

Cyberbullying in Ireland

**A Survey of Parents Internet Usage
and Knowledge**

Research Committee

Dr. James O'Higgins Norman EdD

Professor Mona O'Moore PhD

Lian McGuire MEd

Authors:

James O'Higgins Norman

Lian McGuire

This report is published by
ABC, National Anti-Bullying Research and Resource Centre,
Dublin City University.

ISBN: 978-1-873769-56-0

© ABC, National Anti-Bullying Research and Resource Centre (2016)



www.dcu.ie/abc

Introduction

This following report has been developed by ABC – National Anti-Bullying Research and Resource Centre (ABC) at Dublin City University arising from our participation in a wider EU funded project entitled ParentNets. The main outcome of this project is to produce multimedia material that can be used to train parents how to use the internet and to cope with associated risks to their children. This will contribute to the prevention, detection and solution of possible risk situations such as online harassment and cyberbullying. For the purposes of this report we have isolated data and present findings related to Ireland.

ABC is a national research and resource facility at DCU. Researchers at ABC were the first in Ireland to undertake research on school bullying (1996), workplace bullying (1999), homophobic bullying (2004) and cyberbullying (2009). ABC leads the field of research, resource development and training in bullying in Ireland and is an internationally recognised centre of excellence in bullying research.

The Centre's activities are currently funded by the Department of Education & Skills under the National Action Plan on Bullying, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs under the National Lottery, the Irish Research Council, the EU's Erasmus+ Framework Program for Education, Training, Youth and Sport and DCU Research and Innovation Unit. ABC works in partnership with other research centre such as the Norwegian Centre for Learning Environment and Behavioural Research in Education and the Ministry of Education & University Planning at Xunta de Galicia, Spain.

The aim of the study was to learn about parents own knowledge and usage of the internet, and what they knew of their children's internet usage. The study also looked at usage and understanding of social networks, as a prime conduit for cyberbullying. Only the parents of children with an age range of 9-16 years were asked to participate, both in accordance with prevailing knowledge on the more widespread use of the internet among children from the age of 9 years, and also to meet the age demographic of the wider European project. The survey was distributed through a number of online contacts and national networks resulting in a total of 908 parents completing the online questionnaire.

In summary, the survey revealed that while Irish parents perceive themselves to be vigilant in monitoring computer and internet usage, there is an over-reliance on their children giving them accurate accounts of their online activity – especially on social media, where only 18% of parents supervise activity. And while many children may show honesty in this area, there is also a well-established “digital deceit” pattern in pre-teen and teen dealings with their parents that can leave them vulnerable online, especially to cyberbullying.

The digital gulf is also evident in the different social media platforms parents and children use. While over half of parents do engage in social media such as Facebook, they have almost no interaction with Twitter, Instagram or Snapchat, which are the platforms of choice for their teen and pre-teen children. We also found that there was a lack of technical knowledge among parents as 40 % lacked knowledge about basic security measures, 52 % had no knowledge about more advanced privacy techniques such as search engine filters. This adds to the feeling of distance from their digital native children. Adding to the digital divide is that time is also likely to be a limiting factor for parents trying to monitor online usage, when you consider that the average 15-16 year old will spend up to 10 hours a week online on their devices.

Contents

Introduction.....	3
Methodology.....	6
Profile of Respondents.....	6
Internet Access & Use.....	9
Conclusions.....	22

Methodology

The survey was designed by academic partners in the ParentNets Project (www.parentnets.com) and the resulting self-report questionnaire was distributed for dissemination by local partners in each country. The Anti-Bullying Centre, Dublin City University translated the questionnaire, containing some 23 questions, into an online format that could be distributed through our existing networks.

The questionnaire was designed in a number of short sections, intended to glean the background of the parents; their own internet usage; their knowledge of their children's access to the net and social networks; what they felt they knew of their children's usage of the net and social networks; their own knowledge of internet risks to children, and what tools could be utilised in the prevention of said risks.

