age groups (30% compared to 15%) stating: "I don't know how to show my children most of the above because I don't know much about them myself". Only 5% of respondents from Poland report a lack of knowledge in showing children such things, but the percentage jumps to 16% in Ireland (Figure 19). Overall, 4% of respondents claim that they do not have time to do the above, with Poland showing a minimum score (less than 2%) and Armenia almost doubling the average with 8%.

Figure 20 – Q15: I speak to my children about … (comparison across respondents' age groups)

	Age of parent			
	18-30	31-45	46-60	Over 60
Protecting their privacy/privacy of others	60%	67%	69%	52%
Their rights and responsibilities online	39%	47%	52%	48%
How to build and maintain a positive image and reputation online	22%	27%	32%	30%
How to deal with cookies to limit profiling	14%	12%	14%	17%
How to avoid spam, viruses, malware or phishing, or what to do about them	44%	47%	45%	41%
Critical thinking, cross-checking and evaluating content for reliability, truth and accuracy	17%	29%	43%	41%

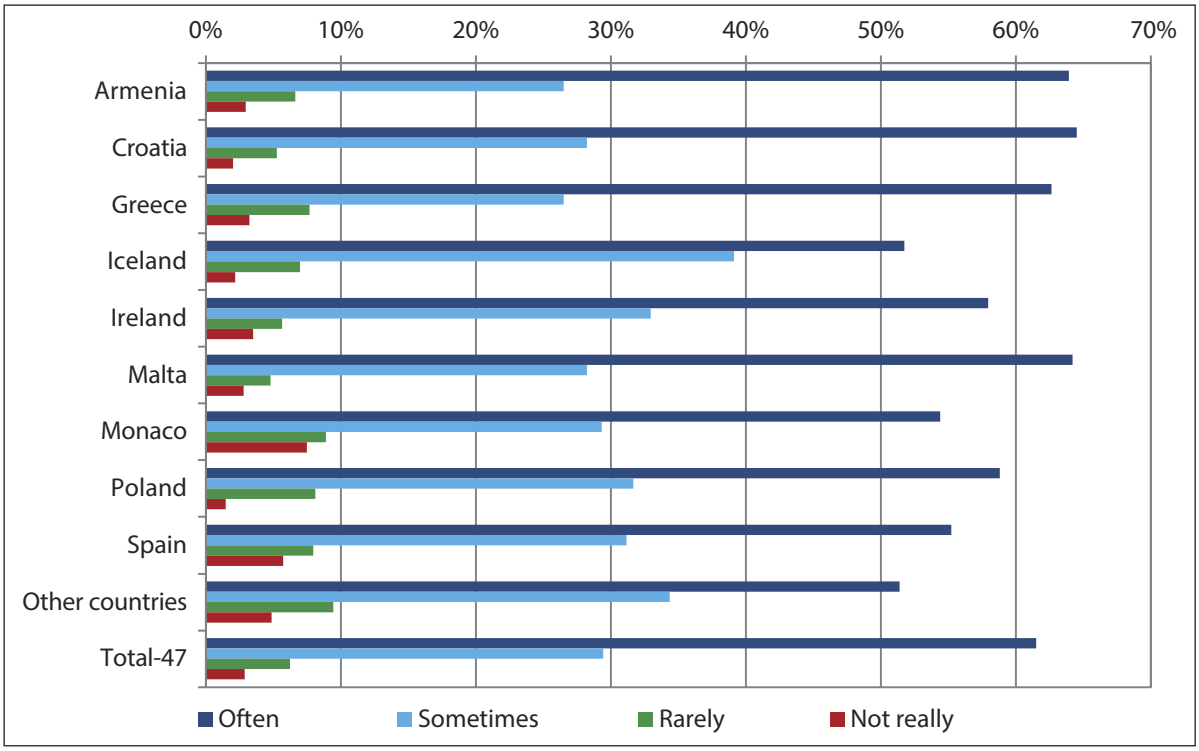
	Age of parent			
	18-30	31-45	46-60	Over 60
How to navigate through a website/an app	37%	32%	24%	18%
Respecting creative works of others online (copyright) and avoiding illegal downloading	19%	21%	25%	28%
How to behave appropriately and lawfully, and respect others online	29%	37%	44%	35%
How to choose the most trustworthy news and information sources online	22%	28%	33%	24%
How to create their own content	7%	9%	10%	16%
I do not know how to show /do not know much about these things myself	6%	9%	12%	18%
I do not have time to do the above	5%	4%	4%	9%

4.5. How often do children talk with parents about their activities online?

After having looked at what parents say they speak about with their children, it is encouraging to see that respondents from all countries report that their children often talk to them about what they are doing online (61%) (Figure 21). Malta, Croatia and Armenia lead the field, all at around 64%, but at least 1 in 2 parents from all countries cite "often".

Iceland stands out with fewer parents stating "often", and more than any other country reporting "sometimes", comparable only to the countries grouped under "other countries" in this graph. Iceland appeared earlier as the country applying the most rules regarding children's online activities, and Armenia the least. Is rule-setting linked to the amount children are talking with their parents about what they are doing online?

Figure 21 – Q13: My children talk to me about what they are doing online (country comparison)



On average, 6% of parents say that their children talk about their online activities rarely or not really (3%), and all countries score less than 9%. This nevertheless means that the children of around 1 500 survey respondents are not sharing this important facet of their lives with their parents. If the respondents are representatives of the general population, millions of children are being deprived of this opportunity.

Chapter 5

Actions to improve children's digital competences

5.1. Recommendations – what the findings tell us

This section looks at the strategies parents implement to support their children to maintain a positive online reputation, communicate safely, use age-appropriate platforms and tools that suit family values, and avoid their being overly upset by certain content they come across online. The following are the key findings.

On average, 7 in 10 parents check out the websites, apps and online games their children use or wish to use; and 1 in 2 parents still check out the online platforms used by their children aged 14 to 18. However, it seems parents are still struggling with strategies to help their children protect their privacy and online reputation. Only 39% conduct an online search with their children on their name, and 12% of parents do not see much use in doing this.

More than half the respondents report that their children talk to them when they encounter something weird online, or if something bothers or scares them online. It is nevertheless concerning that, in total, 8% of parents admit not knowing whether their children have seen such content or are bothered or scared by content they have seen, or that their children are not talking to them. On the other hand, 3 in 4 respondents on average (75%) say that they talk to their children as a preventive measure about what to do if they are bullied or treated badly, or if they believe that somebody else is being bullied or treated badly, online or offline.

Almost 1 in 2 parents report that they know all their children's real and online friends, and 3 in 4 parents speak to their children about how to react to bullying and to children being mean to each other as a preventive measure. However, almost 1 in 10 parents (9%) in Spain say they do not have enough knowledge to speak with their children about this.

The following ideas and recommendations may help parents overcome some of the issues that have become apparent in this section of the report.

- A broader range of age-appropriate communication tools, games and platforms would improve the well-being and safety of younger children, and help avoid their usage of media tools designed for older children and adults. The Covid-19 crisis has accentuated this need, as one of the areas where children have been most impacted is the lack of peer interaction and social contacts.
- A comprehensive rating system for parents to find suitable websites, games, etc. for their children. It would be helpful to provide them with a user-generated rating system, inviting parents to fill out a small number of labelled criteria. If parents' input were to be automatically averaged and encoded, parents could rapidly find suitable tools for their children.
- Parents are generally aware of the need for their children to learn about rights and responsibilities, protecting privacy, and dealing with bullying and mean comments, but beyond talking about these issues and applying certain rules, they do not seem to have fine-tuned strategies. Watching videos is one of the top activities parents and children do together, and they could therefore benefit from short videos from children and teens who talk about the practical strategies they use to overcome the issues they encounter online. Such videos could be developed with a European-wide competition for minors to find the best strategies for specific issues.
- Schools should take on a broader responsibility in teaching children about their online rights and responsibilities, so that every child can learn the basic skills and knowledge to become an active digital citizen. Every child has the right to know how to block and report scary, harmful or hateful content, and how to use social media tools responsibly. As some parents simply do not have the knowledge, time or will to teach their children about these things, it is up to schools to fill the gap.

5.2. Guiding young digital citizens – parental strategies

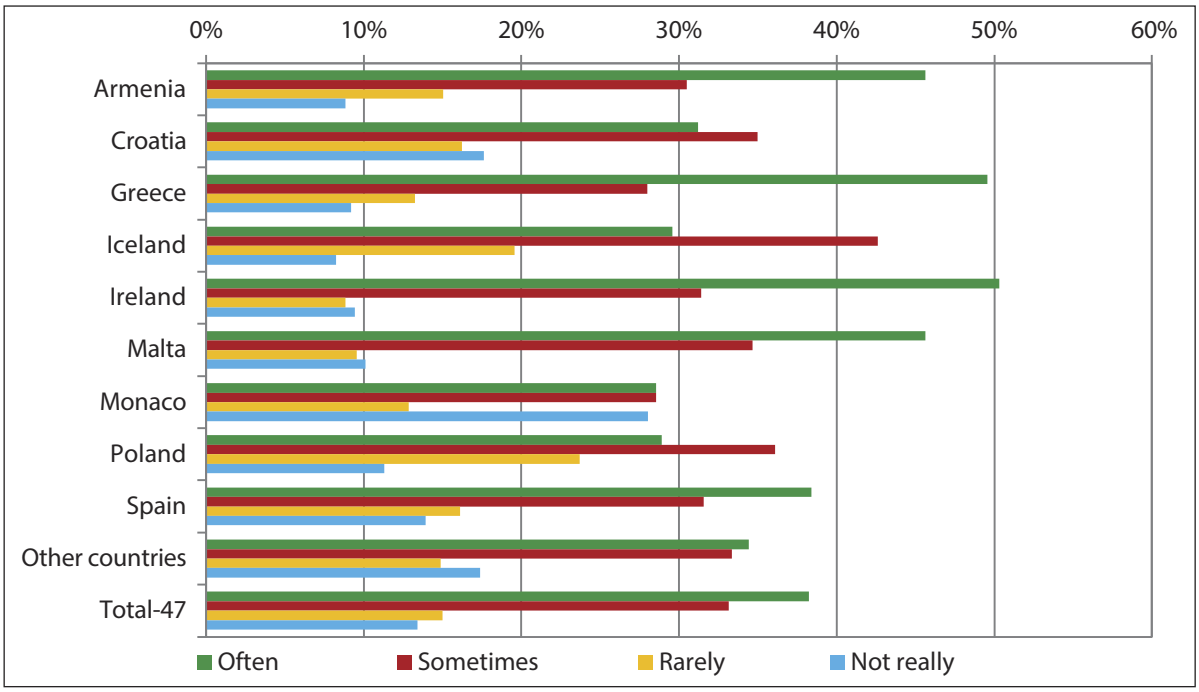
Beyond setting rules, there are many actions parents can take to help safeguard the well-being of their children while building their digital citizenship competences. This section focuses on a few of these.

The online tools that children use and the content they see in the websites they visit will contribute to a large extent in shaping and influencing their lives, both on and offline. A 2019 Global Kids Online survey[21] reports that around 20% of children surveyed say they have seen, in the past year, self-harm content. In Italy, 1 in 3 children say they have seen hate speech. One of the strategies parents can adopt to limit the risk is to check out websites, apps, online games, etc. that they are considering for their children or that their children are using, to evaluate if they are appropriate for them.

On average, 7 in 10 parents report in this DCE survey that they "often" (36%) or "sometimes" (34%) check out the tools and platforms their children use. In Ireland and Malta, the figure rises to 8 in 10 parents (82% and 80% respectively), and Armenia follows closely with 76% (46% often, and 30% sometimes). Only respondents from Monaco (57%) and Poland (65%) appear to do this less than respondents in most other countries (Figure 22).

Overall, 15% of respondents report that they do this for their children rarely, and another 15% "not really". In Poland, 24% say they do this rarely and 11% chose "not really". In Monaco 28% of respondents say that they do not really check them out for their children at all.

Figure 22 – Q12: I search for and check websites, apps, online games, etc. that I am considering for my children or that my children are using, to evaluate if they are appropriate for them (country comparison)

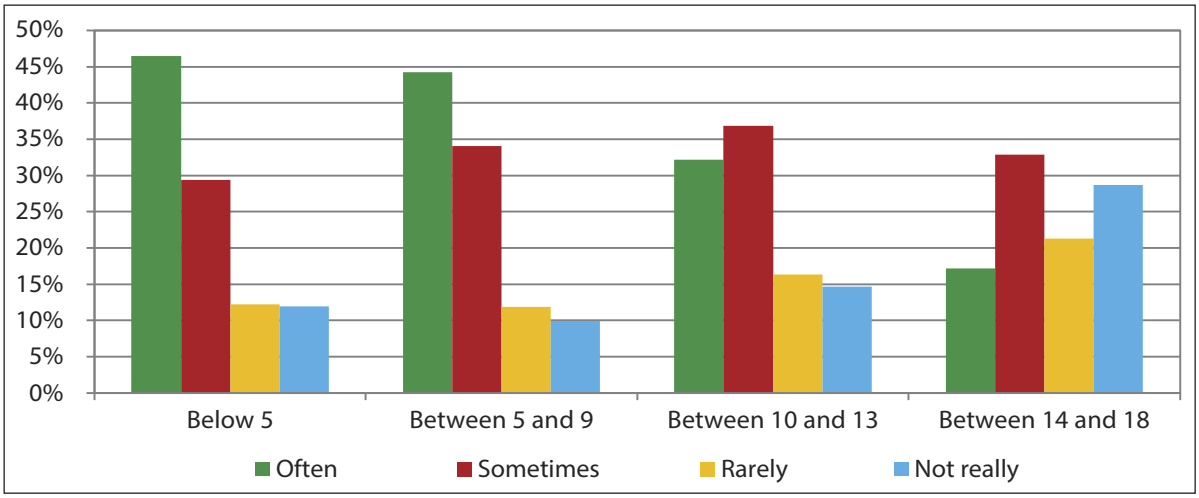


Younger parents tend to check out websites and apps for their children more than the older respondents do, perhaps because they have younger children. When we look at responses per age group of children, unsurprisingly parents check out more online platforms and tools for children up to the age of 9. It is nevertheless concerning to see that almost 1 in 4 parents (24%), and 2 in 10 parents (22%) of children in this age category, rarely check or do not check the content their children will see. Finding interesting sites and videos, and bookmarking them so that young children can easily find them alone, is an effective way to trigger a child's interest in learning to read, and encourages gradual independence while protecting the child from harm. Besides, it takes pressure off parents if each child has their own list of favourites.

Figures show that parents check out tools and platforms progressively less as their children get older and their digital competences more finely honed. Nevertheless, 17% of parents of children aged 14 to 18 report that they still often do this for platforms their children use or perhaps wish to use (Figure 23). It would therefore be helpful for parents to have clear up-to-date information as new apps and digital tools emerge, to enable them to have reliable evaluation criteria and help them get a step ahead of their children.

21. UNICEF (2019), "Global Kids Online comparative report", available at https://bit.ly/3dJmQaz.

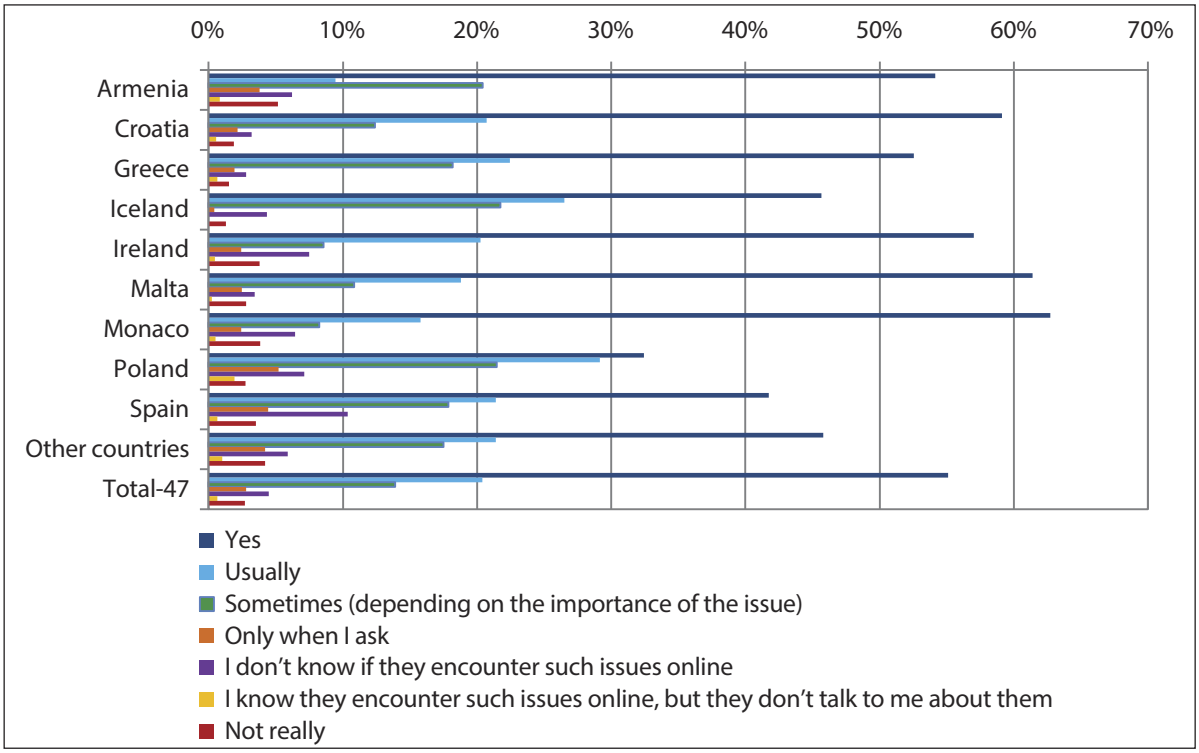
Figure 23 – Q12: I search for and check websites, apps, online games, etc. that I am considering for my children or that my children are using, to evaluate if they are appropriate for them (comparison across children's age groups)



Regardless of the precautions that parents may take, many children will, as mentioned above, encounter things they find weird or that bother them online. Most parents declare that their children talk to them when they encounter something weird online, or if something bothers or scares them online. More than 1 in 2 parents (55%) report that their children always do that. In Monaco, the figure rises to 63% of parents, 30 percentage points ahead of respondents from Poland where the average is 32% (Figure 24). The countries grouped under "other countries" (46%), Iceland (46%) and Spain 42% also fall the furthest below the average.

When we add the number of respondents who report that their children usually or sometimes talk to them about content they have seen that bothers or scares them, the overall percentage is encouraging.[22] There are less than 10 percentage points between countries, and around 9 in 10 parents say their children do this in Croatia, Greece, Iceland and Malta. In Spain, Poland, Armenia, "other countries", Ireland and Monaco, the count is slightly lower, ranging upwards from 81% in Spain to 87% in Monaco (Figure 24).

Figure 24 – Q19: My children talk to me when they encounter something weird online, or if something bothers or scares them online (country comparison)



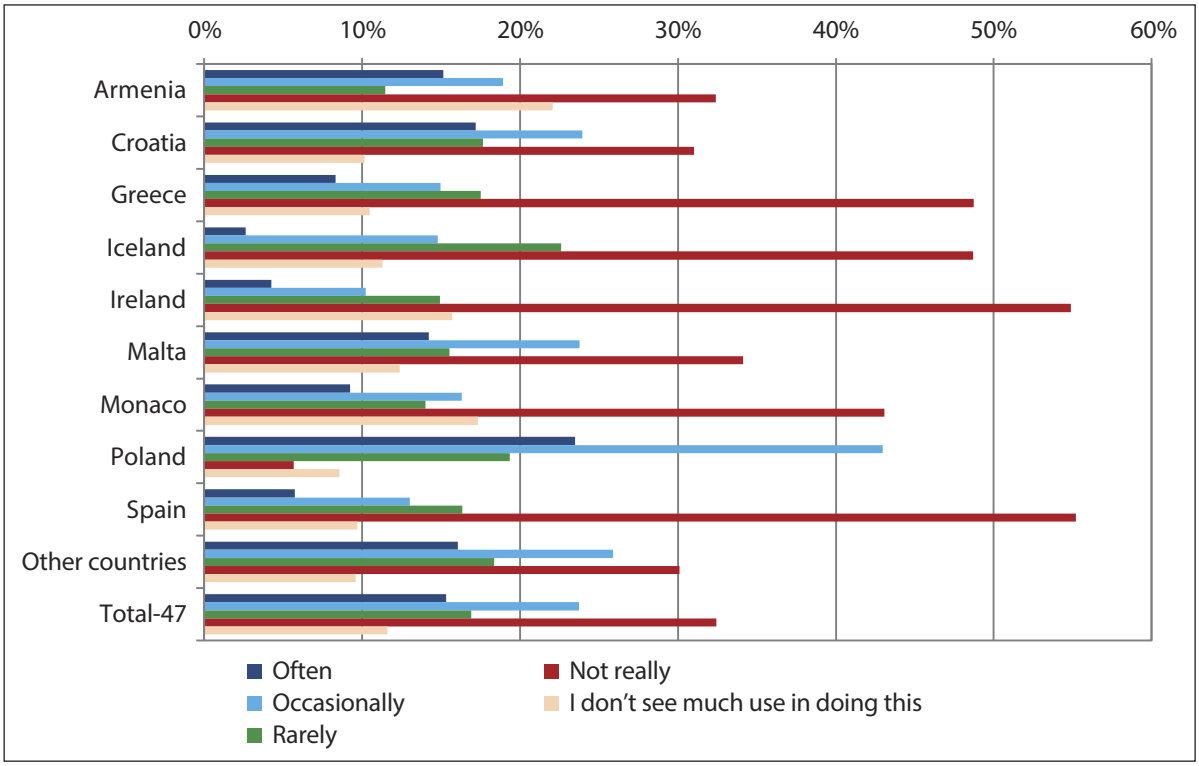
22. This percentage includes the three positive responses: yes, usually and sometimes.

It is concerning to see that some respondents in every country reported that they do not know if their children encounter such issues online. This is the case for almost 5% of respondents, rising to 10% of respondents from Spain and more than 7% in Ireland and Poland. Far fewer parents (0.63%) report that "I know they encounter such issues online, but they don't talk to me about them". Another 3% chose the "not really" option. This brings the total number of parents not being aware of the disturbing content their children may see online to an alarming 8%. Are their children able to discuss things that bother or scare them with another trusted adult, or with peers? Figures from national child helplines and social media services would indicate that few children are reporting to them when they are upset by the content they see. Schools can play an important role in empowering children by ensuring that they know how and when to block content, based on the values and attitudes children will have learned at home and consolidated at school. Knowing your rights and responsibilities is an integral part of being a digital citizen, and helping to keep the digital environment child-friendly by having disturbing or hateful content removed is one of these responsibilities.

5.3. Privacy, personal information and online reputation

A top safety rule applied by almost 60% of respondents is that their children must ask them before sharing any personal information online or via the mobile phone (Figure 18). Reputable sources estimate that 50% of children use at least one form of social media by age 12, and that one of the biggest problems is overexposure of their private life.[23] One effective way for parents to guide their children, and to protect their child's online reputation in the process, is to conduct a search with their children on their name, and discuss the results with them (Figure 25). Yet despite their concern with privacy, it appears that few parents do this, perhaps because of a lack of awareness or because they want to respect their child's privacy, even within the home.

Figure 25 – Q16: I conduct a search with my children on their name, and discuss the results with them (country comparison)



A minority of parents seem to conduct search activities with their children on their name and discuss the results: only 15% of parents say they do this often and 24% say they do it occasionally. In Poland, where effective awareness campaigns on privacy have been running for more than a decade, 2 in 3 parents go online often or occasionally (23% and 43% respectively) with their children to take stock of what comes up on their name and discuss it with them. Respondents from Ireland and Iceland are at the other end of the scale, with just 14%

23. "The Common Sense Census: plugged-in parents of tweens and teens, 2016", available at https://bit.ly/3kZREGC.

and 17% respectively saying that they do this often or occasionally. Across all countries, 32% of respondents choose the option: not really; and 12% of respondents say they do not see much point in doing this.

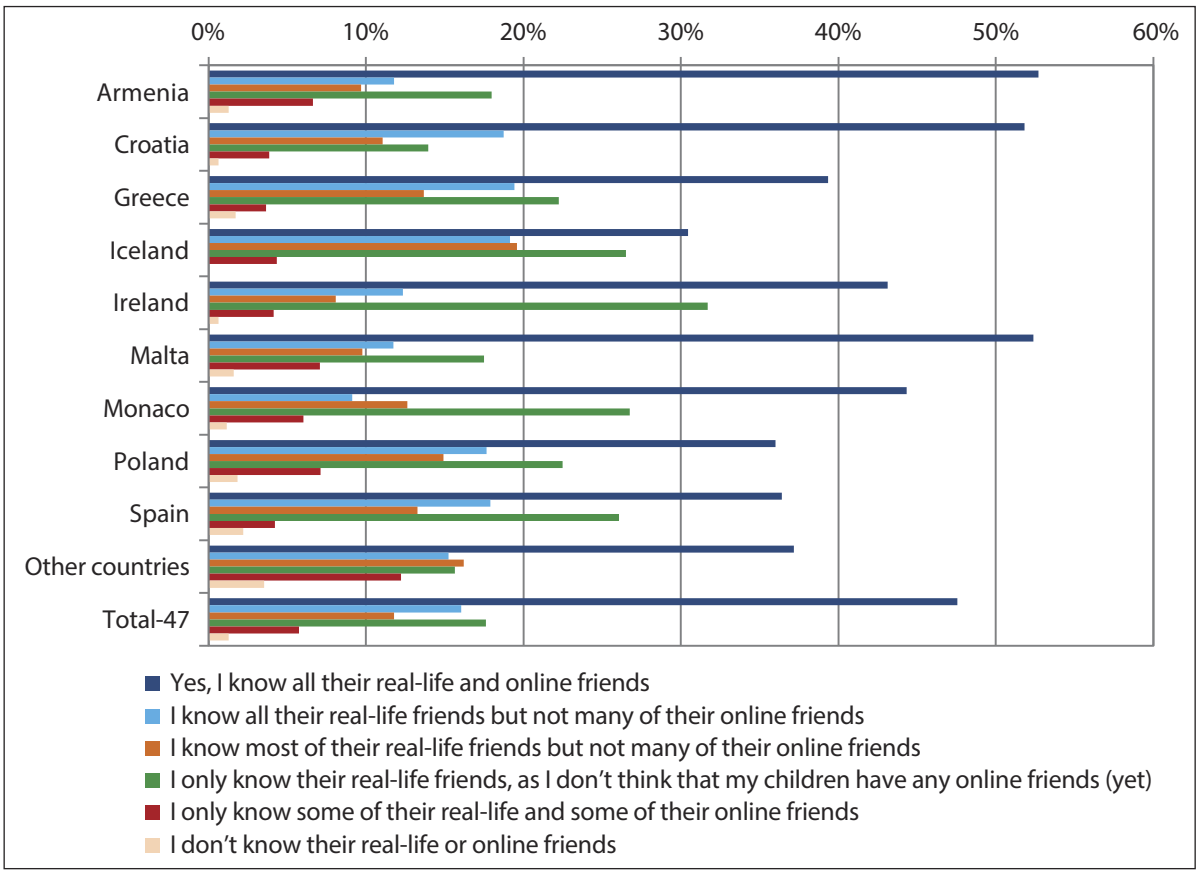
While it is true that once private information or content that may be damaging to a person's online reputation is online it is very difficult to have it removed, finding and discussing such content with a sympathetic parent helps children and teens develop the digital competences that will be important to their future. Sometimes the content is there because it was posted or a photo was tagged by others without the person's permission. This too can lead to children learning an important lesson about posting the images and content of others without permission. Learning about these things within the supportive environment of the home will build trust between parents and children, and reinforce the values and attitudes they require to become responsible digital citizens.

5.4. Behaviour and social interactions on- and offline

The border between "real" and "virtual" worlds has become blurred, with children often interacting with their friends both on- and offline at the same time. One advantage is that distance becomes meaningless, but a disadvantage is that misunderstandings can rapidly arise in communication due to the lack of visual cues such as facial expression and body language. Moreover, words can more easily be taken out of context. Therefore, children often need a little more support from parents and siblings when this happens. They can also meet all sorts of people online, especially through gaming and social media, and can be more easily convinced to provide information or adhere to ideas (for example grooming), because the virtual world makes it easier to hide what a person really is.

Almost half of respondents (48%) report that their children speak to them about their real-life and online friends and indeed that they know all their real-life and online friends (Figure 26). Armenia, Croatia and Malta show an above average percentage (at around 52%), whereas only 30% of respondents from Iceland consider the statement is true for them. The figures for Armenia do not fully correspond with information provided in Q5, where 60% report being fully aware of their children's online lives, and able to support them in using technology safely and responsibly (Figure 6).

Figure 26 – Q18: My children talk to me about their real-life and online friends (country comparison)

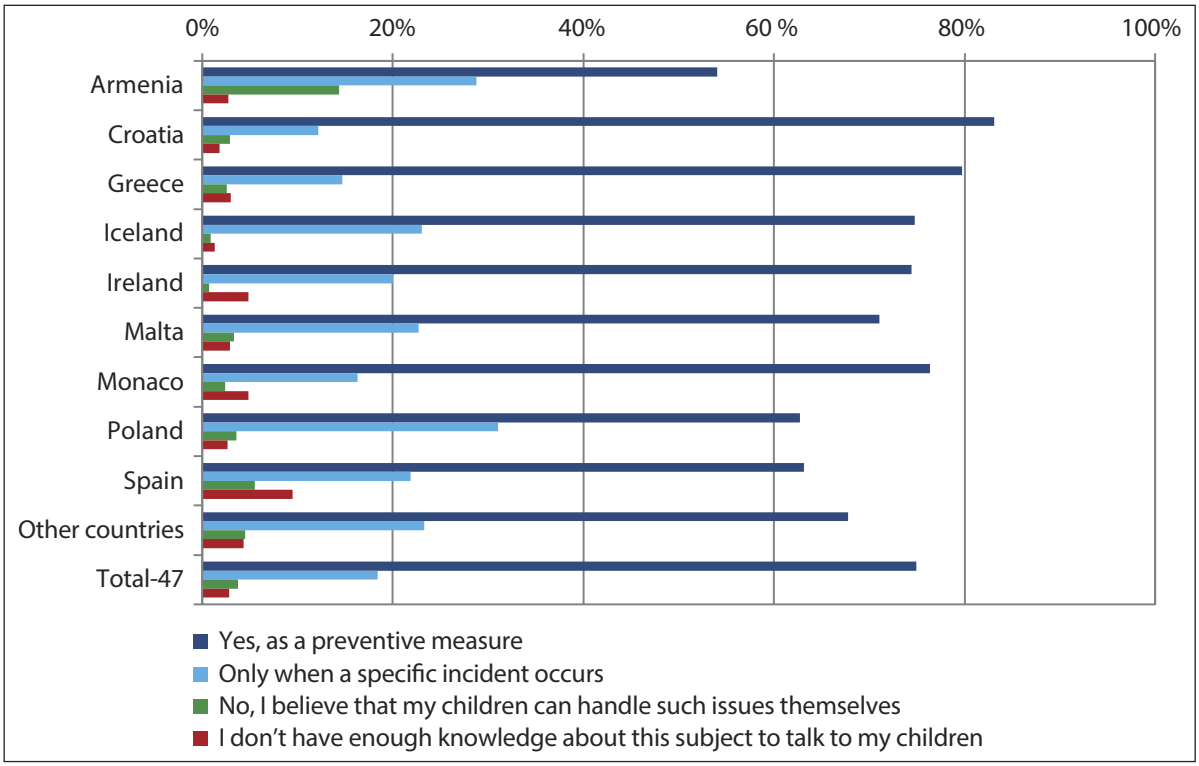


Another 16% of respondents say that they know all their children's real-life friends but not many of their online friends. In Greece, 19% of parents do not know many of their children's online friends, whereas Monaco (9%) is almost 7 percentage points below the overall average of 16%. A large percentage of respondents from Ireland (32%) report that they only know their children's real-life friends, as they do not think their children have any online friends (yet). The overall average is 18%. A comparison of responses compared to ages of children shows that the children of 48% of respondents who chose this option have children up to the age of 9 (see Appendix V). About 1 in 17 parents (6%) inform us that they only know some of their real-life and some of their online friends, although this is the case for 12% of respondents from other countries.

It is encouraging to see that only 1% of respondents report that they do not know their real-life or online friends, though Spain doubles this figure at 2%. The recent Covid-19 experience has shown that social interaction with friends and peers was one of the things that children and teens missed most during the period of confinement, and something that virtual communication and friendship did not satisfy. Social interaction with friends builds self-esteem and resilience, both important competences for digital citizens. Most respondents seem to be aware of their children's friendships, but perhaps require a little more awareness of the influence that online "friends" may have on them, along with the fact that online "friends" are not always who they say they are.

Bullying and being treated or treating others badly unfortunately seem to be an inherent part of friendship. When asked if they talk to their children about what to do if they are bullied or treated badly, or if they believe that somebody else is being bullied or treated badly, online or offline (Figure 27), 3 in 4 respondents (75%) say they do, as a preventive measure.

Figure 27 – Q17: I talk to my children about what to do if they are bullied or treated badly, or if they believe that somebody else is, online or offline (country comparison)

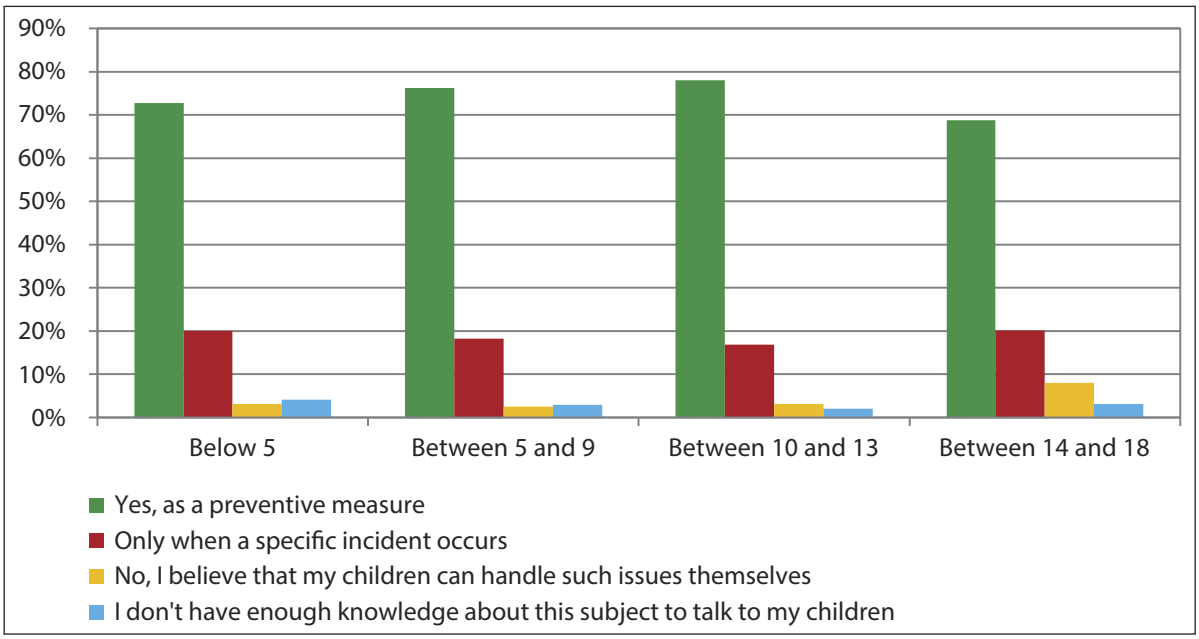


Around 4 in 5 parents in Croatia (83%) and Greece (80%) talk about these topics with their children. The percentage varies only slightly with the age of the children (Figure 28). From 73% average for children aged under 5, the percentage rises to 78% for children aged 10 to 13, then drops down slightly to 69% for children aged 14 to 18. Bullying has been in the news for many years now, which may explain the high number of parents who speak with their children about it as a preventive measure.

In some countries such as Armenia (29%) and Poland (31%), more respondents seem to prefer to discuss these issues only when a specific incident occurs. On average, only 18% of parents say they take this route. Almost 8% of parents of children aged 14 to 18 respond that they believe their children can handle such issues themselves, whereas the overall average on this option is less than 4%. In Spain, almost 1 in 10 respondents

(9%) say they do not have enough knowledge about the subject to talk to their children about it. In Monaco and Ireland, 5% of parents report that they do not have enough knowledge either, and 4% in other countries.

Figure 28 – Q17: I talk to my children about what to do if they are bullied or treated badly, or if they believe that somebody else is, online or offline (comparison across children's age groups)



Bullying and treating others badly are symptoms and manifestations of problems in social interaction and can best be dealt with by dealing with the underlying issues such as lack of confidence and self-esteem. Research[24] shows that bullying can have long-term social, economic and physical well-being impacts, and is largely influenced by the environment at home and at school. The most effective approaches to limit children treating each other badly is discussion with all concerned, and ensuring a positive, friendly context for children to develop their competences.

24. Richardson J., Milovidov E. and Blamire R. (2017), *Bullying: perspectives, practice and insights*, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, available at https://go.coe.int/tdr7W.

Chapter 6

Empowering parents is key to children's well-being

6.1. Recommendations – what the findings tell us

The three questions in the final section of the survey focus on parents: which technological terms they understand, which topics they need help with, and what they need to help their children become responsible digital citizens. The findings show that: many respondents may have a superficial knowledge of the seven terms presented, not fully understanding the breadth of the terms and their impact on the lives of digital citizens. Whereas 3 in 4 respondents say they understand "artificial intelligence", far fewer understand "big data" (35%) and "machine learning" (38%). The 18 to 30 age group scores lower on five of the seven terms, perhaps because they are aware of the complexity of the terms and realise they do not fully understand them.

Almost 1 in 2 parents consider that the tool most needed to help their children become responsible digital citizens are activities for children that can be easily implemented at home (48%). Around 40% of parents choose short videos by experts on a dedicated video channel, and a website for parents. However, there are considerable differences between the age of respondents, and the age of their children, clearly indicating that no single set of tools can suit all.

The final question in the survey is intended to cross-check information gathered earlier, and correlate data to help map a clear path for the future. When asked about the topics parents would like information and advice on, the responses are therefore somewhat predictable and echo topics that family rules and parent–child discussions are based on. Protecting the privacy of self and others ranks first (64%), avoiding fake news and/or hate speech ranks second (54%), closely followed by how to tackle bullying (almost 54%).

In order for parents to effectively guide and support their children on their path to becoming responsible digital citizens:

- it is of crucial importance for them, indeed for citizens in general, to look beyond the media hype and to take stock of the far-reaching impact of emerging technology that surrounds us in our everyday lives and which is infringing certain human rights. Short segments by specialists on the radio or TV during peak listening hours is one way this could be done, or an information campaign to raise awareness of journalists and media on the impact of technology on citizens' rights;
- parents need activities for children, short videos from experts and a website for parents; these should be implemented and broadly disseminated through public media campaigns. A rating system appears to be another urgent need, and existing rating systems (such as PEGI) could provide valuable support in finding simple informative ways to implement rating tools for children's websites and platforms similar to the system that already exists for games;
- parents need to receive brief, easy-to-understand information they can share with their children on the topics of most concern to parents that are extremely important for their children's welfare. Strategies to protect privacy, balancing on- and offline activities, understanding copyright and illegal downloading, for example, are all topics where more information needs to be shared in families.

- it would be unrealistic to imagine that one size fits all when tackling the challenge of helping children to become responsible digital citizens. Needs are shaped by the age of children, and the age and experience of parents, and therefore a range of tools and topics are necessary, distributed through a reliable channel and presented under the same credible label so that parents can immediately recognise quality;
- fostering exchanges between countries and experts is important, to be able to build on the experience of others to provide young digital citizens with age-appropriate tools, platforms, competence-building activities and information.

6.2. Forging meaning from digital jargon

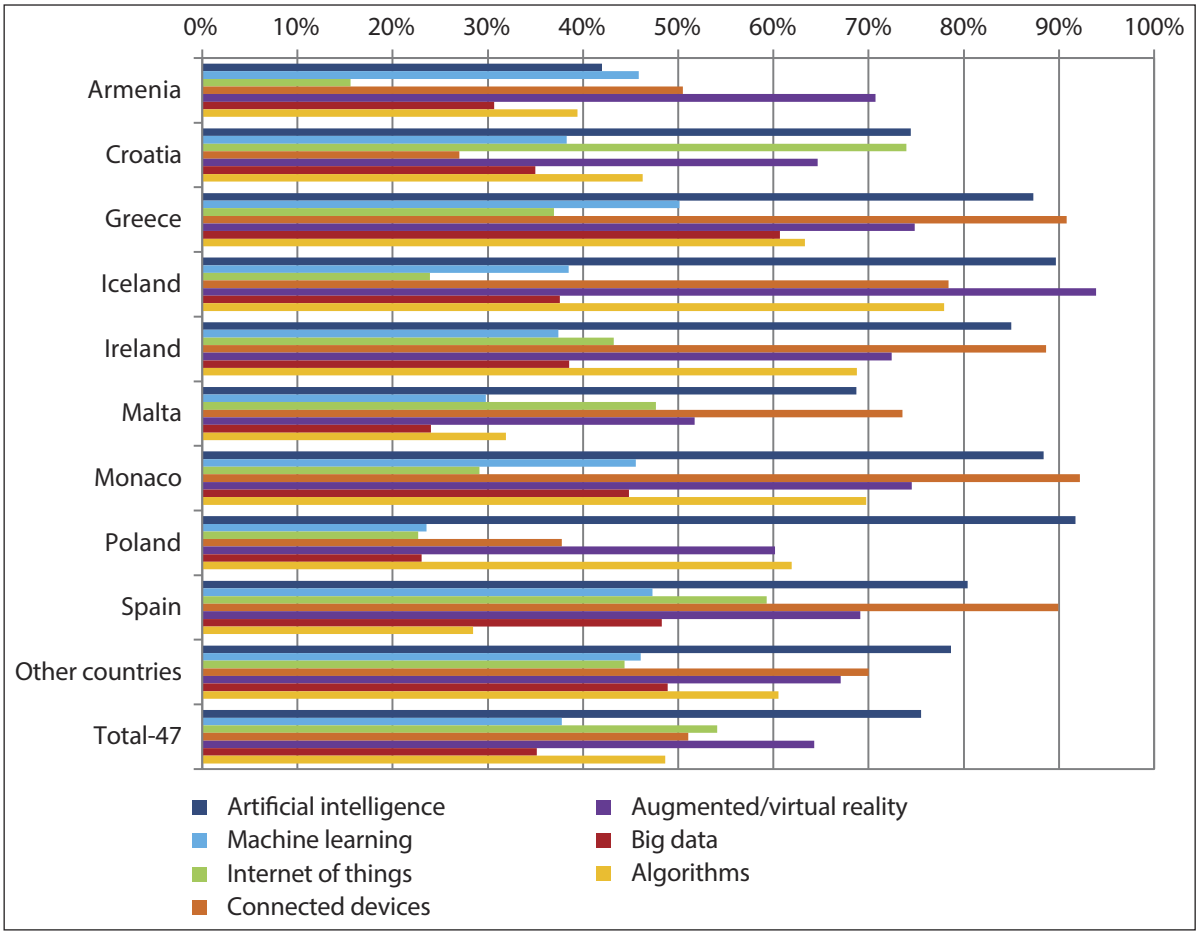
When presented with seven terms that are very much part of the current media hype on digital technology (Q20), 76% of respondents indicate that they understand "artificial intelligence" (AI) (Figure 29, word cloud). Curiously, two terms closely related to AI, "machine learning" (38%) and "big data" (35%) appear to be the terms the least well understood. In Poland, 92% of parents say they understand AI; the percentages drop to 24% and 23% for machine learning and big data, respectively. Percentages in Armenia show a similar trend, with an 11% difference between understanding AI and "big data". Respondents from Greece lead the field in understanding the terms "machine learning" (50%) and "big data" (61%), compared to an overall average of 38% and 35%.

Figure 29 – Technical terms understood by parents

It seems either that parents do not fully understand how artificial intelligence functions and is applied, or they think they know what AI is, as nowadays the term is used quite loosely.

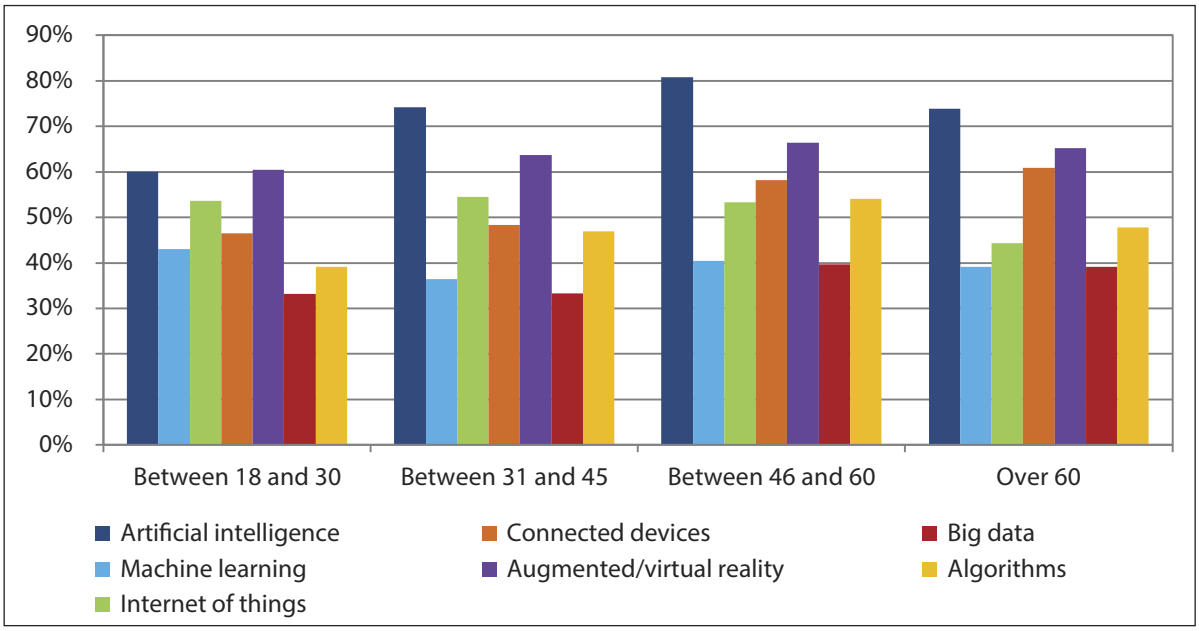
"Connected devices" is the term that shows the largest variation between countries (Figure 30); in Monaco 92% of parents say they understand what it means, compared to 27% in Croatia. Overall, 1 in 2 parents (51%) say they understand what the term means. A similar percentage of parents (54%) report that they understand what "internet of things" means, with up to 74% in Croatia. Far fewer parents in Monaco (29%), Iceland (24%), Poland (23%) and Armenia (16%) say they understand this term. Between 52% (Malta) and 94% (Iceland) of parents indicate that they understand the terms "augmented virtual reality". On average, almost 1 in 2 parents (49%) say they understand what algorithms are, although only 28% of parents in Spain do.

Figure 30 – Q20: Which terms do you understand? (country comparison)



There appears to be little difference across respondents' age brackets in understanding the seven terms, although somewhat surprisingly the 18 to 30 age group shows slightly lower scores than the other three groups on six of the seven terms (Figure 31). Many in this group will probably have been online since their early childhood, and could be expected to know more about these things than the three higher age brackets. Do these results show their awareness of still having a lot to learn about these complex topics? There are no significant differences between findings per age of respondents' youngest child.

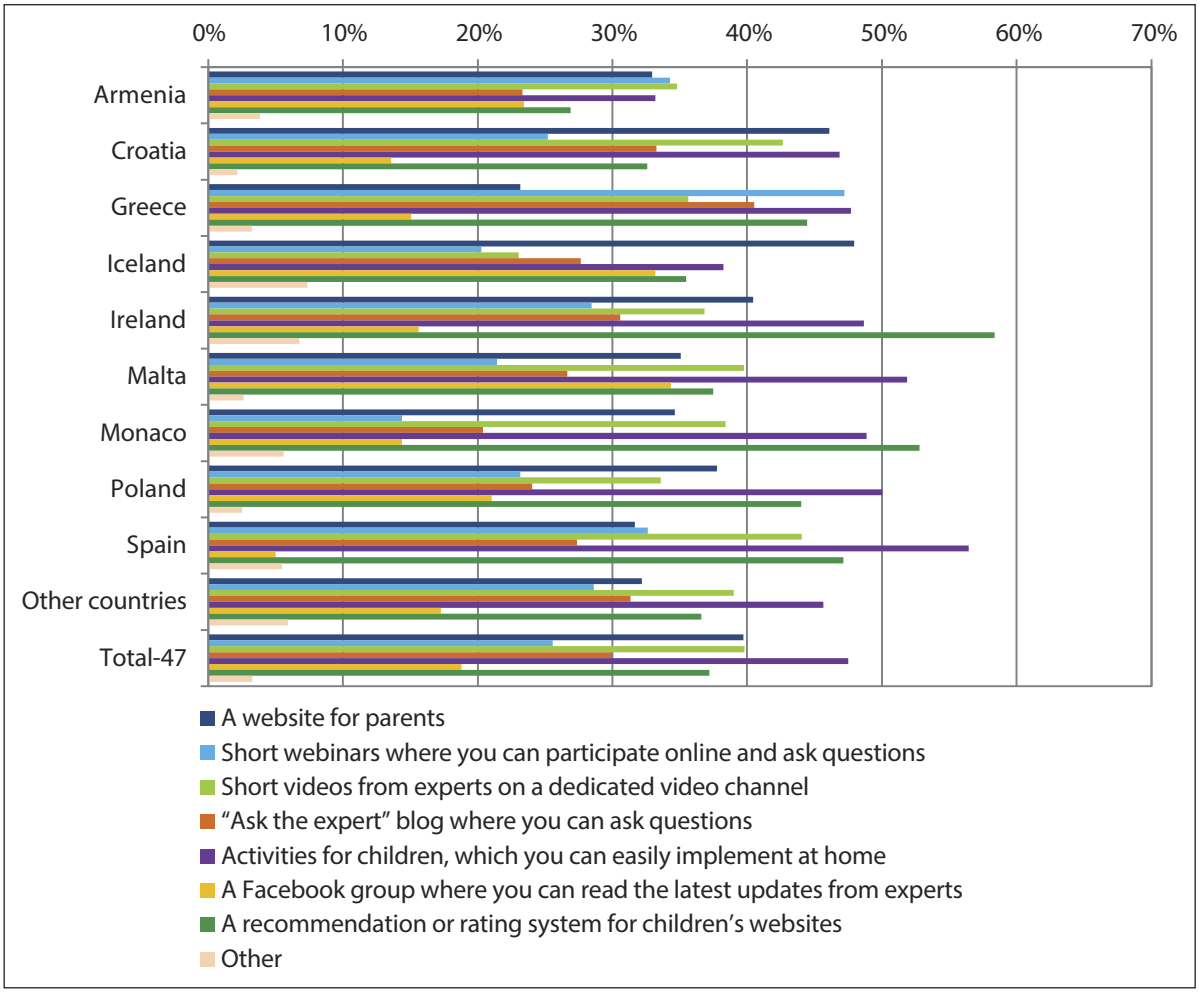
Figure 31 – Q20: Which terms do you understand? (comparison across respondents' age groups)



6.3. What parents wish to have to support their children online

Parents were asked to select from a list of seven tools, the three most important for them to help their children become responsible digital citizens (Figure 32). Almost 1 in 2 (48%) chose "Activities for children that I can easily implement at home". Percentages on this option range broadly, from 56% in Spain to 33% in Armenia. The figure is slightly higher, at 57% and 54%, for parents of children under 5 and up to 9, and progressively drops to 31% for the 14- to 18-year-olds.