The questionnaire was distributed in conjunction with the aid of a number of Irish parent organisations, including:

- National Parents Council, Primary;
- National Parent's Council Post-Primary
- Educate Together

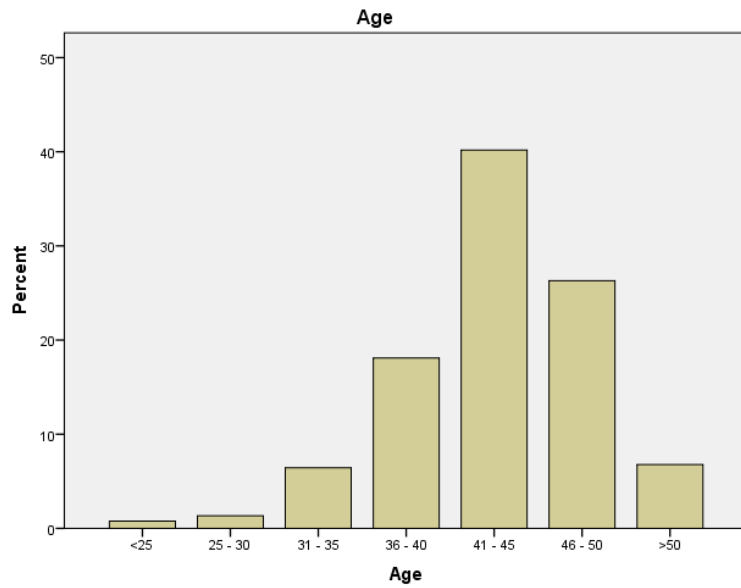
In each case the survey was hosted both online (on either web page or Facebook page of each organisation) and followed up by a mail shot to the organisations member groups who forwarded it to the parents in the schools they represent. In addition the survey was also hosted on both the website and Facebook page of the Anti-Bullying Centre. The survey was also promoted through social networks including Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. A total of 908 respondents completed the questionnaire before it closed online.

Profile of Respondents

Age of Respondents

The parents were asked about their age. As would possibly be expected with an age range of 9-16 year old children, the majority of respondent parents were between 41 – 45 years of age (40%, n=362), followed by those between 46 – 50 years of age (26%, n=237) with the third highest grouping being 36 – 40 year olds (18%, n=163). Those over 50 comprised just 7% (n=61), and those between 31 – 35years, 6% (n=58). Those identifying as between 25 – 30 years of age (.8%) and those under 25 years of age (1.3%) made up just 2% of respondents combined (n=19).

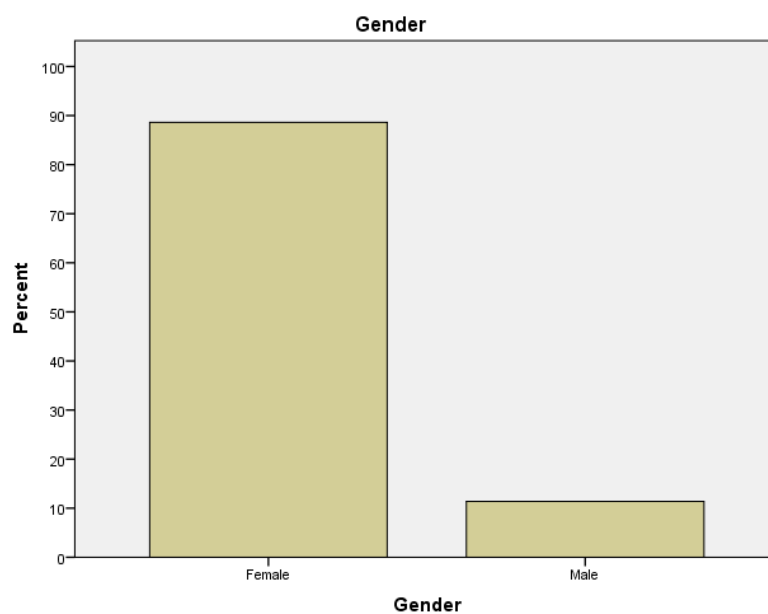
Figure 1
Percentage age range of respondents



Gender of Respondents

Of the 908 respondents 802 (88.6%) identified as female, while only 103 (11.4%) identified as male. This would tend to corroborate the prevailing view of the mother as the primary caregiver in the home and in dealing with the school in relation to their children's safety in school, and in relation to bullying issues.

Figure 2
Percentage gender of respondents

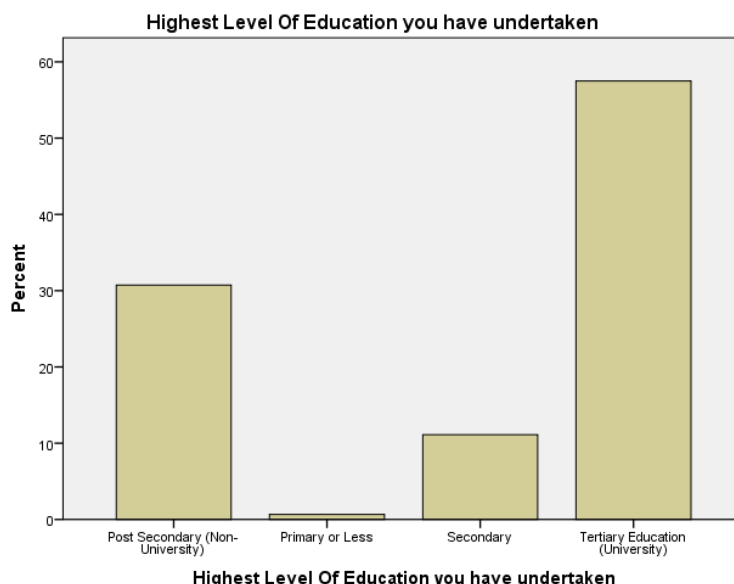


Level of Parent's Education

Less than 1% (n=6) of respondents stated that they had completed or failed to complete a Primary level education only. 11% (n=101) reported that they had received a second level education. It is notable however that over 57% of respondents (n=522) had a University level education with a further 31% having a post second level education non university level education.

While it should be noted that Ireland does have among the highest percentage of 3rd level educated populations in the world, the results indicated here may be a reflection of the survey within Ireland being a wholly online study, and may also indicate the demographic of those parents most closely associated with parents associations in Ireland.

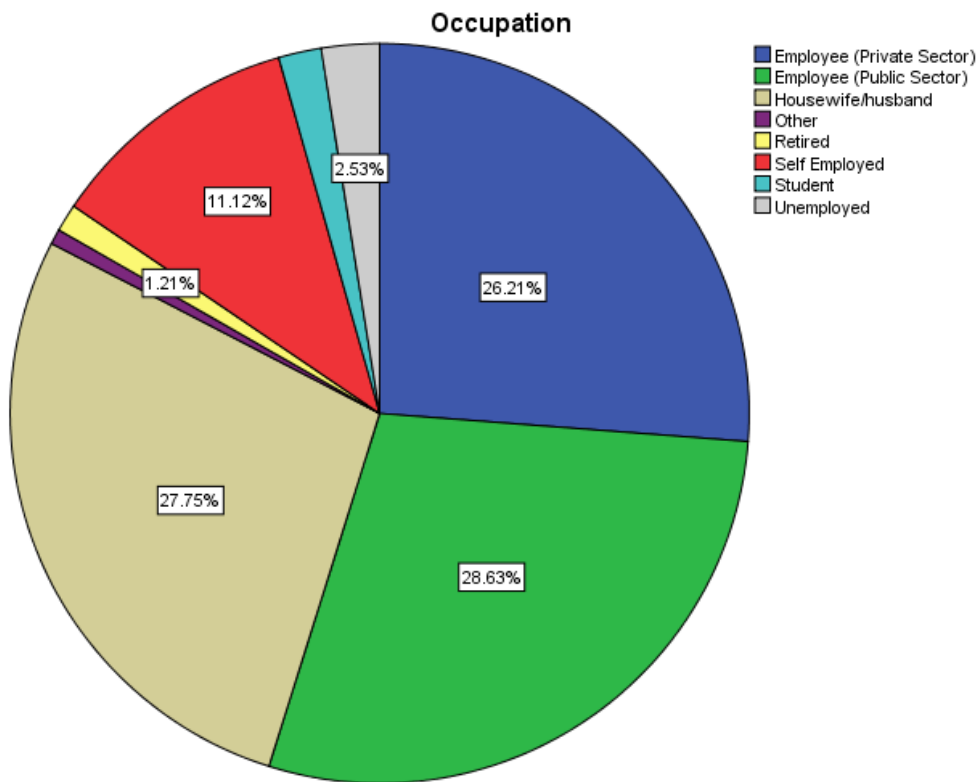
Figure 3
Percentage of respondents and their level of Education