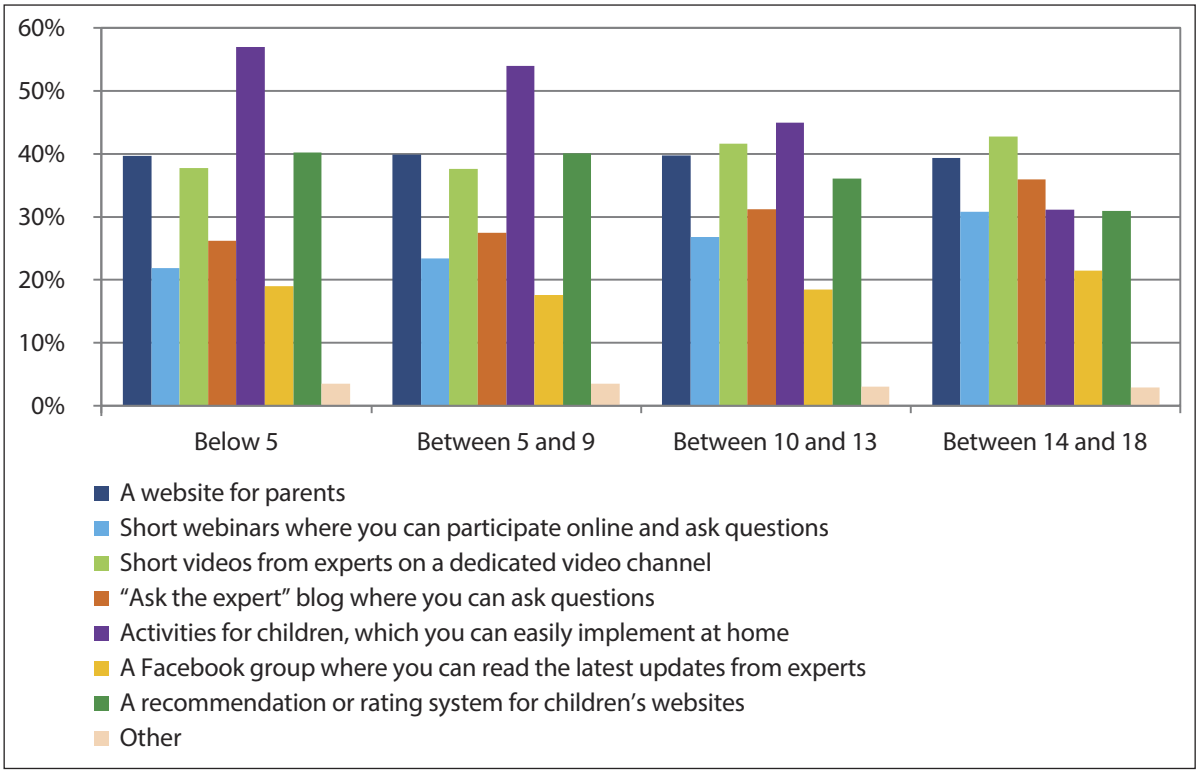
Figure 32 – Q21: What do you need to help your children become responsible digital citizens? (country comparison)



Short videos from experts on a dedicated video channel, and a website for parents, were ranked similarly on average, with approximately 2 in 5 parents selecting them from the list. Large variations exist between countries, with 44% choosing the first option in Spain compared to 23% in Iceland. In Iceland, 48% select the second option, compared to 23% in Greece. A website (45%) and a recommendation or rating system (42%) were the two tools selected more often by the over-60 respondent group (Appendix IV). A website was the second (41%) choice for the 18 to 30 age group, topped only by activities for children (52%), perhaps because they are likely to have younger children. Almost 3 in 10 parents (30%) would like to have an "Ask the expert" blog where they can ask questions, with 4 out of 10 parents expressing this need in Greece (41%). A large variation is evident according to the age of the respondent's youngest child (Figure 33): While just 26% of parents of the under 5 group would find this useful, this progressively rises to 36% for the 14 to 18 age group, indicating a clear need for customised support as children's online activities become more varied and their online footprint gets bigger.

Around 1 in 4 parents (26%) prefer short webinars where they can participate online and ask questions. The figure reaches 47% in Greece, compared to 14% in Monaco, showing a greater difference between countries than any other tool. A Facebook group where they can read the latest updates from experts, seems only to be a popular choice in Iceland (33%) and Malta (34%). On average, less than 1 in 5 parents chose this option, with a similar average when analysed by age of respondent and age of respondent's youngest child.

Figure 33 – Q21: What do you need to help your children become responsible digital citizens? (comparison across children's age groups)



6.4. Topics of most concern, from a parent's perspective

The final question in the survey (Q22) asks parents to indicate the topics they would like to receive information on, to support their children with their online activities, and 64% of parents choose the topic "ways to protect privacy online" (Figure 34, word cloud). This correlates with earlier findings which indicated that 60% apply the rule that their children should ask them before sharing any personal information online (Q14), and that 67% of parents talk to their children about how to protect their privacy and the privacy of others online (Q15). Variations across certain countries are considerable. For example, in Spain, 78% select this topic, whereas in Armenia the percentage is 43%. This also correlates with findings from Armenian responses on Q14 and Q15, where only 38% apply rules about privacy and 32% talk to their children about this.

Figure 34 – Topics parents would like to receive information on

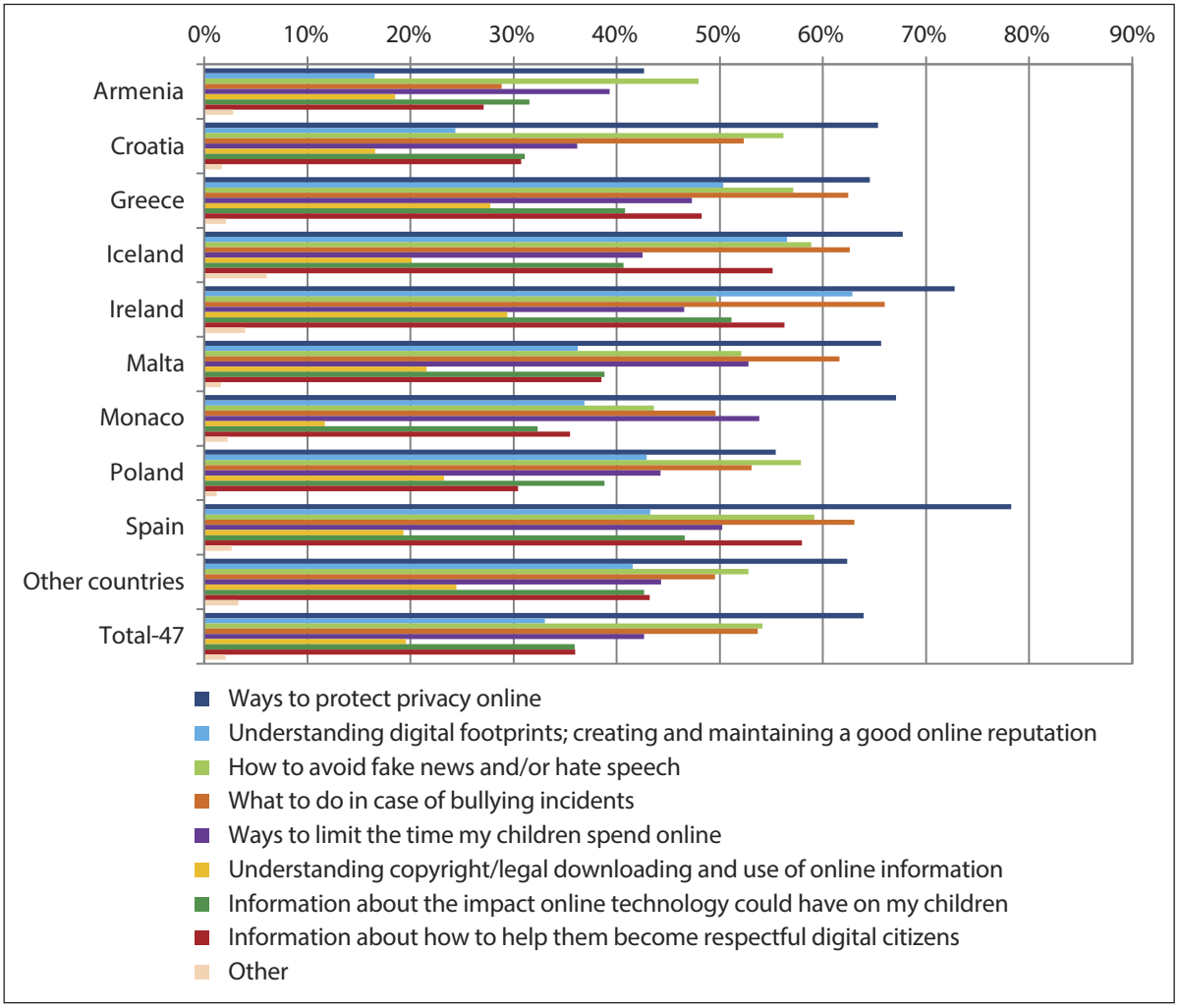
Understanding and checking children's digital footprints is an effective way of helping them maintain a good online reputation; however, many parents do not seem to realise the importance of this strategy in teaching children about protecting their privacy. Less than 1 in 3 parents (33%) selected this as a topic they would like to receive information on. Ireland scores highest on this topic at 63%, and Greece, Iceland, Poland, Spain and other countries all show percentages well above the overall average. Armenia is at the other end of the scale, with 17% of parents choosing this option (Figure 35).

Fake news and hate speech have often been in the news over the past year or so, and this topic ranks second with an average of 54%, with figures similar across all countries. There is a discrepancy with responses to Q15, where only 32% of parents report speaking to their children about how to cross-check and evaluate the content they read in terms of reliability, truth and accuracy. This underlines the need to help parents define strategies for their children, rather than just talk about online risks and offer no strategies to overcome them.

What to do in case of bullying incidents ranks a close third with just under 54%, and once again corresponds to the 75% of parents who say they talk to their children about bullying in Q17. More than 3 in 5 parents would like to have more information on handling bullying in six countries: Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Malta and Spain. Only in Armenia, less than 3 in 10 parents want more information on this topic, once again correlating earlier figures.

Around 2 in 5 parents (43%) would like to have more information on ways to limit the time their children spend online; 32% indicated earlier in the survey that they apply a rule about their children using technology only at set times. Understanding copyright, legal downloading and use of online information are three topics that parents seem to ignore to a large extent, as seen earlier in this study, perhaps because it is a widespread practice. It comes last in the list of respondents' preferences, at an average of 20%. More parents in Ireland than any other country show concern to know more about this topic (29%); in Monaco, the figure drops to about 1 in 10 parents (12%).

Figure 35 – Q22: Please indicate the topics you would like to receive information on, to support your children with their online activities (country comparison)



Neither information about how to help their children become respectful digital citizens nor about the impact online technology could have on them rank high on the agenda of parents, with only 36% choosing to learn more about these topics. It seems that awareness is growing of the importance of digital citizenship in Spain (58%), Ireland (56%), Iceland (55%) and, to a lesser extent, Greece (48%), all well above the overall average. Awareness about digital citizenship seems low in Croatia (31%) and Armenia (27%), though it should be pointed out that the number of survey respondents from Croatia is more than double the number of respondents from Malta, the next highest country, and many times more than other countries shown in the graphs.

Responses vary considerably between the four respondent age groups, on four of the seven topics. Rankings drop progressively on information about the impact online technology could have on their children, from 43% for the over-60 age group, to 32% in the 18 to 30 group. Similarly, information about how to help them become respectful digital citizens drops from 49% to 26%. When we look at the selected topics according to the age of the youngest child of the respondent, there are minor differences between parents of children under 5 and parents of those aged 14 to 18 except on two topics: ways to limit the time children spend online, and receiving help in case of bullying incidents. Even 1 in 2 parents of children under 5 show concern on topics like fake news and hate speech.

A little over 2% of the parents proposed further topics they would like to receive information on. Responses include "how to" guides to stimulate self-taught coding, information on preventing sexting and coercion, limiting cookies and managing social media profiles and, from Poland, building broad digital competences in the cognitive, decision-making and integration areas, and emphasising the inclusive function of technology for tools that improve the quality of life.

Chapter 7

Digital citizenship education – the road ahead

7.1. Recommendations – what the findings tell us

The two final questions of the DCE survey discussed in the previous chapter, Q21 and Q22, provided an open space for parents to share their ideas related more specifically to the road ahead. Their comments on what they would like to have to help children become digital citizens, where they would like to find this support, and more general comments on digital citizenship are enlightening. However, they also clearly underline a lack of understanding on what digital citizenship is, and the competences required to thrive in our 21st-century society. Comments like "my child is too young for this", "my child is independent" and "I don't want my child to turn into a robot" show that the concept of digital citizenship is misunderstood. Parents place the responsibility almost equally on the shoulders of schools, social media and digital technology providers to guide their children in developing their competences, yet the key competences that children need are built on the values and attitudes that children develop from their earliest years in the home and from family.

Open responses to Q22 in particular provide invaluable information on the topics that are most troubling for parents, and the level of importance they accord to their children becoming digital citizens. Many comments relate to what could be called "internet safety issues" – bullying, privacy, managing screen time and fake news. Although these are important, this is not the essence of the competences that digital citizens, namely citizens in the digital world, require.

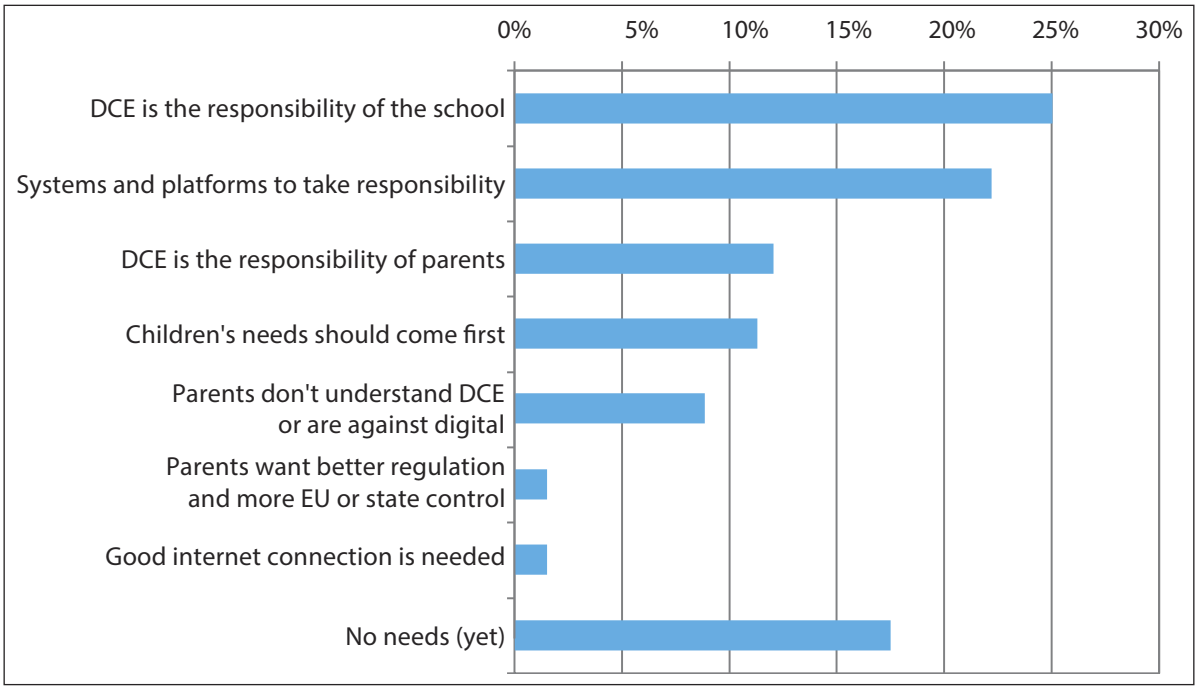
- The first recommendation here is for the Council of Europe to make greater awareness-raising efforts to enable the public to grasp what it really means to be an active citizen in today's connected world.
- Secondly, because digital citizenship has disturbing connotations in some cultures, more focus should be placed on the competences rather than the concept. Similar to the earlier suggestion that parents talk about strategies that will help their children understand, act and react, it seems the same approach should be taken by the Council of Europe with regard to digital citizenship education.
- The DCE survey has highlighted gaps in parental understanding and approaches, and suggests that similar surveys for teachers and young people could provide valuable insights.
- Since parents are placing the onus on the shoulders of educators and industry, it is important to build an ongoing dialogue with both, again with a focus on strategies rather than topics.

7.2. What are digital citizenship competences, and why do we need them?

In November 2019, Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)10[25] on developing and promoting digital citizenship education was adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. The DCE survey investigates how parents are supporting the overarching goal of this recommendation by supporting the development of their children's digital citizenship competences in the home, and what customised resources can be provided to assist them in this task. Although online safety is still at the front of parents' minds, the findings show that their awareness of the very broad impact of digital technology on daily life and the well-being of their children has increased over the past few years.

Open responses in Q21 and Q22 provide a more granular overview of the parents' perspective; the interviews carried out with parents from 24 Council of Europe member countries between November 2020 and early January 2021 have further enriched the data (see Part II). In the survey, 495 parents shared their thoughts on what they need to help their children become digital citizens. Their ideas are categorised in the following graph (Figure 36).

Figure 36 – Q21: What do you need to help your children become responsible digital citizens? (comments under "Other")

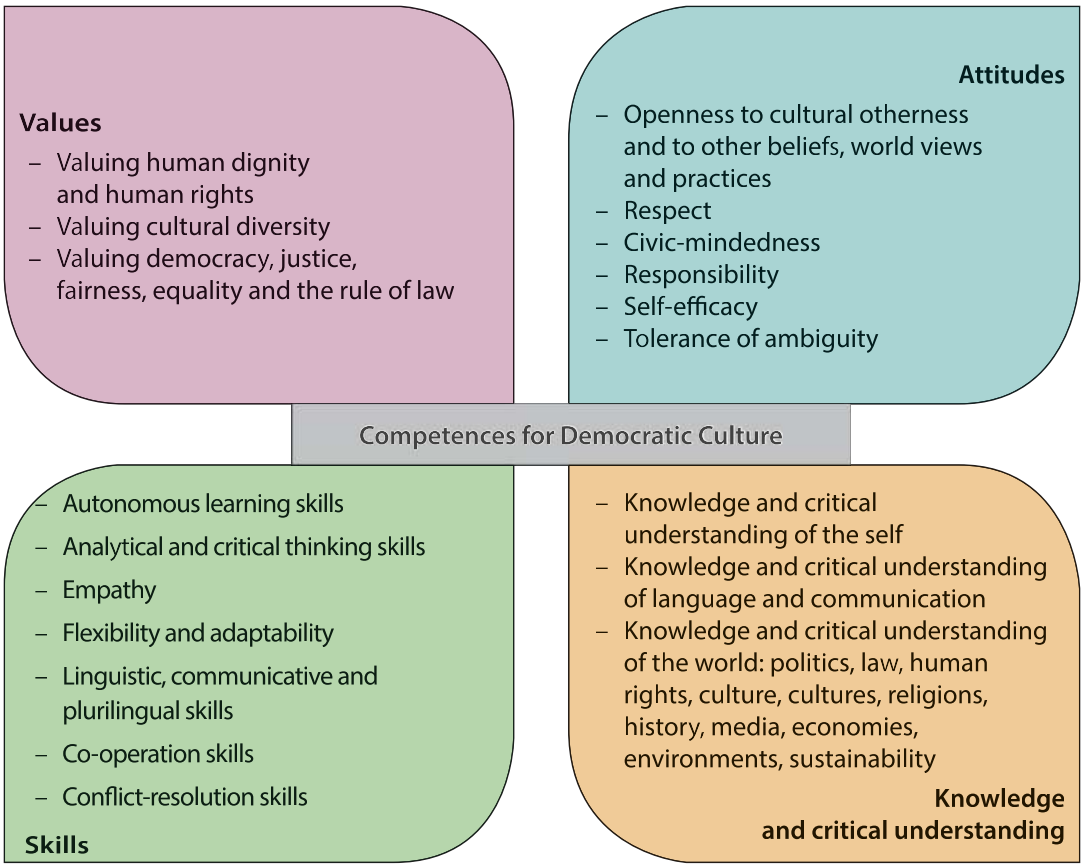


Surprisingly, 9% of parents who shared their feedback are against the idea of digital citizenship, or say they do not understand what it means. With comments like "I like real children, not digital ones" and "I don't want my child to turn into a robot", it is evident that awareness raising is necessary to help parents understand that DCE is about helping their children become active, responsible citizens in the online and offline worlds, and not about encouraging them to spend more time online. Digital citizenship education is designed to empower people to master technology, to remember that it is no more than a tool to be used wisely and meaningfully, and not a cure-all to reach into every corner of our lives. Through digital citizenship, children learn to protect their rights online and to respect their responsibilities, to play their part as an aware consumer of products and the environment, and to strive for an inclusive society.

Notably, 18% of parental feedback was about not needing any help. Comments like "my child is too young" and "my child is independent" further underline the need for greater awareness of the competences required by digital citizens. These are built on values and attitudes that children pick up from the home environment from the moment they are born. No child is too young to understand respect and responsibility, and to value human dignity. These are essential competences for digital citizens, and central elements in the Council of Europe's Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (see the full range of competences in Figure 37 below).

25. Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)10 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on developing and promoting digital citizenship education.

Figure 37 – Competences for Democratic Culture



As mentioned earlier, the critical-thinking and problem-solving aspects of digital citizenship competences correspond closely to what the World Economic Forum[26] considers the "top 10 skills of tomorrow", namely:

1. Analytical thinking and innovation
2. Active learning and learning strategies
3. Complex problem solving
4. Critical thinking and analysis
5. Creativity, originality and initiative
6. Leadership and social influence
7. Technology use, monitoring and control
8. Technology design and programming
9. Resilience, stress tolerance and flexibility
10. Reasoning, problem solving and ideation

Perhaps through greater awareness of the competences involved in digital citizenship, parents will realise its importance in the life and well-being of their children now and in the future.

7.3. Where does the responsibility lie?

A quarter (25%) of comments from parents place the responsibility for digital citizenship education on the shoulders of the school, while 22% consider that it is the responsibility of the social media and digital platforms that their children are using (Figure 36). Another 1% would like to see better European and state government control and regulation, and eight parents, less than 1%, comment that they need to get a good internet connection before thinking about digital citizenship.

The statements of parents provide considerable insight into their thoughts and concerns, with 12% indicating that children's needs should come first. One parent writes: "Children should be encouraged to learn and explore on their own. What I, as a parent, know today is mostly not passed on to me by my parents either". Another parent urges for "Acceptance of fellow human beings" and continues with "This particularly applies

26. World Economic Forum (2016), www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/10/top-10-work-skills-of-tomorrow-how-long-it-takes-to-learn-them/.

to teachers who give questionable content for distance learning". Several comments relate to special needs, with two Icelandic parents noting that their young children need content in a language they understand. One parent underlines the importance of inclusion, stating "Including participants with disabilities and their experiences of online usage".

From these and other comments, it is evident that although many parents do not feel empowered in this domain, they do have useful practical advice to give. Some of their suggestions for schools and digital media platforms could make a difference in fostering more responsible use of technologies.

- We would like to receive updates with info on the latest apps and sites our children are using.
- The problem is that the children want to (actually have to) use apps, websites, etc. that are actually not made for their age (for example WhatsApp and Spotify). It would be helpful to have separate children's accounts for these large, widespread services, which allow the use of the essential functions, but are otherwise restricted or linked to the parents' accounts so that they can moderate.
- A parental lock on certain apps and easier access to report inappropriate things.
- Short videos that enlighten parents and children on the internet and how it works.
- Social media changes fast. It is a challenge getting a good overview of what is popular at any given time and knowledge on how it works. Having real-time access to information on that in one place would help.

Parents also mention that they would like to see the school digitised, and technology use supervised by cyberteams set up within the school. They suggest that the school could provide materials on the topics that children learn about in class, for discussion in more detail at home. Some would like to see better training on the use of online media for teachers, and on dealing with social media in class. Finally, several suggest a safe platform for children within the school where they can learn and practise under supervision.

7.4. Parents' choice of topics and formats for more information

Although Q22 invited parents to indicate the topics they would like to receive information on, most of the 311 open responses received related mainly to their final thoughts on digital citizenship education rather than specifically on topics.

Almost 1 in 10 parents state that they are "against digital", with statements like "My fear is that we will make children robots tied all day in front of a computer"; and 2 in 5 parents shared comments to say that they have no needs, stating things like "I have considerable skills in everything mentioned". One parent says, "Only parents can help their children", 2% of commenting parents call for better teachers, and 1.5% for better equipment and networks.

The breakdown of responses on topics and formats is especially interesting for future work with parents to prepare the road ahead. Figure 38 shows the things parents would like to learn more about to help their children, ranked according to the number of times each topic is cited by parents.

Figure 38 – Parents' top 12 topics to help their children become digital citizens

1.	Limiting/balancing internet access with a healthy lifestyle
2.	How to use the internet safely (e.g. avoid viruses)
3.	Protecting children from negative information – keeping track of child's activities even on apps like Snapchat; filtering YouTube content
4.	Using parental controls
5.	Online privacy and managing online friends
6.	Recognising false information
7.	Online bullying
8.	How to get the best out of the internet and keeping up with evolving technology
9.	Managing cookies to limit profiling
10.	A service to ensure that we are not alone when a problem arises
11.	How to get content in our own language
12.	Getting my children to discuss their internet activities more openly

Figure 39 – Preferred formats for parents to receive information about digital citizenship

1.	Regular snippets of "latest" information
2.	Information that can be read together with our children
3.	A website explaining the age rating of websites and games
4.	More dissemination of the "Guide to human rights for internet users"[27]
5.	A list of the best websites for educational videos
6.	Links to educational yet fun games
7.	Information that is easy to understand
8.	Catalogue of associations, bodies and organisations offering activities and materials for digital citizenship

The information in these two tables should, of course, be matched with the responses of parents shown in Figures 33 and 36 for a broader view of how parents think they can help their children become digital citizens.

Digital technology is playing an increasingly bigger role in society, and in the life of its citizens. Given the rate of evolution, it is beyond human capability to fully keep pace. However, digital technology is no more than a tool; the way it is used is in the hands of citizens, and is shaped by the values and attitudes that guide them in the way they see and interact with the world.

27. https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=09000016804d5b31.

Part II

Interview findings

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Chapter 8

Introduction – context and demographics

8.1. A European-wide consultation adapted to national settings

The Council of Europe's digital citizenship education (DCE) survey, which ran from May to June 2020, provided a valuable overview from more than 21 000 parents on what digital citizenship means to them and the approaches they are taking to help their children develop the basic competences that every digital citizen needs to master. Following the survey, a second phase of the consultation was implemented in the form of interviews conducted with 92 individuals and organisations in 24 of the total 47 Council of Europe countries. The aim of this second phase was to gather more granular information on the factors that parents consider important in shaping their children's values and attitudes to digital technology, and the types of support they feel would be most beneficial to them as they educate their children to become responsible citizens in the on- and offline worlds they live in today.

The interviews were conducted in national languages by different people in each country, mainly teachers or members of national parents' organisations. This was firstly to ensure that the sample population was not limited to English speakers and, secondly, so that questions could be culturally adapted to gather truly meaningful information. All interviewers were initially equipped with the core questions in English, and given a response recording sheet so that the data collected in different languages by different interviewers could nevertheless be compiled and compared. Interviewers were invited to attend two webinars before they began their task, to ensure that everyone was using a comparable approach while adapting to national culture and context.

The outreach of the consultations was significantly increased by one of the participating parent organisations, which consulted parents in 10 countries using the interview recording sheet to summarise responses. Each of these consultations has been counted as just one interview, though in reality it represents far more than one parent's voice. The present report therefore makes reference to a total of 92 interviews. Participating countries were: Austria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, France, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and the United Kingdom.

The interviews were broken down into four separate sections, beginning with demographic details about the interviewees, and continuing with questions grouped around:

- the effect of Covid-19 on the family's digital practices;
- digital technology and its role in family life;
- parental approaches to digital citizenship.

The interviews were conducted between November 2020 and early January 2021, at a time when the impact of the Covid-19 health crisis was very much at the front of parents' minds. It was also a major force in shaping children's use of digital technology and, due to social distancing, school closures and curfews, was more than ever a social lifeline in their lives.

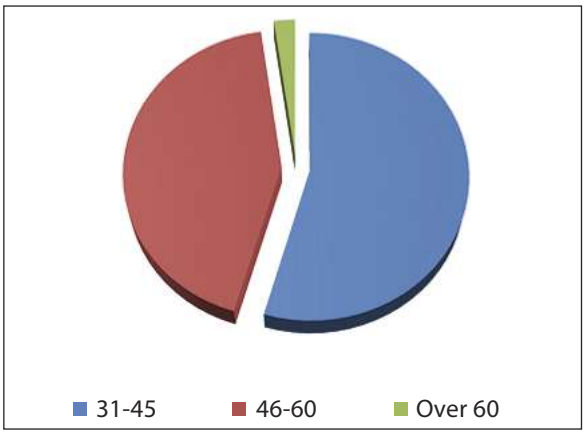
8.2. Getting to know the interviewees

In the first few minutes of the interview, data were gathered on age, gender, nationality, and whether the interviewee was a city or rural dweller, since all have an influence in approaches to digital literacy, citizenship and education. Interviewees were further asked about the number of children in the family, and their age and gender.

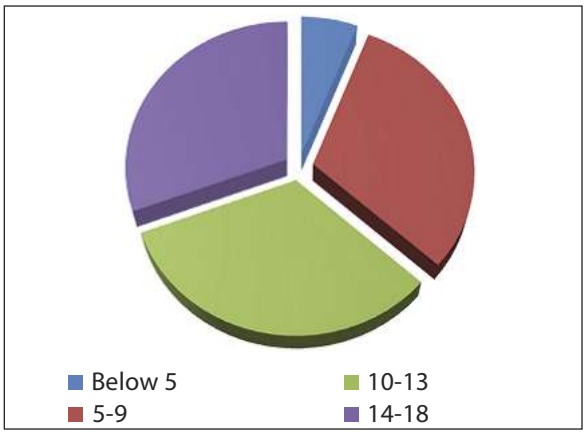
There were 20 men and 66 women participants in the individual interviews. The findings in this report also take into account the much larger number of voices expressed in the nine national consultations. The majority of parents interviewed were aged between 31 and 45, and altogether were parents of 177 children. Of these, 153 were aged between 2 and 18. Children aged 5 to 9 years old accounted for 31% of these, 33% were aged between 10 and 13, and another 31% between 14 and 18 (Figure 40). The sample was 40% boys and 60% girls.

Figure 40 – Interviewees

a. Age of interviewees



b. Age of their children



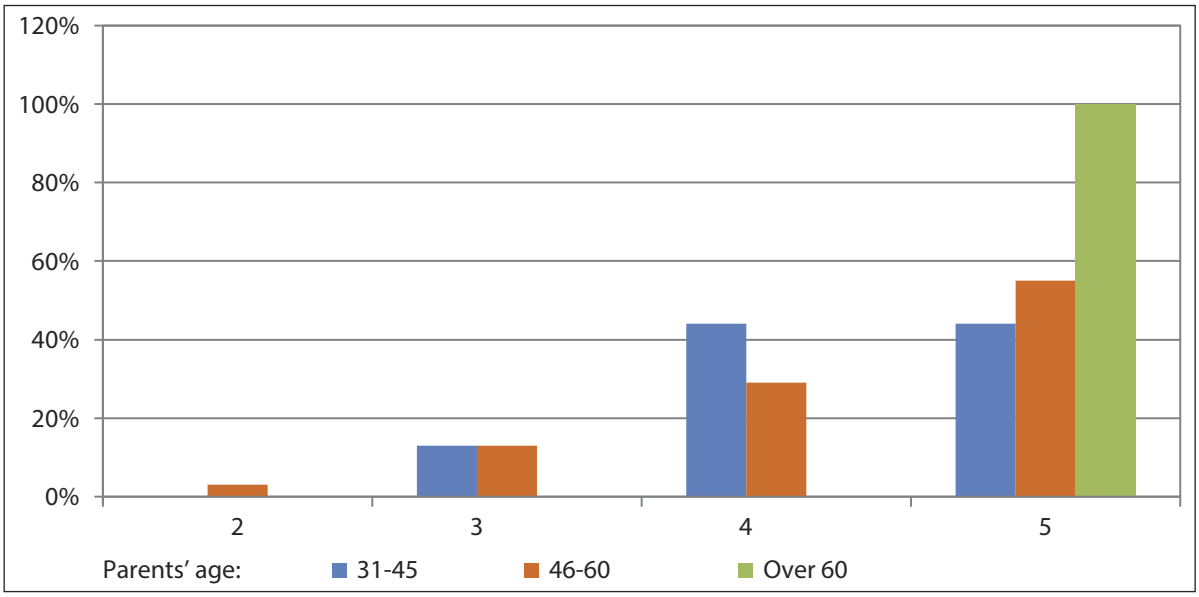
The age and gender of children is an important factor when discussing the strategies parents use to help them develop digital citizenship competences. However, although different needs and strategies were highlighted by parents in accordance with the age of their children, the interviewers picked up no significant differences in parental approaches to digital citizenship that appeared to be related to gender.

8.3. The importance of digital technology in parents' and children's lives

Once demographic details had been noted, parents were asked to rate on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high) the importance that they believe digital technology has in the life of their children. For parents with more than one child under age 18, the interviewer asked parents to give only the rating for the eldest child. Next, they were asked to rate the importance of digital technology in their own lives.

Out of all of the interviews with parents aged 46 to 60, only one parent rated the importance of digital technology in her own life at 2, the lowest rating overall in the consultation (Figure 41). In the 31 to 45 year age group, 44% of parents gave digital technology in their life a top ranking of 5. In the 46 to 60 year age group, 55% of parents gave a rating of 5. The two interviewees over 60 both rated the importance of technology in their life at 5. A rating of 4 was given by 45% of parents aged between 31 and 45, and 29% aged between 46 and 60. Also giving a rating of 4 were 13% of both those aged 31-45 and 46-60.

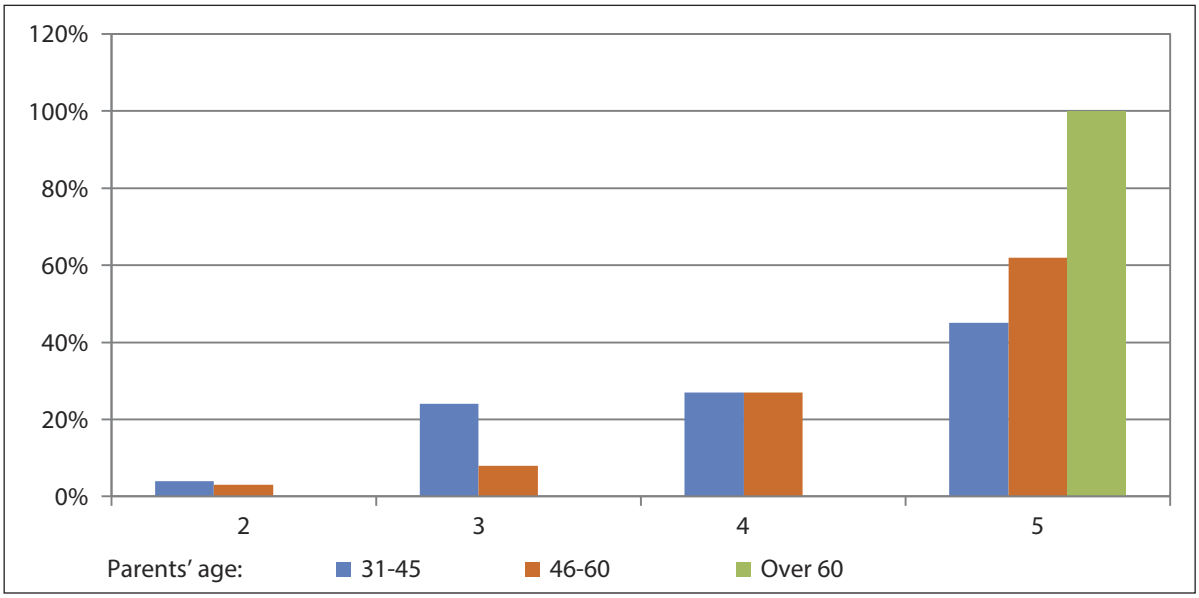
Figure 41 – Rating digital technology in interviewees' lives



When asked to indicate how important digital technology is in their children's life, parents' responses showed a slightly wider spread (Figure 42). The majority of all age groups gave a rating of 5: 45% and 62% for those aged 31-45

and 46-60 respectively, and the two interviewees over 60. In both the 31-45 and the 46-60 age groups, more than 1 in 4 parents gave a rating of 4. Only 4% in the 31-45 group, and 3% in the 46-60 group, gave a rating of 2. These figures indicate just how important parents believe that digital technology is in their children's lives.

Figure 42 – Rating digital technology in the life of interviewees' children



When parents' ratings are examined according to the age of their youngest child, not surprisingly six parents of children aged 6-10 gave a rating of 2. On the other hand, one parent rated technology in the life of their 2-year-old child at 4, and all parents of children aged under 5 rated the importance of digital technology in their child's life at a minimum of 3. More predictably, parents consider that digital technology has a greater importance for older children (Figure 43). Another trend worth noting is that while 73% of parents give a 5 rating for children aged 10 and 12, there is a significant dip in ratings at ages 13 and 14. This is exactly the age at which policy makers expect children to be taking their first steps on social media platforms. It would be interesting to know why the importance appears to dip. Most parents rate technology at 4 for children aged, and 5 for those aged 17.

No significant differences are evident when comparing gender (Figure 44).

Figure 43 – Rating digital technology in a child's life, according to age

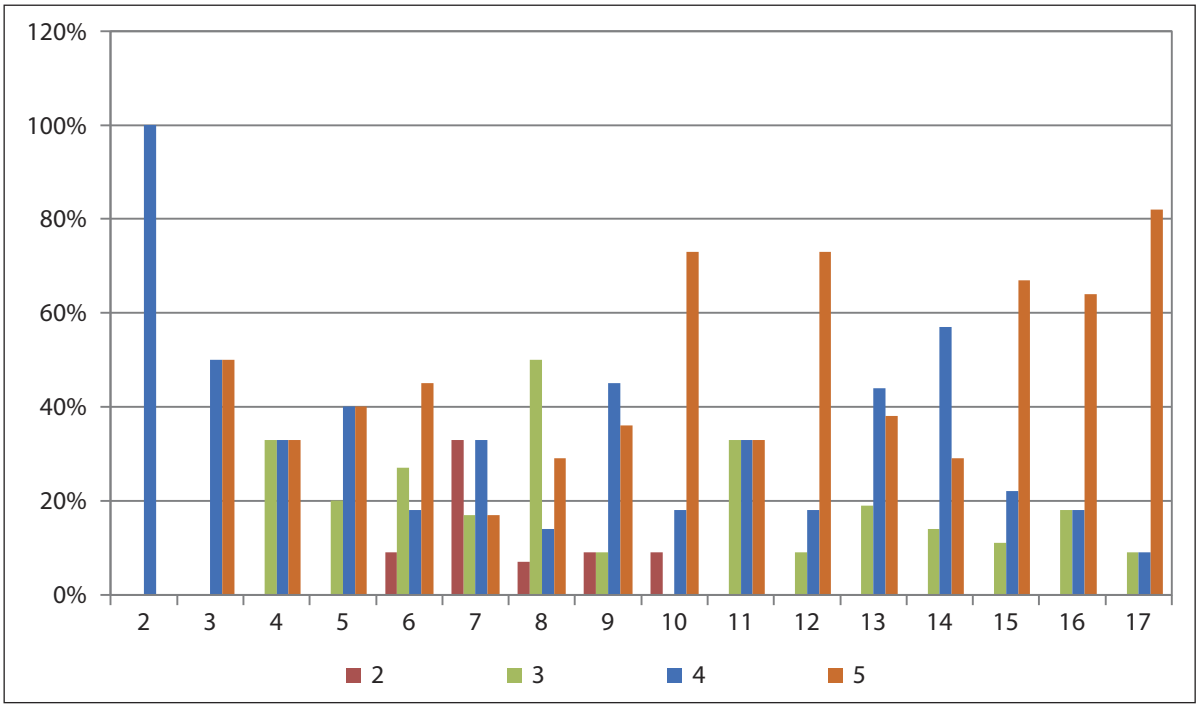
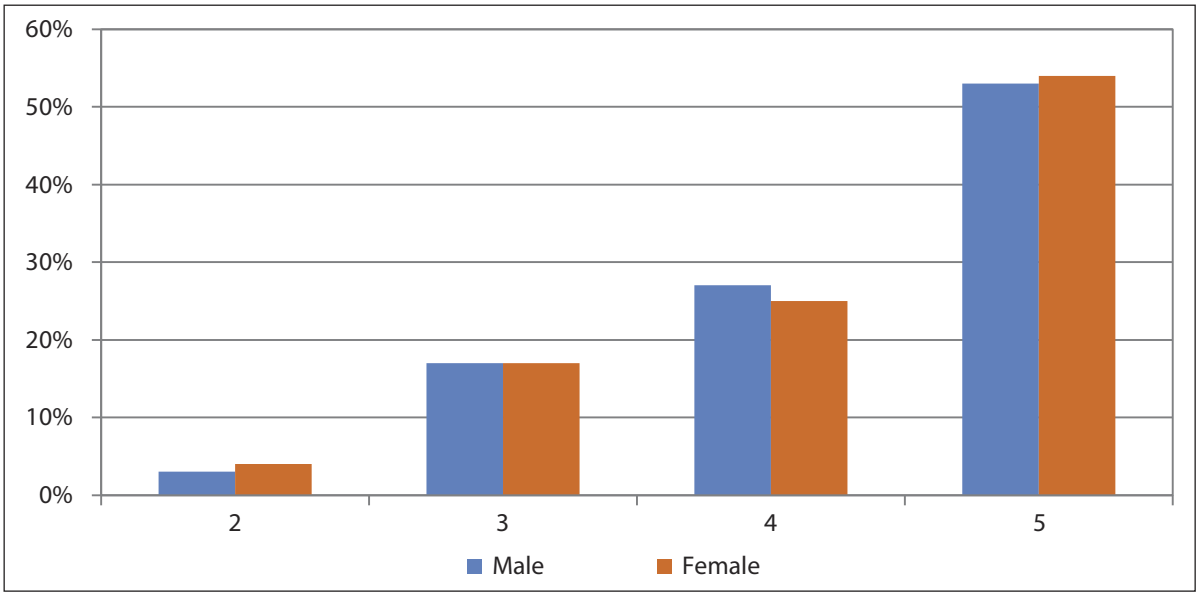


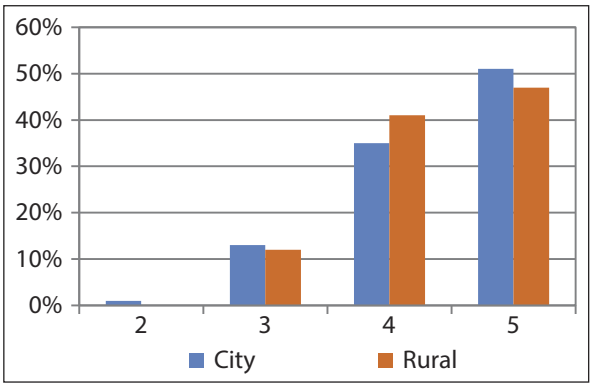
Figure 44 – Rating digital technology in a child's life, according to gender



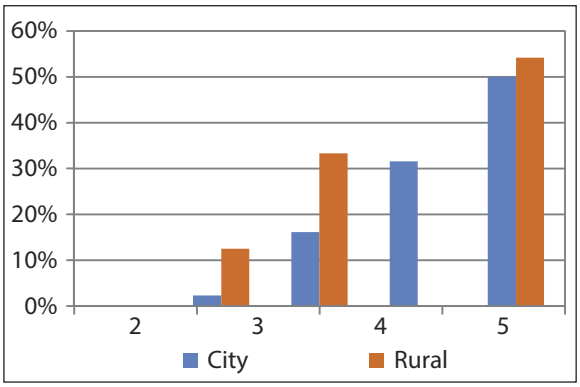
The vast majority of the interviewees lived in a city (80%), with just 17 stating that they lived in a rural environment. No significant differences were apparent in the way city and rural dwellers rated the importance digital technology has in their life, with just 4% more city dwellers giving a 5 rating, and 6% more rural dwellers a 4 rating (Figure 45a).

Figure 45 – Rating digital technology, according to city or rural context

a. For parents



b. For children



However, ratings differ significantly between children living in a city or rural environment (Figure 45b), with consistently higher ratings for children in the latter setting.

Chapter 9

Learning in the time of Covid

9.1. What parents tell us – recommendations

The section of the DCE interviews dedicated to looking at digital technology use in the time of the Covid-19 crisis offers interesting insights into how parents believe that the impact on their children could have been limited, the specific problems they have encountered during the past year, and suggestions of ways that some of the challenges could have been overcome. This has been a difficult period for children and their parents, who would like to have their voice heard when it comes to making remote schooling more inclusive and enriching for all children. They have suggested many areas for improvement, should social distancing and the closure of schools become a necessity again in the future. Responses to the DCE survey back in May-June 2020 already underlined the far-reaching impact of the health crisis on families, in part due to the increased use of digital technology by all sectors of society. Since then, new tools and platforms have sprung up to cater to the needs of remote schooling and teleworking, and parents have become more aware of the changes wrought by the crisis in family and community values, and social attitudes that define citizenship.

In the course of the DCE interviews, parents voiced several recommendations about the stocktaking that needs to be done and the conditions to be fulfilled if the outcome of the crisis is not to further increase the gap between children from different walks of life.

- The Council of Europe, as a credible European institution dedicated to protecting human rights and preserving values, should take a leading role in analysing the lessons learned from remote schooling to guide the education sector through the necessary transitions to be made in education if it is to meet the requirements of the current millennium.
- All children must have access to adequate equipment and broadband infrastructure if they are to exercise their right to education; it is the role of government and the community to make this happen.
- Education authorities need to learn how to become contingency planners, a skill that has long been necessary in other sectors.

9.2. Positive experiences versus unmet needs, an ongoing dilemma

When asked which of their children's needs were not met during remote schooling, almost 2 in 5 parents (38%) cited the social, emotional and/or physical needs of their children that were accentuated by the lack of face-to-face interaction and led to a widespread feeling among young people of social isolation (Figure 46a). Other unmet needs fell basically into three categories: a technological infrastructure able to support remote learning, pedagogical strategies to help children make the transition to remote schooling, and support for families required to take over the supervision of their children's education.

> *Digital fake, waste of time in the process.*
>
> Mother of two 12-year-old girls, Portugal

Another 38% of interviewees focused on the quality of teaching, an issue raised by parents time and again when they speak of their children's remote learning experiences. Parents criticised teachers for their inability to adapt their pedagogy to the demands of online learning, the lack of information and support they gave families trying to cope, and the fact that many had difficulties in interacting with their students and imparting knowledge on a technological platform. Other comments from parents alluded to poor monitoring of children's work, and poor preparation and planning as well as a lack of suitable educational material. One parent from southern Europe stated: "Little productive work, doing everything on paper and sending it in by e-mail." This correlates with results from the DCE 2020 survey where, when asked about the distance learning offered by schools, 38% of parents chose the option "the distance learning offered by the schools leaves a lot of room for improvement".[28]

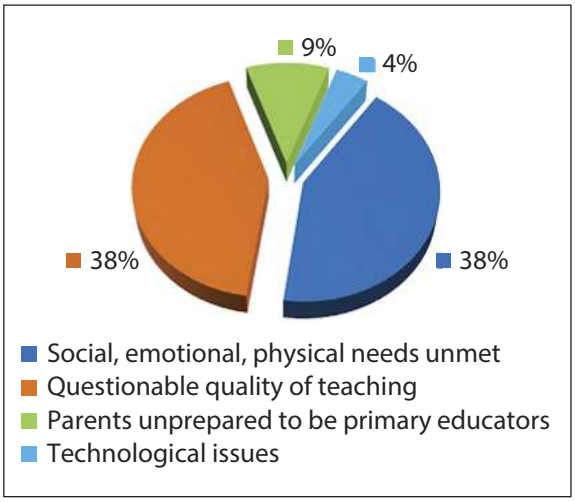
28. Figure 8 in Part I of this report.