Parents Occupation

The parents were asked what their current occupation was, and as can be seen from Figure 4 there was a relatively even breakdown among those employed in the public sector (29%, n=260) those who identified as a housewife/husband (28%, n=252), and those working in the private sector (26%, n=238). Those who were self-employed made up the biggest remaining group (11%, n=101), while those who were either currently unemployed (2.5%, n=23), full time students (2%, n=17) or retired (1%, n=11) made up the smallest groupings. Just under 1% identified as being otherwise employed with the majority of those being full time carers.

Figure 4
Percentage breakdown of Parents Occupation



Internet Access & Use

Parental Access to Internet

Parents were asked what access they had both at home and at work to the internet, both with and without access to social networks.

Table 1
Percentage of Parents Access to the Internet

	Don't Have Access to Net	Have Full Access	Have Access but not to Social Networks	Total
Home	1.80% 16	93.94% 837	4.26% 38	891
Your Work	10.55% 71	68.05% 458	21.40% 144	673
Your Mobile Phone/Tablet	6.54% 58	88.28% 783	5.19% 46	887

As would be expected from an online study, as can be seen from Table 1, almost 94% (n=837) of respondents had access to internet with social networks at home. 88% (n=783) reported having access to both via their mobile, while 68% of respondents (n=458) reported having access to both at work.

Parental use of Social Networks

Parents were then asked what types of social networks they themselves most used, and how often they thought they used them.

Table 2
Percentage of Social Networks most used by Parents

	Don't Use	Use Daily	Use Weekly	Use Monthly	Use Less than Monthly	Total
Twitter	70.87% 562	11.73% 93	6.94% 55	2.65% 21	7.82% 62	793
Facebook	21.42% 187	55.56% 485	15.01% 131	3.44% 30	4.58% 40	873
Instagram	84.39% 654	4.90% 38	4.39% 34	2.58% 20	3.74% 29	775
LinkedIn	64.06% 508	4.79% 38	11.48% 91	8.07% 64	11.60% 92	793
Texting (Watsapp, telegram, etc.)	22.95% 199	60.90% 528	11.42% 99	2.77% 24	1.96% 17	867
Other	67.32% 206	17.65% 54	8.17% 25	1.96% 6	4.90% 15	306

Table 2 illustrates that the highest level of daily social network usage by parents was on Facebook (55%) and via Texting at (61%). Instagram was least favoured by parents with almost 84% reporting non-usage, followed by Twitter (67% non-usage) and LinkedIn (64%).

Children by age (9-16) in house

There was a wide spread of ages reported in the households. 44% of respondents (n=379) reported that they had a 9 year old in their household, followed by 30% (n=259) with 11 year olds. 10 year olds (26%, n=226) and 12 year olds (25%, n=218) followed. 20% (n=168) stated they had a 13 year old with 16% having a 14 year old in their household. The smallest grouping were for 15 & 16 years olds with 13% reporting them in their households.

Children’s age and their level of access to the Internet & Social Networks

As can be seen from Table 3 Irish parents report that access to computer with the internet by the children is ubiquitous from quite a young age. Indeed, on being asked parents reported that even of those younger in the household than the survey range (i.e., between 6-8 years old) 52% had access to a computer with the internet, with a further 27% in that age range having access to the net on their own portable device, e.g. phone or tablet, and almost 22% report that these 6/8 year olds are able to install software (games etc.) themselves.