Five interviewees complained that, to a large extent, parents had been forced to take on the role of teachers, a role they were not ready for and had neither the knowledge nor the patience to fill. Many had to juggle being the replacement teacher around their own teleworking schedule, with all the reorganisation of working hours and upset of daily routine that this involved. Two parents of primary school children in Turkey were taken by surprise to suddenly discover that their existing technological infrastructure at home became rapidly inadequate when several family members had to be on a computer at the same time. An Austrian parent of three teenage girls informed the interviewer that she had to borrow a notebook computer from school for one of her children, as the family infrastructure could not cope when five people needed to use a computer at the same time. Once again these comments concur with findings from the DCE survey, where 11% of respondents indicated that they did not have suitable IT equipment to satisfy all family members' requirements.

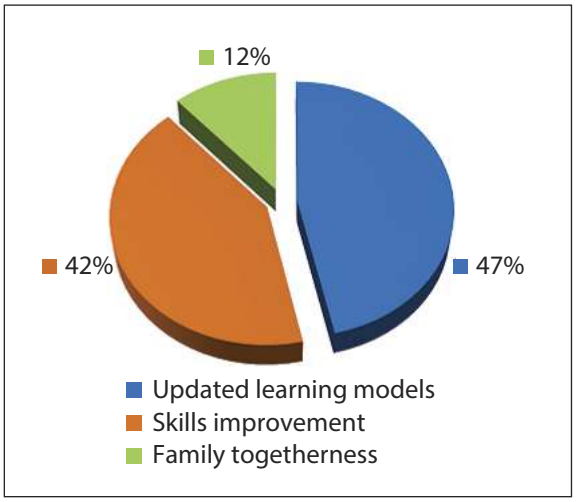
Nevertheless, almost half of the interviewees considered that remote schooling was a positive experience for the family, and had addressed children's basic skill requirements. They would like to see distance learning continued when children's schools get back to normal routines (Figure 46b).

Figure 46 – Remote schooling

a. Downside of remote schooling



b. Positive aspects



Many positive responses from interviewees (47%) focused on the advantages brought about by the increased use of digital tools in the learning process, and they hope this will continue once the crisis is over. Another benefit highlighted in Poland in a consultation with 100 parents is the fact that, with remote schooling, even if children are stuck at home because of illness or other reasons, they can still join classes online from home. An Austrian parent of a 17-year-old boy felt that combining distance and face-to-face learning in a hybrid process would be beneficial for many youngsters. In a consultation with 15 parents of primary school children, one parent suggested: "Digital tools could also be used during summer holidays to cover specific areas of the curriculum, and to introduce the new school year before children actually visit the school."

> *Keep on digitalising schools, continue equipping all schools with high-speed internet and digital devices, and training teachers.*
>
> Mother of 15-year-old daughter, Austria

Eighteen interviewees (42%) find that giving young people a chance to improve their digital and organisational skills in this way is a major benefit. Remote schooling can help develop self-discipline, self-control, concentration, responsibility, self-efficiency and planning skills, improving many of the competences required of digital citizens including the ability to use digital technology confidently and master new ways to communicate and learn. Family-related benefits were cited in 12% of the responses, including such things as togetherness, and a better understanding of what children are doing in school. A mother of teenage girls in France picked up on a rather crucial issue for many parents: that remote schooling relieves young people of the social pressure related to dress, devices, etc.

9.3. Positive effects on children's learning and social well-being

The above findings were further enriched with responses from parents about how the health crisis may impact their children's learning and social well-being in the coming months. Although almost 40% of parents' responses were about the beneficial effects, 60% were about possible negative consequences, as described in the next chapter.

Many of the benefits cited relate closely to the competences defined by the Council of Europe as being the cornerstones for any democratic culture.[29] These include empathy, self-efficacy, life values, flexibility and adaptability, communicative and co-operation skills, problem-solving skills, and development of autonomous learning skills. The benefits cited by interviewees can be loosely organised into six groups: development of organisational and social skills; better mastery of digital skills; deeper understanding of the potential of technology; family-related benefits; development of empathy and appreciation of existing values in life; and other benefits. Each of these are briefly described below, and see Figure 47.

1. **Development of organisational and social skills**. Almost 1 in 3 parents thought that remote schooling has enabled their children to become better planners, adapt more rapidly to new situations and adopt a more responsible, autonomous approach to their work. Co-operation and team work has improved, and children showed more self-control and self-discipline in managing their time and their responsibilities. They became more innovative in solving problems, finding new ways of learning and appeared to be more capable communicators. One parent wrote: "They have learned to master unusual situations and recognise that peer exchange is important whether in person or virtually." Another parent stated: "(they have) learned that nothing is a given, (and are) acting responsibly for themselves and towards others".

> *Learning that nothing is given, acting responsibly for themselves and towards others.*
>
> Mother of 17-year-old boy, Italy

2. **Better mastery of digital skills** took second place in the list of benefits described by 1 in 4 parents, who noted that their children have generally become more digitally competent, and able to use digital technology in a more sense-making way as a tool for collaboration. They were able to use a broader range of programmes, platforms and digital devices (computers, scanners, etc.). To quote one parent: "They can improve their digital skills, and get to know multiple interesting ways to learn, so later it will be easier for them to get along in the digital world."

3. **Deeper understanding of the potential of technology**. One parent said: "Many parents who were against technology use, started appreciating it." This suggests that not only children benefited, but also parents. Another respondent stated: "Children finally see that the internet and digital world are not only entertainment, there are much more important things that the internet and devices should be used for."

   > *Great benefit, that they get in direct contact with the computer NOT as a gaming machine; they see the uses of the computer, how important the tool is and what you can do with it.*
   >
   > Mother of 8-year-old boy and girl, Greece

   Besides collaboration, parents included among the improved sense-making usage of digital technology the time-saving aspects, the improved digitisation of educational structures, the upgrading of school networks and, more generally, the growing awareness in most sectors of society about the value and the limits of technology.

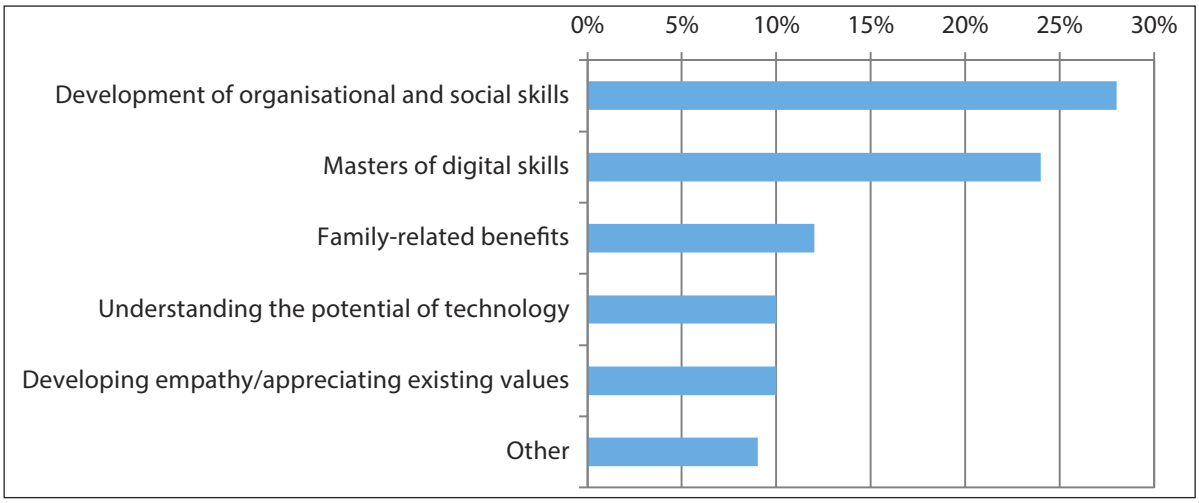
4. **Family-related benefits** were cited by a dozen interviewees, and mainly related to the extra quality time families spent together, and the more experiences they shared as a family. Parents also became more involved in their children's education, because they had to play a more active role in it. As the mother of 4- and 7-year-old boys in Iceland explained to the interviewer: "This pandemic has strengthened our family bonds and made us more aware of our children's learning needs, which I think would definitely benefit them."

5. **Development of empathy towards others, and a greater appreciation of existing values in life** was mentioned by around 11% of parents. They said that children showed more sensitivity towards less advantaged population sectors, and a greater understanding of what the good of the community really means. They were more aware of the problems in the world, and understood that they were part of something historic. One parent said that his daughter "has become socially stronger since she began to value friendship more than ever before".

6. The nine responses in the "**other**" category pertain mainly to the opportunities parents felt that the health crisis had given them to understand that the challenges they face and the ways they solve their problems are all part of a learning process for the future. Other parents said that, because their classmates were not learning in the same room as them, their children became less distracted, had more time to sleep in the morning, and were saving the time and money usually spent going to and from school.

29. https://www.coe.int/en/web/digital-citizenship-education/a-conceptual-model.

Figure 47 – Beneficial effects of Covid-19 on children's learning and social well-being

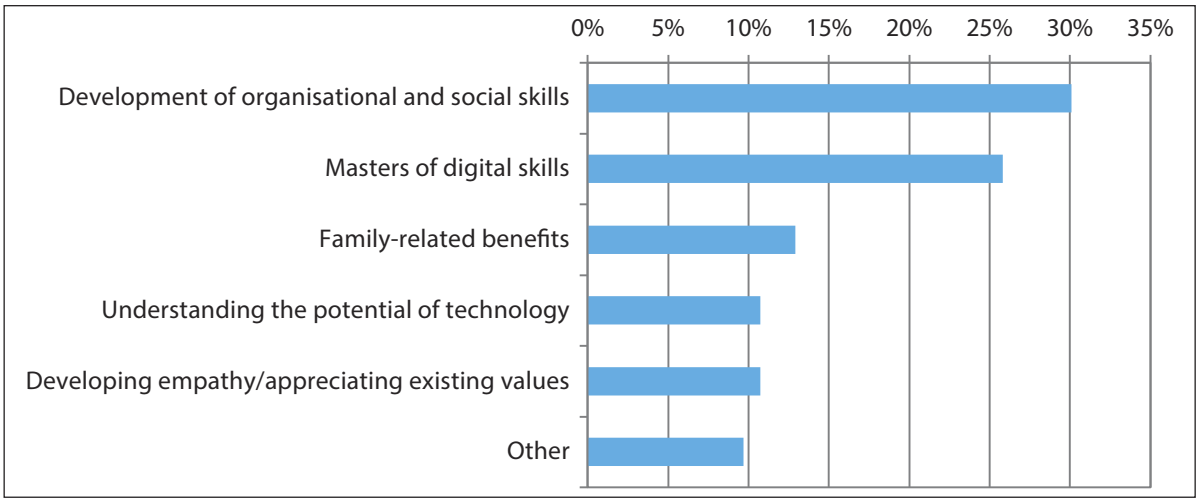


9.4. Negative effects of the Covid-19 pandemic

The negative consequences of the social upheaval brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic were manifold, according to parents (Figure 48). They cited in particular the impact on their children's social and emotional well-being, and on their education, once again corroborating the views expressed by parents in the DCE survey, namely that distance learning by schools leaves a lot of room for improvement (38%), inadequate pedagogical strategies (29%) and poorly run remote classes (11%).[30] Parents were concerned that:

- communication between teachers, students and peers weakened, creating group tensions;
- the transition from face-to-face to remote education, the disruption of schedules and lack of interaction created an irremediable learning gap;
- the decrease in teaching time, the lack of appropriate educational supports and the questionable quality of education lowered the level of knowledge acquisition;
- children from less affluent families were not able to adapt to the new digital learning situation, thus widening the knowledge gap between different sectors of the population;
- special learning needs of children were not addressed, and the extra support some of these children were benefiting from in the classroom had simply disappeared;
- the learning challenges of certain children would increase, while the gap between weaker and stronger students would widen.

Figure 48 – Negative effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on children's learning and social well-being



30. See Figures 8 and 9.

Sixty-two responses (42% of the total) highlighted social well-being issues: social isolation; impoverished quality of life; limited opportunities for certain children/families; pressure on relationships; emotional distress; insecurity. One father in the 46-60 age group with a 15-year-old daughter said: "social consequences are still difficult to estimate; already before Covid communication among young people was based upon a lot of one-way messages [writing in chats or sending voice messages]; [there is] a danger that the ability to truly communicate and develop networking skills will be lost". Accordingly, 33% of the DCE survey respondents pointed to their children's well-being during the crisis as one of the most challenging aspects for them.[31]

> *Danger of losing the ability to truly communicate and develop networking skills.*
>
> Father of a 15-year-old daughter, Austria

Parents' involvement in supervising their children's learning on a daily basis put undue pressure on families. A mother (aged between 31 and 45) of three children pointed out: "one of the parents has to be at home all day to help children with their studies". Another interviewee, speaking as a representative of 500 Muslim parents in the United Kingdom with children aged between 11 and 19, states: "Many of the parents simply don't have the technology skills to support their children."

Mothers of teenage children expressed another concern. They are "afraid there will be a lot of pressure on children to make up for lost time", and that "children may not be as well prepared for end-of-year exams as they should be due to lost time" (mother of 12- and 15-year-old girls, Austria).

Around 1 in 4 concerns voiced by interviewees were about problems linked to mental health and physical well-being: lack of concentration, anxiety, psychological disorders, physical health problems such as weight gain, eyesight and back problems due to increased use of IT devices, lack of physical activity, mental suffering and accumulated fear, and poor sleeping habits. On top of this, 6% of all responses related to excessive internet exposure and the extra time spent in front of the screen which, many feared, may lead to or increase addictions. Finally, a male interviewee representing 38 parents in Hungary decried the fact that parents were left alone to handle the negative fallout, resulting in increased domestic violence and a greater number of divorces, with all the subsequent problems children will have to face.

31. Appendix III – Q6.

Chapter 10

Looking to the future

10.1. What parents tell us – recommendations

Although the past year has been extremely challenging in terms of children's education, parents see it as a watershed moment that will determine the capacity of schools to step into the technological age of the 21st century. They hope the lessons learned will lead to a vast improvement in school organisation. They feel it is time that schools and teachers accepted the reality that children are doing a lot of their learning online with or without their guidance, and that they will begin working more closely with parents and parent organisations to find a middle road. The well-being and resilience of children, their capacity for critical thinking and their creativity should be foremost in educational goals rather than preparation for examinations that can be completely disrupted at any time through social crises.

As children's online activities begin to revolve less around communication and entertainment and more towards learning, parents urge educational authorities to let them share the responsibility of preparing children to become responsible digital citizens, and to make it a multi-stakeholder endeavour. Children are increasingly using commercial platforms such as YouTube for learning, for example, but who is shouldering the responsibility with regards to the reliability of information, profiling, etc.?

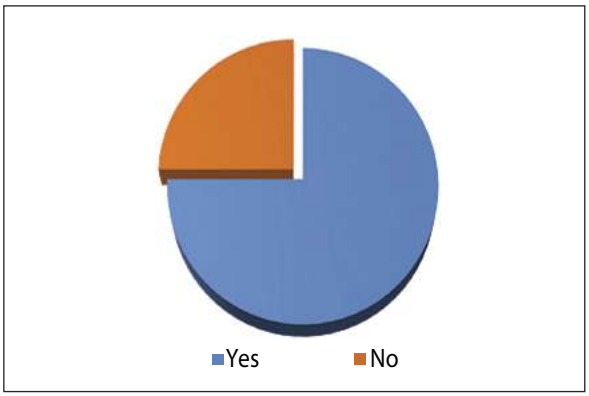
Parents would like to see hybrid learning become an integral element of schooling at all age levels. They hope the crisis will mark the beginning of a more constructive partnership between the school and the home, and that they can work in unison to ensure that every child has the possibility to develop the knowledge, values and critical attitudes they need to assume their future role as ethical leaders in tomorrow's society.

10.2. The remote schooling experience – from parents' emotions to concrete suggestions

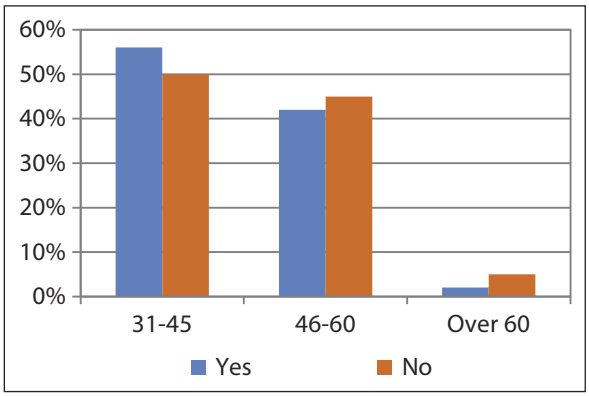
When asked to give five or six words that best express their own and their children's experience of remote schooling during the various Covid-19 lockdown periods, parents' responses ranged from negative terms such as "chaos", "confusing" and "unstructured" to highly positive terms: "fun", "exciting" and "successful". The words parents chose were enlightening, also the broad range of educational aspects they covered. The beginning of the crisis represented the first time for 3 out of 4 respondents that their children had participated in remote schooling, though figures varied slightly per age group. It was a first experience for 56% of parents in the 31-45 age bracket, 42% in the 46-60 age bracket, and for just one of all parents over 60 (Figures 49a and b).

Figure 49 – Experience with distance learning

a. First experience with distance learning



b. per age group



The words parents chose to describe their experience generally fell into two groups: those used to describe the impact of the experience on children and family, and those used to describe the remote schooling process itself. In the former group, most parents expressed concern about the potential social repercussions on their children, as can be seen in Figure 50. Nevertheless, around 20% of responses highlighted the positive aspects of remote schooling, such as children becoming more self-reliant and independent in the way they learn. A few parents appreciated the added flexibility that distance learning can offer. They noted improved motivation and an enriched learning experience when their children had more freedom to investigate a broader range of resources. Once basic reading skills have been mastered, the quality of learning appears to be determined by the character and enthusiasm of the child rather than by age.

Parents' negative comments generally related to anxiety, frustration, uncertainty and the inability of their children to resolve content issues that arose, sometimes because teachers were not available to provide the just-in-time support they had been used to in the classroom. After long spells of working alone without their teachers' feedback, children tended to lose interest and motivation.

Figure 50 – Impact of remote schooling on children

The second group of responses, illustrated in Figure 51, relate to the process itself. These comments focused mainly on organisational issues within schools, and the poor pedagogical approaches adopted by teachers. "Passive", "emotionless", "unstructured", "unproductive" and "unmet needs" were some of the words and expressions parents used as they watched their children struggle to maintain a learning routine amid the uncertainty provoked by the societal crisis.

Figure 51 – The remote schooling process

Overall, parents appeared to consider that if distance learning is to continue to play a role in children's education once the current crisis is over, and they would like this to happen, then it must become a well-organised, structured addition to schooling. It also needs to be adapted to meet the individual needs of children. The underpinning condition is, of course, that families and schools are equipped with adequate tools and infrastructure.

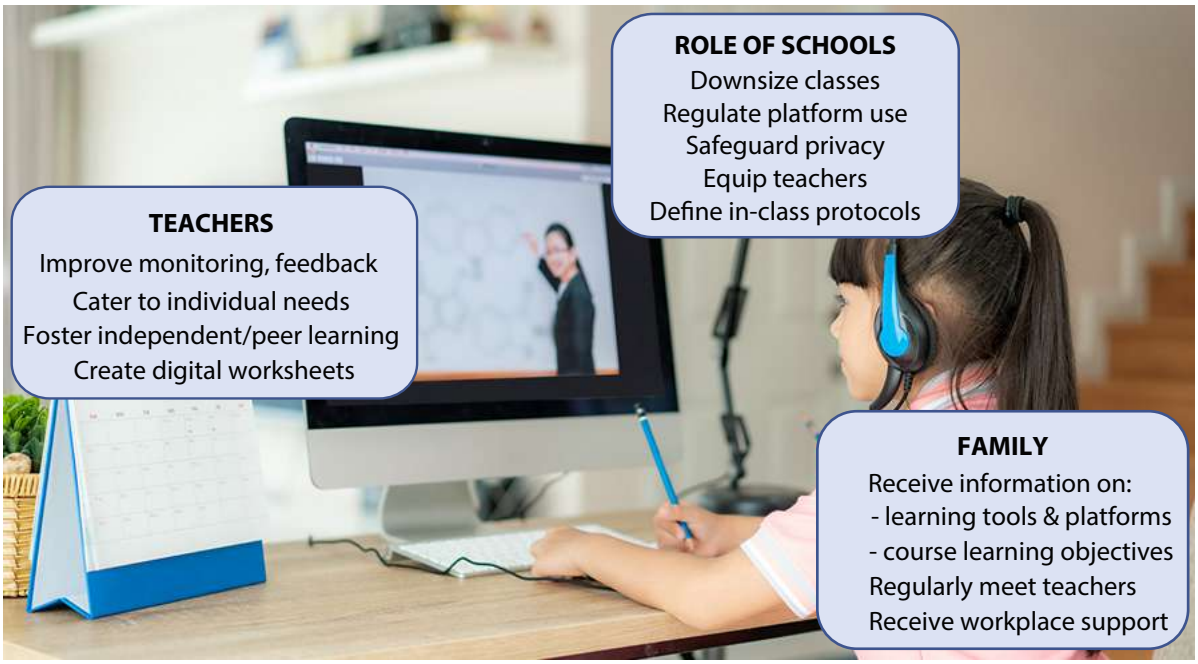
Parents were quick to offer ideas and examples of good practice when asked how they believed remote schooling could be improved. Most suggestions related to how remote schooling could be better conducted, the training teachers require to adapt to this new mode of teaching and the role of government, industry and families in overcoming the barriers that are currently depriving many children of the equal right to education.

10.3. Improving remote learning – a shared responsibility

Better logistics and a systematic approach from schools are among the key improvements that parents would like to see. Remote schooling, by its very nature, leaves little room for ad-libbing. School classes should be downsized to cater for the new demands of the learning environment, and a standard platform developed that is fully compliant with the stringent privacy requirements of schools. All teachers in any given school should be made to use the same platforms – children should not have to sign up to half a dozen different platforms because no joint decision has been made within schools. Reliability of learning platforms is crucial for successful remote schooling. Checking platforms and connections should also not add to the burden of teachers while they are making the transition from in-class to online teaching. It is also up to the school to establish the ground rules and classroom protocols and ensure that students and families are fully aware of them. Finally, equipping teachers with adequate devices adapted to pedagogical requirements could have been much better handled by schools.

Parents suggested that it would have been better for their children to have lost a week of schooling at the outset to prepare the transition to remote schooling rather than stumbling into the process and losing the confidence of parents and students along the way.

Figure 52 – Areas for improvement when schools move online



New training opportunities for teachers to learn to adapt to the considerably different requirements for teaching online is also a priority, according to parents. They need to learn how to impart knowledge and cater for children's individual learning needs in ways other than setting tasks and deadlines and expecting their pupils to understand everything from a book, an online search or by asking parents. They need to master new strategies for monitoring children's work remotely and for providing feedback, as well as find a way to make e-learning an active, inclusive process, where even the more timid or passive children are not left behind. Recent remote schooling experiences also lead parents to fear that teachers are not able to teach high-level digital and cognitive skills remotely. They would like to see the Council of Europe discreetly lead the debate among national education authorities through consultations with students, parents and teachers, and by gathering sense-making practices from its member countries. In this way, teachers can be upskilled, learning from research and by exchanging knowledge and practice. Several parents cited the example of the "DigitalMisaki" YouTube channel in Turkey. Built on peer learning between teachers, they found it to be really helpful. A parent organisation in Austria says that teachers there thought about undertaking similar initiatives but decided against it. The responsibility to provide and pay for quality training should be on the shoulders of the national authorities, rather than the responsibility (and cost) being assumed by the teachers themselves.

Pupil–teacher contact is an essential aspect of learning, yet few schools apparently offered the possibility of one-on-one meetings where teachers could help pupils track their own progress and become independent learners rather than allowing them to hide behind an on-screen presence. Teachers need to develop new means of rapidly seeing which students have grasped the lesson at hand, which ones are waiting to get help, and how to trigger online peer interaction to maintain the social nature of learning. If teachers are unable to integrate soft skills in the e-learning curriculum, then the development of digital citizenship competences will be at risk.

In the first wave of home schooling, teachers filled their students' time with written exercises in the mistaken belief that homework could replace in-class learning. Deadlines and submission modes were apparently hazy, and usually relied on printing, scanning and e-mail. When the family's printer broke down or ran out of ink, chaos and distress ensued because shops were closed and ink stocks in online stores depleted. Few parents encountered any good practices they felt met the expected standards of today's so-called paperless world. A parent-teacher in France (whose husband is in IT) interestingly explained how she was able to work around equipment-related challenges: "We discovered that by investing in a touch screen I could easily correct my students' work on-screen, bypassing the need to print, mark, scan and send. We even figured out how to make digital worksheets that children and parents loved."

Parents fully understand that they also need to learn how to participate more effectively in their children's remote schooling. They would like to be given the information and supporting tools to fully assume the role of chief educator so rapidly cast upon their shoulders. They want to receive information about the devices and platforms their children are expected to use, and the learning objectives of the courses they are meant to

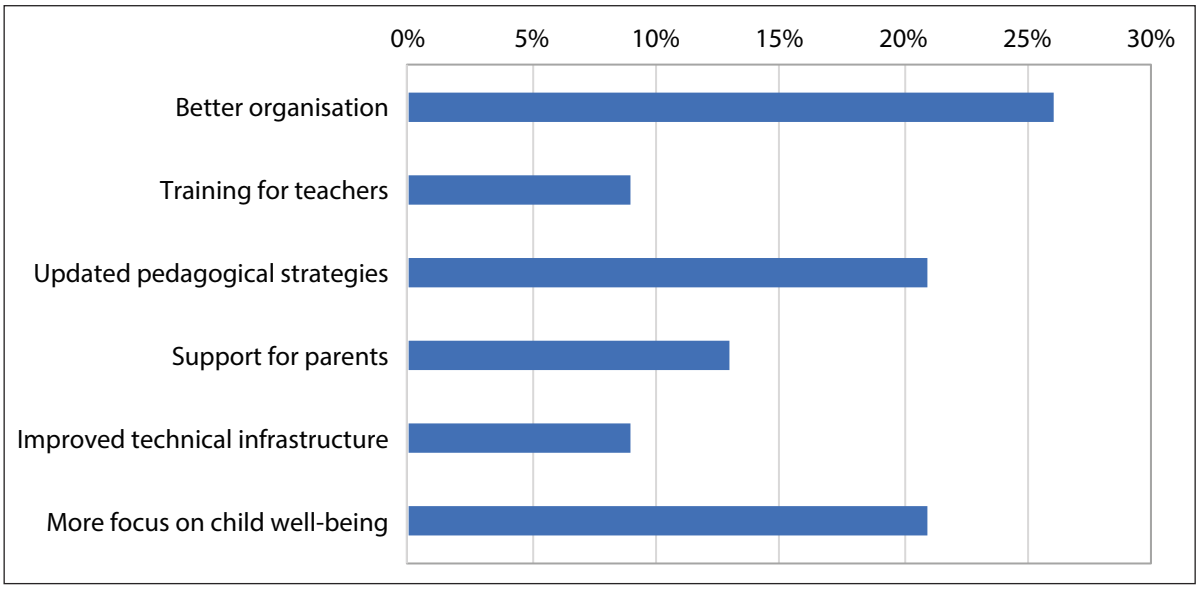
follow. They suggest that school course-book suppliers could create tutorial videos for teachers and parents at the start of each new section to create a bridge between printed and digital resources and add coherence to the learning process. Most interviewees would be ready to attend online parent-education sessions where they could learn more about the devices and platforms their children are expected to learn on and about strategies to help co-ordinate their children's online learning without disrupting their primary role as parent. More frequent opportunities to discuss their children's progress with teachers would be appreciated too. Finally, they underlined the lack of co-operation they received from their workplace; parents were expected to spend hours schooling their children and still get through their usual workload!

Parent associations see a bigger role for themselves in supporting parents in most of the above areas, and really do not understand why they were not involved in the in-class to online transition from the outset.

10.4. Solutions to shape remote schooling to the needs of young digital citizens

Parents came up with a wealth of ideas on how remote schooling could be rapidly improved. Most suggestions related to organisational aspects, closely followed by ideas about pedagogical solutions, and strategies to compensate for the socio-emotional and physical impact that the transition has had on children. Technical solutions appeared to be much lower on their list, at least for parents with an acceptable level of digital equipment and broadband connection (Figure 53).

Figure 53 – Improving remote schooling



At the organisational level, parents would like to see evidence of more common sense from governments, and contingency planning. They consider that educational authorities jump-started the radical transition to remote schooling overnight, in a trial-and-error approach. They do not seem to have taken into account that schools are, for children, far more than just places of academic learning. It is where they interact with peers, practise their social skills and develop their social networks. Through interaction with others, they try out new interests and develop their identity. A far more equitable solution would have been to reduce class sizes and reorganise timetables, spreading school time across the summer holiday if need be. Although parents feel that face-to-face learning is generally more effective, especially for younger children, most are quite enthusiastic about e-learning; on condition, however, that it is integrated into the school programme gradually, with the right tools and logistical organisation. It could then become one facet of a hybrid approach that could valuably continue beyond the health crisis. This would also help cater to the needs of children who are sick, in quarantine, or unable to physically attend school.

Parents voiced disappointment in the way the media handled the whole Covid-19 situation. Instead of it being a moment when society pulled together to console children and compensate for their loss of social opportunities, it was felt in many cases that traditional media spent its time fearmongering and digital media was bombarded with fake news. Another lost opportunity for society was the lack of innovation regarding job creation. While parents were overburdened with teleworking and supervising their children's schooling at the same time, tertiary education students suffered from lost income and could well have honed their skills

by providing the extra support children needed with their schoolwork. Support staff could also have been employed by governments to back up families in need of help.

Parents innovatively suggested that, rather than making the transition a burden on children and families, teachers could have turned this into a fun interlude. They could have brought their students together online to visit online museums, discover art and travel to far-off countries, experimenting with alternative modes of social interaction and assessment too, rather than wasting limited face-to-face teaching time on tests and exams. The period offered a window of opportunity for children to learn about disease, our reliance on each other in society and the notion of limits – all facets of being a citizen in a democratic and highly digitised society.

Chapter 11

Children and digital technology – a potentially creative tandem

11.1. Lessons learned and recommendations

A third section of the interview protocol aimed at learning more about the online activities children spend most time on, the level of family interaction that takes place around digital technology use in the home, parents' approach to setting rules and monitoring, and finally the troubleshooting habits of families. Knowing these things is invaluable when defining resource materials and strategies to support families in shaping values and attitudes as well as honing the knowledge and skills of their children as they become informed digital citizens. It also helps educators detect opportunities for reaching children in the places and through the activities where they most like to spend their time.

One example of how this could work is the ritual "show and tell" that teachers conduct in primary schools the world over to foster oral expression. We learned from the interviews that this activity has now moved online. Creative activities by children, especially in the framework of remote schooling, are now at an all-time low. A virtual "show and tell" could provide a rich new avenue to explore, using tools and platforms already available in order to give even very young children the opportunity to practise the real-life skills they need to master virtual and hybrid environments.

However, parents' concerns do not seem to be focused on creativity, although this is one of the top 10 skills the World Economic Forum believes are essential for children to master if they are to thrive in tomorrow's world.[32] Despite understanding the importance of digital technology in their children's online activity lives, many parents seem to have their sights fixed on limiting its potential negative impact rather than exploiting the opportunities it offers. Decisions about monitoring constitute a dilemma for many families, especially families with older children when peer pressure plays a big role.

Approximately 1 in 3 parents told interviewers that they do not monitor their children's online activity because they prefer to foster in their children responsibility and independence. Monitoring is a loosely defined concept that for some may be about applying tools to control screen time and/or content, while for others it means keeping an eye on children's activities and seeking windows of opportunity to talk with them about issues of concern such as bullying, grooming and fake news.

Parents shared few explicit recommendations in this section of the interview, often indicating in their responses that they were overcome by the need to guide their children in an environment that is too technical, and fast moving. Nevertheless, it is evident from the discussions that more information for parents is needed about the apps their children use, and how they can be monitored. Monitoring videos is also a vague area for some, and tutorials on this topic could prove useful.

11.2. What online activities are children spending their time on?

When compared with the findings of the DCE survey (reproduced here as Figure 55), certain responses from interviewees about their children's online activities were somewhat unexpected (Figure 54). Nevertheless, account should be taken of the exceptional circumstances of the past year. Almost everyone is spending more time online than usual, due to work or schooling requirements, and this has made it more difficult for families to find a balance between physical and online activities. Moreover, a lot of socialising has been forced online.

Playing online games topped the list of activities for the children of 76% of interviewees, whereas only 1 in 5 parents ranked this as their child's top activity in the survey back in May-June 2020. Watching videos or movies (mainly on Netflix or Amazon), which topped the list of children's online activities in the survey, is now considered by parents to be their second favourite activity.

32. www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/10/top-10-work-skills-of-tomorrow-how-long-it-takes-to-learn-them/.

However, it should be noted that while survey respondents had to choose just one activity from a list, interviewees were able to cite more than one activity in their discussion with the interviewer. It is interesting to compare Figure 54, which shows the percentage of parents out of the total number of interviewees who cited the activities as being among their children's favourites, with Figure 55, which shows the analysis made in the DCE 2020 survey.

Figure 54 – Activities my children spend most time on when online

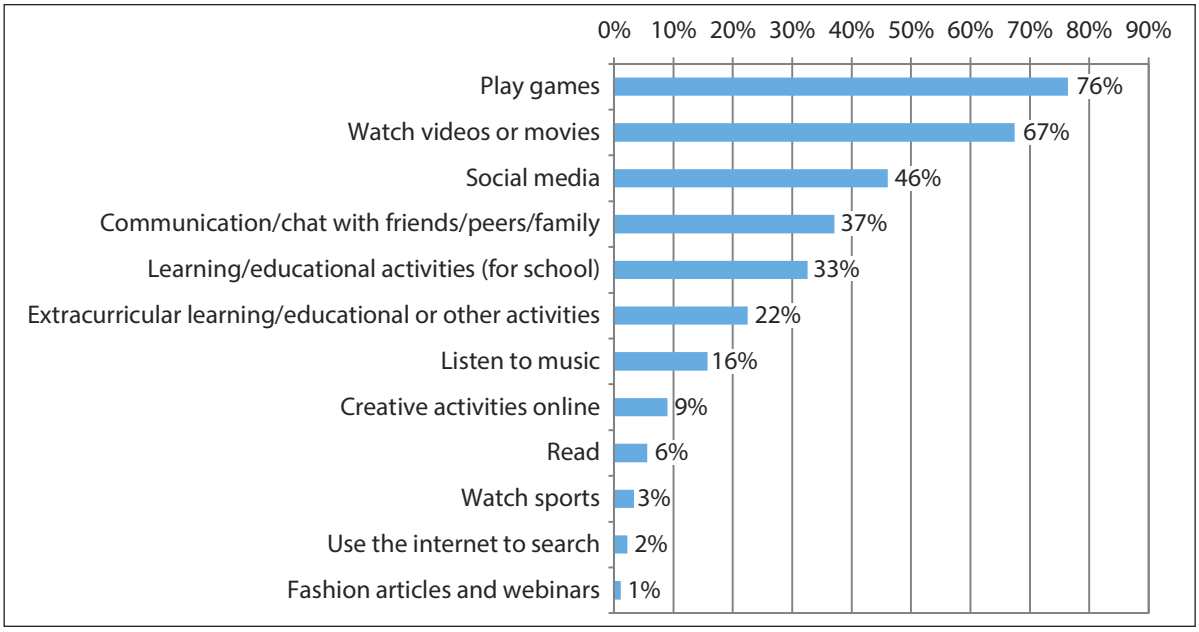
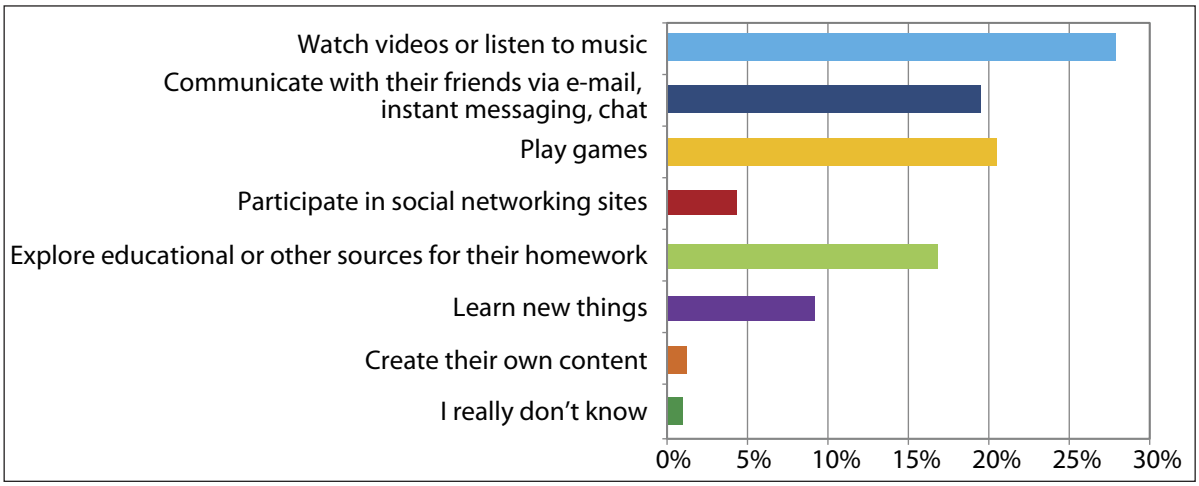


Figure 55 – My children mainly use the internet to… (DCE survey, Q10)



Online communication was rated high among children's online activities by both the interviewees and survey respondents. Social networks were given much greater importance in the interviews, possibly because interviewers were able to clarify with parents the many communication apps that are actually considered to be social networks (WhatsApp, for example). It is therefore likely that the interviews give a more realistic picture of what children are currently doing online, which will probably evolve once schools are fully open and life is back to normal. It appears that Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, Facebook and WhatsApp are the social media platforms the children of interviewees are mainly frequenting at present.

It comes as no surprise that "learning and activities for school" continue to be in the top five online activities for children. With remote schooling now being an everyday part of their lives, they use the internet more than ever before for school assignments and extracurricular learning. In the survey only 9% of respondents stated their children were using the internet "to learn new things", an activity that also scored low in the interviews. Only around 1% of children were apparently using the internet for creative pursuits, although this is not the case in all countries. The creative activities mentioned by the interviewees were mainly painting, drawing, scratch and filming.

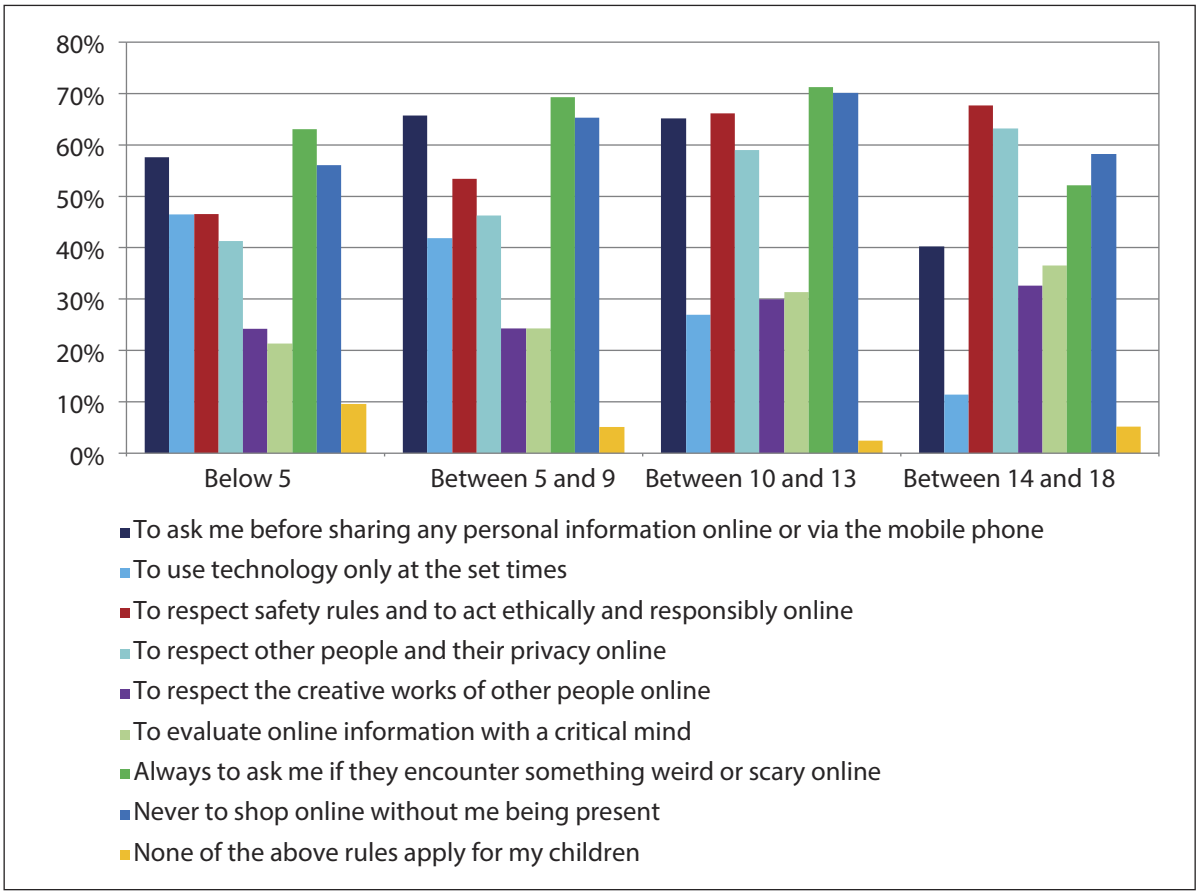
An interesting good practice in Iceland appears to be making a considerable difference to creativity among school children, as recently picked up in research on children's internet use in the Nordic region of Europe.[33] For a few years now, 7th-10th graders have been spending one to two hours per day in an activity called The Factory (Smiðjan). Students choose a topic or concept from the curriculum, and work in groups using smart online devices and tools to create a digital report. This opens up all kinds of creative ways for them to tackle the topics the school wants them to learn. A leading teacher-parent in The Factory initiative states: "We know that creativity is an essential skill for the future, and that children like to design their own learning. We put the two ideas together and are delighted with the impact."

Knowing what their children are doing online offers an invaluable opportunity for parents and educators not only to intervene with guidance in a timely manner, but also to share experiences with them in fun ways on the platforms of their choice. A few parents have also informed us that their children like to read international news and magazines, follow webinars and do surveys online via their laptops, phones and e-readers. These are all platforms and applications through which children can be encouraged to exercise the skills, knowledge, values and attitudes they need as citizens of the digital world.

11.3. Monitoring children's online activities – generally an age-related process

Findings from the DCE survey (Figures 16-18, reminded per children's age group in Figure 56) show that most parents set family rules about internet usage to protect their children from unsuitable content and contact with strangers, and to make them aware that sharing too much information could put them at risk. For a majority of parents participating in the Council of Europe's digital citizenship education programme, setting ground rules about internet usage is generally seen as an important area in a child's upbringing. The overall aim of this practice is to help them understand and negotiate rules, both crucial steps towards becoming responsible adults. While the survey did not focus specifically on monitoring, comments from participants in the open section of the survey raised some interesting questions about why and how parents do or do not monitor. It was therefore considered important to seek more granular information about this via the interviews.

Figure 56 – Choose the rules that apply for your children (DCE survey, Q14)



33. Richardson J. and Samara V. (2021). "Smartbus: tackling online safety and wellbeing in the time of Covid. Lessons learned and recommendations for the future", available at https://bit.ly/3siWdPj.

Interviewees indicate that the way they monitor their children online is very much age-dependent (Figure 56). Parents of younger children prefer to accompany them online at the beginning, and confirm that they closely monitor screen time and forbid the uploading of information. This is in line with the survey findings for rules parents set for children below age 5.

Some parents feel strongly about the need to monitor their children's online activities. One parent told an interviewer: "Yes, I think monitoring my children is important. No matter how much I guide them, I control them to take precautions against dangers in the virtual environment. They may not yet predict where the damage will come from and may rely on [the credibility of] digital messages right away." Another parent stated: "I use special programs to keep track of children's access to age-appropriate sites and accurate game downloads. Of course, they object to this, but we make reasonable explanations. I want his brother to be a role model in the problems I have with my little son."

Monitoring is one of a panoply of strategies parents use to guide their children's activities online and, according to interviewees, can range from discussions about online activities and friends to mechanically regulating the time children spend and where they go, with many shades of control in between. Concern for personal development is a priority for many parents, and that children continue to interact and empathise with others as real people, and not in a unidimensional, digital way. Trust is a notion that came up frequently in the interviews, with a number of parents wondering aloud how they can bring their children up to grasp the full meaning of the word "trust" when they encounter so many negative examples and unhealthy influences online.

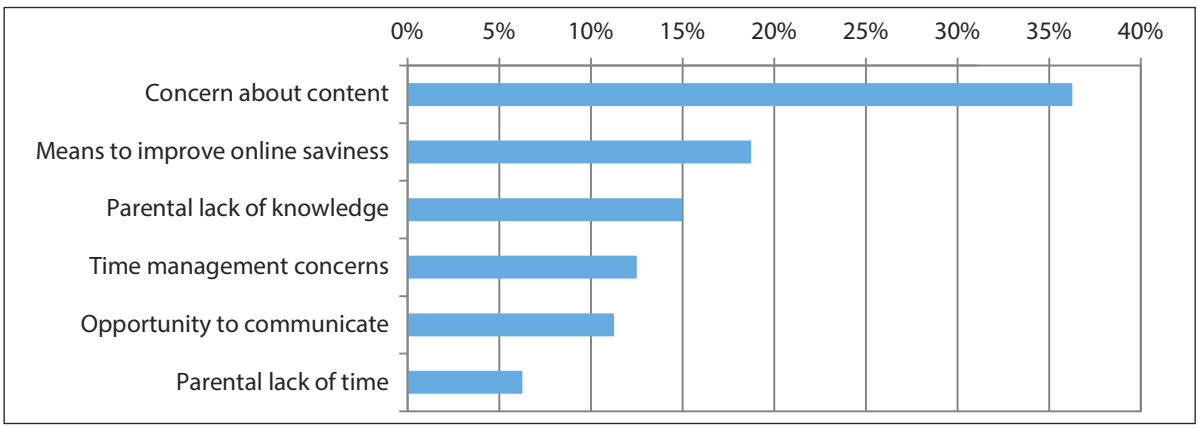
> *I sit regularly with my child to discuss what he is doing and ask him to show me some of it.*
>
> Mother of a 13-year-old boy, Iceland

For some parents, monitoring their children's online activities enables them to spot the teachable moments when their guidance will have most impact (Figure 57). One parent told the interviewer: "I want to explain every time what he should and should not see, to reveal the distortion in something he has seen in order to make him understand what is right or wrong (fake news, Country Balls videos); to check that what he sees is indeed true and has scientific proof, that he pays attention to what he expresses online." Parents are aware that technology can be a conversation starter: "I find it really boring all this technology talk, but I fake interest in this so I can get closer to my children."

Some parents feel that monitoring helps them find out things such as whether their children really know how to do online research. Online gaming is another worry that leads parents to monitor. They feel that children spend too much time gaming, because of the prevalence of fighting and violence in war games and/or the contact risk between gamers. Parents fear that their children may fall victim to bullying or sexual predators, and therefore worry about the people they may meet online. One parent stated during the interview: "The biggest challenge is keeping children safe! The internet and darknet facilitate bullying, grooming, sales of illegal substances, recruiting to extremist organisations, etc." Others fear their children may be taken in by electronic scams through e-shops, become addicted, or be exposed in public because of the things they say or do.

A few parents say they are too busy to think about monitoring, and are struggling with the whole issue of their children's use of the internet. One parent complains: "Lack of time. Fatigue. Lack of motivation with this type of teaching." For others, the age of their children or family tensions make it difficult: "No time to talk and surf together. Communication difficulties with adolescents, (lack of) unity between father and mother." Peer pressure is frequently raised by parents as considerably complicating the challenge. It is difficult to set limits and expectations for teenage children, parents tell us, when their peers are allowed to do otherwise. Peer pressure plays out in many ways, such as the age children get their first mobile phone, the games they are allowed to play and screen time. It creates tensions in families that parents have difficulty overcoming.

Figure 57 – Reasons affecting monitoring decisions



Around 15% of interviewees said they opted out when it came to monitoring because of their lack of knowledge about digital technology. This is concerning, but also of specific interest to the Council of Europe's digital citizenship team because it highlights areas where parents need tools and knowledge. Comments from two families clearly outline the urgent need for support:

- "Monitoring requires information and experts for all risks. Children listen better to experts. I have no knowledge of what the biggest threats are."(Mother of a 17- year-old girl, Greece)
- "I lack information about apps that can help me monitor my children's use of digital." (Mother of a 10- and 13-year-old girl, Romania)

> *We will always be one step behind our children, so we must try to build a relationship of trust with them.*
>
> Mother of a 13-year-old daughter, Greece

Unfortunately, by placing the focus on technology, parents often believe themselves incapable of guiding their children's online activities. They feel that "children and parents live in different worlds", and they cannot keep up with new versions of software and modes of communication. Although some parents accept this philosophically, stating things like "we will always be one step behind our children, so we must try to build a relationship of trust with them", the granular information they shared in the interviews shed light on ways they could be supported. Most parents want to be involved in helping their children master the skills that will enable them to become competent, responsible digital citizens, but do not always know how.

Choosing the most appropriate parental control tools for the family does not appear to be a simple matter. A couple of families shared their experience:

- "We use parental control tools. It was hard to choose the best and the most suitable one. At first children were not happy about the control program, but now they have got used to it." (Father of 14-year-old girl, Latvia)
- "Videos are more difficult to monitor than games since these have rules and videos do not." (Mother of 11-year-old girl, Czech Republic)
- "We use (Google) family links to monitor their activity." (Mother of 11-year-old boy, Iceland)

> *There is such rapid change that it is difficult to keep up and understand how they work and what the security implications may be.*
>
> Father of a 12-year-old boy, Spain

Another parent especially concerned about chats "for obvious reasons" is still deciding: "I am thinking of investing in parental control tools. I am concerned about browsing safely on the internet."

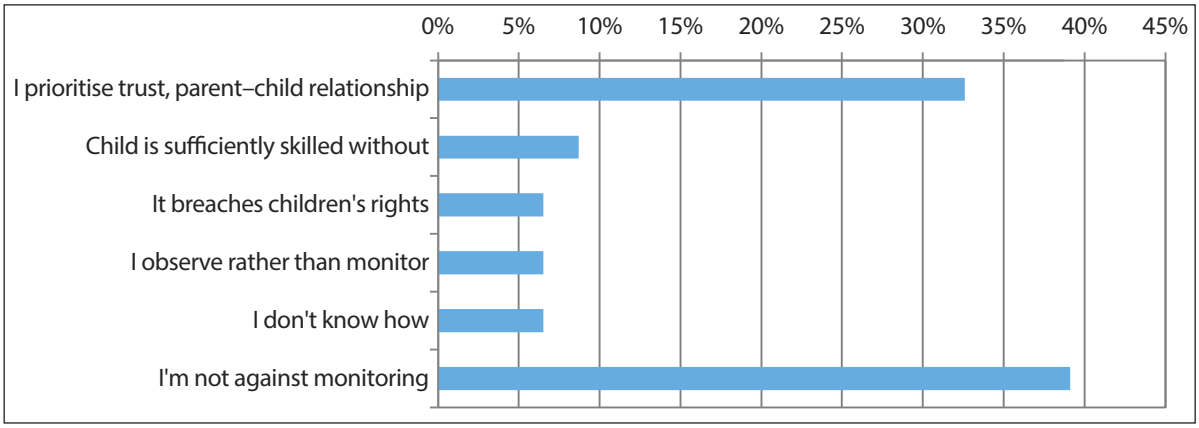
The older the child, the more difficult parents find it to monitor their activities while respecting their freedom of expression and right to privacy. As one parent stated during the interviews: "I do not want my child to think that I am controlling her." Another parent complained: "It is awkward to monitor a teen boy's business online."

The way a French couple, parents of two teenage girls, described their approach was echoed by several other parents during the interviews: "We no longer monitor what our children do online because, since their earliest childhood, we have been raising their awareness about things like the time they spend online, the importance of privacy, and not posting images of other people without permission. They know we can ask to see their recent posts at any time, and they have to have a good reason if they don't want to show us."

11.4. To monitor or not to monitor, that is the question

The second interview question on monitoring children's use of digital technology was aimed at understanding why parents choose not to monitor. Besides understanding the challenges parents face when they choose to monitor their children's online activity, it is also important to be aware of the reasons that lead certain parents to recommend against monitoring. Forty-six parents gave an answer to this particular question, of which 28 were reasons for not monitoring and 18 highlighted the importance of monitoring.

Figure 58 – Parents' approach to monitoring



Overall, interviewees revealed many different reasons that influence decisions about monitoring, but few parents choose to monitor because they wish to control their children or spy on their online activities or contacts. Some see it as a means of spotting the right moment to broach sensitive topics they are concerned about with their children. Many monitor because they are generally concerned about things like technological dependency, online identity and digital footprint. They are worried about the content their children may be exposed to, and their reaction to the aggression they encounter online.

Often parents against monitoring argue that it is better to focus on building family relationships and trust instead. From a consultation with 38 parents conducted by a parent association in Hungary, we were told: "Monitoring undermines the necessary trust between child and parent. Instead, there needs to be a family environment that encourages discussion and where children are encouraged to share." A mother of a 17-year-old girl in Greece said: "I don't want my daughter to be afraid of me." Several other parents said they trusted their children and therefore did not need to monitor what they were doing online, while others said that they taught their children how to use digital technology properly instead of monitoring their online activity all the time. A mother of a 15-year-old in Liechtenstein said that she strives to develop her son's capacity for self-discipline instead.

Three parents interviewed said they systematically avoided monitoring because they considered that it violates children's fundamental rights to privacy and individuality. Another three parents preferred to use the term "observe" rather than monitor, which enables them to talk with their children at the slightest hint of a problem. Four parents (9% of parents who gave reasons for not monitoring) said that their children were skilled enough to understand what was right or wrong, and knew how to protect themselves (Figure 58). One parent said: "I would not control my child because she has training/digital skills/she has a shield. I would never enter the control process" (mother of a 17-year-old girl in Greece).

The creation of a family environment where the children feel secure and loved is indeed a very important factor. Nevertheless, this does not need to exclude monitoring. Parents simply need to explain to their children that they want to see what they are doing online because they love them and want to protect them, making sure they get the best out of opportunities on the internet and avoid the pitfalls. Even if children are self-disciplined or if parents consider they know how to use technology properly, they can get into unpleasant situations online – even adults do! Children cannot be fully aware of all the risks involved, and need help from parents until they become very experienced. Children need to be aware that they have a right to be protected, and that it is the responsibility of the parent to provide this protection.

Another three parents said that they did not monitor because they were not sufficiently skilled to be able to do this, did not know how to use the special apps required to do it, or did not know how security apps work. One mother in the 46-60 age bracket with a teenage child informed the interviewer that she did not want to know.

Although the question in the interview specifically addressed parents who did not wish to monitor, 18 parents (39% of the answers) responded that they were not against monitoring their children's use of digital technology. One parent found it difficult to imagine why any parent would not want to check what their children were up to online, and another pointed out: "Control is absolutely necessary. Unfortunately, parents who do not choose to control will surely face the negativities of the digital world one day." Several parents thought that monitoring was important, and advised other parents not to leave their children unattended online. Another added: "Parents should strictly monitor their children, provided that they respect their individual space." Finally, a school leader, a Portuguese father of four, two of them teenagers, said: "My opinion is that we should monitor young learners until age 18 for many reasons. Safety, information, interest … At each age the extent and the volume should be differentiated."

Chapter 12

Digital citizenship – the parents' perspective

12.1. A brief overview and recommendations

"Digital citizenship" is a vague term for most parents, as was already confirmed through focus groups conducted with parents in five different European countries back in 2019. Interviewers were therefore armed with the following short description to be read to any parent unsure about what digital citizenship actually means.

"Digital citizens know how to use digital technology sensibly, and how to behave online. They know how to protect their own rights and information, and are careful with the rights of the people they communicate and interact with online."

This section of the interview began with parents giving five or six words that came to mind when they thought of what a digital citizen should be. Discussion then moved on to things that children needed to learn to become active digital citizens, and where and how such things should be learned. Not unexpectedly, a sharp dichotomy existed between what parents expected of the school and how they saw their own role in the home. A considerable number put much of the responsibility onto the school, despite being fully aware that, until remote schooling was forced upon them, few schools used digital technology on a daily basis.

Interviewees had explicit ideas on the needs of young digital citizens, yet overlooked an important domain of activity that all internet users need to take into account on a daily basis: consumer awareness. They also did not appear to be aware of the far-reaching impact of creativity in the way children are able to solve problems, think critically, innovate and generally develop a flexible world view that will help them make the most of opportunities and overcome adversity.

A number of recommendations can be drawn from the discussions on digital citizenship.

- The concept needs to be promoted more broadly in simple terms and with concrete examples that parents can identify with, to increase their understanding of its relevance to their children both in terms of their well-being and their future.
- Public awareness of the very broad role that creativity plays in learning and being should be enhanced, for example by publishing a report on good practices being implemented by schools and youth groups in this area, and/or by publishing digital citizenship activities that will foster creativity.
- Greater public awareness is needed of the broad array of activities and individual responsibilities encompassed by the term "consumer awareness". As artificial intelligence and machine learning become increasingly prevalent in our lives, citizens must be able to protect their rights or succumb to having their choices and rights taken over by the technology that surrounds them.

12.2. Describing a digital citizen

Parents describe a digital citizen as being a person who can effectively use technology and the internet to learn, educate, produce, disseminate, shop, get news, share, etc. One parent stated, though not exactly in the five words requested by the interviewer: "A citizen that knows what digital technology is, how to use certain digital technologies, and for what purpose. Everything has a plus and minus. If you place too much focus on the minuses you restrict evolution."

As can be seen in the word cloud in Figure 59, all four areas in the Council of Europe's description of key competences required by digital citizens are covered in the ideas put forward by parents. These are: values, attitudes, skills, and knowledge and critical understanding.

Figure 59 – What words come to mind when you think of a digital citizen?

Interviewees also added enough interesting observations to fill a rule book on "netiquette". For example, we learned that, as a digital citizen:

- you become a journalist;
- you get greater insight into impact;
- a digital citizen can step back to analyse;
- you are the filter;
- people have to be aware that chain mails waste time and saturate the internet network;
- be careful about using "Reply to all";
- do not make all e-mail addresses visible when you are sending a mail to several people;
- be careful what you open, when confirming requests for friendship online.

Some interviewees took the opportunity to share good and bad practice examples to illustrate digital citizenship. In Norway, for example "there has recently been considerable focus on digital competences;[34] a new learning plan is to be rolled out in schools this year, one of the main themes of which is 'democracy and citizenship'". A teacher-interviewee from Romania shared her thoughts: "I knew about digital before the pandemic. I know about what to do online with human rights and I respect my students' rights online in lessons or projects. Some parents in my daughter's school make films of their kids and share them on WhatsApp groups. I don't think it's very smart."

12.3. What parents suggest their children learn to be responsible digital citizens

Although parents' understanding of the concept of digital citizenship was somewhat vague, they had many ideas and suggestions when asked what children need to learn to become responsible digital citizens, as well as where and how should they be learning these things.

What to learn

Suggestions covered a total of 221 topics, including all except one of the 10 domains defined by the Council of Europe to encompass all the activities citizens carry out online (Figure 60). Consumer awareness was the exception. Although it is a crucial domain in the daily lives of most people, as we are consumers in many of our activities including accessing the internet, parents did not generally consider it as part of digital citizenship. This is an interesting finding that needs to be taken into account in future DCE activities and when creating resources for parents.

34. Digital competence education in Norway: www.udir.no/in-english/professional-digital-competence-framework-for-teachers/.

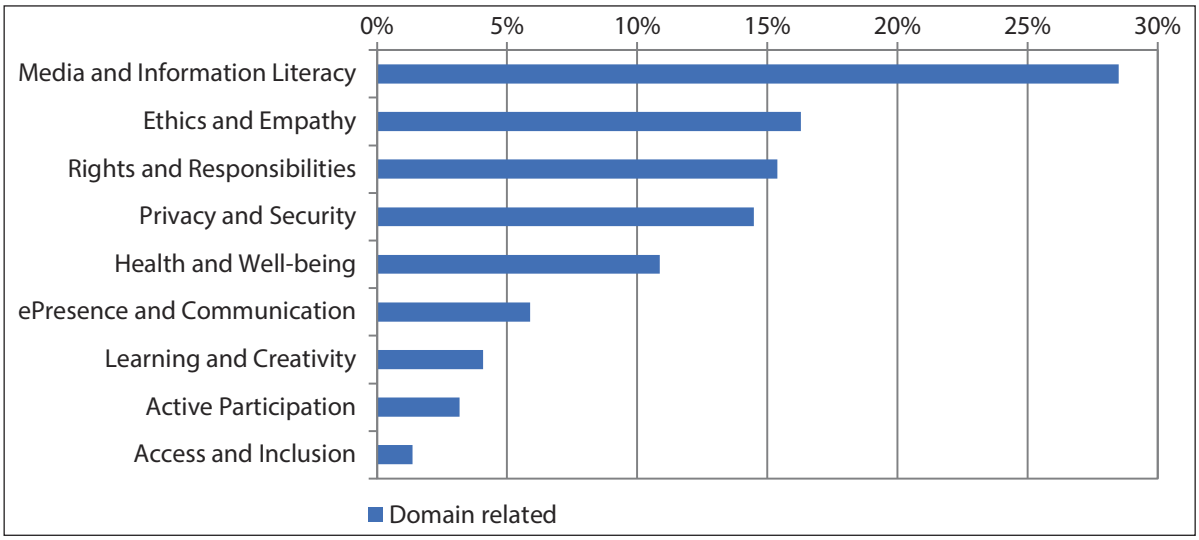
Sixty-three parents (29% of the total 221 suggestions put forward on this topic) placed **Media and Information Literacy** at the top of their list of things young digital citizens need to learn. Most parents underlined the importance of children developing the basic skills that will enable them to become effective problem solvers, able to avoid unpleasant situations and select quality and trustworthy content, as well as filter out what is fake. They also highlighted the importance of critical thinking and responsible use of one's own data. One parent suggested that it would be very helpful for children "if the people they follow, YouTubers, influencers, made a campaign for the 'good' use of technologies showing proactive attitudes". The interviewees' view of media and information literacy was rather encouraging, compared to the results from the DCE survey where just 1 in 3 parents reported discussing critical thinking with their children, and cross-checking and evaluating content they read in terms of reliability, truth and accuracy.[35]

Ethics and Empathy came second in parents' priorities, with 36 of the total interviewees underlining this as a necessary competence for their children (16% of the total). It seems that the Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted certain values that had been left aside in the rush of everyday life. Parents underlined how important it is for children to learn to respect themselves and others, to respect diversity and equity, and to show mutual respect, empathy and solidarity. Moral values was a topic that consistently came up when parents were giving key words to describe digital citizenship. For parents, this means children being able to express views positively and politely without hurting others and being prudent when communicating online.

> *Children must know how to say "no" when they find something unacceptable.*
>
> Father of 6- and 8-year-old children, Turkey

Rights and Responsibilities took third place, with 34 interviewees (15% of the responses) citing this as being something that children need to learn about and especially, "applying all the rules that apply in the 'real' world" (this ranked second in importance in the DCE survey). Several parents mentioned that children need to know how and where they can turn to report problems, and how their parents can help them in such situations. One parent highlighted the importance of empowering children to "be able to say 'no' when they don't want to".

Figure 60 – What digital citizens must learn



Privacy and Security was mentioned by 32 interviewees (14% of responses). They mainly highlighted: respecting the privacy of all, personal data and identity protection, getting to know the signs of cybercrime, and being vigilant to invitations from/not engaging with strangers online. In the DCE survey, 67% of parents said the top discussion theme in their family was knowing how to protect one's own privacy and the privacy of others; 64% chose this as the principal topic they would like to receive information about.[36]

For 24 interviewees (11% of responses), **Health and Well-being** were topics that should be included when children learn digital citizenship competences. Many responses related to a healthy balance between online and offline activities as well as the need for children to be alert to any type of bullying or intimidation, hate speech or harm online, and be able to block undesirable contacts. In the DCE survey, 43% of parents mentioned

35. Figures 19 and 20 and Appendix III – Q15.
36. Appendix III – Q15 and Q22.

ways to limit the time children spend online as a topic they would like to receive information about, and more than 54% said they needed information about what to do in the case of bullying.[37]

ePresence and Communications was a topic that needed more attention for 13 interviewees (6% of responses). This particularly included issues of online image and reputation, digital footprint, understanding the difference between face-to-face and online communication, knowing the implications that being (sharing) online may have, interaction with people online and knowing how to choose friends wisely, both online and offline. This corroborated findings from the DCE survey, where just 1 in 3 parents said they speak to their children about how to build and maintain a positive image and reputation. In the survey, parents said they would like to receive information on both digital footprint and creating a good online reputation.

Only nine interviewees mentioned **Learning and Creativity**, yet these are cornerstones for digital citizenship. It seems that more focus must be placed on helping parents understand the importance of children being able to use technology creatively, and as a means of learning. Only two parents brought up the topic of copyright, namely respecting the work of others. Findings from the DCE survey showed that just 9% of parents talked to their children about content creation, and 22% about respecting the creative work of others online.[38] Nevertheless, 20% of respondents said they would like to receive information to help them better understand copyright.

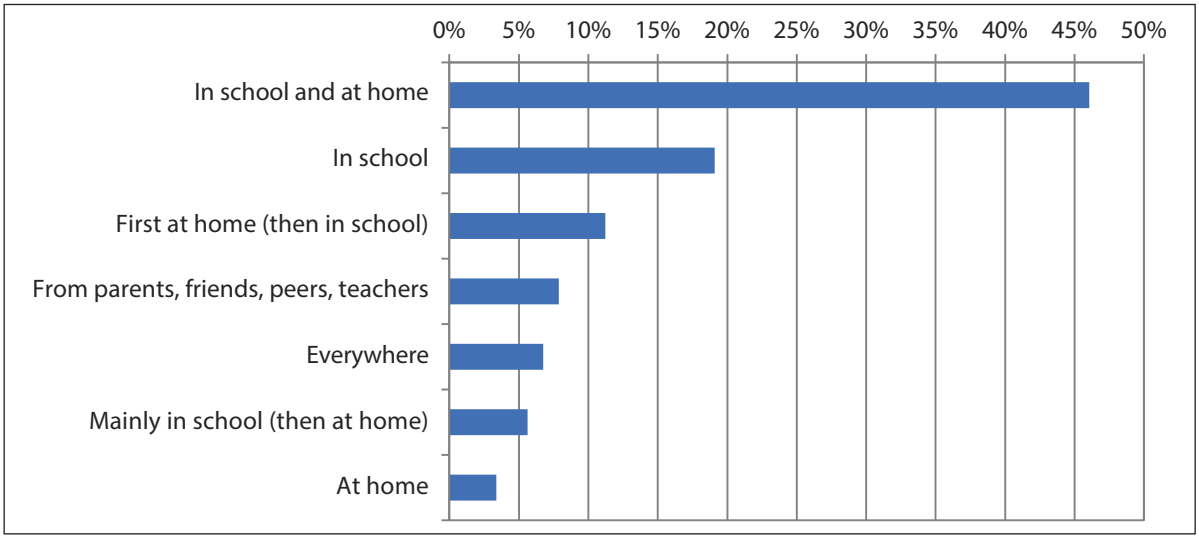
Few parents seemed very concerned about **Active Participation** (3%) or **Access and Inclusion** (1%), quite possibly because many parents take them as a given when thinking of their own children's needs. However, interviewees did point out that children need to experience active citizenship early, learn to share and co-operate, and understand why active participation is important. Equal accessibility was accepted as being necessary to ensure equal rights for all, but was apparently not seen as an issue that needs to be discussed with children in further depth.

12.4. Where and how should digital citizenship education take place?

Only one response was recorded per interviewee on this question, and almost half (46%) say that children should be learning to become digital citizens both "in school and at home", recognising the role of both – 19% of the responses indicate that children should learn to master the required competences only at school and 3% only at home. Another 11% consider that home and school have a complementary role, with digital citizenship education beginning in the home; 8% believe that digital citizenship is something that is learned from parents, friends, peers and teachers; and 7% respond that it should be learned "everywhere". For 6%, school should take the lead role, and children should get added support from home (Figure 61a).

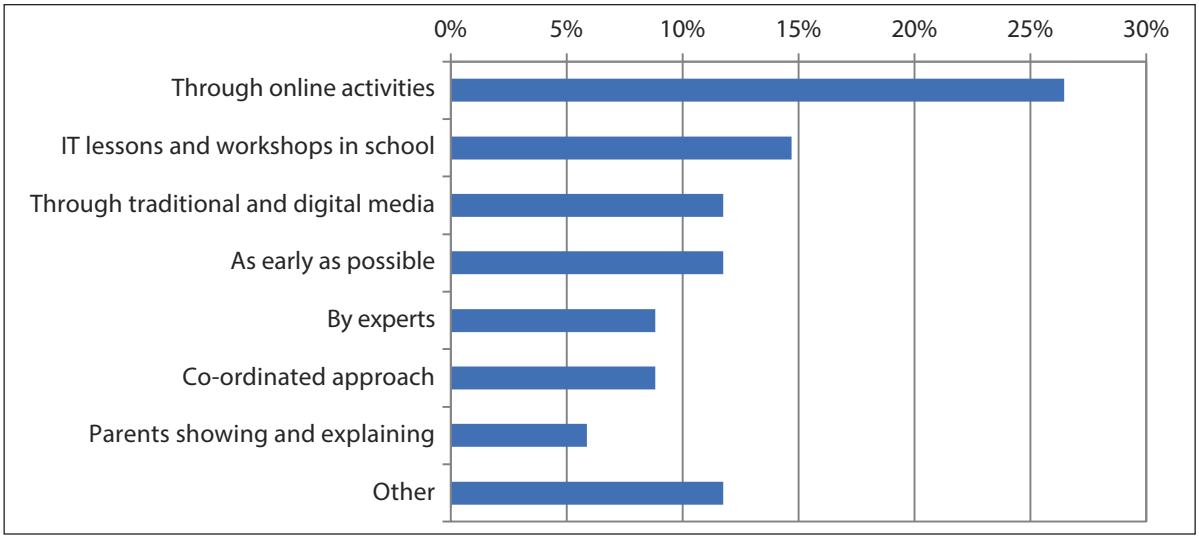
Figure 61 – Where and how children should master digital citizenship competences

a. Where



37. Figure 35 and Appendix III – Q22.
38. Figures 19 and 20 and Appendix III – Q15.

b. How



Thirty-four interviewees put forward a range of ideas about how children can best learn to be digital citizens. A quarter of these suggested that the ideal way was to have children do online activities that enable them to live digital citizenship rather than try to learn it. Another five parents suggested that schools should run IT lessons and workshops all year round as an integral part of the school curriculum, so that children do not forget the acquired knowledge. One parent said digital citizenship was something that children should be given the opportunity to practise across all subject areas, and that their teachers should set positive examples. Four interviewees wanted to see children learn such competences through both traditional and digital media, and another four underlined the need to begin digital citizenship education early, or at least as early as possible. Three parents stated that the topic should be taught by experts and highly qualified staff (parents, teachers, social workers, psychologists, youth club facilitators) or by trained peers, and a similar number pointed out that helping children become digital citizens requires a unified approach, for example through "a body that will co-ordinate parents and teachers, so that they don't cancel out each other's efforts". Two mothers from southern Europe (Portugal and Cyprus) with teenage children believed that "parents need to show (their children) the good and the bad side of the internet, and talk about dangers and opportunities. Grandparents need to be informed as well since they are very often in charge of looking after children nowadays." Finally, a few people proposed that children receive training from people they admire or role models they follow, within a variety of formal and informal activities (Figure 61b).

> *The school has a big responsibility, but the family is the place where the citizens are raised.*
>
> Mother of a 11-year-old girl, Georgia

Chapter 13

It takes a community to raise a digital citizen

13.1. Working together to educate young digital citizens

Bringing up children in a society that is heavily reliant on digital technology appears to be a somewhat daunting task for many parents. The broad variety of findings and information recorded from this section of the interview illustrated the huge range of challenges that parents of young digital citizens face, and the many different ways these can be addressed. Interviewees were keen to share the knowledge and insights they have gathered through parenthood, and indeed their input as described in the following pages could provide the basis for a much-needed follow-up guide to the "Easy steps" brochure published by the Council of Europe in 2020.[39]

When it comes to problem solving around technology or child welfare, the internet appears to be the place to go for many families. This raises several issues that need to be carefully studied before it is too late. Previously family and friends were the prime source of support for young parents, and the transmission of values and attitudes across families and communities was an integral part of this learning process. When people turn to the internet to find answers on topics such as digital citizenship, the information they find is not necessarily true or good advice, and the transmission of values is generally lost.

While the internet is undoubtedly a fine example of peer learning and just-in-time troubleshooting on the broadest scale imaginable, parents are seemingly aware of its downfalls in terms of credibility and nuance. In the following chapter they offer each other a wealth of advice and guidance, underlining gaps that parent associations and institutions such as the Council of Europe could fill to:

- enable parents to provide each other with face-to-face support and consult experts on issues they are facing in a user-friendly environment;
- compile a follow-up guide to "Easy steps to help your child become a digital citizen" with information customised to respond to parents' biggest challenges;
- promote equal opportunities among families by making information available in all European languages;
- work with industry to find a means of helping parents locate the most credible tutorials and websites, possibly through some form of filtering or certification.

13.2. Advice and guidance that parents offer each other

Towards the end of the interview, parents were asked to give three pieces of advice they have picked up that could be useful to other parents facing similar issues. The answers are grouped into three categories: things parents themselves should do (157 ideas), things parents should discuss with their children (61 topics), and things that should be done by or at school (six suggestions in total). The ideas put forward address many of the competences defined by the Council of Europe as being necessary for democratic citizenship (Figure 37). Each of the four areas of competences are covered: values, attitudes, skills, and knowledge and critical understanding.[40] Responses in the first two categories are shown in Figures 62 and 63.[41]

39. Richardson J. and Samara V. (2020), "Easy steps to help your child become a digital citizen", available at: https://rm.coe.int/easy-steps-to-help-your-child-become-a-digital-citizen/16809e2d1d.
40. *Digital citizenship education handbook*, the 20 competences for democratic culture, page 12, available at https://rm.coe.int/168093586f.
41. The figures present the responses given by at least two parents.

Things parents should do

The best thing that parents can do for their children, according to 25 interviewees (28% of responses), was to help them become digitally literate and set an example as role models (Figure 62). To do this, parents need to overcome their own digital illiteracy.

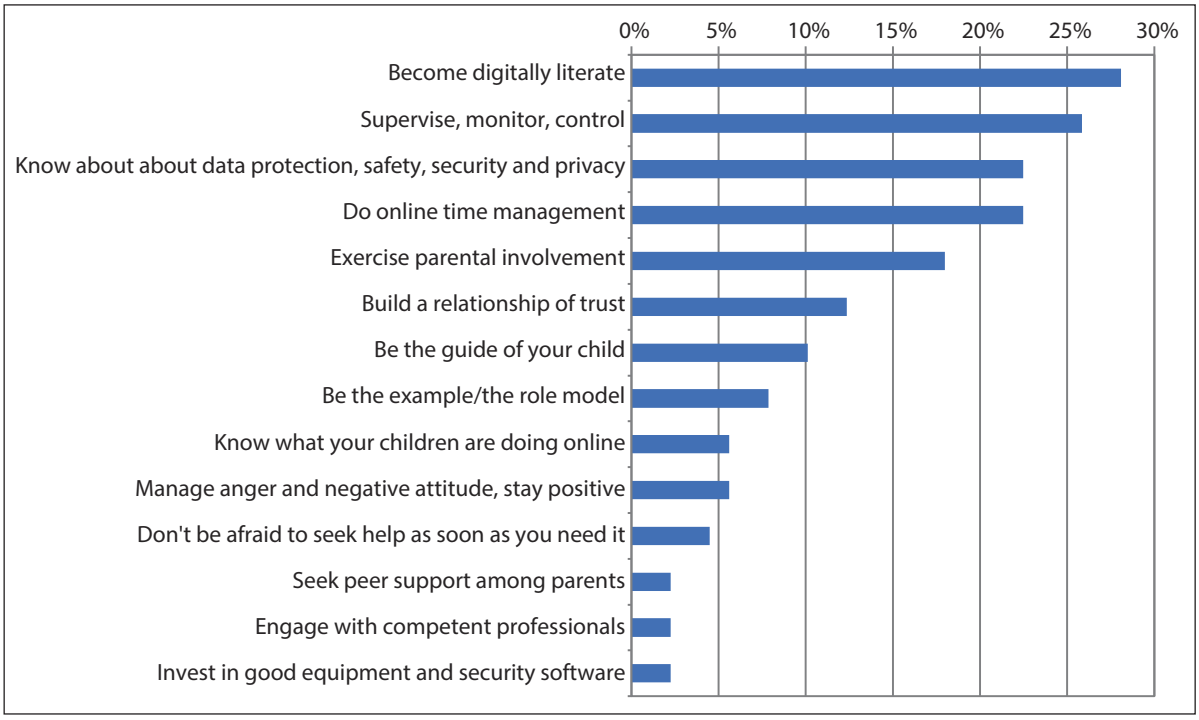
The solution "supervise, monitor, control" was considered best by 1 in 4 parents. They urged parents to observe what their children are doing both on- and offline, to be able to identify any behavioural changes or other signs of problems, and make sure their children are doing things that are age appropriate. Parents should be ready to explore the internet, filter the websites, games and apps their children may use, and monitor their activity, explaining why it is so important.

The third most popular suggestion from 20 interviewees (22% of responses) was that parents improve their knowledge on data protection, safety, security, privacy and time management. To protect their children online, parents need to be able to discuss things like managing personal data and safeguarding identity and data. They should not be afraid to set time limits, ensure that their children balance online and offline activities, and that they take time out from digital media to keep up their creativity.

Sixteen interviewees (18% of interviewees) thought that parental involvement was the best way to help children develop citizenship competences. Parents should begin exploring the web and sharing activities while their children are still young, listening to what they have to say, showing them the advantages of the internet, talking about the dangers, and explaining why digital literacy is useful. Five parents reminded their peers that knowing what children are doing online and the things they are excited about is a good way to share in their interests. By getting children to explore digital technologies with them, they can learn many things from them. They can therefore become better informed about the digital world their children live in and the challenges and opportunities they encounter.

Building a relationship of trust was, for 11 interviewees, a good way to promote digital citizenship (12%). But to do this, parents should themselves be trustworthy, have a close relationship with their children and educate them to become autonomous. Nine parents pointed out that, while trust and parental involvement is important, parents also need to be able to guide their children. Seven parents talked about the importance of parents being role models and being there to support their children without scolding or judging them. Forbidding or punishing is not the answer; children learn from the example parents set as digital citizens themselves.

Figure 62 – Things parents should do to help children become digital citizens



Five parents stressed the importance of anger management and avoiding negative attitudes; their advice was to stay positive and not be prohibitive. Another four parents talked about not being afraid to seek help as soon as it is needed.

Seeking peer support among parents, engaging with competent professionals, and investing in good equipment and security software were all proposed twice each. Others advised that parents learn to adapt to new situations and challenges, set goals and strive to achieve them, talk with other parents to give themselves points of comparison, and act against inappropriate content and abusive behaviour online.

Things parents should discuss with their children

Out of the 58 topics interviewees suggested should be discussed with children, 14 parents agreed that information and digital literacy should top the list (Figure 63). For parents, information and digital literacy includes being able to discern fake news, find age-appropriate quality and reliable content, use critical thinking, check different sources to verify information, and only share information from valid sources.

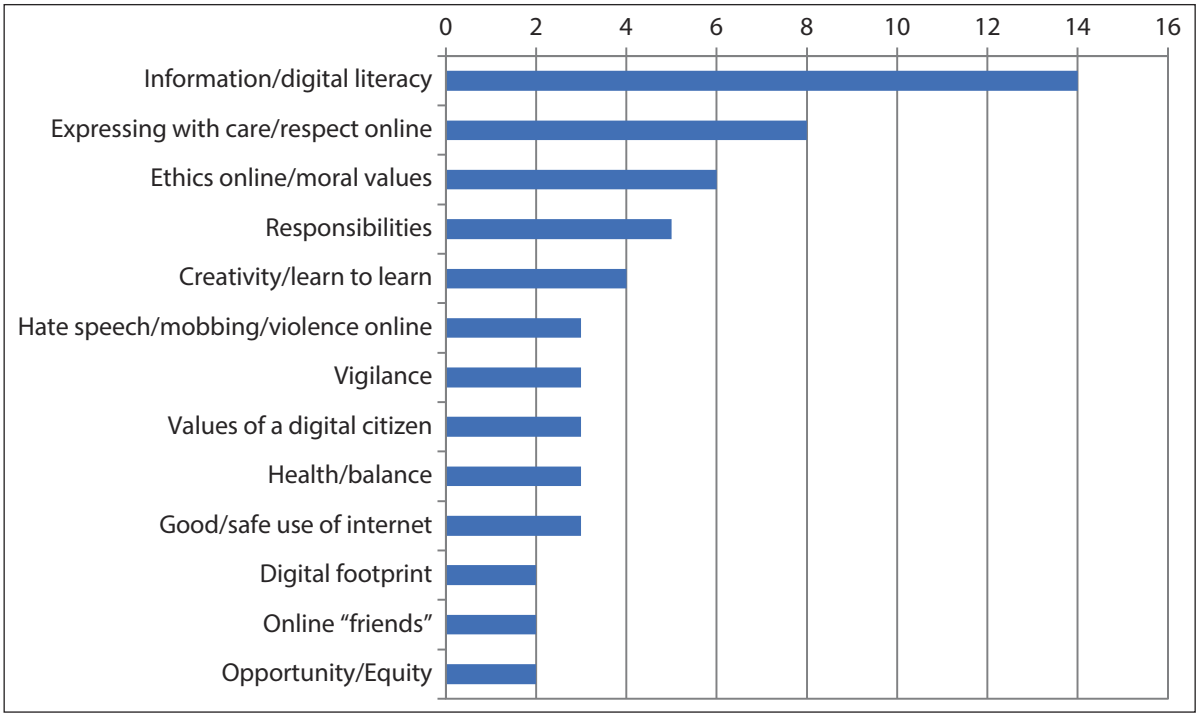
Eight interviewees think it important that children learn to express themselves carefully, politely and respectfully online, and a further six that children need to be reminded regularly of moral values and ethics, and the importance of self-respect.

"Know your responsibilities on the internet" was the advice given by five interviewees, with one parent specifically underlining the importance of getting children to understand their responsibilities when posting content on social media.

Creativity was a topic that four parents thought should be discussed with children. For them, it was up to parents to awaken their child's capacity to learn creatively, and they believed that it would help to substitute games and videos with other more creative activities. One parent said that children need to be encouraged to adopt "learning to learn" strategies.

Three parents talked about hate speech, bullying and violence online, and about teaching children vigilance and the overall values that digital citizens need. Another three advised parents to speak with their children about finding a balance between on- and offline activities, using the internet safely, and consciously protecting health and personal data. Digital footprints, "friends", opportunities and equality, are other topics each cited by two interviewees.

Figure 63 – Things parents should discuss with their children (number of parents indicating each)



Finally, as seen in the previous section of this report, many parents believe that the school has a major role to play in preparing children for their life as digital citizens. Six parents talked about the school in the advice they gave. They felt that schools need to rethink their role, run digital citizenship programmes for children and teachers, and train teachers so that they can inform and "coach" parents. Schools should work on strengthening their contact and that of IT teachers with parents, encouraging parents to show greater interest in what their children are doing at school.

13.3. Troubleshooting – mutual support to solve common digital issues

Parents expect their children to turn to them whenever they encounter a problem online, but where do parents turn to for help? More than two thirds of interviewees had interesting troubleshooting ideas and good practices they were happy to share (Figure 64).

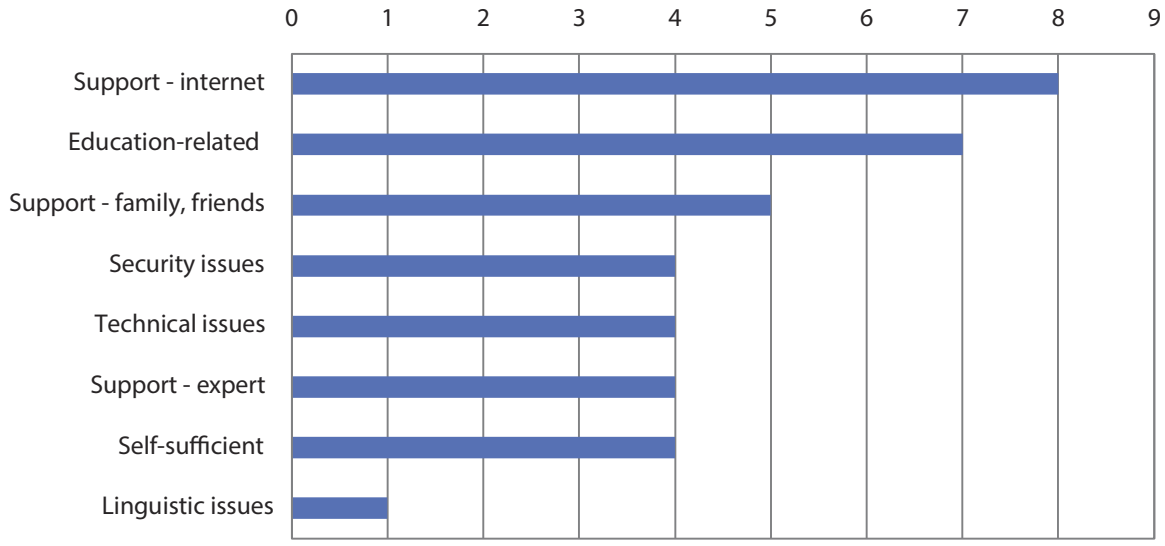
Four of them felt that self-sufficiency was the answer, and that this could be learned in several ways including through peer support. As one parent told an interviewer: "At first, we got support for the use of digital technology. Then there was no need." Another stated: "Now I'm very familiar with technology and able to do most things by myself."

Once families have mastered the tools, it seems they are also the ones who troubleshoot for people around them. A father of two teenage girls in France recounted his experience to the interviewer: "I am an IT engineer and often get requests from friends and colleagues about screen messages, also about how to repair problems with the computer without losing data."

Family and friends appear to be a main port of call for parents struggling with technical issues as well as a source of advice in general, as seen in the earlier pages of this chapter. One interviewee spoke about difficulties encountered with remote schooling: "I didn't know how to use distance learning tools. I learned to use them from my friend. We need to learn from someone who knows the tools of digital technology and improve ourselves."

Although family and friends still prove to be an invaluable source of support, and a means of transmitting values and attitudes across families and communities, they have to a large extent been replaced by the internet. The internet was mentioned many times as a source of support and advice for families. One parent told an interviewer: "If I ever come across a problem, it is mostly technical. Either the device is not working properly or the software. I usually try and find a solution by googling it – especially if there is an error code or error message – to see if anyone else has the answer." Several interviewees mentioned YouTube tutorials as being particularly helpful: "I do research on the internet and watch related videos while solving the problems I have experienced." Another interviewee recounted using the internet to solve a different type of problem altogether: "During the pandemic-red situation I helped a relative to find one dentist to provide help for a big tooth inflammation."

Figure 64 – Issues encountered and source of support (number of parents indicating each)



A few interviewees pointed to specific websites that proved particularly useful to them when a problem arose, or when they needed help choosing resources for their children. One parent informed the interviewer: "I haven't reached out for help, but someone advised me to look for movies, games and more on commonsensemedia.org to help me in navigating the material I allow my kids to use. That has really paid off." A Swedish parent offered more local advice: "The most common situation is bullying and in a severe form, even blackmailing. My recommendations are to contact the Swedish Media Council's website, the school headmaster, file a police report, or file a report with the child and student ombudsman at https://beo.skolinspektionen.se/lamna-uppgifter/."

Parent associations were cited by several interviewees as being a source of expert help, and a place where parents can discuss all sorts of issues from hate speech, bullying and data protection, to children's rights (and

parents' rights!). One initiative cited, DigitalNursery, has been developed by a parent organisation on Facebook and was particularly appreciated by parents struggling to bridge the gap during remote schooling. The platform provides small children with streamed versions of lessons, and answers queries from parents seeking advice on things such as what young children should and should not watch on the internet and which games parents can safely download for them. Some parents turn to the platform for reassurance more than advice because they are terrified by the media coverage of online dangers.

Other parents talked to their interviewer about things that had especially bothered them in the past, and the solutions they had found. One example was a game that the parent discovered her child had been playing: "In 2018 we had to take the computer away temporarily as it had a negative effect on our son's mental well-being. He was playing a game that I think is really bad. We took the computer away for a few days and banned the game for several months." Overall, only one parent talked about having reached out for professional help: "My youngest child (6 years old) was suffering from anxiety, and we had a consultation with a psychologist."

In all, 10% of parents recounted issues they had grappled with related to their children's education. In most cases, it was their children's class teachers who had helped the family out, for example, by helping them understand how to use the digital tools necessary for their child's schooling. Family organisations, on the other hand, report that some children have been unfairly punished by schools for not being able to do the work required of them due to the lack of technology available at home. Overall, positive stories from parents far outshone the negative ones.

- "I didn't know how to use G Suite for Education, but my colleagues helped me and my children. We had a meeting at school and my colleague showed us how it works. I was a good learner, then I could teach my children how to use Google Classroom, Meet and other educational apps." (Mother of a 10- and 13-year-old girl, Romania)
- "We lacked experience in using distance education programmes. But we got used to it over time. We learned from the videos on DigitalMisaki."[42] (Mother of two 8-year-old children, Turkey)

Other Turkish interviewees made similarly positive comments about this platform: "We got help from the videos posted on the DigitalMisaki YouTube channel. Both teachers and children prepared content for this channel. It enabled our children to both socialise and learn to use technology. In this way, I both got help and helped."

Language came up several times as an insurmountable problem for some parents. Technical issues too are among the problems cited in this section of the interview, most of them related to remote schooling. Some parents had to restart old computers to have enough devices for everyone; others had to find ways to improve their internet connection. Parents in rural Ireland said they encountered problems for which there was no solution, since the very poor broadband in both homes and schools cost families and school staff a lot of time and frustration.

It is important to understand the problems parents face with technology since, as one parent pointed out, "for digital citizenship, you need the digital first! We therefore have to do something about equipping all families and all children."

13.4. Further ideas to nurture innovation

The closing remarks from parents participating in the digital citizenship parent interviews were enlightening and encouraging. They also lead into the final chapter of this report, which looks at the way forward, and the role the Council of Europe can play. There are several key take aways.

Children, from the earliest age, must learn to navigate the digital world, and be guided on how to use all sorts of media, recognising the dangers and finding the right path through them. Children naturally want to share, and are inspired by each other, and adults should help them to do this in a positive way. Being a digital citizen also means respecting age limits and respecting each other as well as not putting pressure on others to go beyond reasonable limits. It means understanding the importance of physical exercise and balance, building self-esteem, and being able to concentrate and learn. These qualities will help children cope with the many challenges they will encounter.

Parenting provides children with their first guidance as they step into the world and are the key to education about everything. They have to balance building trust with maintaining discipline. Everything will be digital in the future, and parents need to keep up or they will be left behind. Parents should be acknowledged as

42. A YouTube channel used extensively in Turkey.

primary educators and be given the recognition and support they need from governments and society to fulfil this role. They need to be able to turn to experts for solutions. Parents are also role models, so they cannot forbid children from spending time in the digital world while themselves spending hours on a mobile phone.

Education is one means of giving children equal opportunities to become digital citizens. Teachers need better training to learn to use digital technology in their teaching and introduce new approaches that allow children to practise being digital citizens in the classroom. Digital citizenship should be part of every lesson, but teachers need new tools and guidance to learn how to integrate it. Parent associations are an underused resource that could contribute to filling the gap between learning for yesterday and learning for tomorrow.

Equipment – extending the "digital oasis" concept. If companies can set up fully equipped areas for teleworkers to keep working despite lack of digital tools or broadband in their homes, then the technology industry and governments can manage to do something similar to ensure equal rights among children. For children and the overall population to be digitally prepared, the public sector has to take the lead. This involves financing the necessary equipment (Wi-Fi in schools, devices for all pupils, etc.), training teachers and offering online safety workshops. Platform providers also need to step up to the plate. As one parent stated: "It's hard to understand why, since the health crisis began, no European platform has been established that complies with the GDPR rules and pays taxes (in Europe), offering the same efficiency as Google Classroom and less outdated than Moodle."

Chapter 14

Facing the cyber challenge – the role of the Council of Europe

14.1. Recommendations from parents to help enhance digital citizenship skills

In the Council of Europe's DCE survey conducted in 2020, parents were asked about the type of help they need to support their children's digital citizenship education. Almost 50% of respondents prioritised activities they could implement with their children at home. Approximately 40% wanted to see a specialised website for parents and a similar percentage wanted access to short videos on a dedicated channel; and 37% of respondents, mainly parents of younger children, suggested a recommendation or rating system to help them choose suitable tools and platforms for their children.

The key objective of the 82 interviews and 10 consultations conducted in 24 European countries in November and December 2020 was to obtain more granular, qualitative information about parents' view of their children's digital life and ways in which the Council of Europe can support them in the current challenging context. The following recommendations are based on discussions with these interviewees.

- One in five parents would like to see the Council of Europe develop values-based online and offline training programmes for parents and children. Peer-learning strategies are recommended for children, in simple, modern language that they can relate to.
- Many support the creation of a website to meet parents' needs, as well as videos and apps that can guide them in fostering their children's digital citizenship competences.
- Another recommendation was to make information more accessible to parents by facilitating translation of resources into all national languages, and ensure that every country receives the same, culturally adapted information.
- Parents trust the information and programmes provided by the Council of Europe and would like to see greater marketing efforts, including through parent associations, to increase awareness of such resources among families.
- Finally, there is a need to publish digital citizenship guidelines that will encourage national policy makers to integrate digital citizenship competences into school curricula, and to provide equal digital access for every child by overcoming infrastructural barriers.

14.2. Finding support online

When asked about the platforms where they find useful information, parents' responses highlighted a large gap between their expectations and the resources they are currently able to find. Accordingly, 25% of parents resort to using a search engine when they need to solve an online problem and they usually end up on YouTube and, to a lesser extent, Wikipedia.

Out of all the websites mentioned by interviewees, many fell into the category of commercial non-specialist sites (Figure 65). Examples of these sites are Google Family Links, national mobile operators and internet service providers' websites and documentary movies. Two parents pointed to the preschool learning activities they find on Pinterest. Surprisingly, despite the number of social media users among the interviewees, and the large budgets spent by social media to provide safety centres on their platforms, parents were either not aware of or chose not to use these resources. One person mentioned a movie rating system that is the parental guide on Clouds, but none alluded to the European PEGI[43] system set up to help parents gauge the content and age suitability of online games. This may explain in part why 37% of parents in the survey said they would like to have a rating or recommendation system,[44] but did not bring this up when describing resource tools.

Overall, slightly more parents seemed to rely on educational apps/websites to help their children. Tools mentioned included the European Commission's eTwinning platform and websites set up by national education ministries.

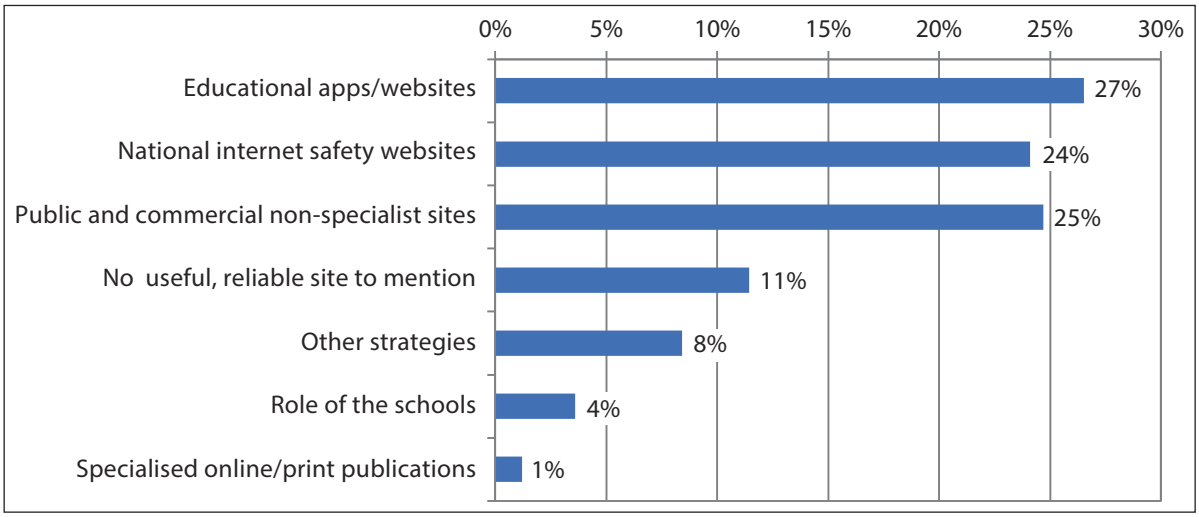
43. https://pegi.info/.
44. Appendix III – Q21.

Three Turkish sites of this type seemed to be particularly popular with nationals, as all Turkish interviewees mentioned them. Two similar portals were cited in Cyprus. Several parent organisations have set up social media groups that give parents access to a repertory of information and activities. Liechtenstein has provided a media competence centre for its citizens.

National language limits choice of resources

The second most popular place to go for parents seeking support was the website of the national internet safety centre. However, this choice could have been influenced by the number of such centres involved in the interviewing process. Parents said they find information on many important topics on such sites, and often go to other sites or use other strategies when they need an immediate response to a specific situation. Being in the national language, the internet safety sites in countries such as Greece, Portugal, Iceland and Latvia were often cited in the interviews. When looking for information about online well-being and digital citizenship, 1 in 10 interviewees reported that language was a problem.

Figure 65 – Resources parents use to help their children



Schools as an information channel for parents

Only two parents of young children talked about finding the information they need in specialised print and online media. However, in the next question on how the Council of Europe can support parents, 19 interviewees (21% overall) mentioned wanting printed leaflets and guides that could be disseminated through schools. Just six parents mentioned the school as a source of information when faced with a specific issue related to their children's online activities. Schools were frequently cited as an important means through which the Council of Europe can engage families as they strive to help young people become digital citizens. One parent quoted IT teachers as a valuable resource, two others appreciated the workshops, parent sessions, webinars and online classes run by their school, and reported confidence in the choice of websites by teachers.

Other interviewees talked about broadly disparate strategies rather than providing links to any specific websites they use for safety or digital citizenship matters. Talking to other parents, family or peers was an important means of solving digital challenges for several parents, while others stated that they simply rely on the moral values they have fostered in their children to solve their own issues responsibly. One parent found it useful to watch teenage series to become more aware of likely problems her daughter might encounter. Many parents hesitated to suggest specific websites because there are so many available. Others said they rely on a digital specialist in the family to solve problems. Several parents talked about preferring to monitor what their children are doing online, check their browsing history, use a screen-time app, or test platforms and apps beforehand themselves rather than seeking information sources to help them. One parent responded with: "No, it's rather the other way around, my children help me to cope with digital issues. We discuss a lot and tell each other what we see, like, dislike, and share information so we learn together and from each other."

It should be noted that 19 out of the total 89 parents interviewed were unable to cite a website they found useful or one they could use as their "official" source of information. As previously mentioned, language plays a large

role in access to information. With around 60% of all web content in English, and less than 5% in any other language except Russian (8%), linguistic needs were cited as an almost unsurmountable problem for many parents.