Table 3
Age of Children and their range of access to the internet and social networks

	No Access at all	Use of Mobile Phone	Access to Computer with Net	Use of Net & Webcam (same device)	Access to Internet w/o Parental Filter	Internet on own portable device	Computer with Net Access in private place (e.g. room)	Utilise Social Networks	Able to Install Programmes, Games, Apps.	Total Respondents
6-8 year old	24.2 6% 74	13.4 4% 41	52.1 3% 159	8.85 % 27	11.4 8% 35	27.54 % 84	4.92% 15	2.30 % 7	21.64% 66	305
9/10 year old	6.25 % 31	17.1 4% 85	71.3 7% 354	15.7 3% 78	18.9 5% 94	54.03 % 268	10.69% 53	5.85 % 29	37.70% 187	496
11/12 year old	3.22 % 13	41.8 3% 169	73.7 6% 298	20.7 9% 84	21.0 4% 85	65.10 % 263	16.34% 66	19.0 6% 77	45.30% 183	404
13/14 year old	2.79 % 7	74.9 0% 188	76.1 0% 191	31.8 7% 80	28.6 9% 72	72.91 % 183	28.69% 72	51.3 9% 129	52.99% 133	251
15/16 year old	4.55 % 7	85.7 1% 132	78.5 7% 121	38.9 6% 60	38.3 1% 59	75.32 % 116	38.31% 59	66.8 8% 103	62.99% 97	154

This usage rate jumps considerably by the ages of 9/10 with 71% of respondents reporting children of that age in their household with access to the computer and internet, and close to 55% reported 9/10 year olds with access to the internet on their own mobile devices.

The rate continues to rise through 11/12 year olds (74% with internet access on computer / 65% with access on mobile device), 13/14 year olds (76% with internet access on computer / 73% with access on mobile device) to 15/16 year olds (78.5% with internet access on computer / 75% on mobile device).

In regards to access to and use of Social Networks, despite the high access rate of 6/8 year olds to the internet, only a very small percentage (2%) of respondents said that the children of this age in their household and access to social networks. This number remains small through 9/10 year olds (6%) and then jumps with 11/12 year olds (19%) despite them being younger in age than some social networks allow for usage. Reflecting this, at 13/14 year olds, the legal age for membership, respondents report that social network usage jumps considerably (51%), continuing to rise (67%) for 15/16 year olds.

As would be expected, the use of a parental filter declines as the age group of the children rises, however a considerable number of respondents reported that their children operated without this filter on the net. 19% of parents reported that their 9/10 year olds were able to

access the internet without this filter, with 21% of 11/12 year olds and 29% of 13/14 year olds, rising to 38% of 15/16 year olds, using the net without a parental filter.

In regards to their children’s privacy when using the internet, 10% of 9/10 year olds were reported by their parents to have access to a computer with the internet in a private place such a their own room. At age 11/12 this rises to 16%, while 29% of respondents stated that their 13/14 year olds and 38% of 15/16 year olds had access to a networked computer in a private place.

Parental interaction with children at home and online

Table 4
Percentage of Parents Interaction with their children at home

	They Don't	Never	Rarely/ Hardly Ever	Sometimes	Often	Always	Total
Watch TV	2.50% 21	0.24% 2	2.98% 25	36.00% 302	50.89% 427	7.39% 62	839
Use Internet At Home	2.75% 23	0.72% 6	3.94% 33	28.20% 236	39.19% 328	25.21% 211	837
Use Social Networks	48.55% 384	3.92% 31	8.85% 70	20.73% 164	12.64% 100	5.31% 42	791
Play Games On Their Computer	5.88% 49	3.48% 29	12.35% 103	38.61% 322	30.70% 256	8.99% 75	834
Share Time With Other Children (Not in School)	10.80% 89	2.55% 21	8.74% 72	32.52% 268	33.74% 278	11.65% 96	824

When asked what supervisory involvement they had in a variety of activities with their children at home, 58% of respondents said they often or always watched television with their children. 39% always or often viewed their children’s computer game use, and 45% often or always supervised their children when they spent time with other children at home.

However, while 64% of respondents stated that they either often or always supervised their children’s use of their internet at home, only 18% of respondents said that they often or always supervised their children when on social networks.