14.3. How can the Council of Europe support parents of young digital citizens?

Though the top item on the parental wish list in the DCE survey was hardly mentioned by interviewees, the second and third survey selections emerged as their priorities. Thirty-nine parents (25%) suggested that the best way the Council of Europe can support them is by setting up a website or online platform, and creating videos (Figure 66). Twenty-one parents (13%) would like to have an app. Some suggested that this could provide just-in-time information for parents and/or children when needed and others that it could provide a repository of "good digital citizen" games. The latter group felt that such an app would help children become more confident online and learn how to use digital resources in positive ways. One person suggested an interactive app that would lead parents through the learning process.

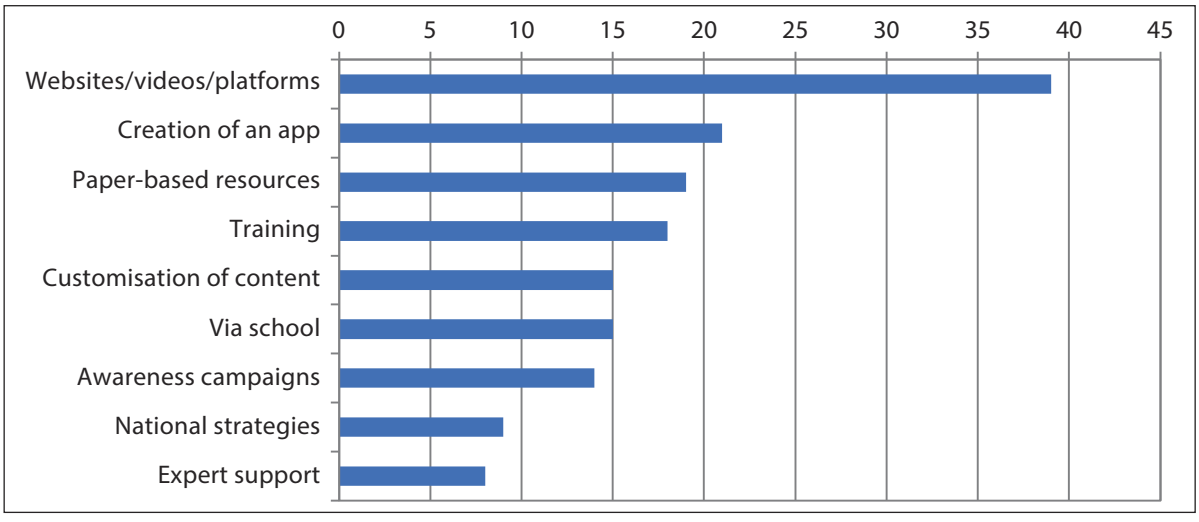
Somewhat surprisingly, paper-based information leaflets and books were highly rated by parents, who appreciated receiving them through their children's school. One parent cited the repository of leaflet and brochure resources at https://library.parenthelp.eu/, where Council of Europe publications on digital citizenship could be made available. Another interviewee pointed out that "Not all parents are online, and it is better to provide books or paper supports for others too." The book *Parenting for a digital future: how hopes and fears about technology shape children's lives* (Livingstone and Blum-Ross 2020)[45] was appreciated by one parent as a new and important publication for families and professionals.

Parents are eager to learn

Parent associations, which work in national languages and have close contact with parents, consider that they could provide the Council of Europe with a valuable dissemination channel but they are currently being underused. As a trusted, official information source for parents, the Council of Europe could provide a simple guide to parents with useful information and tips in their own language through national parent associations, as well as frequent updates on evolving platforms and challenges.

Around 1 in 5 parents wanted to see the Council of Europe offer more training opportunities in simple, modern language that children can relate to, especially if based on peer-learning strategies. They felt it could develop programmes that are then implemented by universities and NGOs. Training could include on- and offline sessions and courses aimed at building a values-based understanding of digital citizenship, both for children and parents. One parent stated: "Although we use technology and the internet, some people in our country do not know the term digital citizen and its meaning. We don't know what a digital citizen is and what we need to do, the rules we need to follow."

Figure 66 – How can the Council of Europe support parents of young digital citizens (number of parents indicating each)



45. Livingstone S. and Blum-Ross A. (2020), *Parenting for a digital future: how hopes and fears about technology shape children's lives* Oxford University Press, New York.

Reinforcing the role of the school

According to parents, the school has a major role to play, not only as a channel for disseminating leaflets and information to parents, but also in implementing the campaigns and projects that the Council of Europe creates. Time and again, the interviewees underlined the linguistic challenges involved in deepening the understanding of all Europeans of how to develop digital citizenship competences. They also suggested that the Council of Europe has a major role in ensuring that every country receives the same, culturally adapted, information in national languages through its outreach. Another role would be the development of e-books and e-journals of interest to parents, teachers and pupils to give them a broader understanding of what is involved in issues like ePresence and active participation. Libraries and broadcasting channels in local languages could also disseminate these materials. Seminars could be organised for children, teachers and parents from preschool to high school level, not only in schools but also in community centres. Interviewees suggested a closer role for the Council of Europe with school leadership, to foster a holistic approach involving family and community.

Besides adapting content to national languages and culture, several parents pointed out that all children have their own way of learning and that a broad diversity in resource formats is important to give equal access to every child. As the evidence base and good practices may vary from country to country, content needs to be adapted accordingly. Resources catering to diverse learning styles and interaction types could range from online games to books and activities, and to situation cards for problem solving.

Awareness campaigns appeared to be lower on the list of parental preferences. Some suggested that a global campaign for parents could help them understand more about digital citizenship. However, this would need to be rolled out using many different communication channels including social media, public TV and radio, through schools, and taking advantage of the broad outreach of parent associations. Such a campaign would be more impactful if it were led by a public figure accepted by young people as a herald of citizenship. Several people considered that, if the Council of Europe were to make greater marketing efforts with promotional advertisements, banners and public video shorts, many more parents would become aware of what it means to be a digital citizen, and where to find resources to help develop the necessary competences. Parents also wanted to see special awareness campaign on- and offline posters in schools and public places.

In addition, 10% of parents wanted the support of the Council of Europe and similar organisations in providing better access for families to expert help when problems arise. Children frequently encounter online problems that call for professional (for example psychological) intervention, and budget-wise this is out of reach for many families. Support groups for parents would also be helpful, as parents often have difficulty finding time to cover all of the needs of their children without extra support. Some suggested that every country should have an easily accessible platform that gathers parent-friendly information which has been validated by experts including teachers and trainers for parents. Information on the platform should be monitored by education authorities to make sure that it only contains valuable and age-appropriate activities and information. This platform could provide access to a combination of online courses as well as specific information for solving security issues.

National strategies covered a broad range of ideas from parents. Certain parents wished to see standardised laws and procedures for online misdemeanours, with stronger penalties for perpetrators, streamlined practices for reporting, and recommendations to help people become proactive digital citizens. They considered it is the role of governments to publish digital citizenship guideline policies that can be incorporated into school curricula. The Council of Europe could provide such guidelines, and through them promote equality of internet access and equipment in regions lacking infrastructure. This would help overcome the barriers for children without adequate access to develop their digital citizenship competences. Currently the general public sees the Council of Europe as a very distant institution, not involved in people's daily life, and therefore does not look to it for help. A lot of this type of education is implemented by volunteers and cannot be sustained without adequate funding. Instead of producing publications that do not reach the public, the budget could be used to fund validated activities conducted by the civic sector to reinforce its work in bridging the digital divide.

The DCE survey and interviews have provided invaluable insight into how parents perceive digital citizenship, and its place in the life of their children. Now it is up to the Council of Europe, and educators everywhere, to use the lessons learned to shift the focus, so that the coming generation is empowered to master the technology that surrounds them, and not be mastered by it.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

Brief description of the digital citizenship domains

Being online

Access and Inclusion includes a range of competences necessary for overcoming different forms of the digital divide and opening digital spaces to minorities and different opinions.

Learning and Creativity concerns the willingness to learn and the attitude towards learning through digital environments throughout life, and the capacity to develop and express different forms of creativity with different tools in a range of contexts.

Media and Information Literacy concerns one's own abilities of interpreting, critically understanding and expressing creativity through digital media.

Well-being online

Ethics and Empathy concerns online ethical behaviour and interaction with others based on skills such as the ability to recognise and understand the feelings and perspectives of others. Empathy constitutes an essential requirement for positive online interaction and for realising the possibilities that the digital world affords.

Health and Well-being concerns one's awareness of the issues and opportunities that can affect wellness in a digitally rich world. Digital citizens inhabit both virtual and real spaces. For this reason, the basic skills of digital competence are not sufficient. Individuals also require a set of attitudes, skills, values and knowledge that render them more aware of issues of health and well-being.

ePresence and Communications refers to the development of digital citizens' personal and interpersonal qualities that help them in building and keeping online images of themselves and online interactions that are positive, coherent and consistent.

Rights online

Active Participation relates to the competences that citizens need to be fully aware of how they interact within the digital environments they inhabit in order to make responsible decisions, while participating actively and positively in the democratic cultures in which they live.

Rights and Responsibilities concerns digital citizen's awareness and understanding of their rights and responsibilities in the online world. As citizens enjoy rights and responsibilities in the physical world, digital citizens in the online world also have certain rights and responsibilities.

Privacy and Security covers two different concepts: privacy concerns mainly the personal protection of one's own and others' online information, while security is more related to one's own awareness of online actions and behaviour.

Consumer Awareness: the internet, with all its dimensions such as social media or other virtual social spaces, is an environment where often the fact of being digital citizens also means being consumers.

Analytical information for each domain is provided at the DCE website (www.coe.int/en/web/digital-citizenship-education/a-conceptual-model).

APPENDIX II

Full survey questionnaire and scoring profiles

Digital citizenship education survey

The purpose of this survey

If you are a parent, we invite you to fill in the following anonymous survey. It will take approximately 10-15 minutes of your time and will allow the Council of Europe to learn more about your view of digital citizenship. It is important that you respond as precisely as possible, so that the tools the Council of Europe will develop for you and for your children to support digital citizenship education will truly match your needs.

To simplify the questions, the term "children" used throughout the survey should be understood to mean one child or several. Similarly, "children" refers to your children, grandchildren or other children close to you (nephews, nieces, pupils, foster children…).

The data collected in this survey are strictly anonymous and shall be used solely for educational purposes.

I. Please specify your profile by answering the following questions

1. **Country (country where you send your children to school)**
   (Drop-down list)
2. **Your age**
   - Between 18 and 30
   - Between 31 and 45
   - Between 46 and 60
   - Over 60
3. **Your gender**
   - Male
   - Female
   - Prefer not to say
4. **What is the age of your youngest child?**
   - Below 5
   - Between 5 and 9
   - Between 10 and 13
   - Between 14 and 18
5. **How would you define your profile?**
   - I know very little about my children's online lives and how to support them as digital citizens.
   - I know enough about my children's online lives, but do not really take part in their online activities.
   - I am fully aware about my children's online lives, and feel that I actively support them in using technology safely and responsibly.

II. Your experience with the Covid-19 crisis

6. **If you have been managing your children's education during this time, which aspects have been most challenging for you? (you may indicate as many responses as you wish)**
   - Supervising my children's online activities

- Balancing their screen time with physical activities
- Juggling my work organisation with my children's
- Struggling with the content requirements from schools
- The lack of face-to-face contact with other children
- Their general well-being during this time of crisis
- Other (please specify): _____

7. Many schools reacted to the crisis by using distance learning. What have your (and your children's) experiences with this been so far? (you may indicate as many responses as you wish)

- My children's school already introduced some distance learning before the Covid-19 crisis.
- This is a new experience for us, but we are coping well.
- This is a new experience for us and therefore problematic.
- I think the distance learning offered by the schools leaves a lot of room for improvement.
- I do not have enough IT experience to help my children when engaging in distance learning.
- We do not have suitable IT equipment to satisfy all family members' requirements.
- The online educational offers by the schools are incompatible with the IT equipment my children use (e.g. smartphones).
- Our internet connectivity creates access barriers.
- Other (please specify): _____

III. Your view about digital citizenship

8. I spend time with my children online to … (you may indicate as many responses as you wish)

- Watch videos or listen to music (1)[46]
- Communicate with family and friends via e-mail, instant messaging, chat (1)
- Play games (1)
- Participate in social networking sites (1)
- Explore educational or other information sources for their homework (2)
- Explore sources where we can together learn new things (such as an online museum) (2)
- Create online content (2)
- I do not do anything of the above (0)

9. I play board and/or online games (such as Trivial Pursuit, Crosswords, Monopoly, Minecraft, Lego) together with my children to trigger their creativity, imagination, participation and critical thinking skills

- As often as I can (2)
- 1 to 2 hours or more every week (3)
- Rarely (1)
- My children play such games, but I do not have time to play with them (0)
- My children do not play such games (0)
- My children do not play games with me (0)

10. My children mainly use the internet to …

- Watch videos or listen to music (1)
- Communicate with their friends via e-mail, instant messaging, chat (1)
- Play games (1)
- Participate in social networking sites (1)
- Explore educational or other sources for their homework (1)
- Learn new things (1)
- Create their own content (1)
- I really do not know (0)

11. I enrol my children/intend to enrol my children in coding or other similar activities to acquire or improve their technological skills

- Yes (2)
- No (0)

46. The number in brackets next to each response option provides the scoring points for this option. The sum of the scoring points for all provided responses leads to one of the three scoring profiles, as described on page 109 of this appendix.

12. **I search for and check websites, apps, online games, etc. that I am considering for my children or that my children are using, to evaluate if they are appropriate for them**
    - Often (3)
    - Sometimes (2)
    - Rarely (1)
    - Not really (0)
13. **My children talk to me about what they are doing online**
    - Often (3)
    - Sometimes (2)
    - Rarely (1)
    - Not really (0)
14. **Choose the rules that apply for your children (you may indicate as many responses as you wish; if none of the below rules apply, please select the option "None of the above rules apply for my children")**
    - To ask me before sharing any personal information online or via the mobile phone (1)
    - To use technology only at the set times (1)
    - To respect safety rules and to act ethically and responsibly online (1)
    - To respect other people and their privacy online (1)
    - To respect the creative works of other people online (1)
    - To evaluate online information with a critical mind (1)
    - Always to ask me if they encounter something weird or scary online (1)
    - Never to shop online without me being present (1)
    - None of the above rules apply for my children (0)
15. **I speak to my children about… (you may indicate as many responses as you wish)**
    - How to protect their privacy and the privacy of others (2)
    - Their rights and responsibilities online (1)
    - How to build and maintain a positive image and reputation online (1)
    - How to deal with cookies to limit profiling (2)
    - How to avoid spam, viruses, malware or phishing and what to do if they cannot deal with such issues by themselves (1)
    - To use their critical thinking, to cross-check and evaluate the content they read in terms of reliability, truth, and accuracy (2)
    - How to navigate through a website or an app (1)
    - To respect the creative works of others online (copyright) and to avoid illegal downloading (1)
    - How to behave appropriately and lawfully, and respect others online (1)
    - How to choose the most trustworthy news and information sources online (2)
    - How to create their own content (such as a blog about their hobby) (1)
    - I don't know how to show my children most of the above, as I don't know much about them myself (0)
    - I do not have time to do the above (0)
16. **I conduct a search with my children on their name, and discuss the results with them**
    - Often (3)
    - Occasionally (2)
    - Rarely (1)
    - Not really (0)
    - I do not see much use in doing this (0)
17. **I talk to my children about what to do if they are bullied or treated badly, or if they believe that somebody else is being bullied or treated badly, online or offline**
    - Yes, as a preventive measure (3)
    - Only when a specific incident occurs (2)
    - No, I believe that my children can handle such issues themselves (0)
    - I do not have enough knowledge about this subject to talk to my children (0)

18. **My children talk to me about their real-life and online friends**
    - Yes, I know all their real-life and online friends (4)
    - I know all their real-life friends but not many of their online friends (3)
    - I know most of their real-life friends but not many of their online friends (2)
    - I only know their real-life friends, as I do not think that my children have any online friends (yet) (1)
    - I only know some of their real-life and some of their online friends (1)
    - I do not know their real-life or online friends (0)

19. **My children talk to me when they encounter something weird online, or if something bothers or scares them online**
    - Yes (4)
    - Usually (3)
    - Sometimes (depending on the importance of the issue) (2)
    - Only when I ask (1)
    - I do not know if they encounter such issues online (0)
    - I know they encounter such issues online, but they do not talk to me about them (0)
    - Not really (0)

IV. How can we help you?

This section will allow the Council of Europe to understand your needs in helping your children become responsible digital citizens.

20. **Which terms do you understand?**
    - Artificial intelligence (1)
    - Machine learning (1)
    - Internet of things (1)
    - Connected devices (1)
    - Augmented/virtual reality (1)
    - Big data (1)
    - Algorithms (1)

21. **What do you need to help your children become responsible digital citizens? (select the three most important for you from the list below):**
    - A website for parents
    - Short webinars where you can participate online and ask questions
    - Short videos from experts on a dedicated video channel
    - "Ask the expert" blog where you can ask questions
    - Activities for children, which you can easily implement at home
    - A Facebook group where you can read the latest updates from experts
    - A recommendation or rating system for children's websites
    - Other (please specify): _____

22. **Please indicate the topics you would like to receive information on, to support your children with their online activities**
    - Ways to protect privacy online
    - Understanding digital footprints; creating and maintaining a good online reputation
    - How to avoid fake news and/or hate speech
    - What to do in case of bullying incidents
    - Ways to limit the time my children spend online
    - Understanding copyright/legal downloading and use of online information
    - Information about the impact online technology could have on my children
    - Information about how to help them become respectful digital citizens
    - Other (please specify): _____

Scoring profiles

44-66 points: Digital navigator

Description: You are fully aware of how important the digital world is in your children's lives, and you do whatever you can to empower them to become digital citizens. You really support your children to use digital technology ethically, safely and responsibly, and help them develop the knowledge and skills that will allow them to do so.

22-43 points: Digital explorer

Description: You understand that the digital world is a big part of your children's lives. Perhaps it is time to explore how you can share some of their online activities. Better informed parents who take an interest in their children's online activities can play a more active role in helping them become responsible digital citizens.

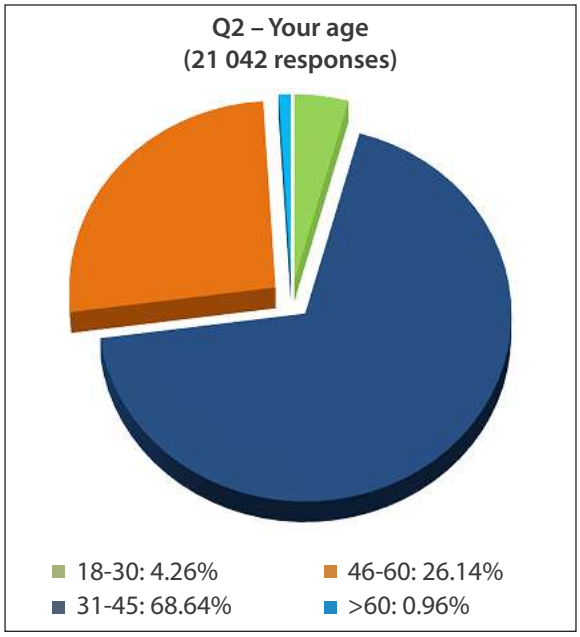
0-21 points: Castaway in the digital world

Description: You seem a little lost in the digital seas. Perhaps it is time to learn more about your children's online lives, and about digital technology in general. This will help you to support and empower your children on their way to becoming digital citizens.

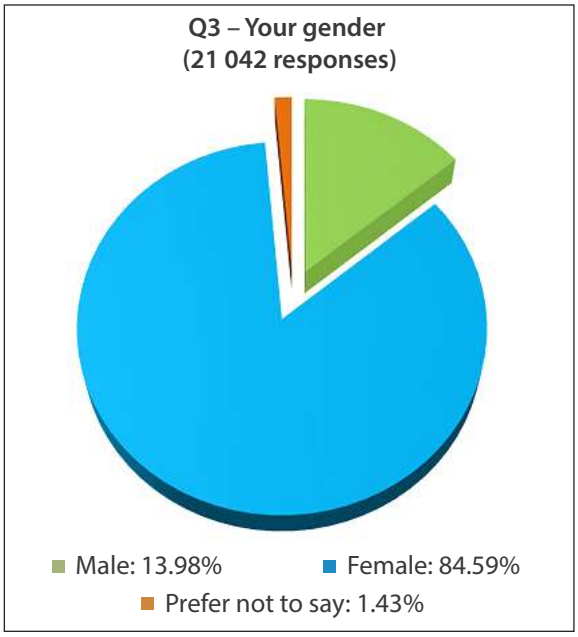
APPENDIX III

Summary responses for all 47 countries

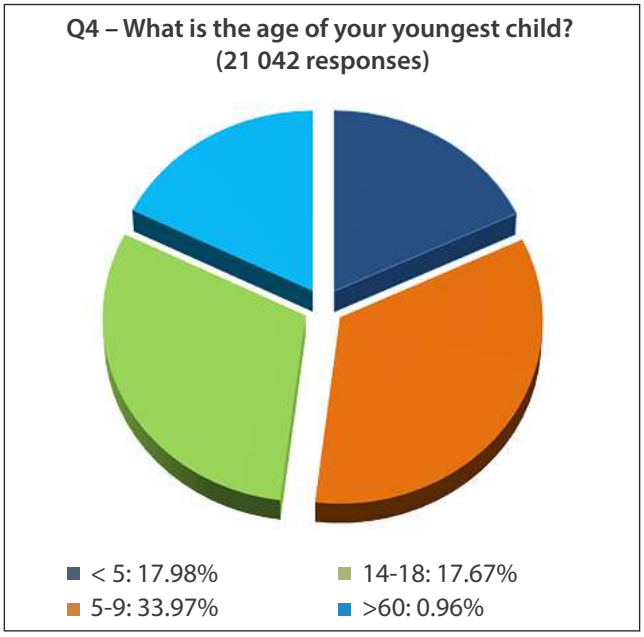
Q2 – Your age
(21 042 responses)



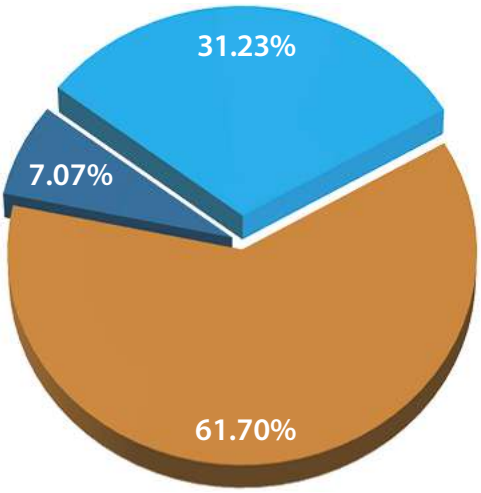
Q3 – Your gender
(21 042 responses)



Q4 – What is the age of your youngest child?
(21 042 responses)

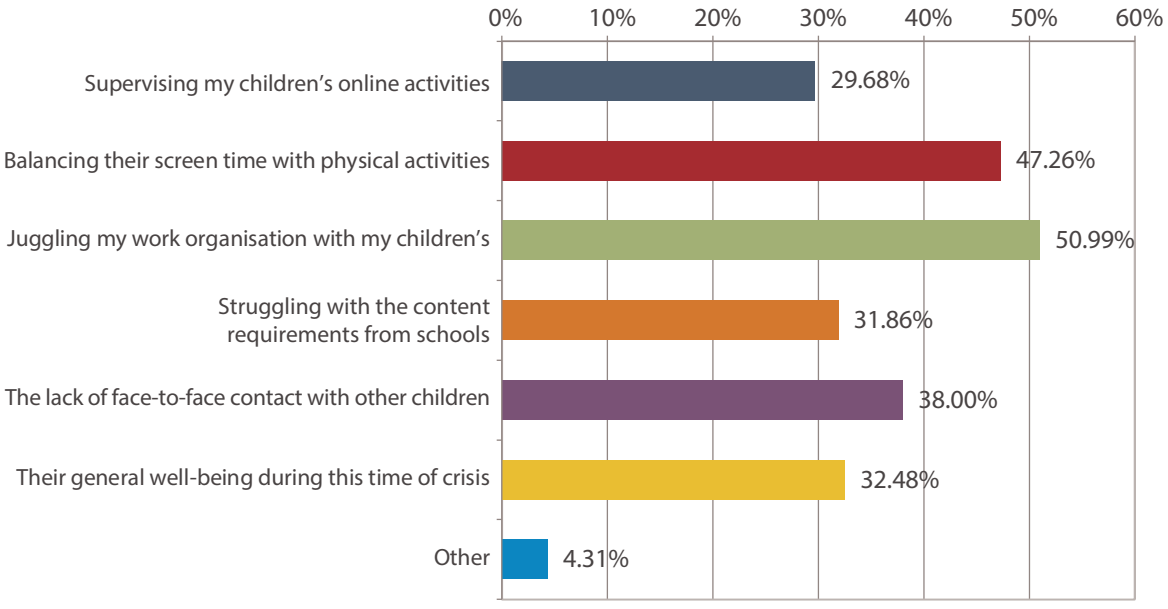


Q5 – How would you define your profile?
(21 042 responses)

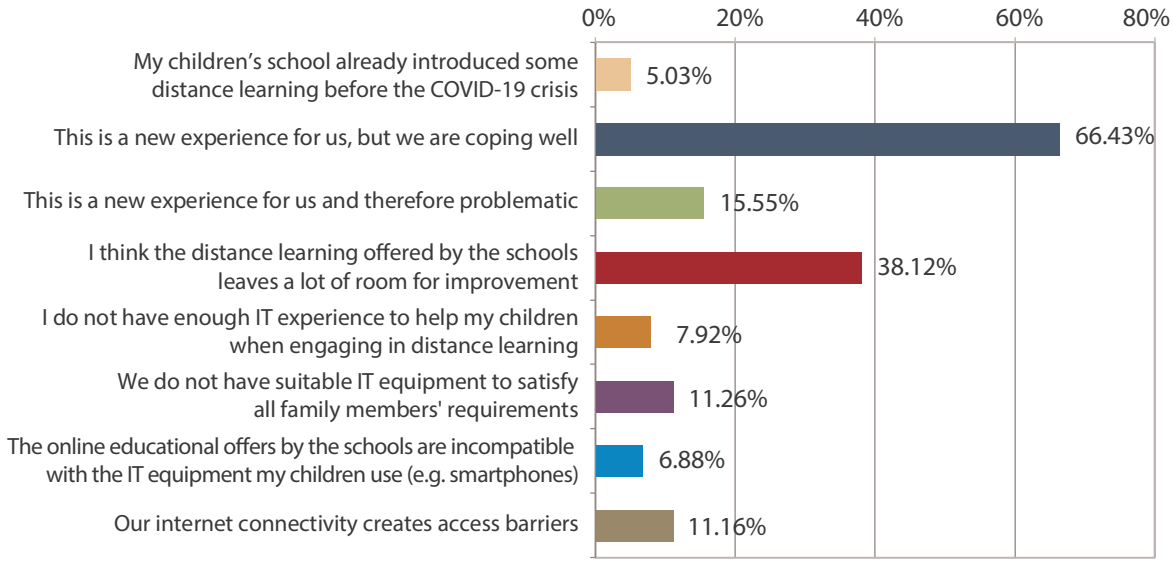


- I know very little about my children's online lives and how to support them as digital citizens
- I know enough about my children's online lives, but don't really take part in their online activities
- I am fully aware about my children's online lives, and feel that I actively support them in using technology safely and responsibly

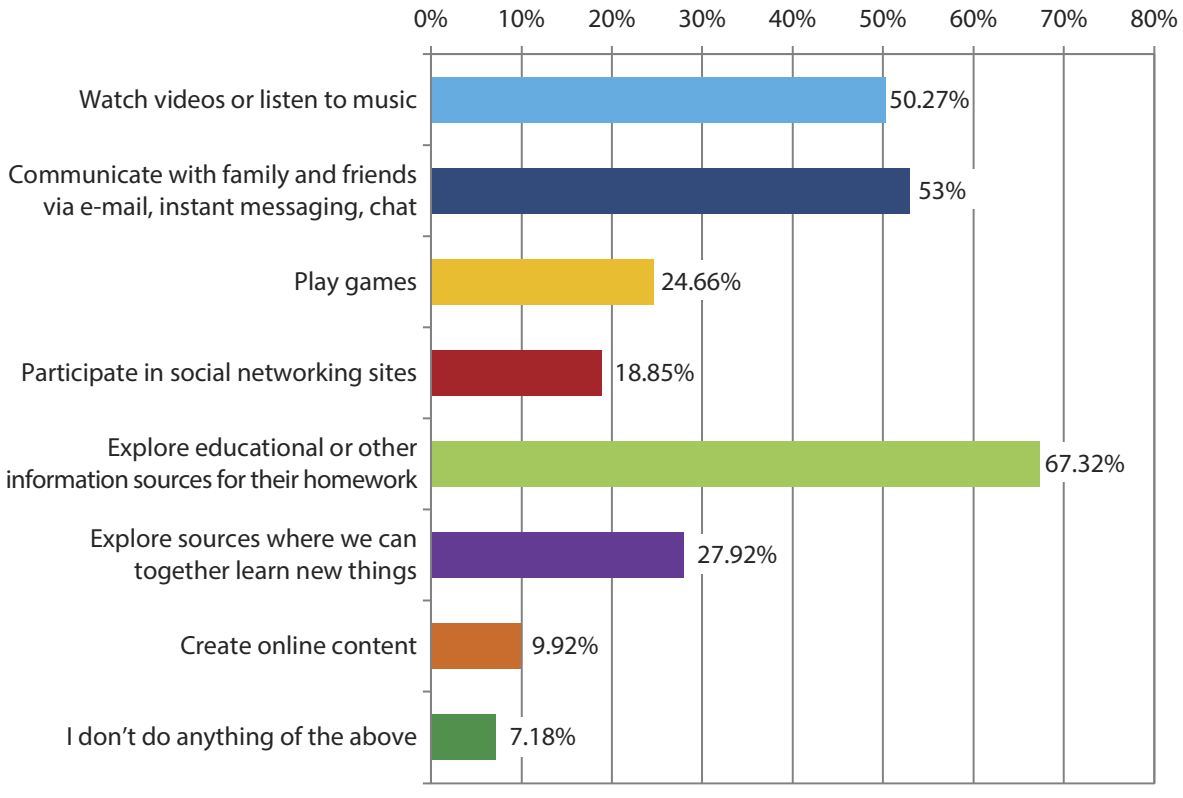
Q6 – If you have been managing your children's education during this time, which aspects have been most challenging for you?
(19 075 responses)



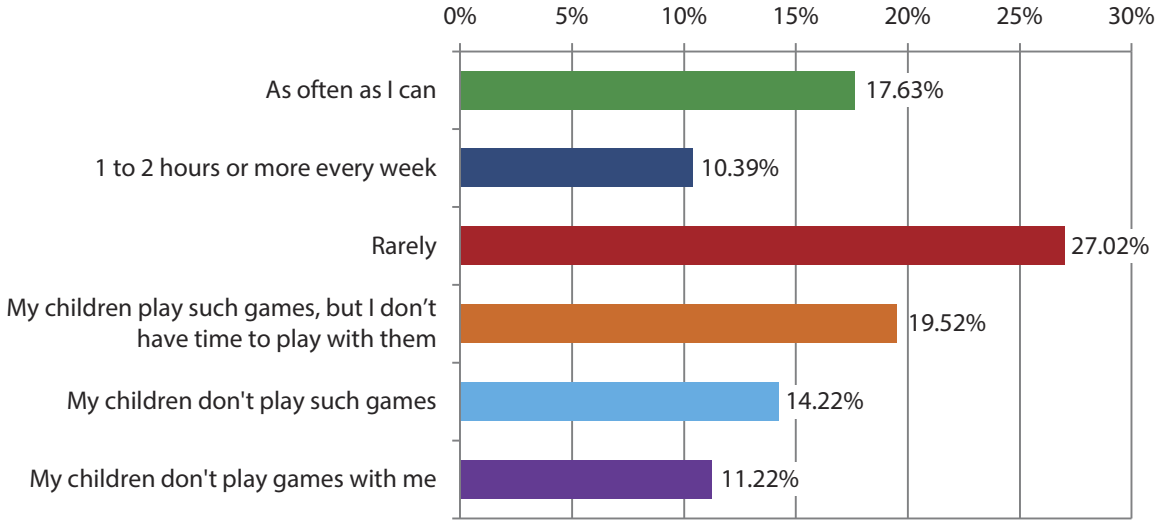
Q7 – Many schools reacted to the crisis by using distance learning. What have your and your children's experiences with this been so far? (19 075 responses)



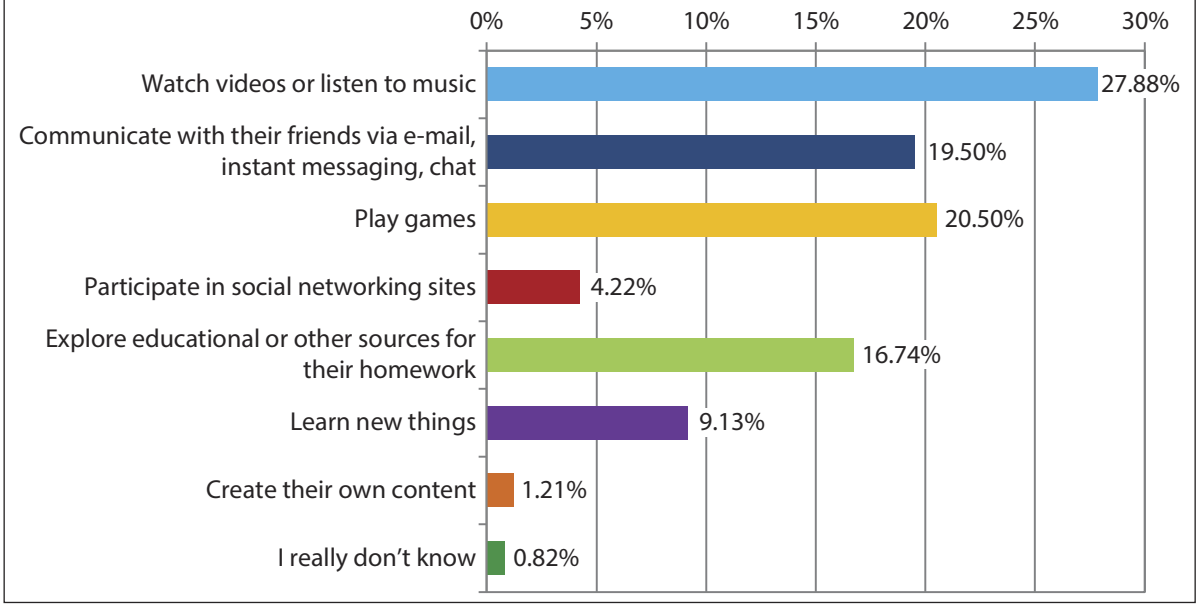
Q8 – I spend time with my children online to …



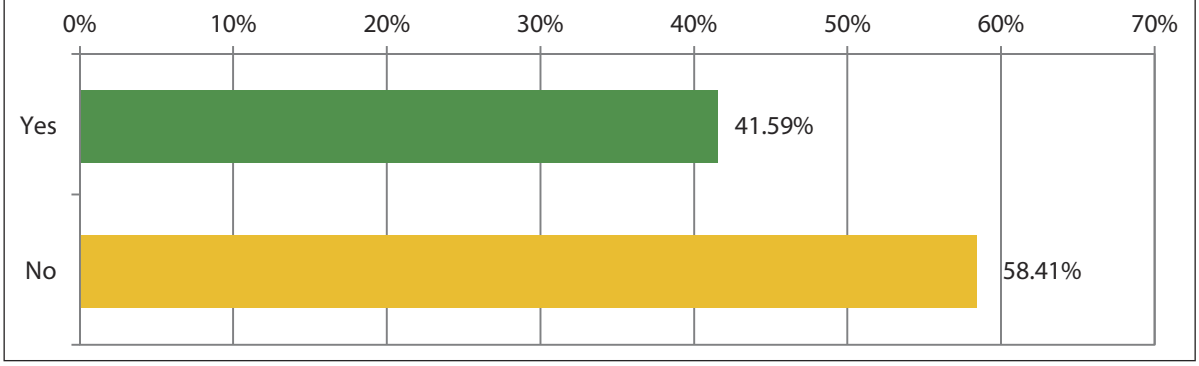
Q9 – I play board and/or online games (such as Trivial Pursuit, Crosswords, Monopoly, Minecraft, Lego) together with my children to trigger their creativity, imagination, participation and critical thinking skills (16 878 responses)

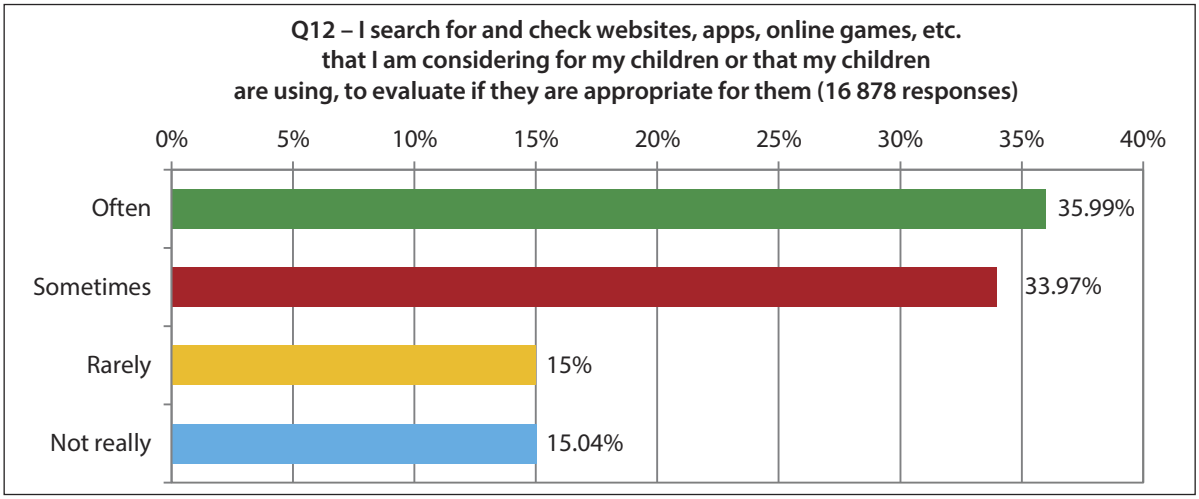


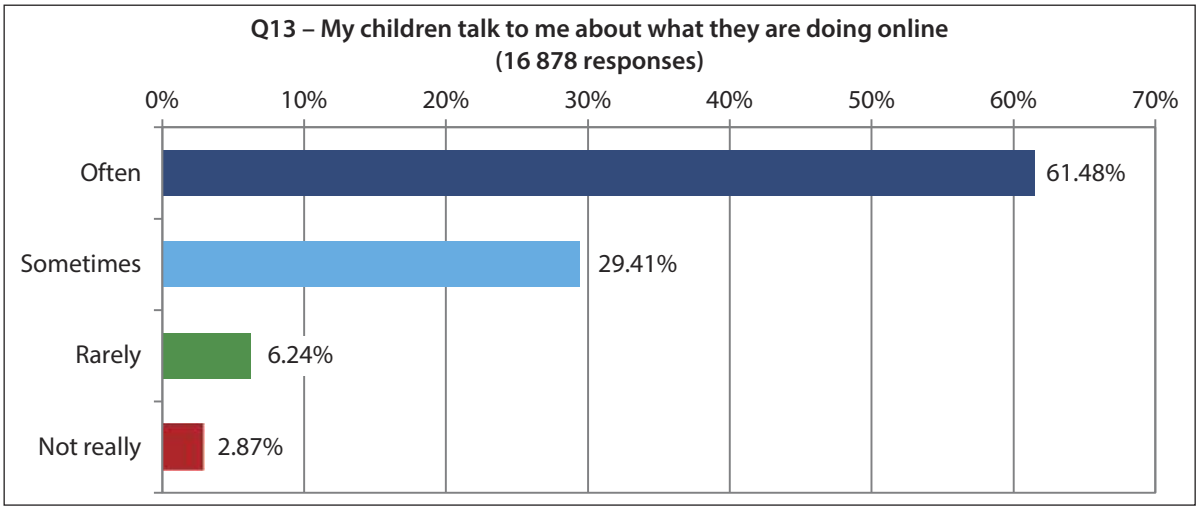
Q10 – My children mainly use the internet to …

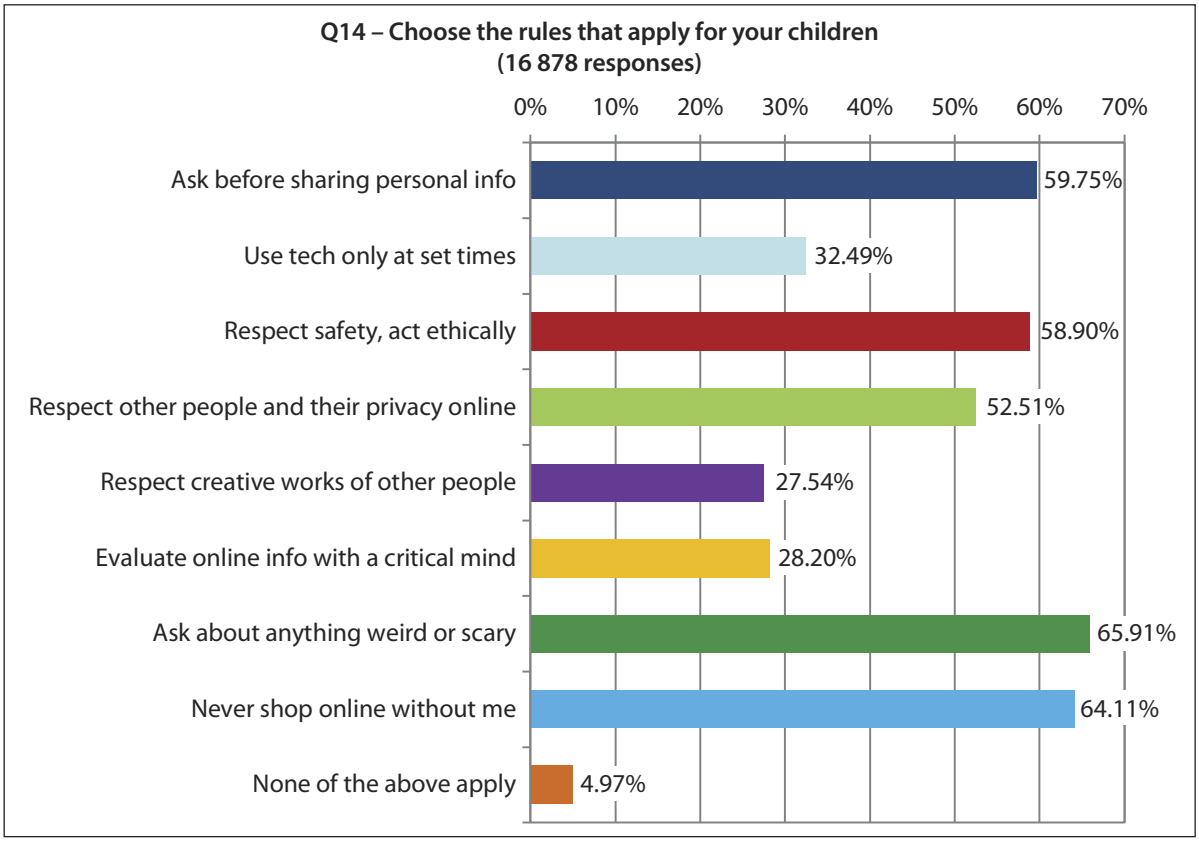


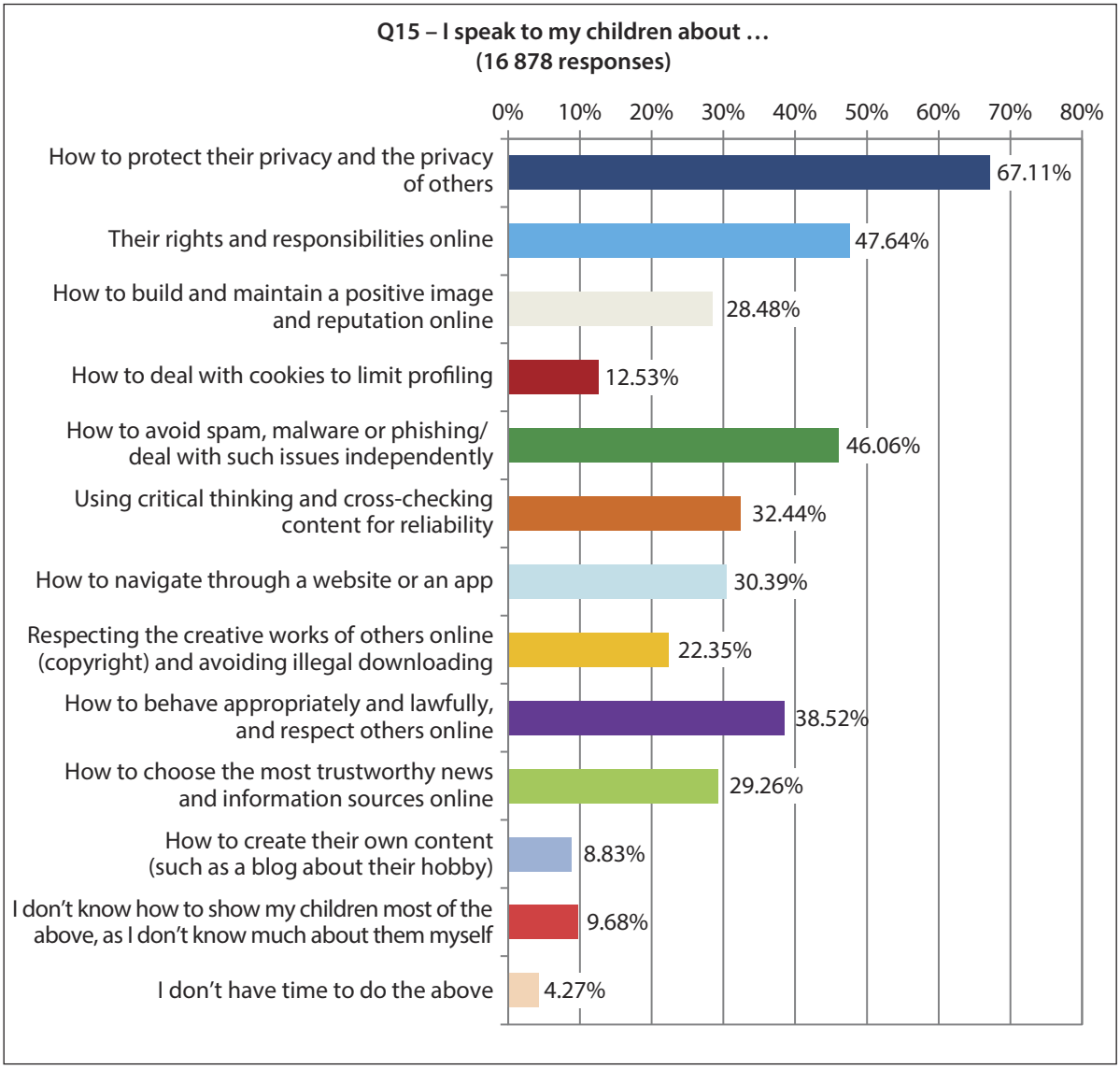
Q11 – I enrol my children/intend to enrol my children in coding or other similar activities to acquire or improve their technological skills (16 878 responses)

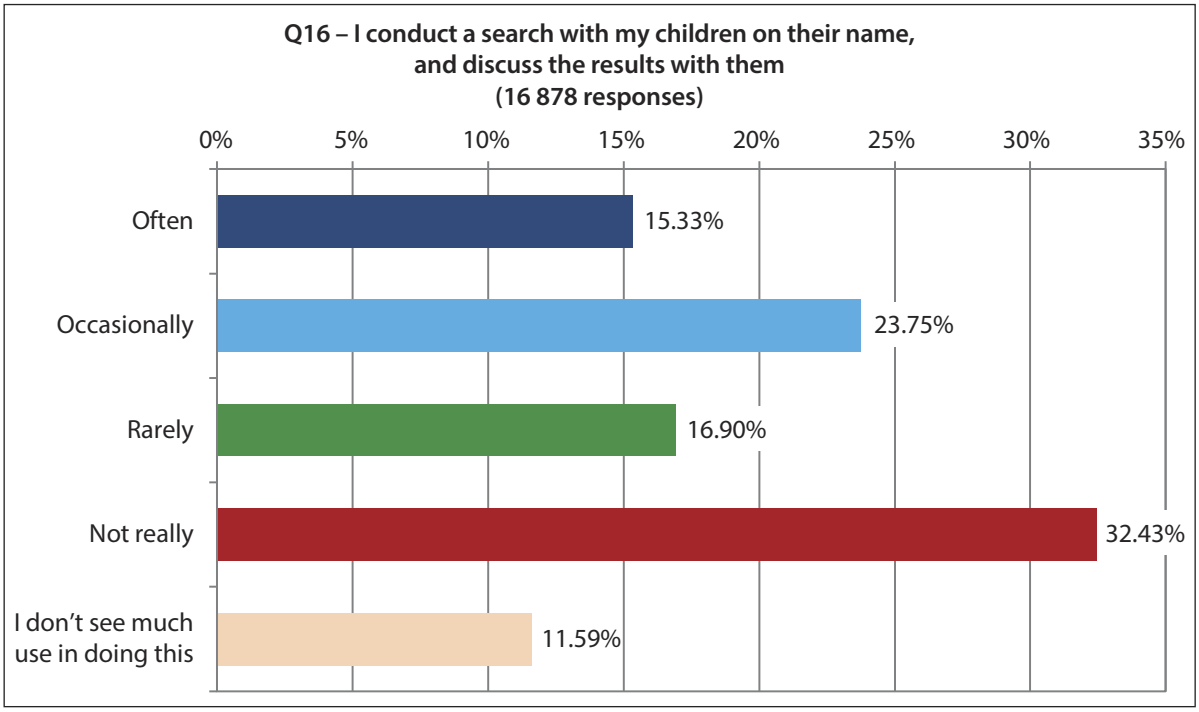



Q12 – I search for and check websites, apps, online games, etc. that I am considering for my children or that my children are using, to evaluate if they are appropriate for them (16 878 responses)
0%
5%
10%
15%
20%
25%
30%
35%
40%
Often
35.99%
Sometimes
33.97%
Rarely
15%
Not really
15.04%

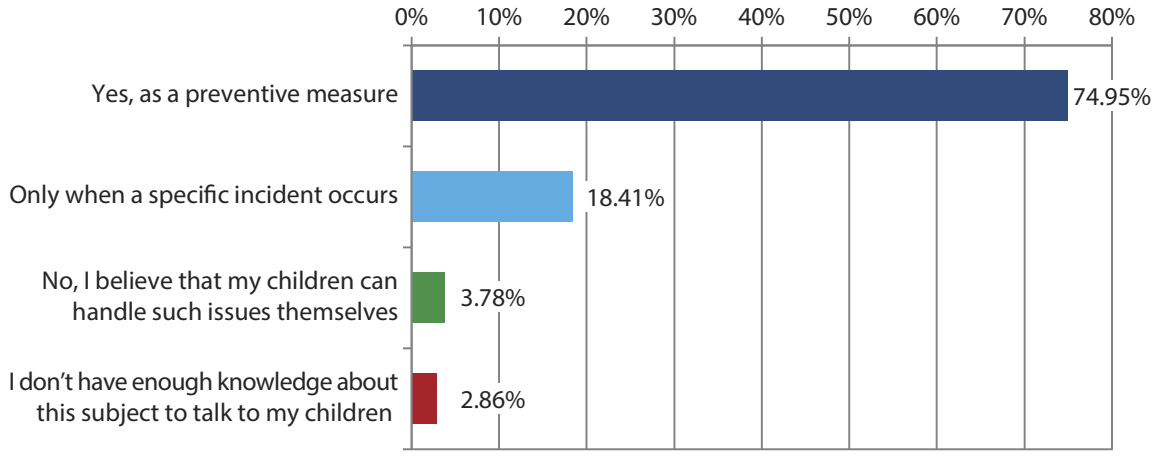

Q13 – My children talk to me about what they are doing online (16 878 responses)
0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
60%
70%
Often
61.48%
Sometimes
29.41%
Rarely
6.24%
Not really
2.87%


Q14 – Choose the rules that apply for your children (16 878 responses)
0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
60%
70%
Ask before sharing personal info
59.75%
Use tech only at set times
32.49%
Respect safety, act ethically
58.90%
Respect other people and their privacy online
52.51%
Respect creative works of other people
27.54%
Evaluate online info with a critical mind
28.20%
Ask about anything weird or scary
65.91%
Never shop online without me
64.11%
None of the above apply
4.97%

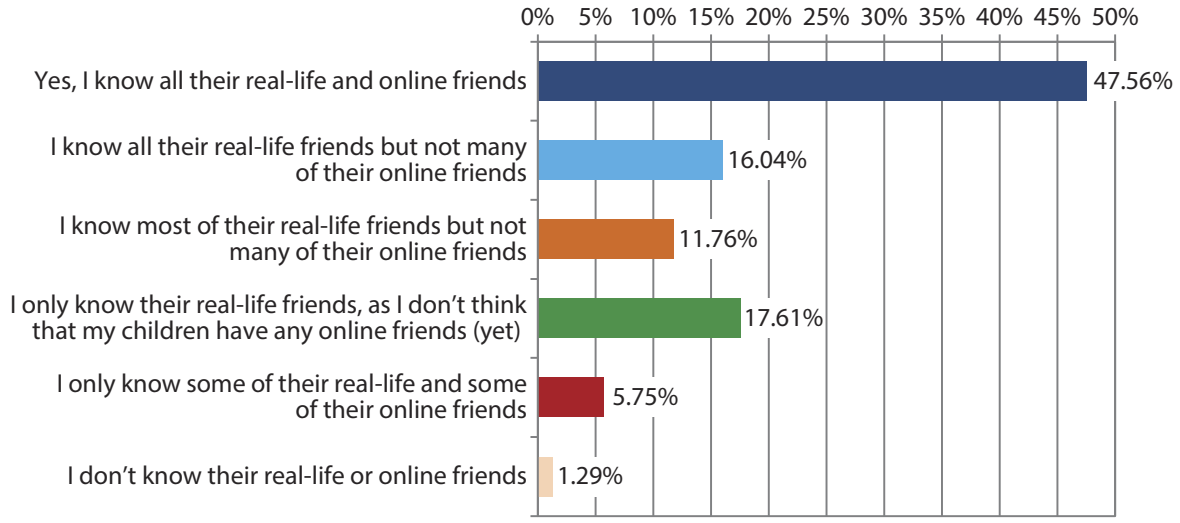

Q15 – I speak to my children about …
(16 878 responses)
0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
60%
70%
80%
How to protect their privacy and the privacy of others
67.11%
Their rights and responsibilities online
47.64%
How to build and maintain a positive image and reputation online
28.48%
How to deal with cookies to limit profiling
12.53%
How to avoid spam, malware or phishing/ deal with such issues independently
46.06%
Using critical thinking and cross-checking content for reliability
32.44%
How to navigate through a website or an app
30.39%
Respecting the creative works of others online (copyright) and avoiding illegal downloading
22.35%
How to behave appropriately and lawfully, and respect others online
38.52%
How to choose the most trustworthy news and information sources online
29.26%
How to create their own content (such as a blog about their hobby)
8.83%
I don't know how to show my children most of the above, as I don't know much about them myself
9.68%
I don't have time to do the above
4.27%


Q16 – I conduct a search with my children on their name, and discuss the results with them
(16 878 responses)
0%
5%
10%
15%
20%
25%
30%
35%
Often
15.33%
Occasionally
23.75%
Rarely
16.90%
Not really
32.43%
I don't see much use in doing this
11.59%

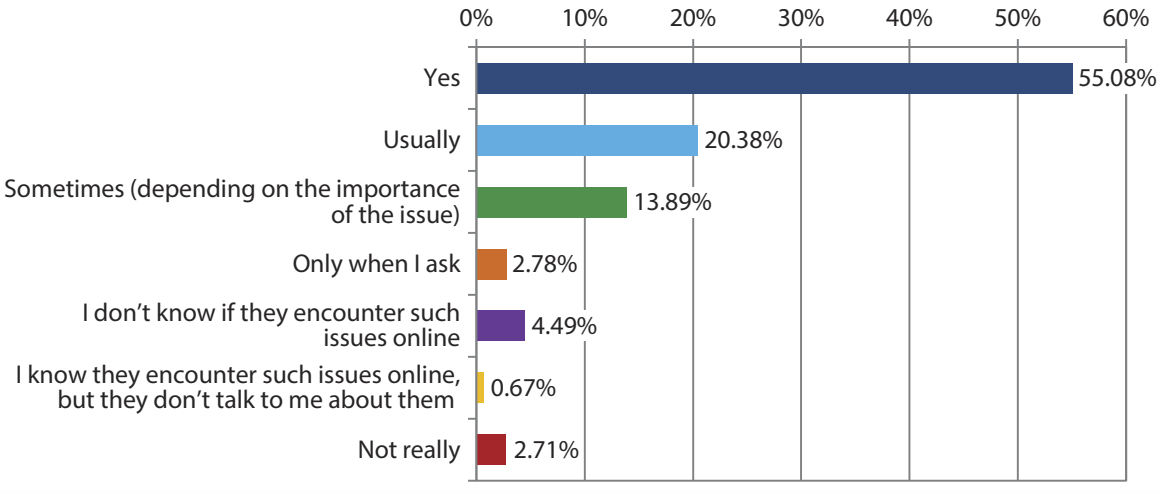
Q17 – I talk to my children about what to do if they are bullied or treated badly, or if they believe that somebody else is being bullied or treated badly, online or offline (16 878 responses)

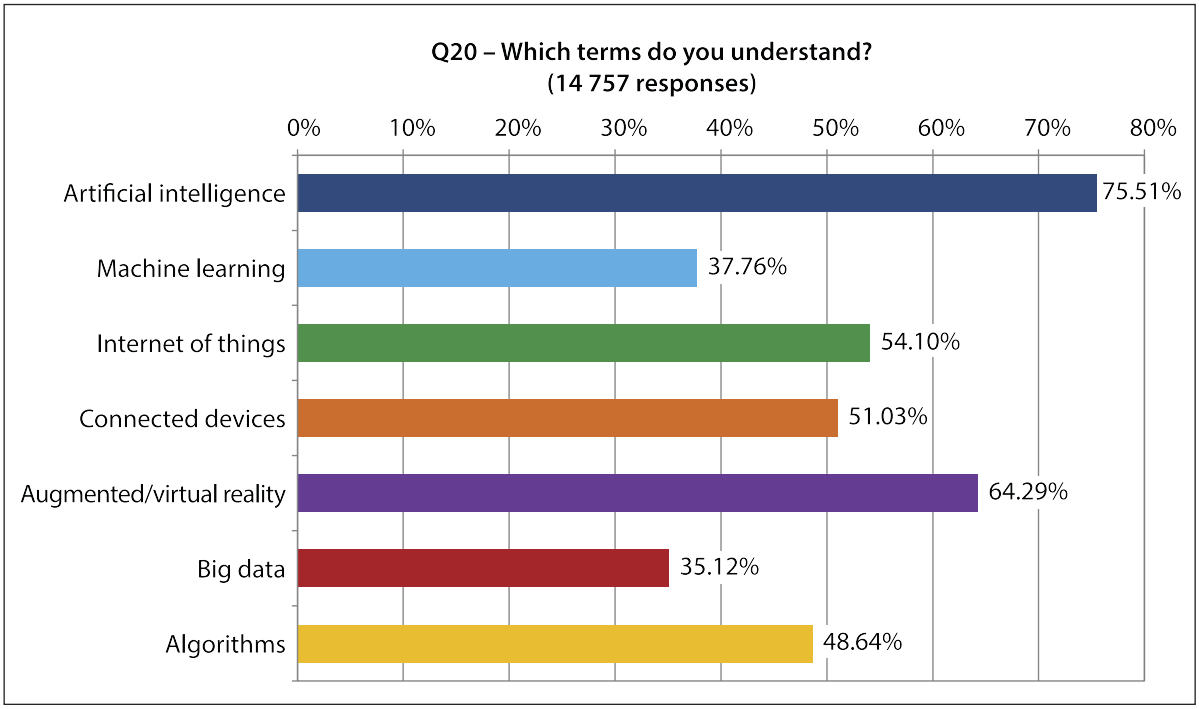


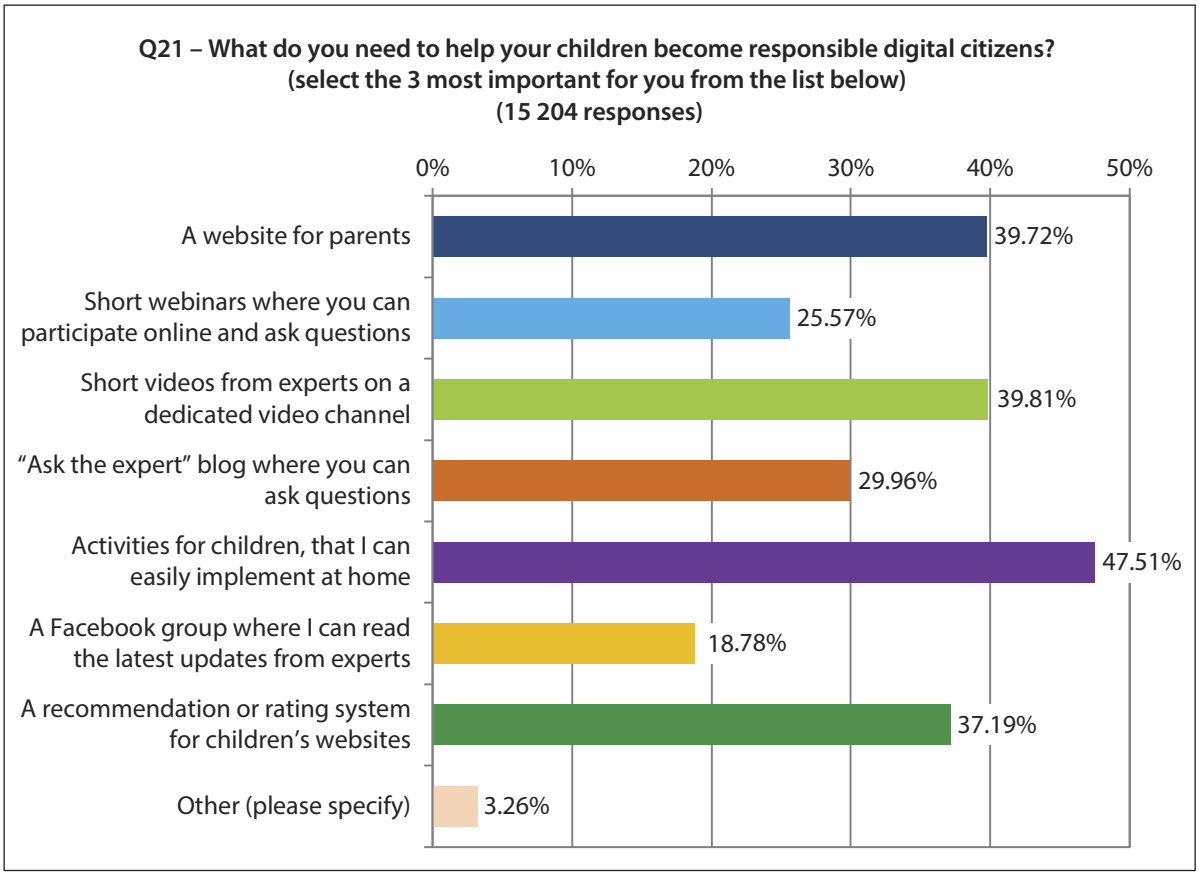
Q18 – My children talk to me about their real-life and online friends (16 878 responses)

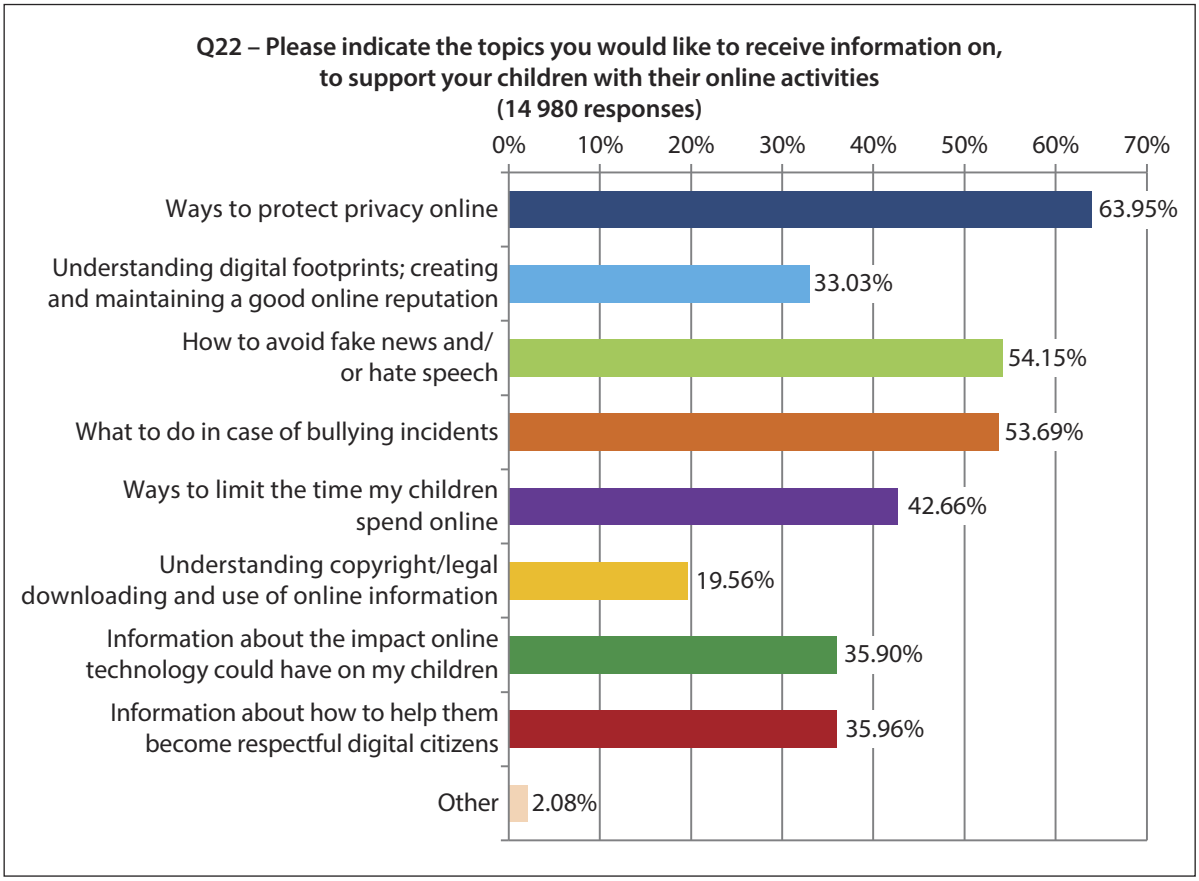


Q19 – My children talk to me when they encounter something weird online, or if something bothers or scares them online (16 878 responses)



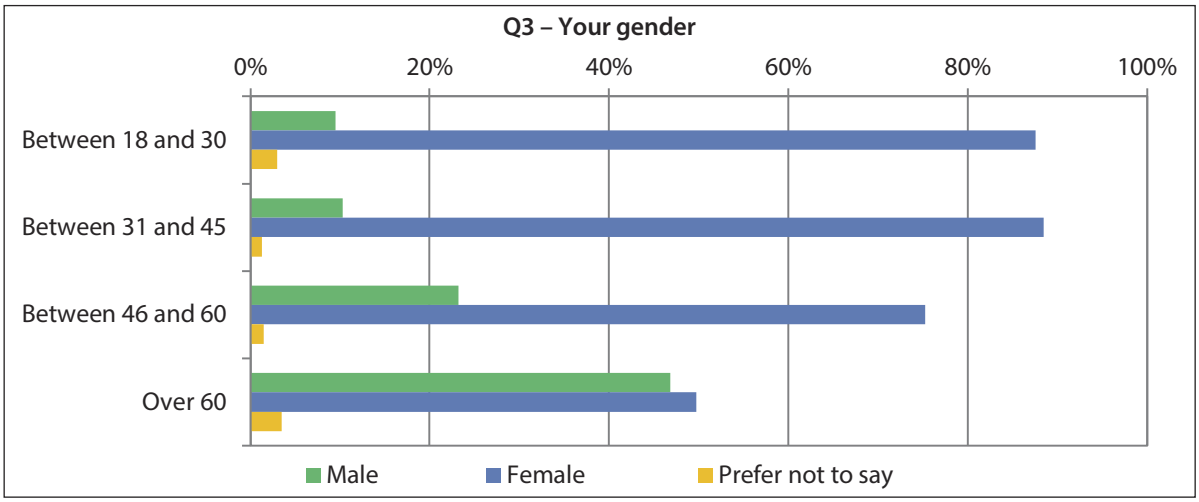

Q20 – Which terms do you understand?
(14 757 responses)
0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
60%
70%
80%
Artificial intelligence
75.51%
Machine learning
37.76%
Internet of things
54.10%
Connected devices
51.03%
Augmented/virtual reality
64.29%
Big data
35.12%
Algorithms
48.64%

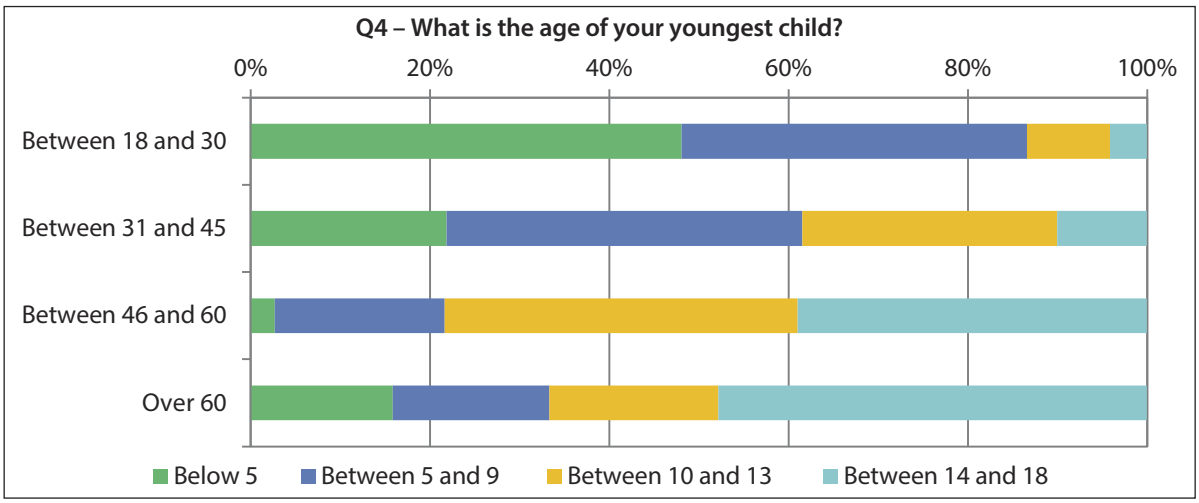

Q21 – What do you need to help your children become responsible digital citizens?
(select the 3 most important for you from the list below)
(15 204 responses)
0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
A website for parents
39.72%
Short webinars where you can participate online and ask questions
25.57%
Short videos from experts on a dedicated video channel
39.81%
"Ask the expert" blog where you can ask questions
29.96%
Activities for children, that I can easily implement at home
47.51%
A Facebook group where I can read the latest updates from experts
18.78%
A recommendation or rating system for children's websites
37.19%
Other (please specify)
3.26%

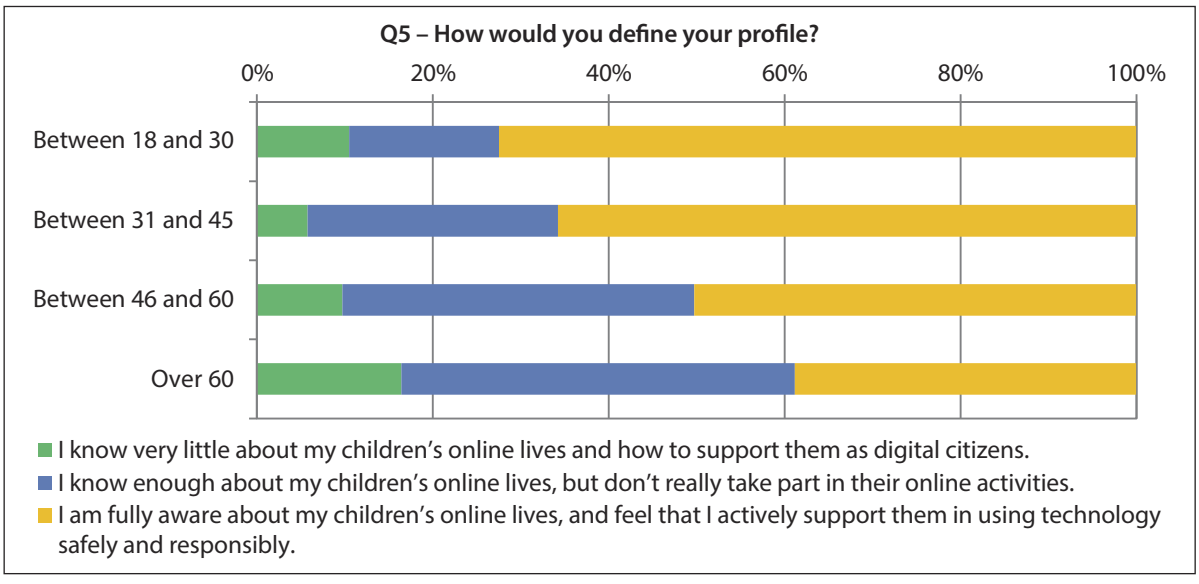

Q22 – Please indicate the topics you would like to receive information on, to support your children with their online activities (14 980 responses)
0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
60%
70%
Ways to protect privacy online
63.95%
Understanding digital footprints; creating and maintaining a good online reputation
33.03%
How to avoid fake news and/ or hate speech
54.15%
What to do in case of bullying incidents
53.69%
Ways to limit the time my children spend online
42.66%
Understanding copyright/legal downloading and use of online information
19.56%
Information about the impact online technology could have on my children
35.90%
Information about how to help them become respectful digital citizens
35.96%
Other
2.08%

APPENDIX IV

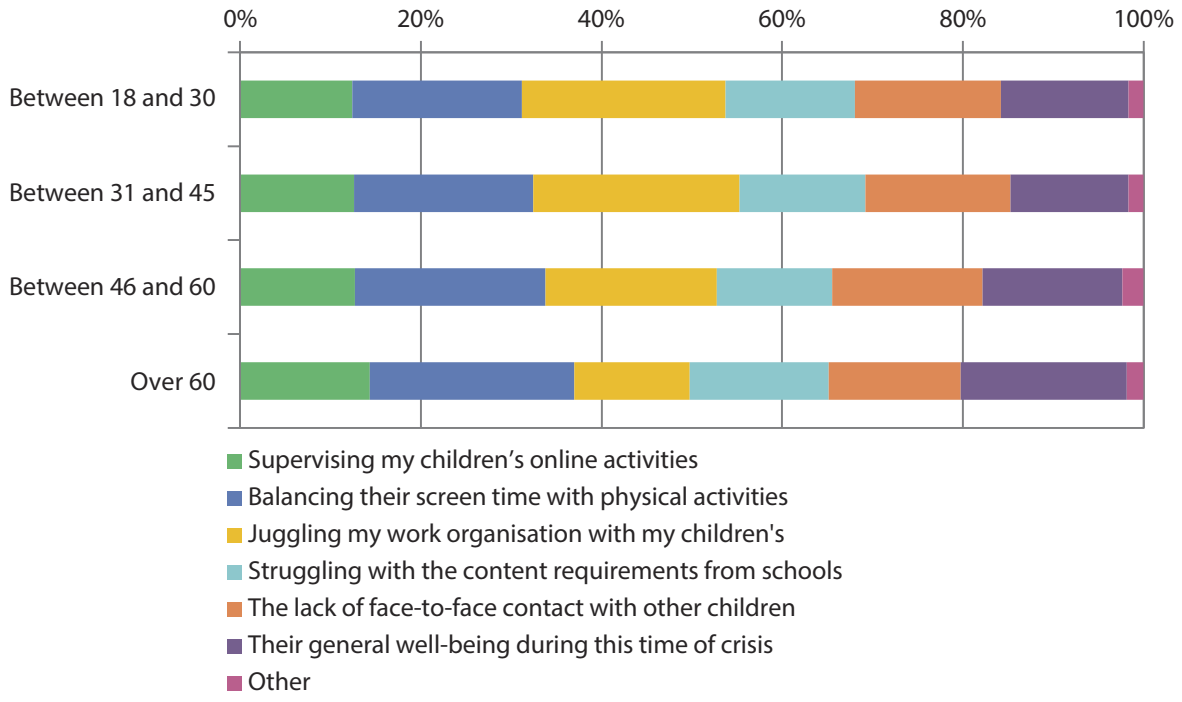
Comparison across respondents' age groups



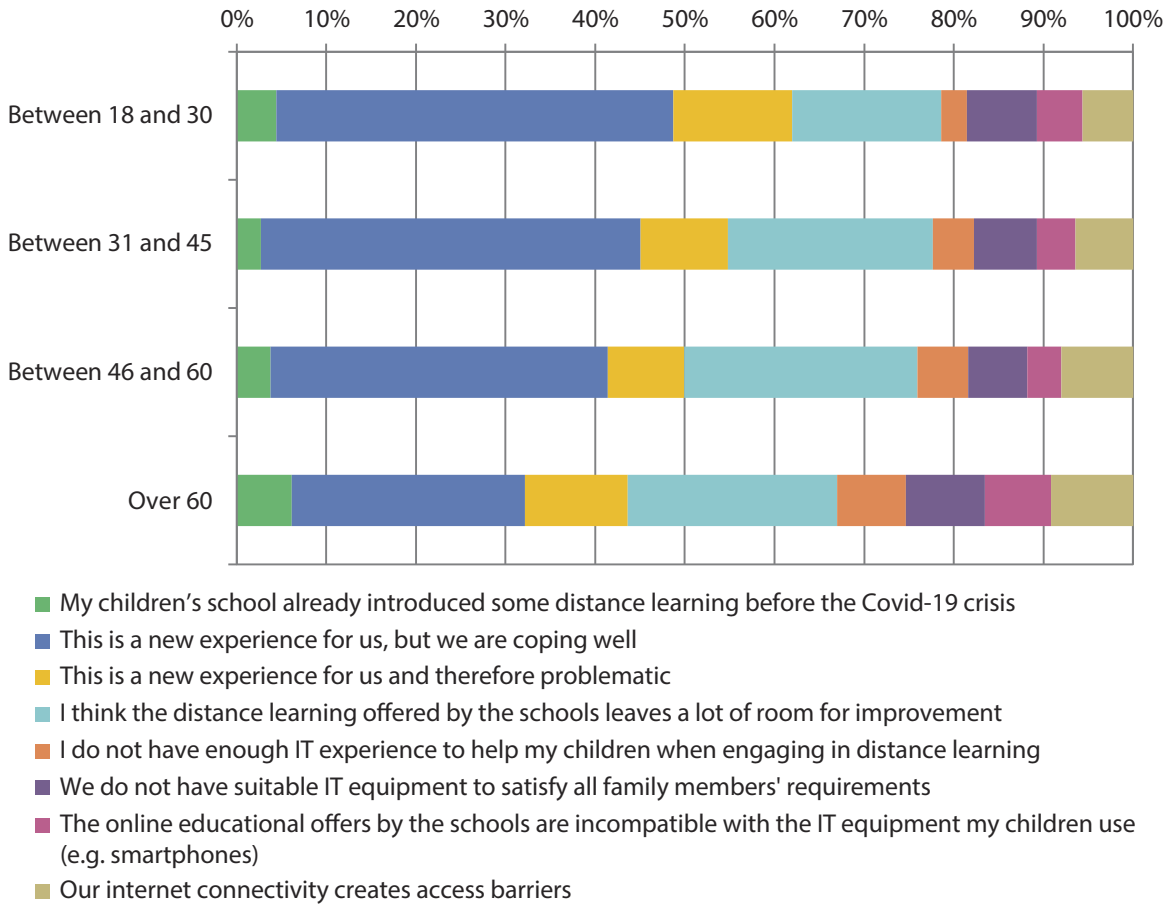


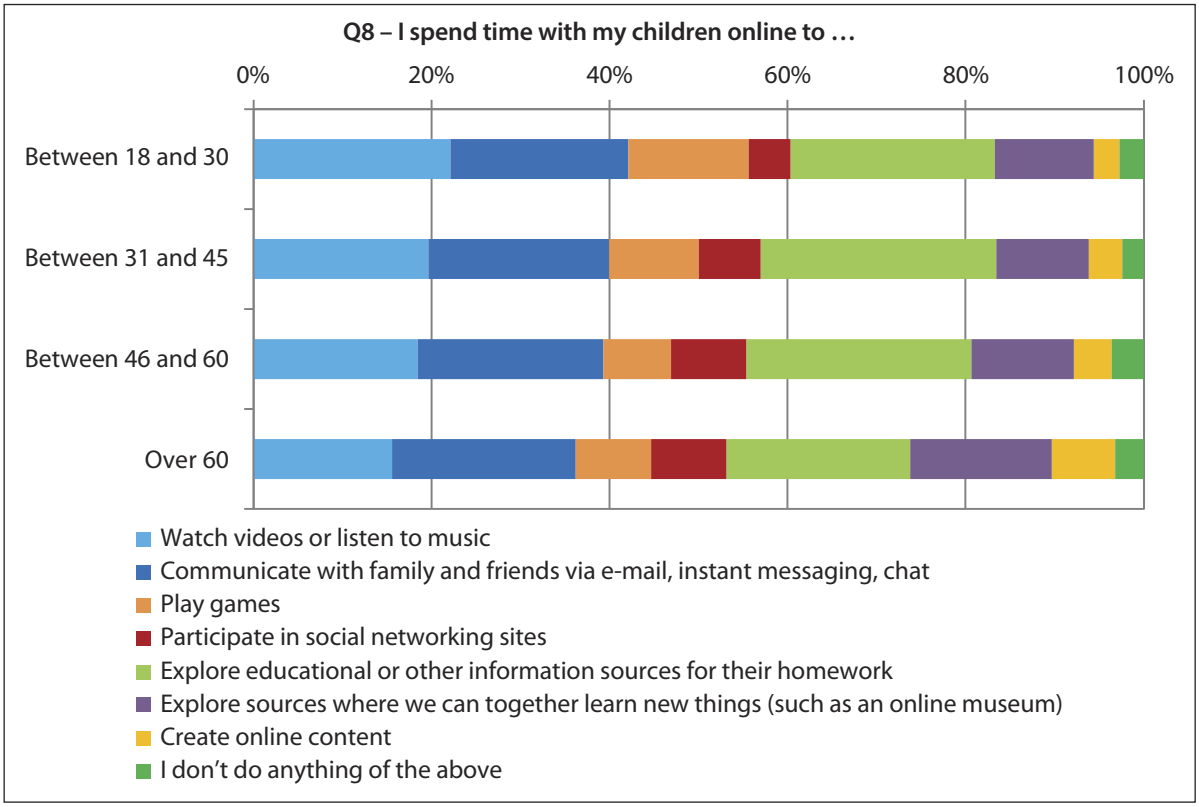


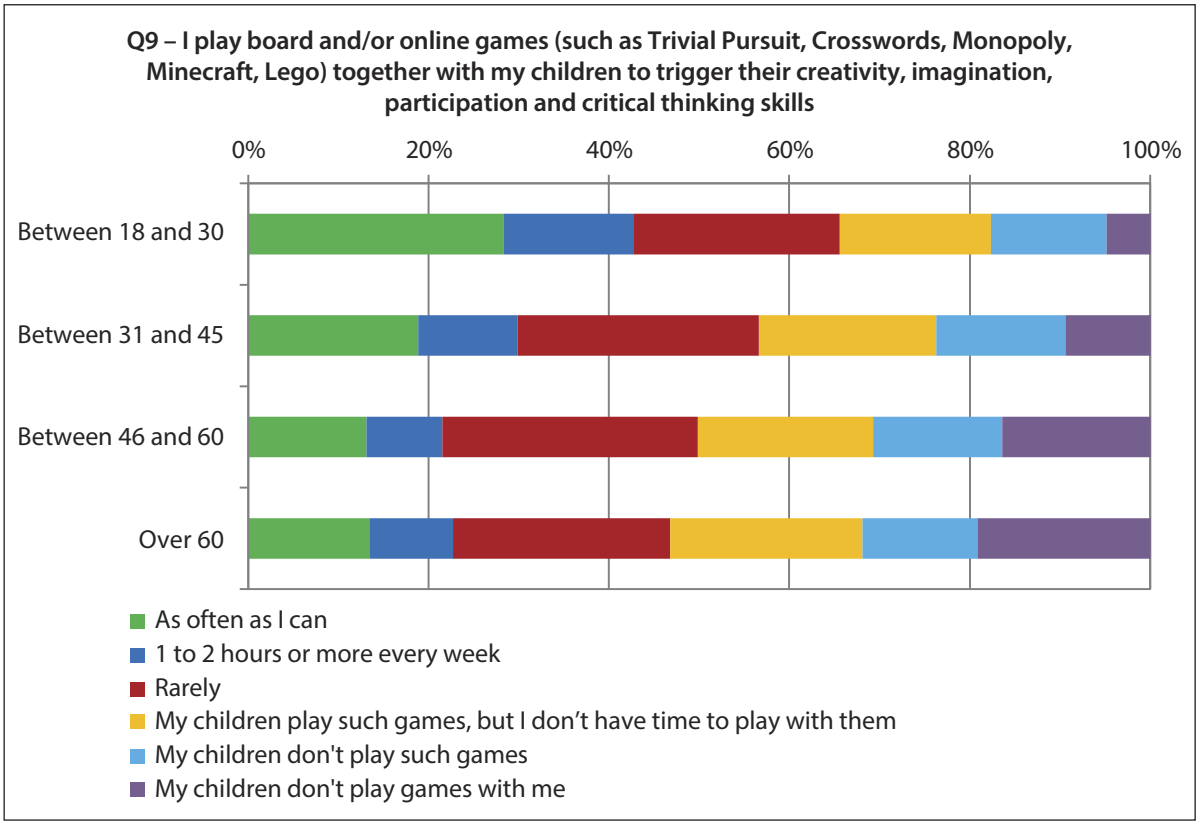
Q6 – If you have been managing your children's education during this time, which aspects have been most challenging for you?

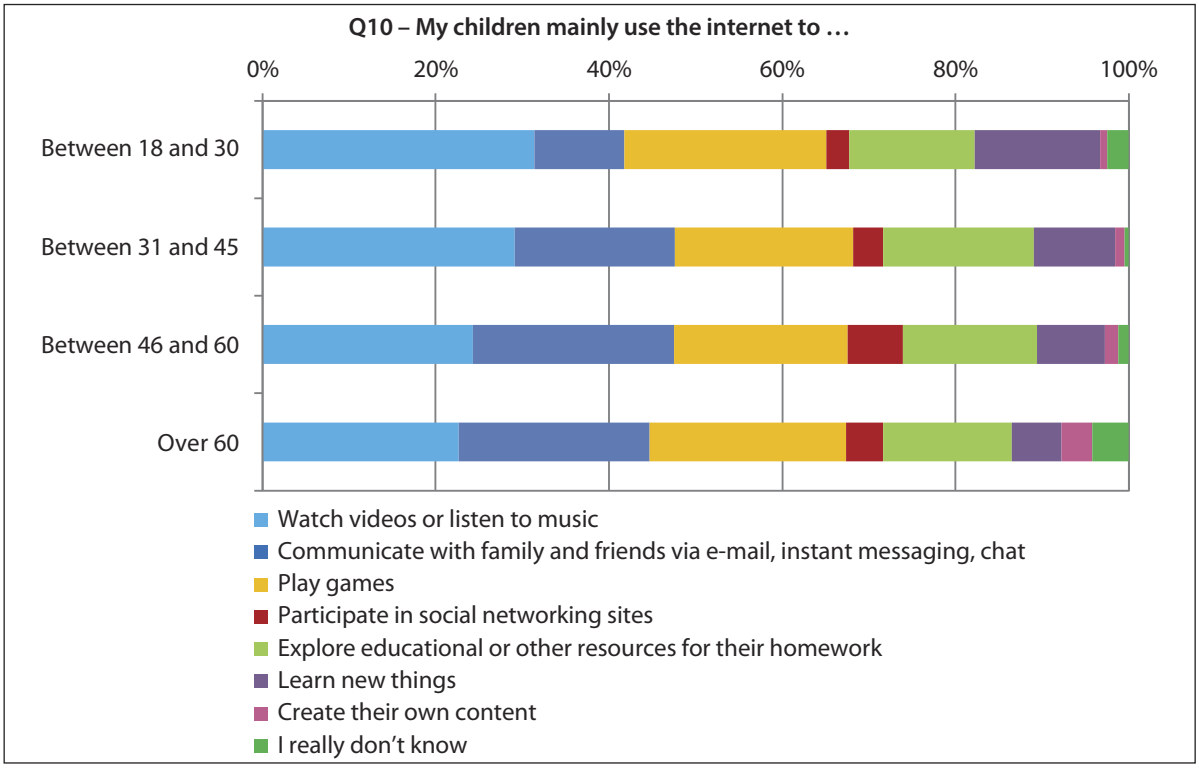


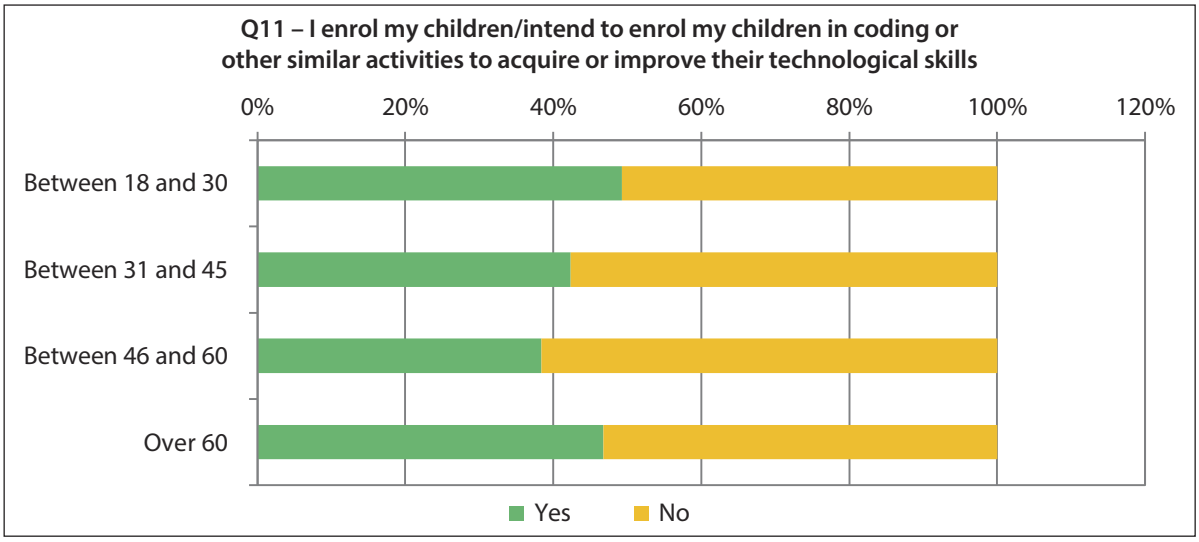
Q7 – Many schools reacted to the crisis by using distance learning. What have your (and your children's) experiences with this been so far?

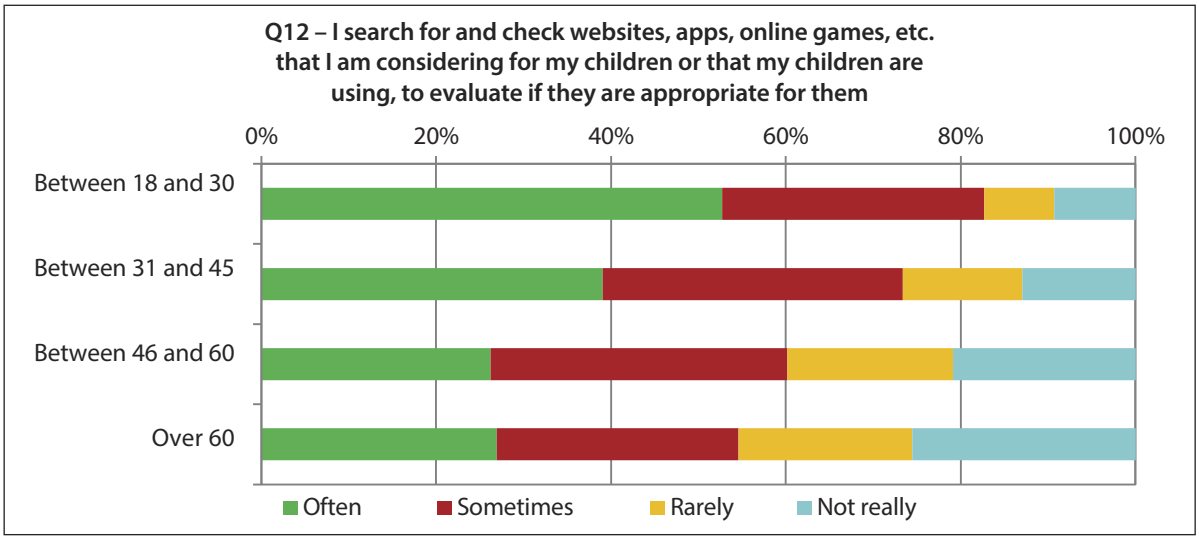


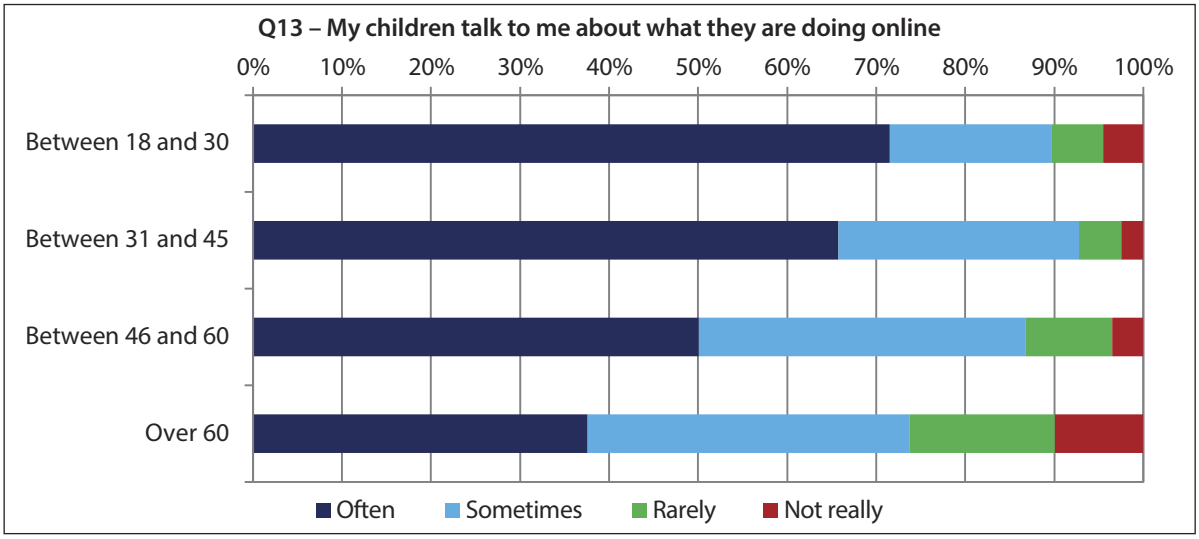

Q8 – I spend time with my children online to …
0%
20%
40%
60%
80%
100%
Between 18 and 30
Between 31 and 45
Between 46 and 60
Over 60
Watch videos or listen to music
Communicate with family and friends via e-mail, instant messaging, chat
Play games
Participate in social networking sites
Explore educational or other information sources for their homework
Explore sources where we can together learn new things (such as an online museum)
Create online content
I don't do anything of the above

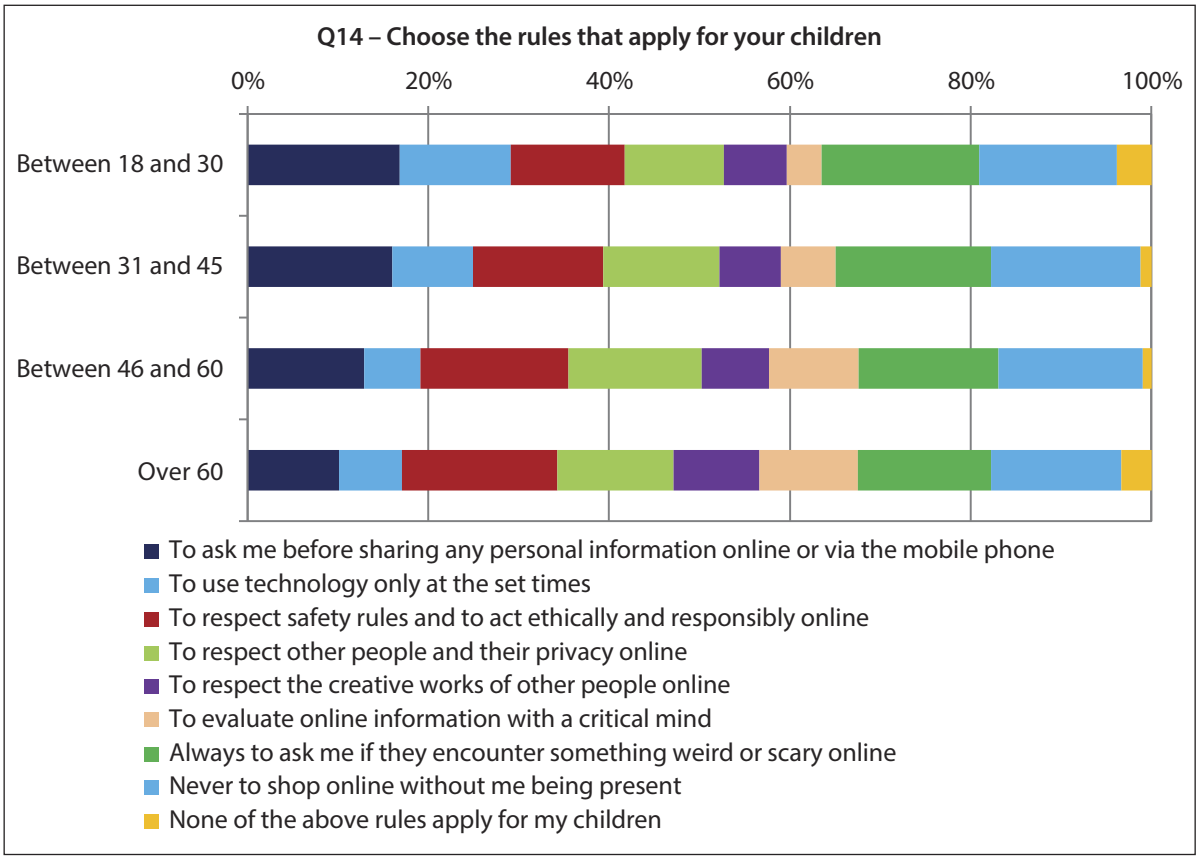

Q9 – I play board and/or online games (such as Trivial Pursuit, Crosswords, Monopoly, Minecraft, Lego) together with my children to trigger their creativity, imagination, participation and critical thinking skills
0%
20%
40%
60%
80%
100%
Between 18 and 30
Between 31 and 45
Between 46 and 60
Over 60
As often as I can
1 to 2 hours or more every week
Rarely
My children play such games, but I don't have time to play with them
My children don't play such games
My children don't play games with me

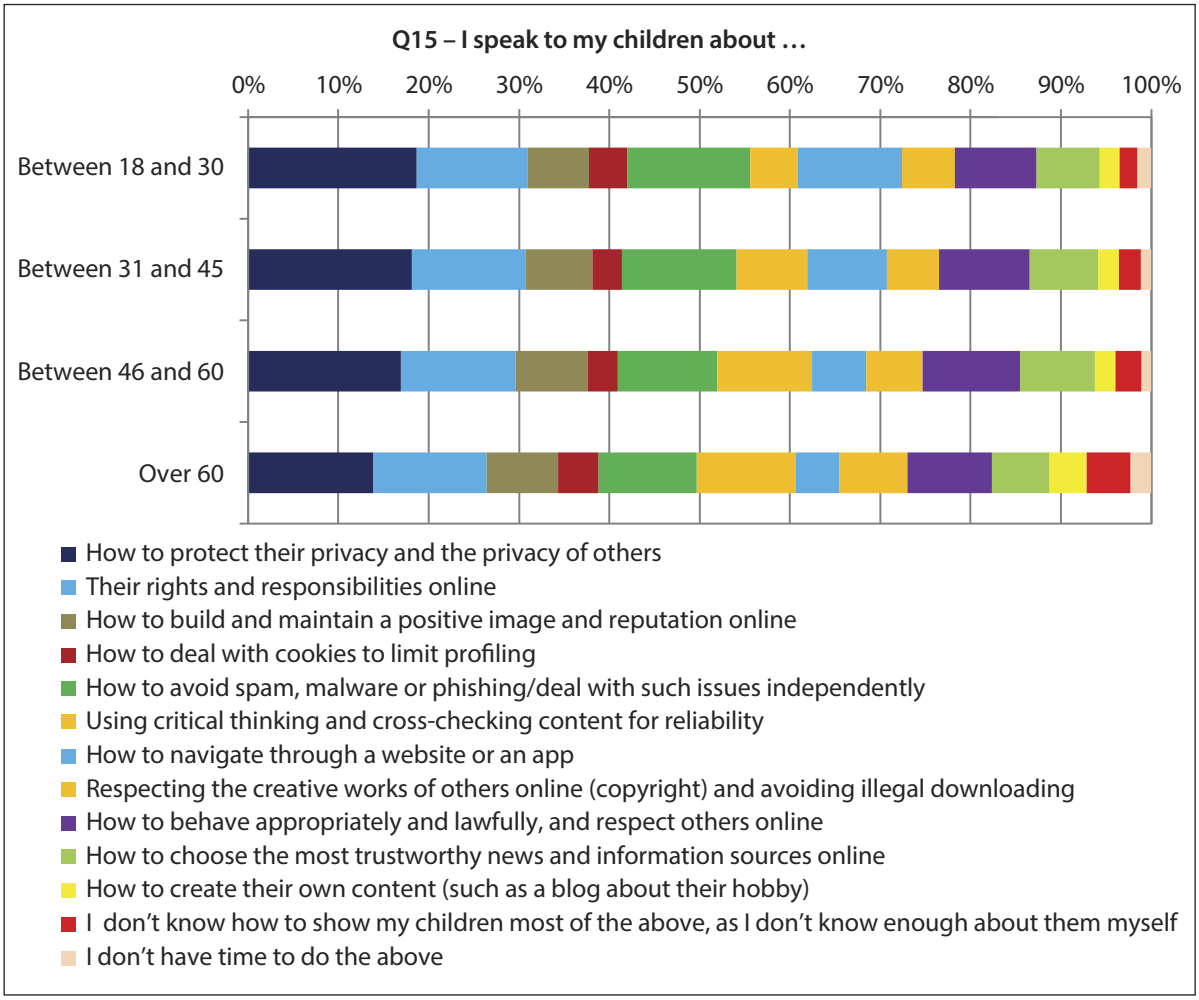

Q10 – My children mainly use the internet to …
0%
20%
40%
60%
80%
100%
Between 18 and 30
Between 31 and 45
Between 46 and 60
Over 60
Watch videos or listen to music
Communicate with family and friends via e-mail, instant messaging, chat
Play games
Participate in social networking sites
Explore educational or other resources for their homework
Learn new things
Create their own content
I really don't know

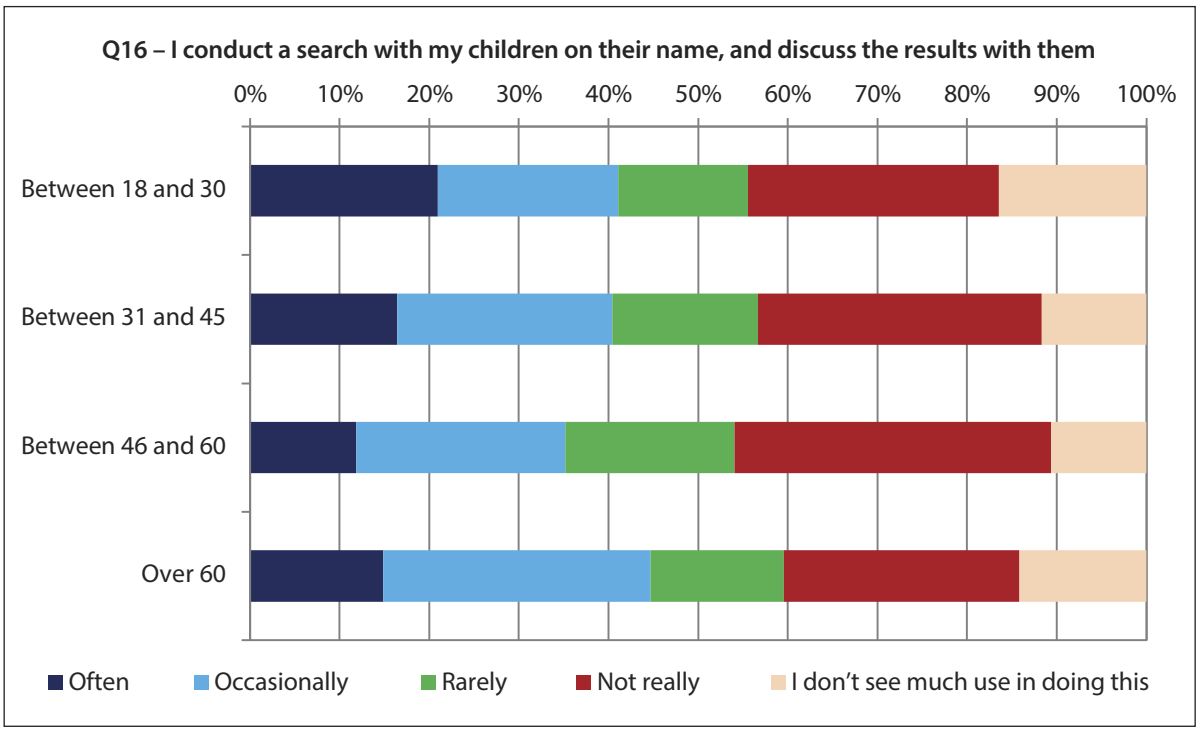

Q11 – I enrol my children/intend to enrol my children in coding or other similar activities to acquire or improve their technological skills
0%
20%
40%
60%
80%
100%
120%
Between 18 and 30
Between 31 and 45
Between 46 and 60
Over 60
Yes
No


Q12 – I search for and check websites, apps, online games, etc. that I am considering for my children or that my children are using, to evaluate if they are appropriate for them
0%
20%
40%
60%
80%
100%
Between 18 and 30
Between 31 and 45
Between 46 and 60
Over 60
Often
Sometimes
Rarely
Not really

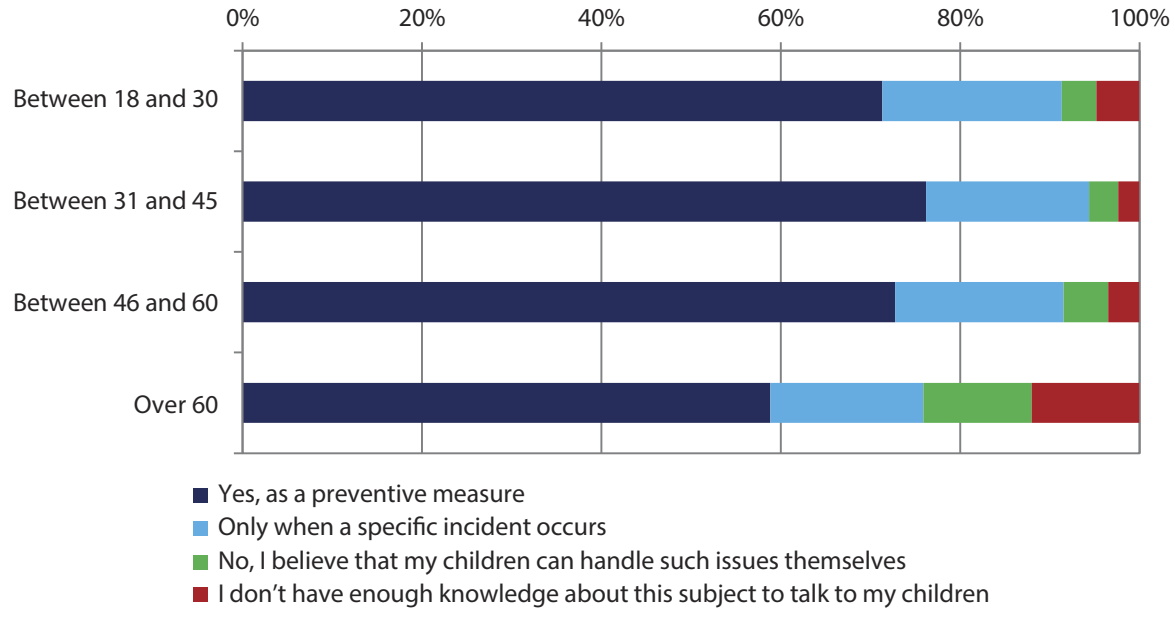

Q13 – My children talk to me about what they are doing online
0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
60%
70%
80%
90%
100%
Between 18 and 30
Between 31 and 45
Between 46 and 60
Over 60
Often
Sometimes
Rarely
Not really


Q14 – Choose the rules that apply for your children
0%
20%
40%
60%
80%
100%
Between 18 and 30
Between 31 and 45
Between 46 and 60
Over 60
To ask me before sharing any personal information online or via the mobile phone
To use technology only at the set times
To respect safety rules and to act ethically and responsibly online
To respect other people and their privacy online
To respect the creative works of other people online
To evaluate online information with a critical mind
Always to ask me if they encounter something weird or scary online
Never to shop online without me being present
None of the above rules apply for my children

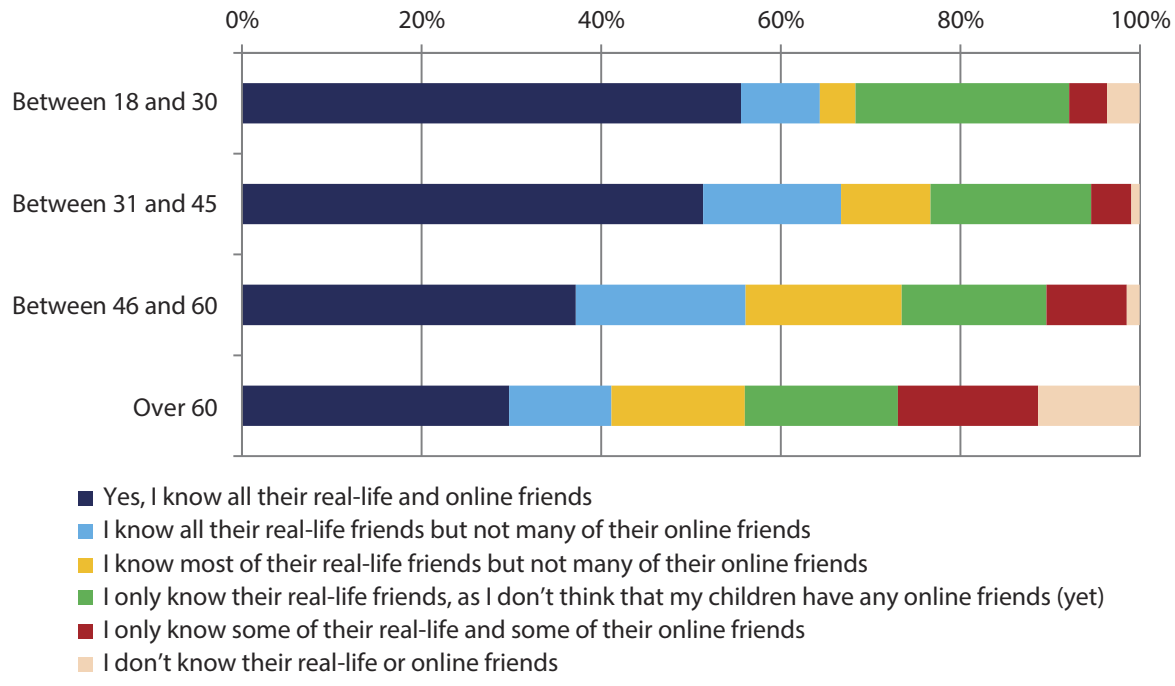

Q15 – I speak to my children about …
0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
60%
70%
80%
90%
100%
Between 18 and 30
Between 31 and 45
Between 46 and 60
Over 60
How to protect their privacy and the privacy of others
Their rights and responsibilities online
How to build and maintain a positive image and reputation online
How to deal with cookies to limit profiling
How to avoid spam, malware or phishing/deal with such issues independently
Using critical thinking and cross-checking content for reliability
How to navigate through a website or an app
Respecting the creative works of others online (copyright) and avoiding illegal downloading
How to behave appropriately and lawfully, and respect others online
How to choose the most trustworthy news and information sources online
How to create their own content (such as a blog about their hobby)
I don't know how to show my children most of the above, as I don't know enough about them myself
I don't have time to do the above

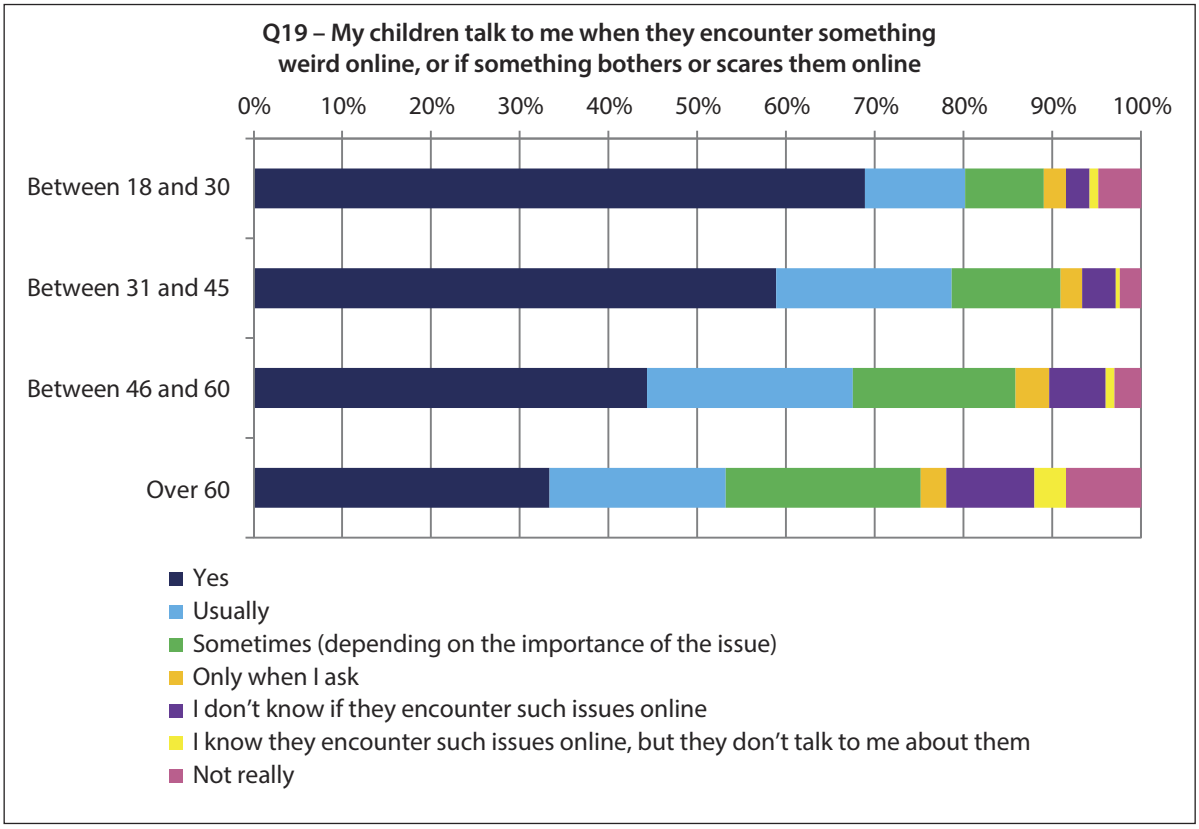

Q16 – I conduct a search with my children on their name, and discuss the results with them
0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
60%
70%
80%
90%
100%
Between 18 and 30
Between 31 and 45
Between 46 and 60
Over 60
Often
Occasionally
Rarely
Not really
I don't see much use in doing this

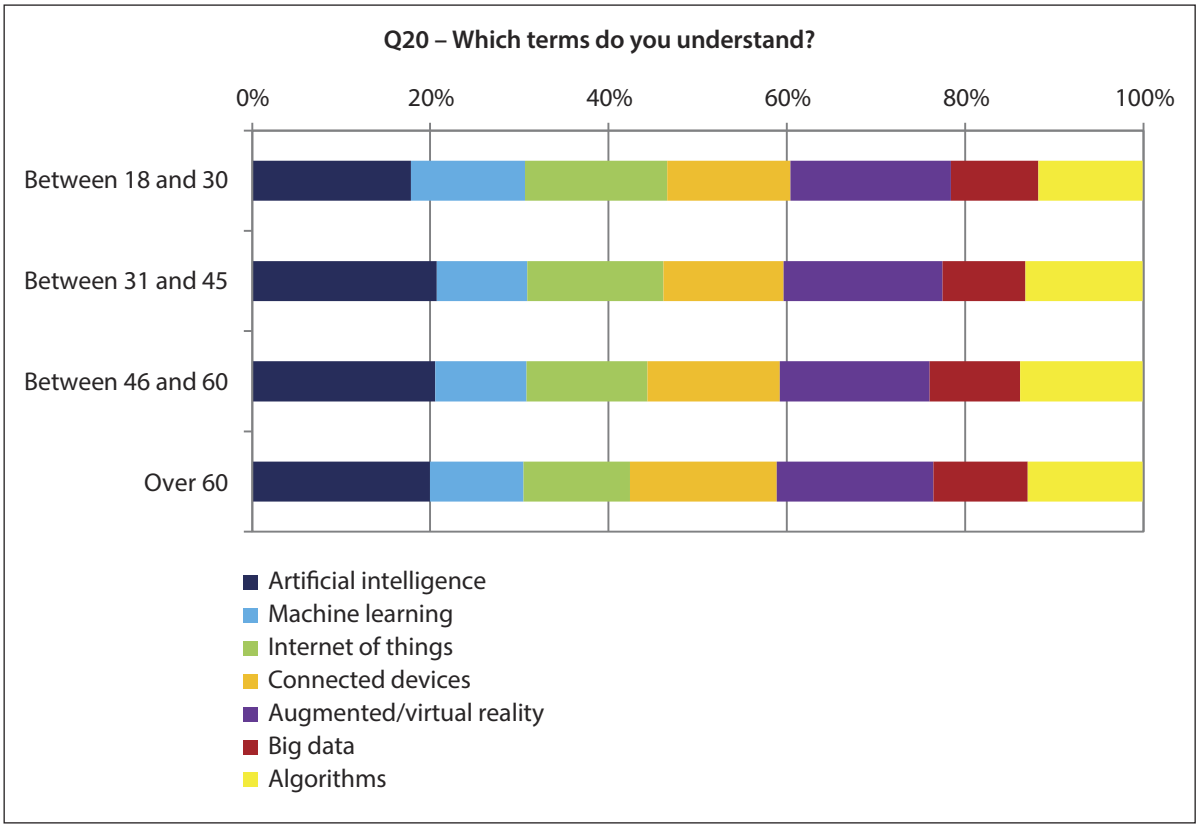
Q17 – I talk to my children about what to do if they are bullied or treated badly, or if they believe that somebody else is being bullied or treated badly, online or offline

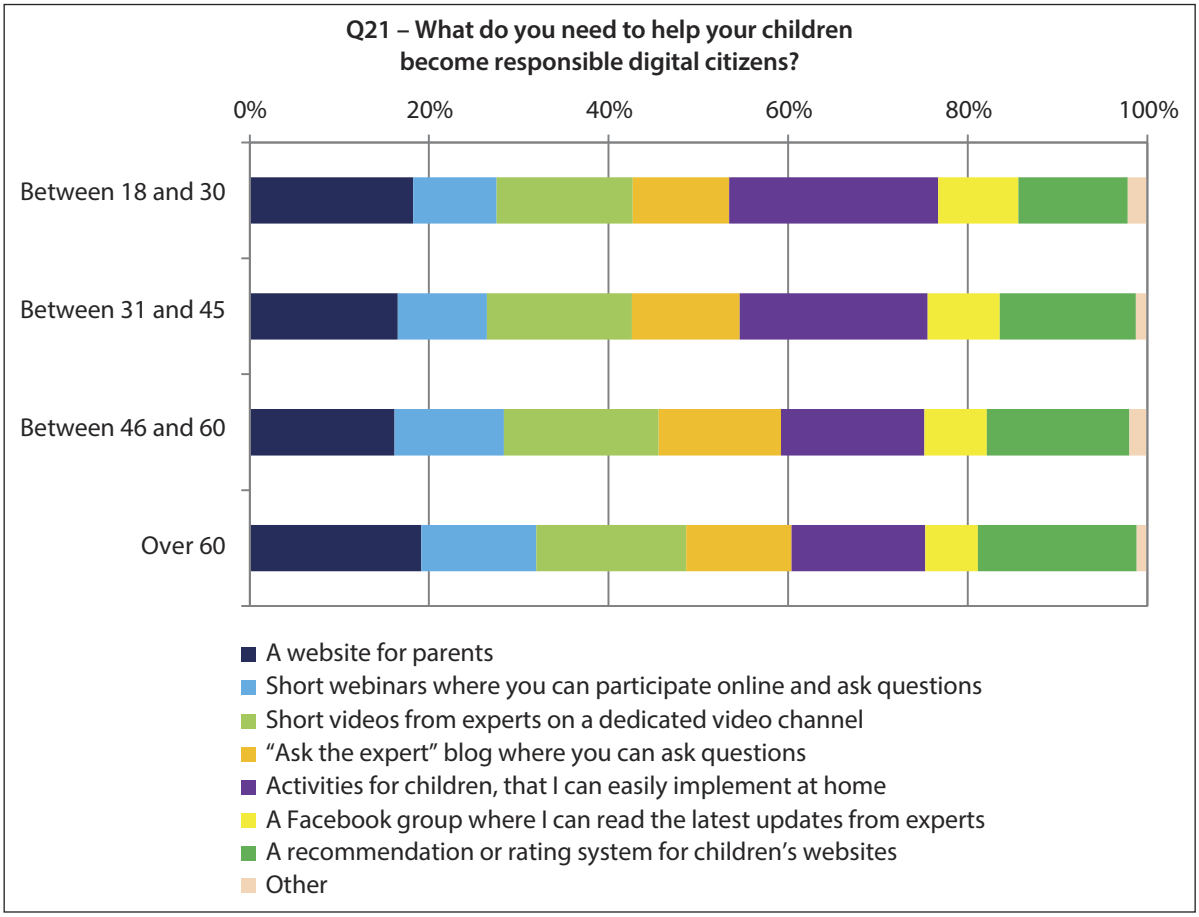


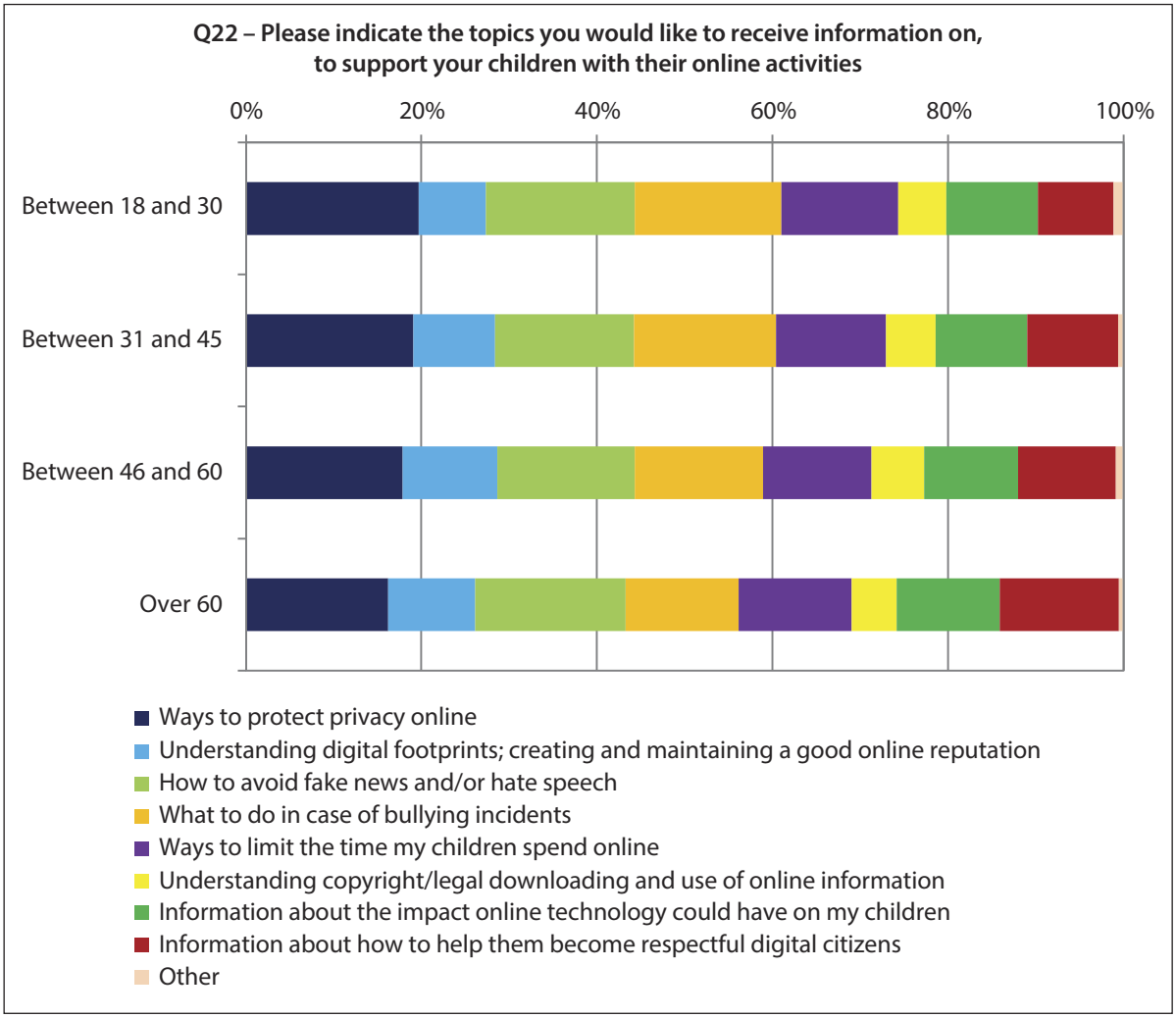
Q18 – My children talk to me about their real-life and online friends




Q19 – My children talk to me when they encounter something weird online, or if something bothers or scares them online
0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
60%
70%
80%
90%
100%
Between 18 and 30
Between 31 and 45
Between 46 and 60
Over 60
Yes
Usually
Sometimes (depending on the importance of the issue)
Only when I ask
I don't know if they encounter such issues online
I know they encounter such issues online, but they don't talk to me about them
Not really

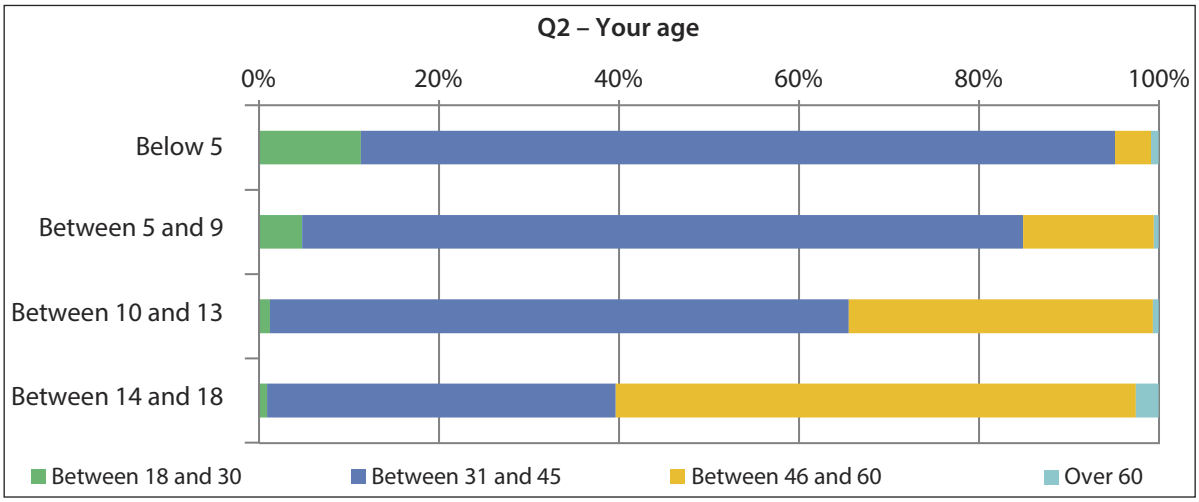

Q20 – Which terms do you understand?
0%
20%
40%
60%
80%
100%
Between 18 and 30
Between 31 and 45
Between 46 and 60
Over 60
Artificial intelligence
Machine learning
Internet of things
Connected devices
Augmented/virtual reality
Big data
Algorithms

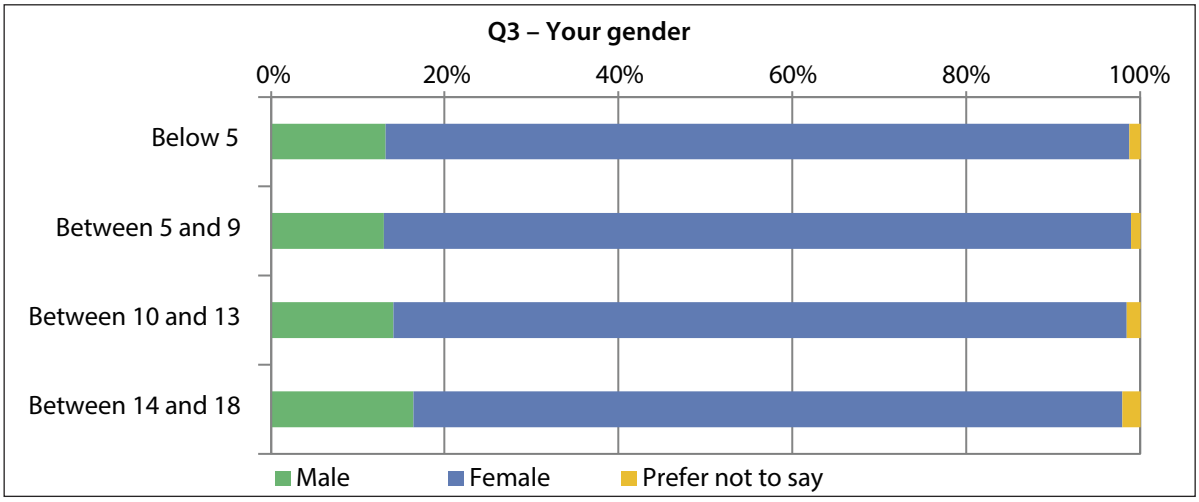

Q21 – What do you need to help your children become responsible digital citizens?
0%
20%
40%
60%
80%
100%
Between 18 and 30
Between 31 and 45
Between 46 and 60
Over 60
A website for parents
Short webinars where you can participate online and ask questions
Short videos from experts on a dedicated video channel
"Ask the expert" blog where you can ask questions
Activities for children, that I can easily implement at home
A Facebook group where I can read the latest updates from experts
A recommendation or rating system for children's websites
Other

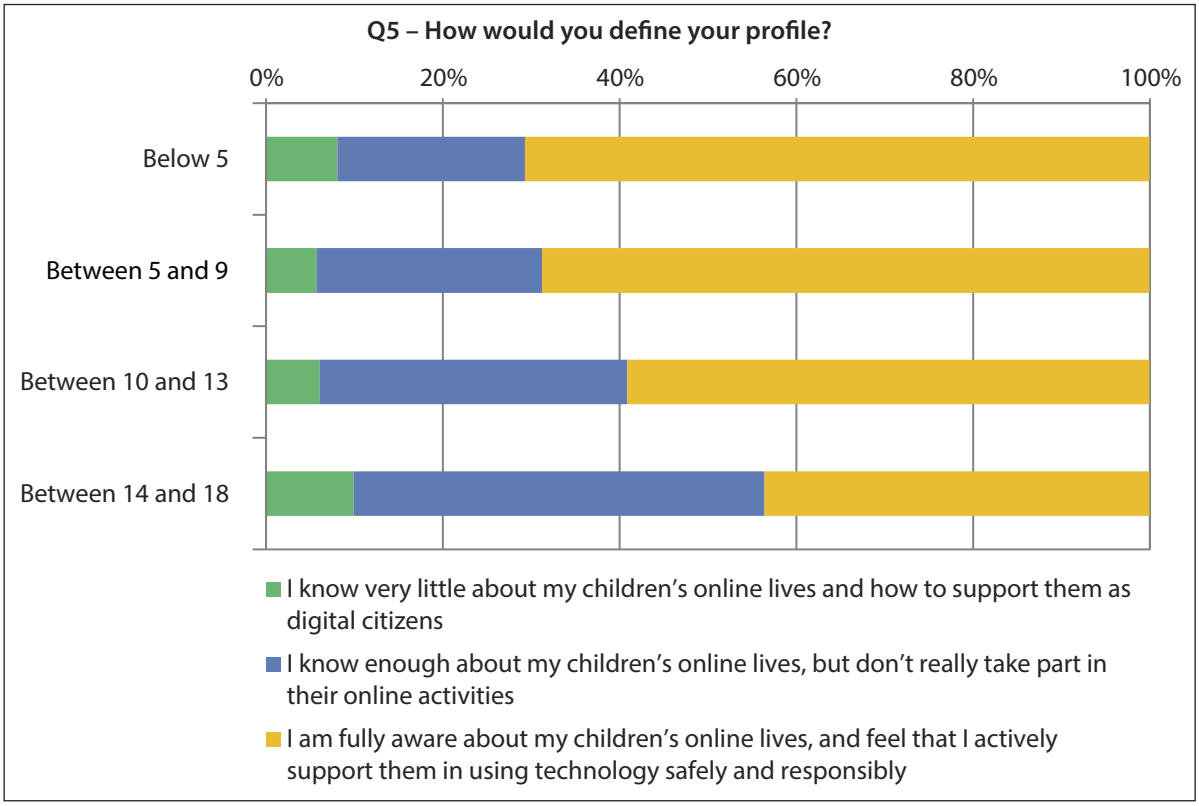

Q22 – Please indicate the topics you would like to receive information on, to support your children with their online activities
0%
20%
40%
60%
80%
100%
Between 18 and 30
Between 31 and 45
Between 46 and 60
Over 60
Ways to protect privacy online
Understanding digital footprints; creating and maintaining a good online reputation
How to avoid fake news and/or hate speech
What to do in case of bullying incidents
Ways to limit the time my children spend online
Understanding copyright/legal downloading and use of online information
Information about the impact online technology could have on my children
Information about how to help them become respectful digital citizens
Other

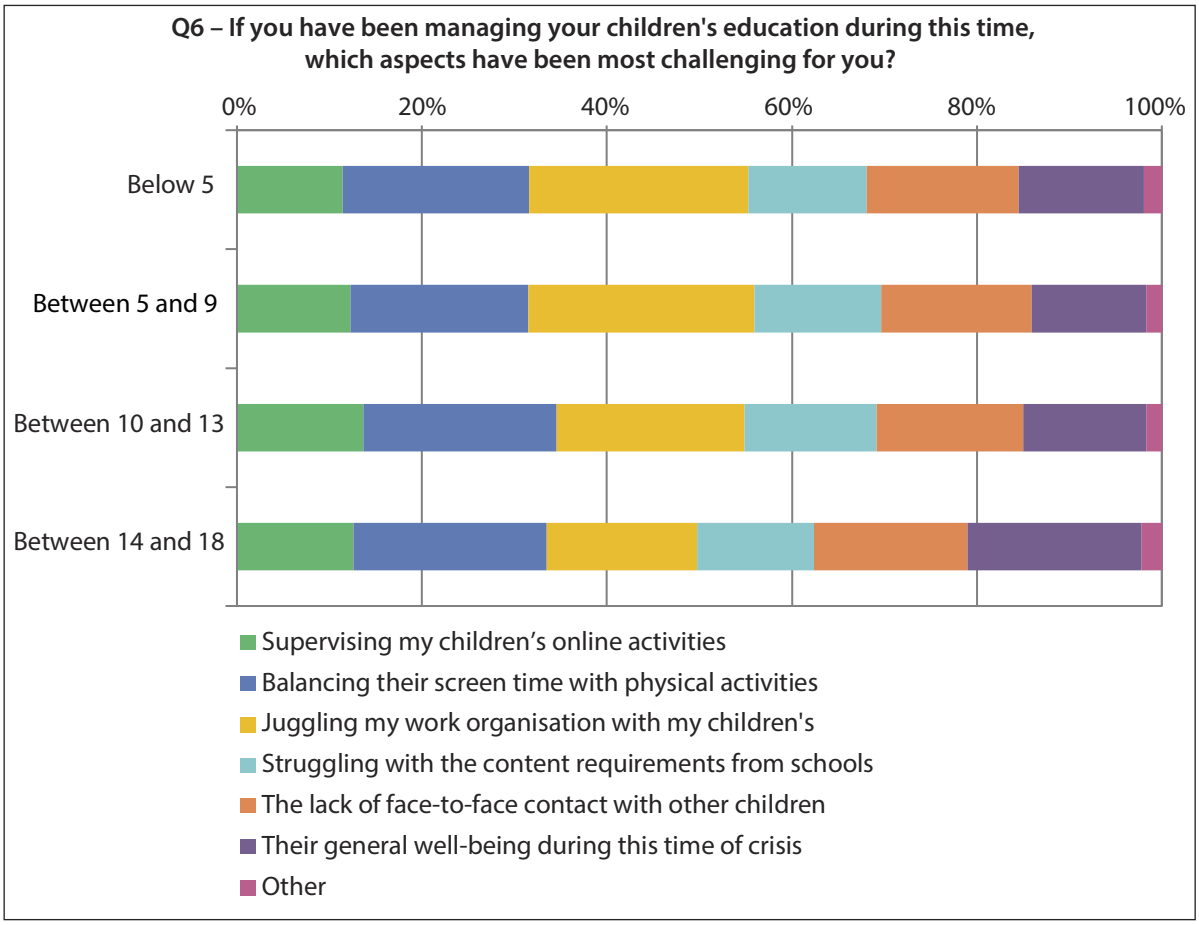
APPENDIX V

Comparison across children's age groups

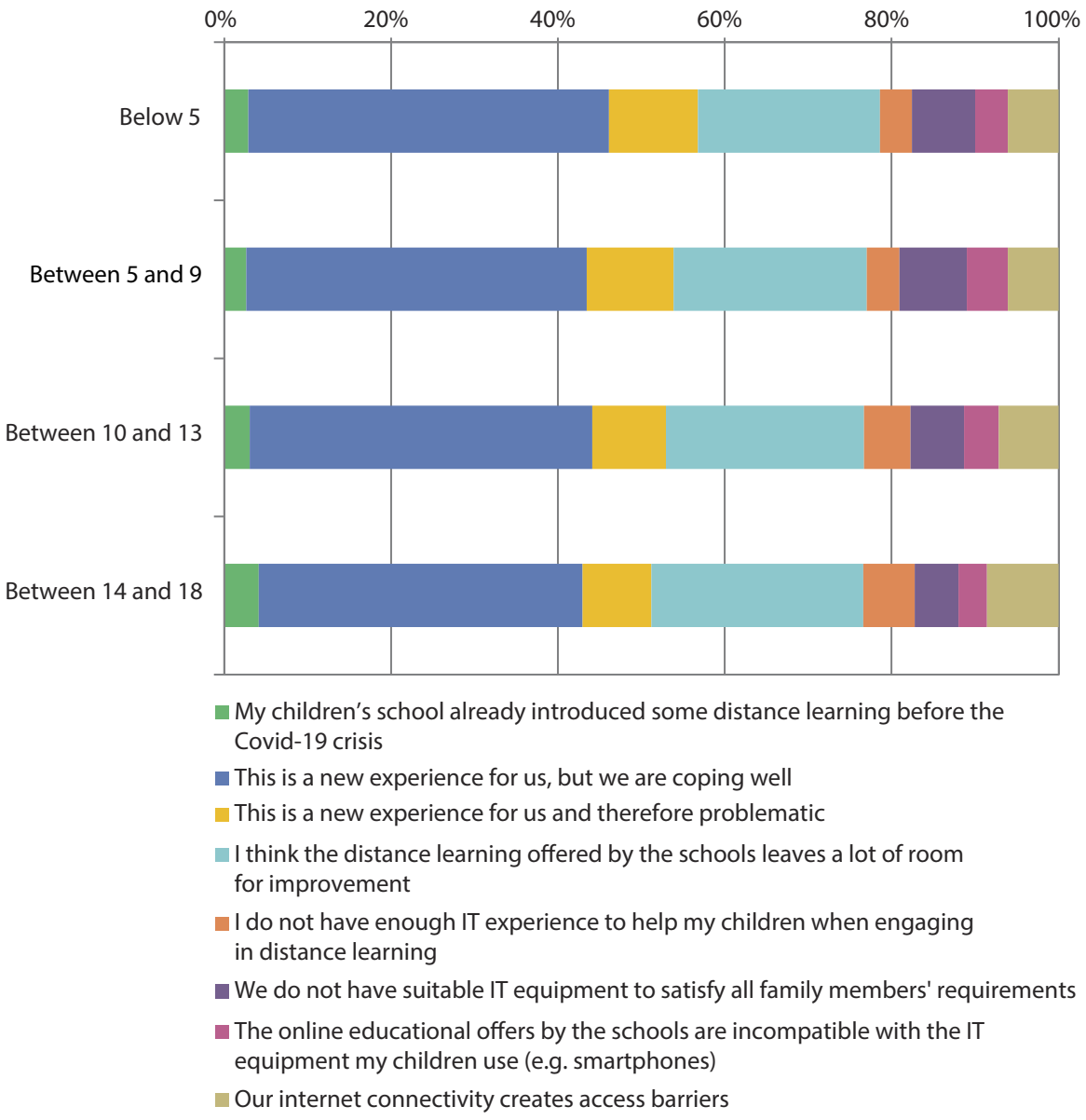


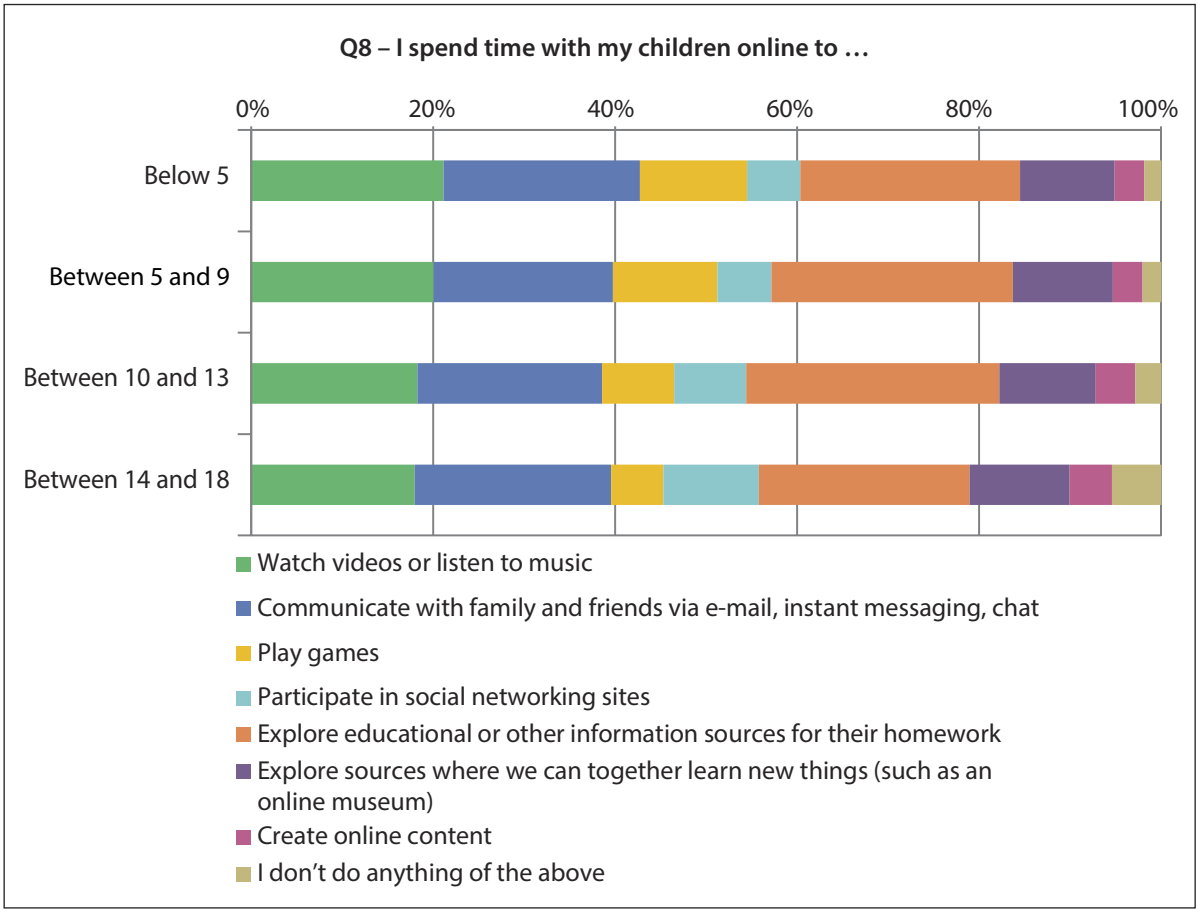


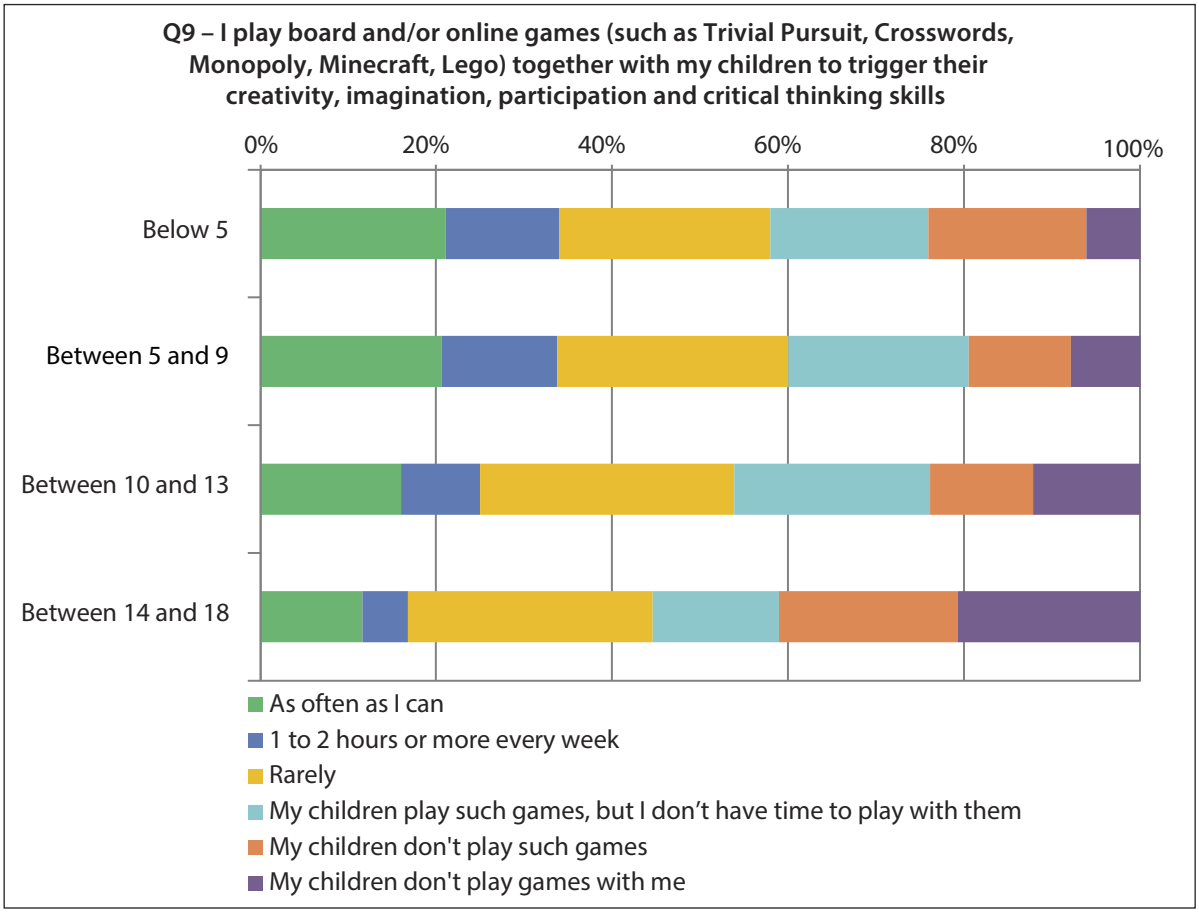

Q5 – How would you define your profile?
0%
20%
40%
60%
80%
100%
Below 5
Between 5 and 9
Between 10 and 13
Between 14 and 18
I know very little about my children's online lives and how to support them as digital citizens
I know enough about my children's online lives, but don't really take part in their online activities
I am fully aware about my children's online lives, and feel that I actively support them in using technology safely and responsibly

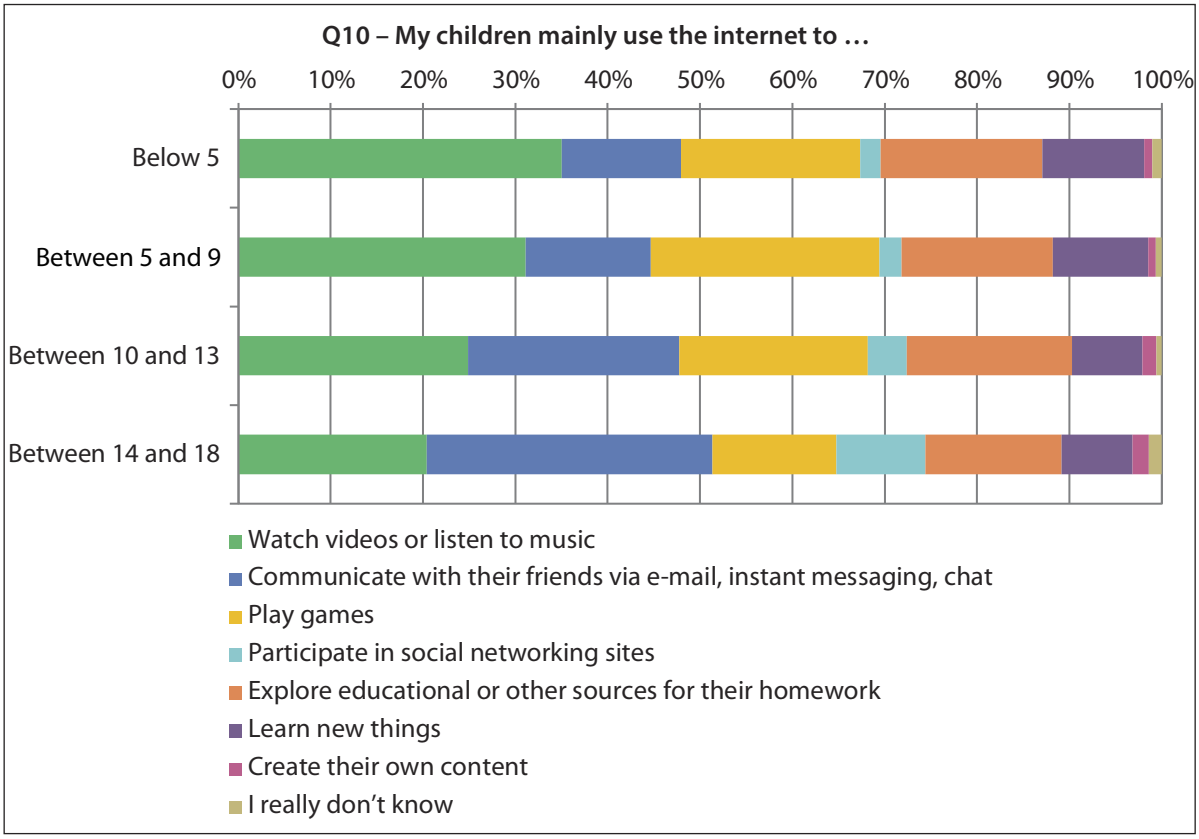

Q6 – If you have been managing your children's education during this time, which aspects have been most challenging for you?
0%
20%
40%
60%
80%
100%
Below 5
Between 5 and 9
Between 10 and 13
Between 14 and 18
Supervising my children's online activities
Balancing their screen time with physical activities
Juggling my work organisation with my children's
Struggling with the content requirements from schools
The lack of face-to-face contact with other children
Their general well-being during this time of crisis
Other

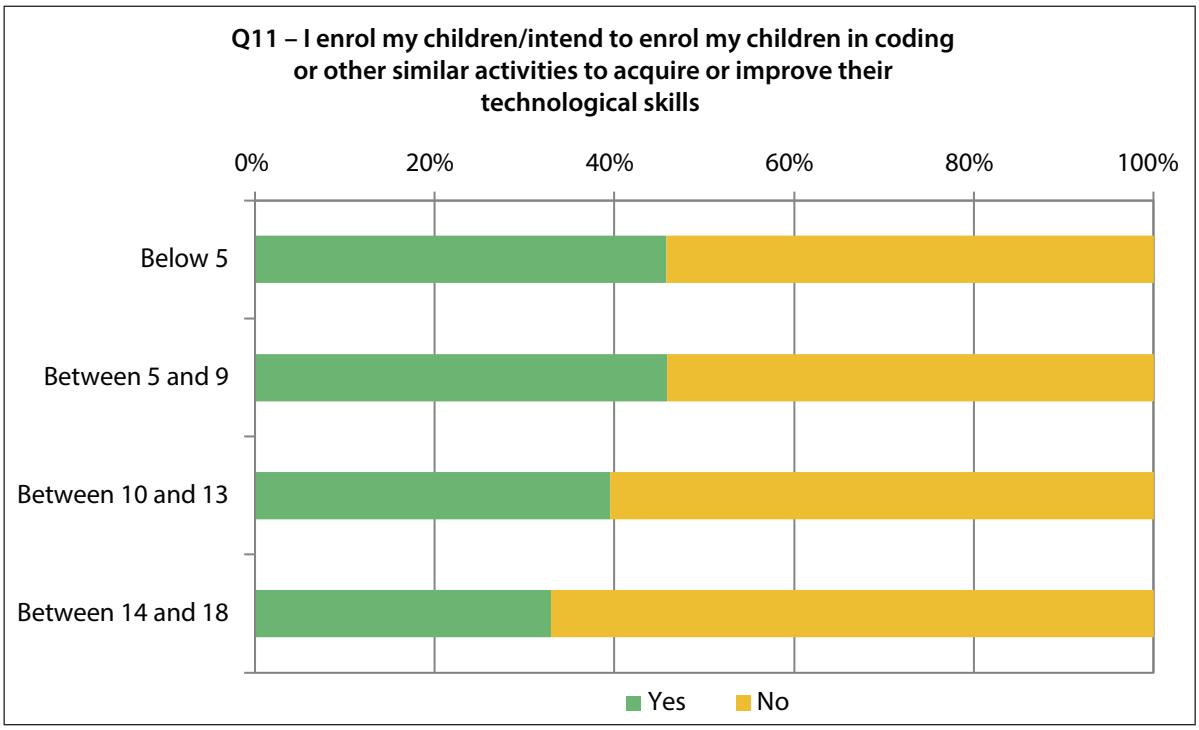
Q7 – Many schools reacted to the crisis by using distance learning. What have your (and your children's) experiences with this been so far?

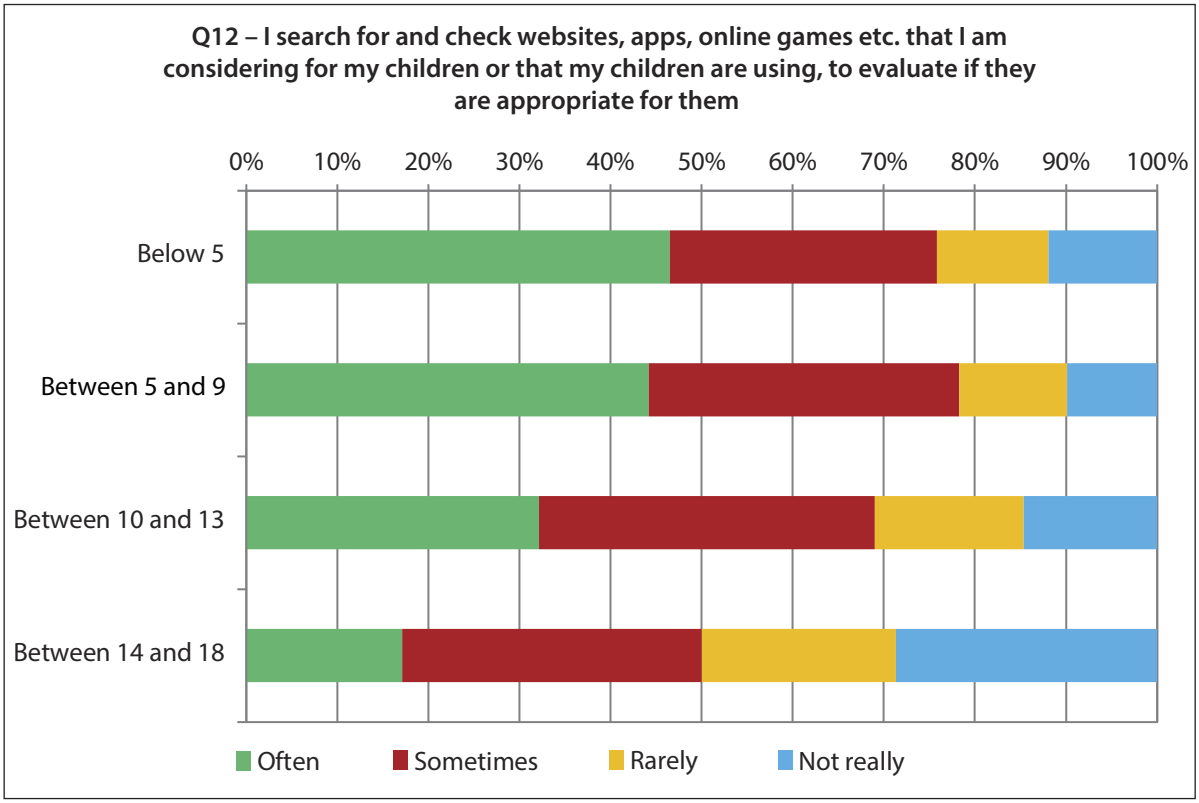


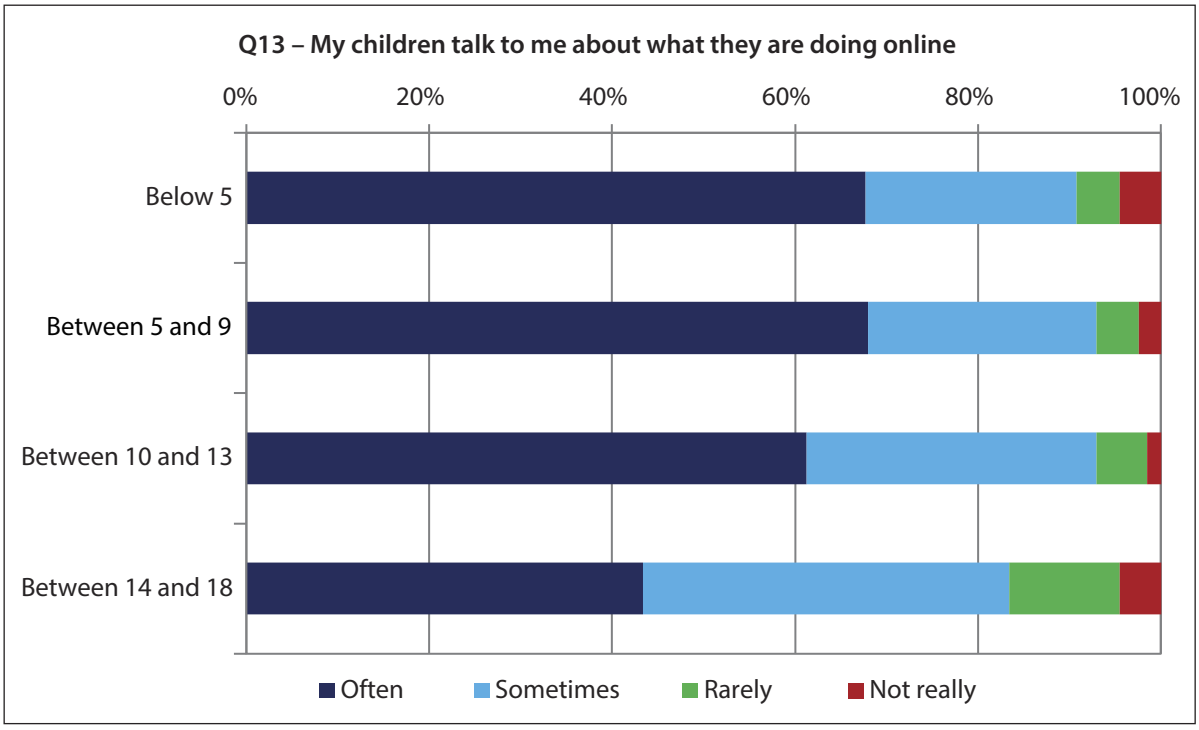

Q8 – I spend time with my children online to …
0%
20%
40%
60%
80%
100%
Below 5
Between 5 and 9
Between 10 and 13
Between 14 and 18
Watch videos or listen to music
Communicate with family and friends via e-mail, instant messaging, chat
Play games
Participate in social networking sites
Explore educational or other information sources for their homework
Explore sources where we can together learn new things (such as an online museum)
Create online content
I don't do anything of the above

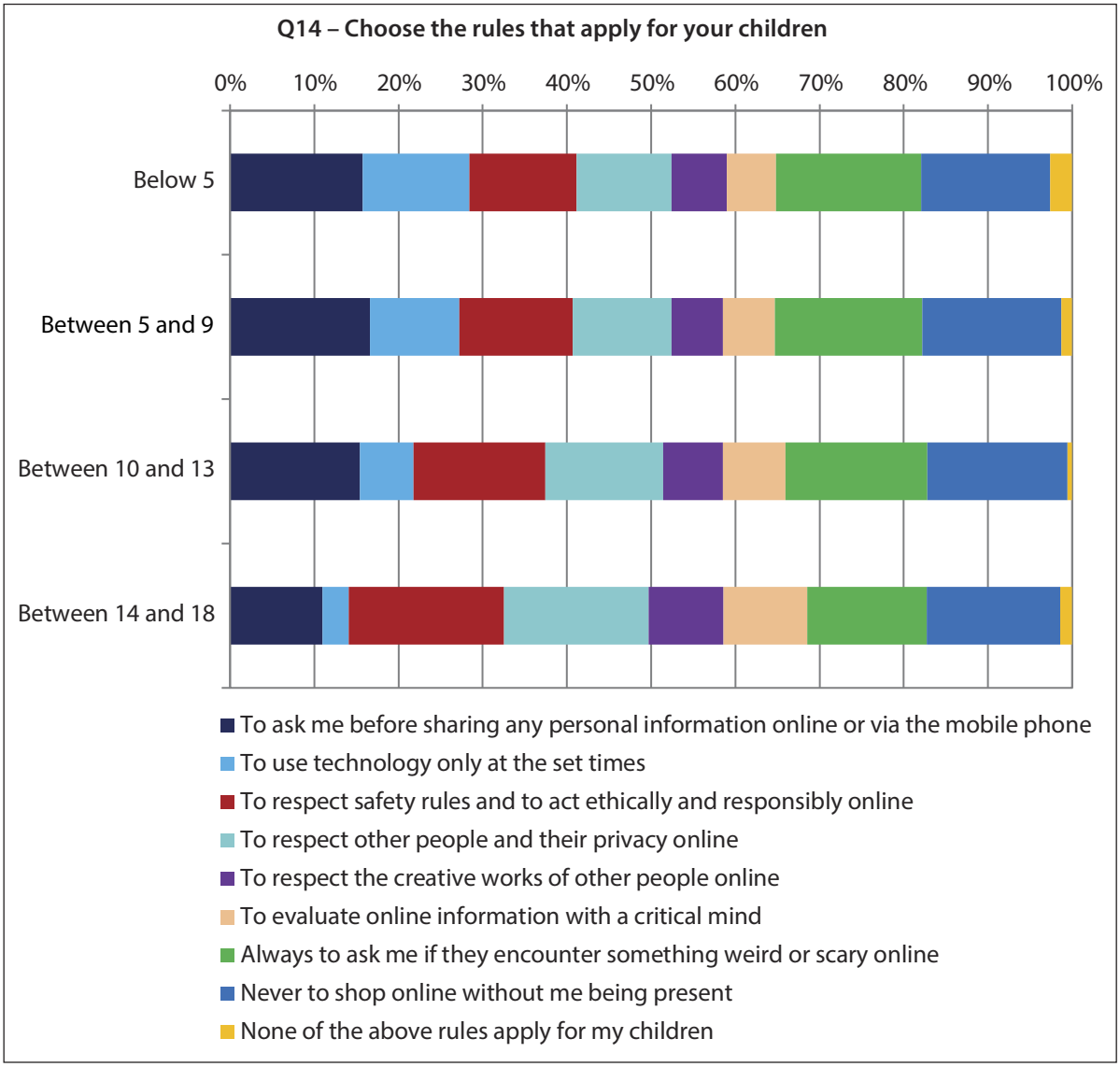

Q9 – I play board and/or online games (such as Trivial Pursuit, Crosswords, Monopoly, Minecraft, Lego) together with my children to trigger their creativity, imagination, participation and critical thinking skills
0%
20%
40%
60%
80%
100%
Below 5
Between 5 and 9
Between 10 and 13
Between 14 and 18
As often as I can
1 to 2 hours or more every week
Rarely
My children play such games, but I don't have time to play with them
My children don't play such games
My children don't play games with me

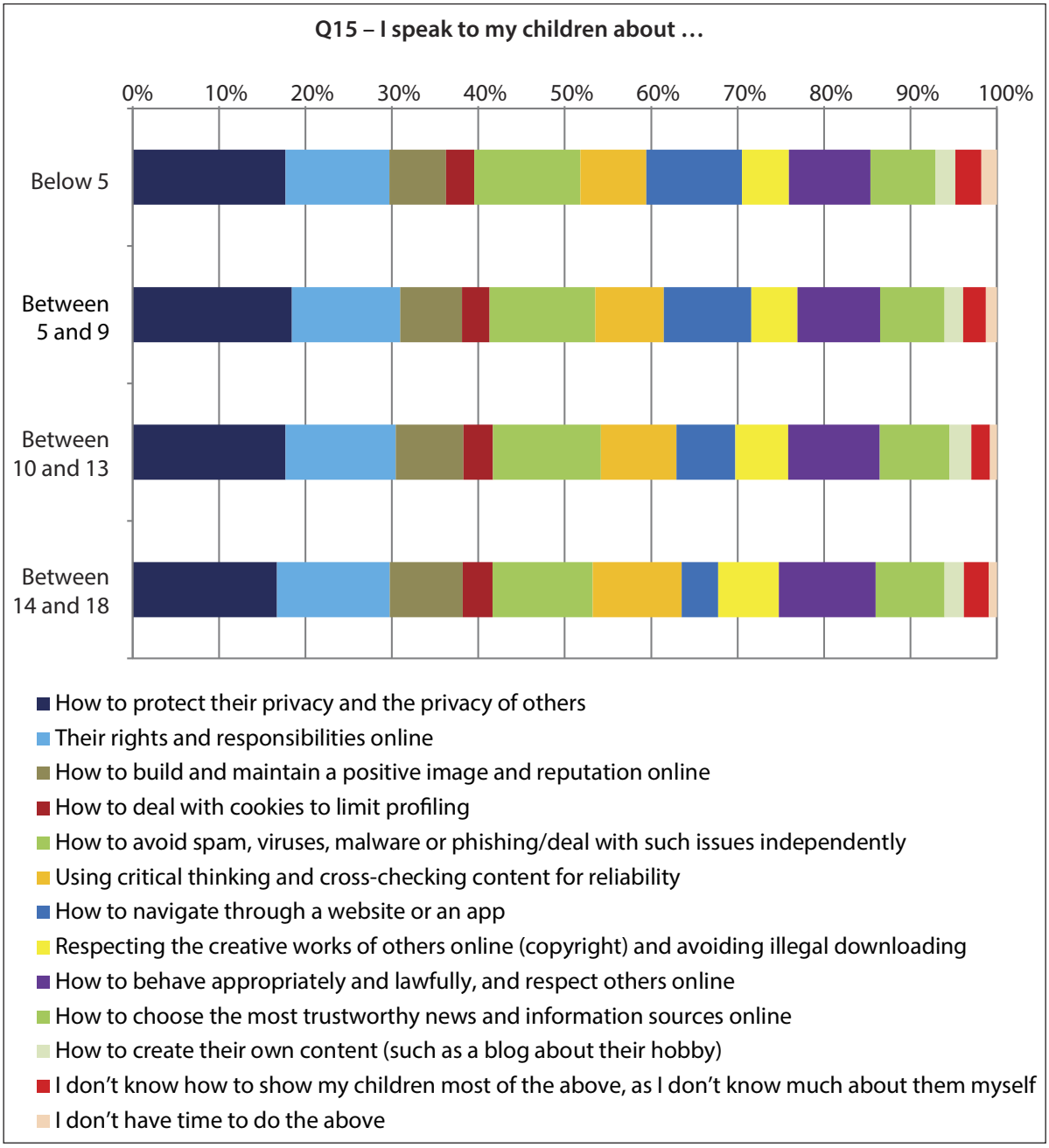

Q10 – My children mainly use the internet to …
0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
60%
70%
80%
90%
100%
Below 5
Between 5 and 9
Between 10 and 13
Between 14 and 18
Watch videos or listen to music
Communicate with their friends via e-mail, instant messaging, chat
Play games
Participate in social networking sites
Explore educational or other sources for their homework
Learn new things
Create their own content
I really don't know

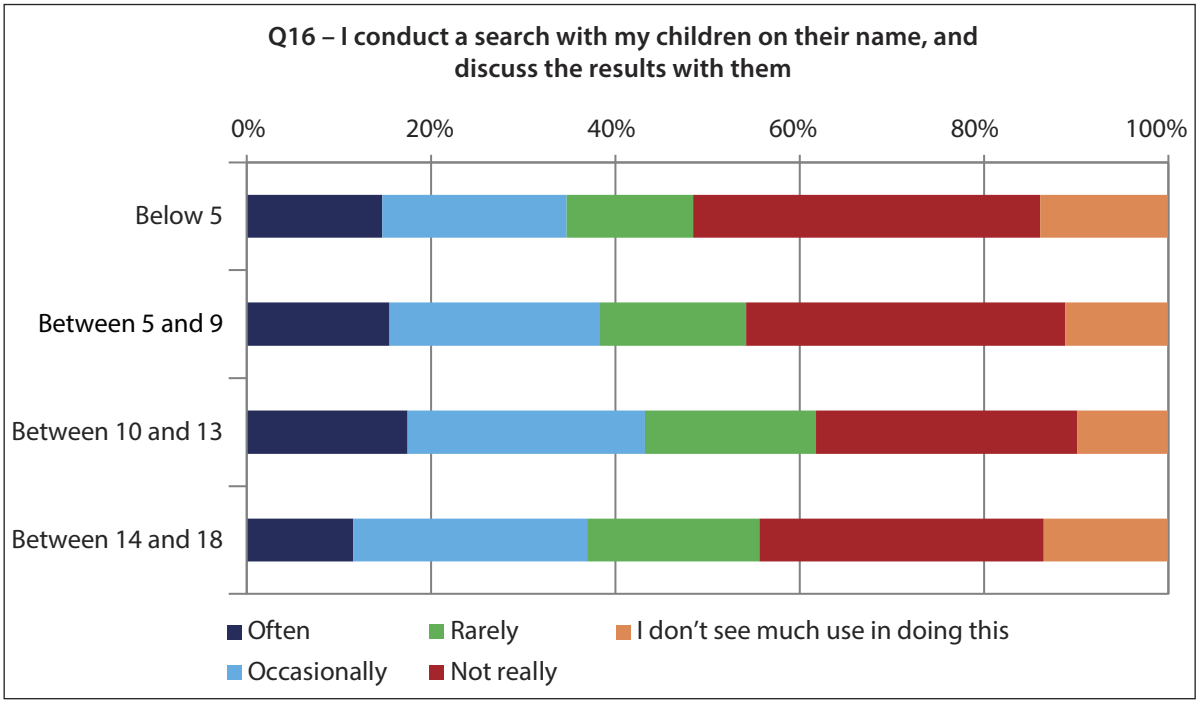

Q11 – I enrol my children/intend to enrol my children in coding or other similar activities to acquire or improve their technological skills
0%
20%
40%
60%
80%
100%
Below 5
Between 5 and 9
Between 10 and 13
Between 14 and 18
Yes
No

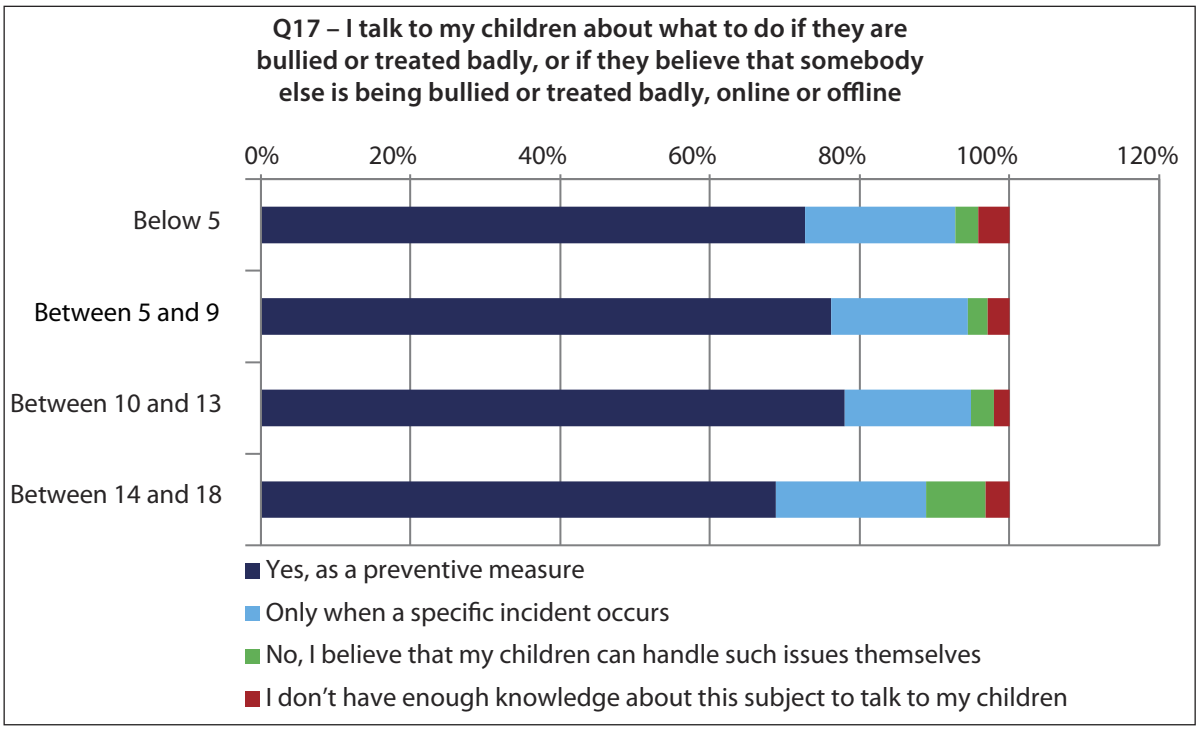

Q12 – I search for and check websites, apps, online games etc. that I am considering for my children or that my children are using, to evaluate if they are appropriate for them
0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
60%
70%
80%
90%
100%
Below 5
Between 5 and 9
Between 10 and 13
Between 14 and 18
Often
Sometimes
Rarely
Not really

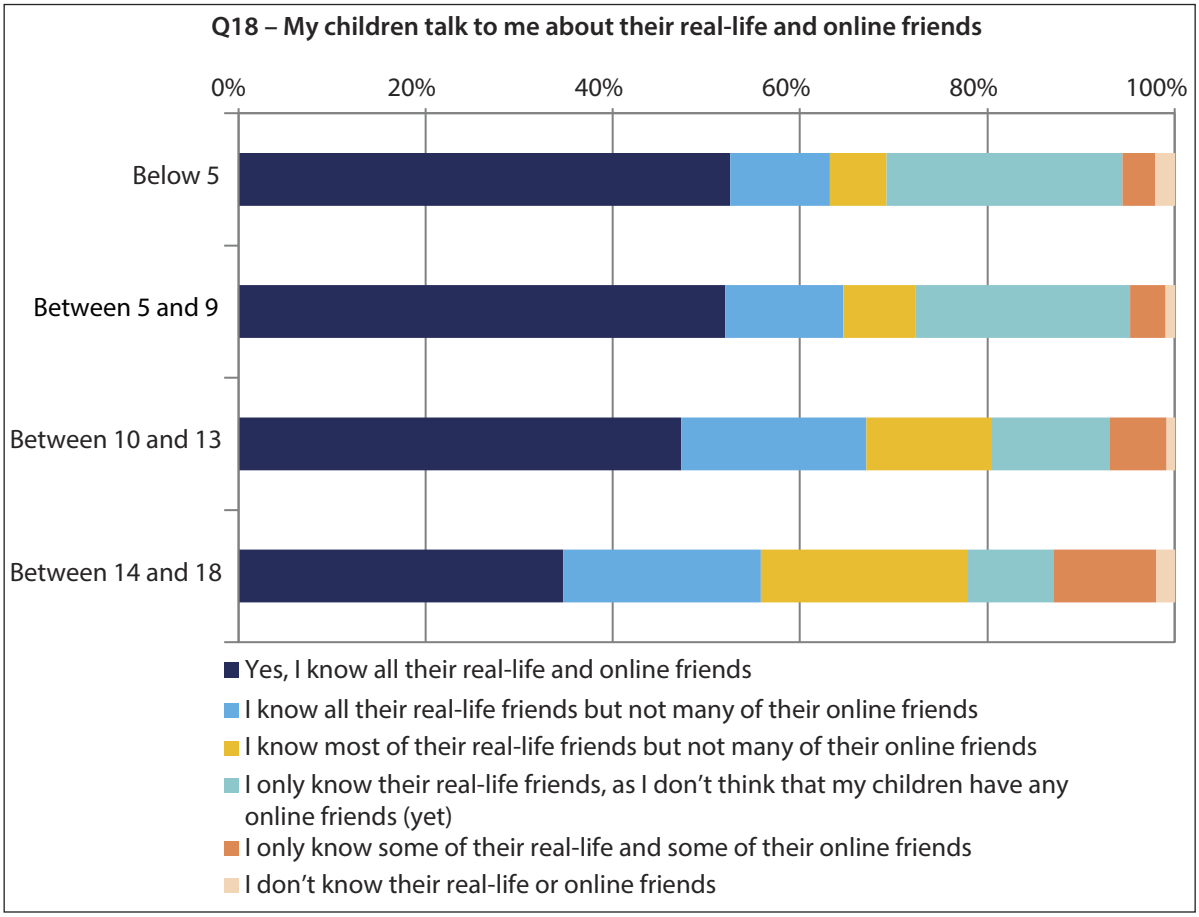

Q13 – My children talk to me about what they are doing online
0%
20%
40%
60%
80%
100%
Below 5
Between 5 and 9
Between 10 and 13
Between 14 and 18
Often
Sometimes
Rarely
Not really

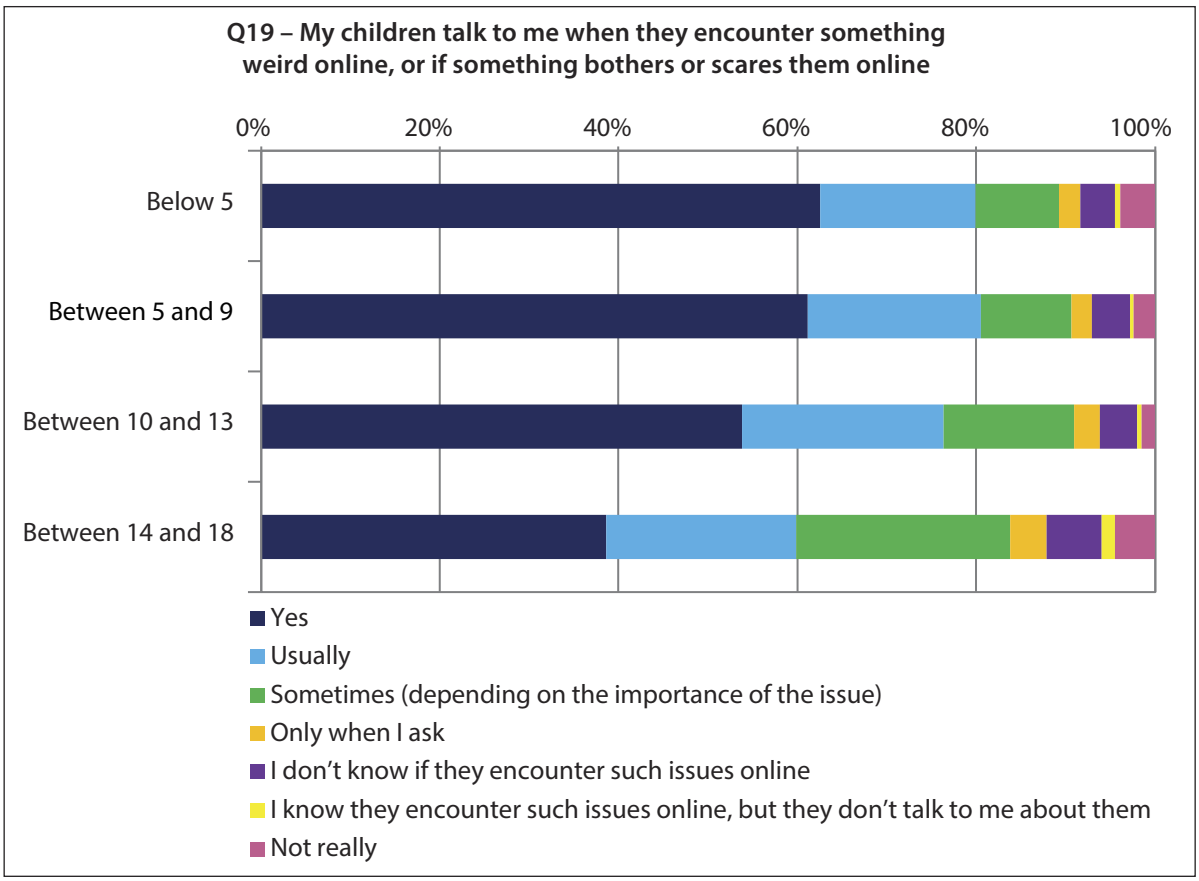

Q14 – Choose the rules that apply for your children
0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
60%
70%
80%
90%
100%
Below 5
Between 5 and 9
Between 10 and 13
Between 14 and 18
To ask me before sharing any personal information online or via the mobile phone
To use technology only at the set times
To respect safety rules and to act ethically and responsibly online
To respect other people and their privacy online
To respect the creative works of other people online
To evaluate online information with a critical mind
Always to ask me if they encounter something weird or scary online
Never to shop online without me being present
None of the above rules apply for my children


Q15 – I speak to my children about …
0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
60%
70%
80%
90%
100%
Below 5
Between 5 and 9
Between 10 and 13
Between 14 and 18
How to protect their privacy and the privacy of others
Their rights and responsibilities online
How to build and maintain a positive image and reputation online
How to deal with cookies to limit profiling
How to avoid spam, viruses, malware or phishing/deal with such issues independently
Using critical thinking and cross-checking content for reliability
How to navigate through a website or an app
Respecting the creative works of others online (copyright) and avoiding illegal downloading
How to behave appropriately and lawfully, and respect others online
How to choose the most trustworthy news and information sources online
How to create their own content (such as a blog about their hobby)
I don't know how to show my children most of the above, as I don't know much about them myself
I don't have time to do the above

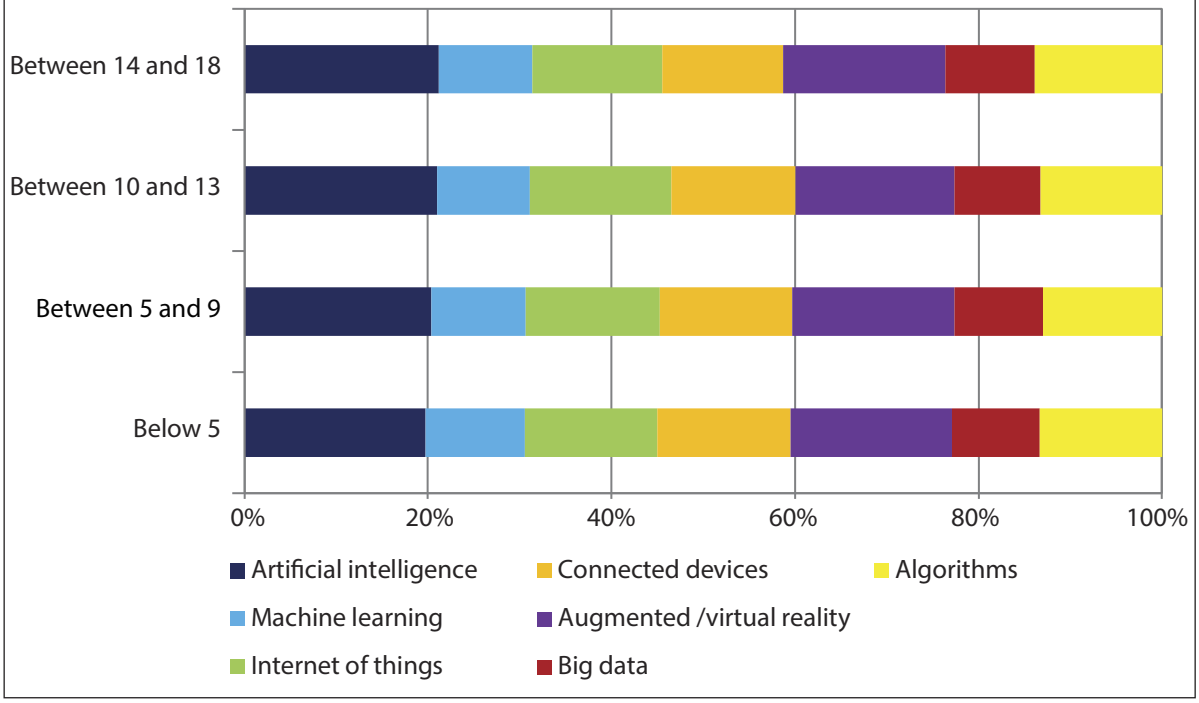

Q16 – I conduct a search with my children on their name, and discuss the results with them
0%
20%
40%
60%
80%
100%
Below 5
Between 5 and 9
Between 10 and 13
Between 14 and 18
Often
Rarely
I don't see much use in doing this
Occasionally
Not really


Q17 – I talk to my children about what to do if they are bullied or treated badly, or if they believe that somebody else is being bullied or treated badly, online or offline
0%
20%
40%
60%
80%
100%
120%
Below 5
Between 5 and 9
Between 10 and 13
Between 14 and 18
Yes, as a preventive measure
Only when a specific incident occurs
No, I believe that my children can handle such issues themselves
I don't have enough knowledge about this subject to talk to my children

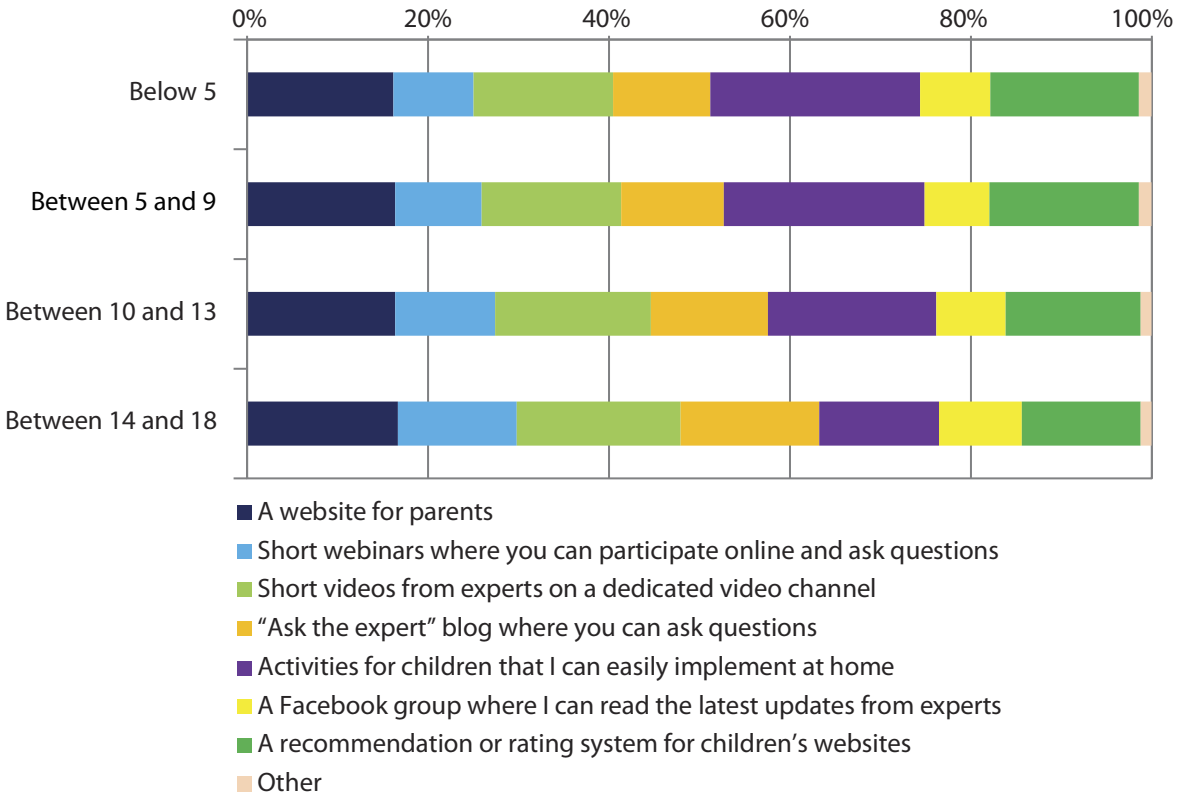

Q18 – My children talk to me about their real-life and online friends
0%
20%
40%
60%
80%
100%
Below 5
Between 5 and 9
Between 10 and 13
Between 14 and 18
Yes, I know all their real-life and online friends
I know all their real-life friends but not many of their online friends
I know most of their real-life friends but not many of their online friends
I only know their real-life friends, as I don't think that my children have any online friends (yet)
I only know some of their real-life and some of their online friends
I don't know their real-life or online friends


Q19 – My children talk to me when they encounter something weird online, or if something bothers or scares them online
0%
20%
40%
60%
80%
100%
Below 5
Between 5 and 9
Between 10 and 13
Between 14 and 18
Yes
Usually
Sometimes (depending on the importance of the issue)
Only when I ask
I don't know if they encounter such issues online
I know they encounter such issues online, but they don't talk to me about them
Not really

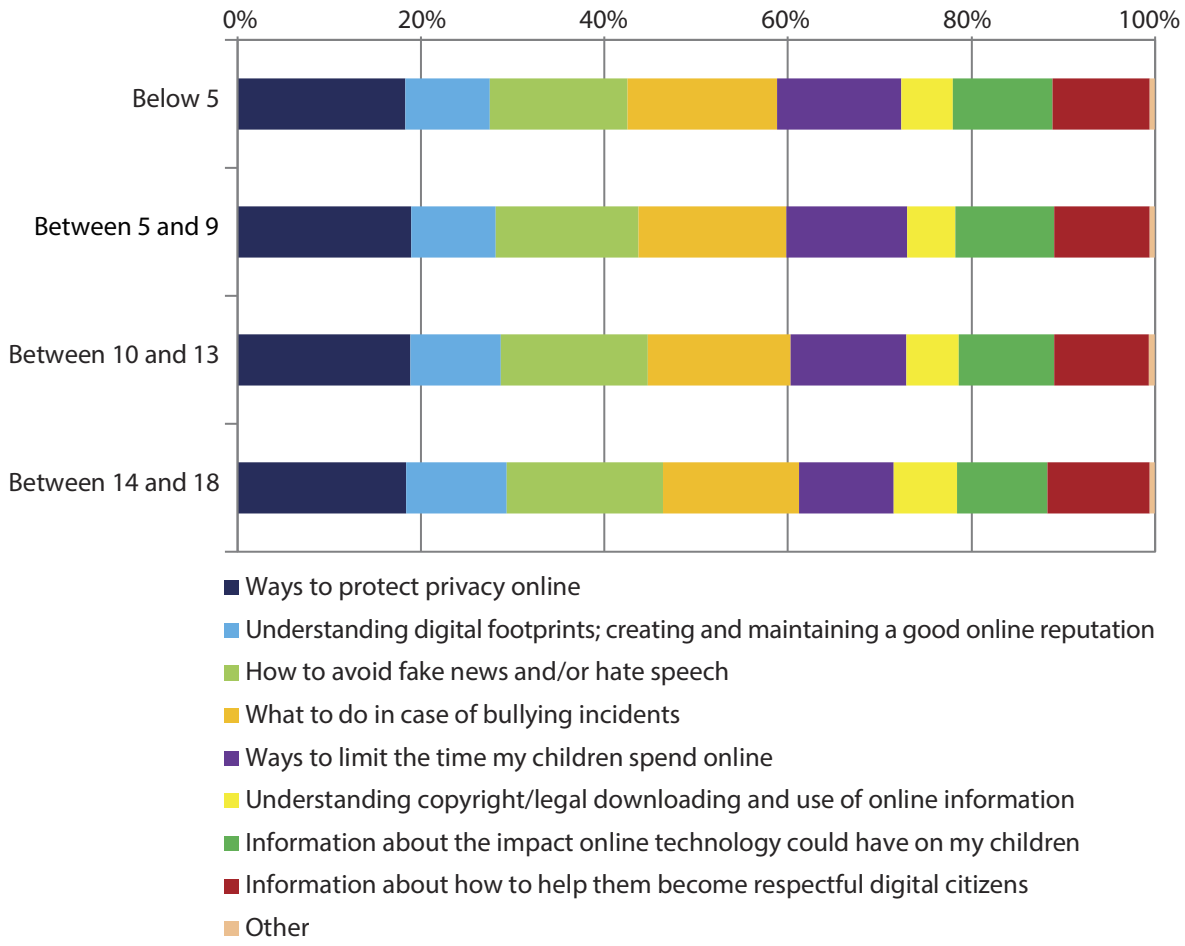
Q20 – Which terms do you understand?



Q21 – What do you need to help your children become responsible digital citizens? (select the three most important for you from the list below)



Q22 – Please indicate the topics you would like to receive information on, to support your children with their online activities



APPENDIX VI

Interview recording sheet

A. CONTEXT			
1. Age bracket: *(use scale: 18-30/31-45/ 46-60/above 60)*	*Note gender without asking*	**Country**	**Does the interviewee live in a rural or city environment?**
Note any relevant observations about interviewee here:			
2. What are the ages of your children under the age of 18 years?			
Girl? Boy?	Girl? Boy?	Girl? Boy?	Girl? Boy?
1.	2.	3.	4.
3. On a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high), how important do you consider digital technology to be in your children's life? *Clarify understanding of digital technology to include mobile phone, computers, tablets etc., online games and social media* Response: Comments, if relevant to objectives:			
4. Using the same scale, how important is it in your own life? Response: Comments, if relevant to objectives:			
B. IMPACT OF REMOTE SCHOOLING ON YOUR FAMILY DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS			
5. Give five or six words that best describe your child/children's experience of remote schooling during the Covid-19 lockdown *Note words:*			
6. **(a) What works well with remote schooling for your child(ren), and what would you like to see continued beyond the lockdown period?** **(b) What needs or hopes for you or your child were unmet during the remote schooling period?** Response:			
7. Was this your first experience with remote learning? **Yes/No** If no: how did this experience compare with previous ones? Response:			
8. What could have been done, and by who, to better help you with this whole experience? Response:			
9. How do you think Covid-19 may impact your children's learning and social well-being in the coming months? (benefits and problems) Benefits: Problems:			
10. Can you suggest any solutions to overcome these challenges? Response:			

C. DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY
11. Which activities do your children spend most time on when online? *Note activities, prompt if necessary:*
12. If you consider it important to monitor your children's use of digital technology, what are the biggest challenges that you face as a parent? Response:
13. If you prefer not to monitor your children's use of digital technology, are there any special reasons that led you to make this choice? Response:
14. Has there been a situation in the past year where you have had to seek help related to the use of digital technology in your family? Can you describe the situation please: *Ask interviewee to describe incident: what was the issue, where they got help, was the issue solved, what advice would interviewee give others about solving this specific issue?* Response:
D. DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP
15. Give five or six words that come to mind when you hear the term "digital citizen"? *Give the following lead if the interviewee doesn't understand the term:* *Digital citizens know how to use digital technology sensibly, and how to behave online. They know how to protect their own rights and information, and are careful with the rights of the people they communicate and interact with online.* Note words:
16. What are some of the things you think children need to learn to become responsible digital citizens? Response:
17. Where or how should they be learning these things? (*at school, at home, from friends, through activities online*) Response:
18. Can you mention any websites, apps, publications or other places where you have picked up valuable information that helps guide your children's online activities? Response:
19. How can the Council of Europe help families find the information they need to support their children in becoming digital citizens? (*website, app, book, etc.*) Response:
20. If there were three top things you could discuss or pass on to other parents about helping children become digital citizens, what would they be? – 1. – 2. – 3.
21. Is there anything further that you would like to discuss or add? Response:

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A majority of parents today are grappling with issues such as privacy, digital footprints and bullying. Where do they turn to find reliable information? When should they intervene in their children's online activities? What is their role in ensuring that their children master the values, attitudes, skills and knowledge they need to actively, effectively engage with society?

In 2020, the Council of Europe conducted a survey to better understand the views of parents on digital citizenship education and the concerns they have about their children's use of digital technology. More than 21 000 parents in 47 countries responded to the survey, which was followed up by interviews in 2020 and 2021.

Digital citizenship education from a parent's perspective maps the needs and reflections of parents as they strive to ensure the well-being of their children and help them become competent digital citizens, who are empowered by digital technology rather than shaped by it. Conducted in the midst of school closures during the Covid-19 pandemic, the study documents parents' experience when they stepped up as primary educators, often with little or no guidance from schools and inadequate digital equipment to cover their children's needs. It aims to foster debate between parents, educators, researchers and policy makers on the meaning and challenges of digital citizenship education for children growing up in today's digital age.

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