Parent’s discussions with their children about the Internet

Table 5
Breakdown of Parents conversations with their children about their internet activity

	Never	Once/Rarely/ Hardly Ever	Sometimes	Often	Always	Total
Downloading of files, videos, pictures (from the Net)	9.52% 75	7.61% 60	21.45% 169	35.53% 280	25.89% 204	788
Their Friends on social networks (whether they know them personally)	16.15% 121	4.27% 32	14.55% 109	28.97% 217	36.05% 270	749
Registering on a website	13.97% 106	6.59% 50	13.31% 101	30.57% 232	35.57% 270	759
Their own profiles in social networks (what information is made available)	19.08% 141	5.41% 40	10.69% 79	28.96% 214	35.86% 265	739
Viruses (protection against them)	17.25% 133	13.62% 105	21.40% 165	22.57% 174	25.16% 194	771
Use of passwords and security	10.51% 81	8.04% 62	19.58% 151	29.05% 224	32.81% 253	771
Pages they use to get information for their computer/device	13.01% 99	9.46% 72	24.18% 184	27.86% 212	25.49% 194	761
Appropriate/inappropriate content on internet	4.88% 38	5.39% 42	17.84% 139	32.35% 252	39.54% 308	779
Bullying on the Internet	8.88% 68	7.70% 59	18.02% 138	30.94% 237	34.46% 264	766
Pornography/explicit content	21.40% 162	17.97% 136	19.42% 147	18.10% 137	23.12% 175	757
How to interact with others on the internet	11.48% 89	9.81% 76	21.03% 163	27.74% 215	29.94% 232	775

Parents were asked about whether they had conversed with their children in regards to a number of internet related issues. 72% had spoken either often or always to their children about inappropriate content on the internet. 62% had spoken to them often/always about the use of passwords and security. 61% of respondents either often/always spoke to their children about the downloading of files and videos from the internet. 58% spoke often/always with their children about how to act with others on the internet.

Pornography on the net was the single greatest topic parents did not/hardly ever spoke to their children about at 39%.

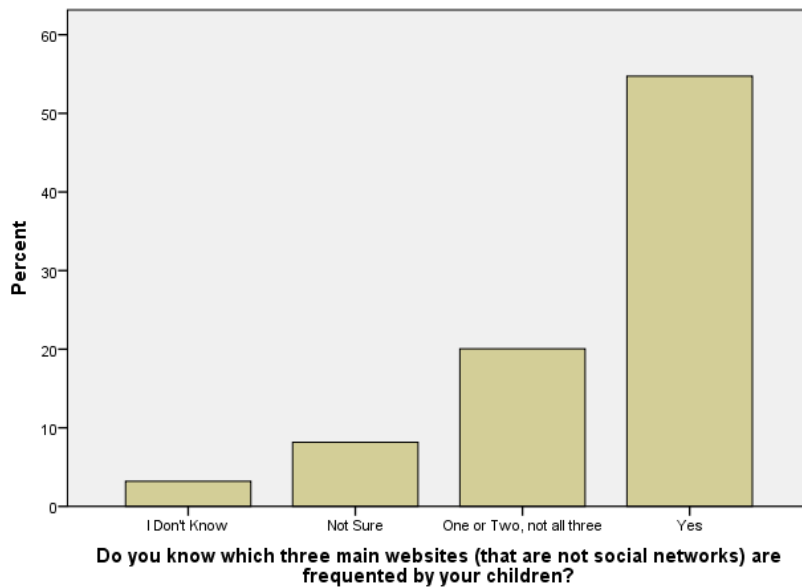
In regards to bullying specifically, 65% of respondents spoke often/always with their children about bullying on the internet, however 16.5% of parents had never or hardly ever spoke to their children about cyberbullying. While when quizzed about social networks, 65% of parents said they always/often spoke to their children about their friends on social networks, and 65% spoke often/always about their profiles in social networks. 24% of respondents did not speak or hardly ever spoke to their children about their profiles on social networks, while

20% did not speak to them or hardly ever spoke to them about their friends on social networks.

Parent’s knowledge of the websites their children use

The parents were asked if they knew what the three main websites their children frequented were. Figure 5 shows that 64% of respondents said they knew which ones they were with almost 23% aware of one or two but not all three. 13% either did not know or were unsure of what websites they used.

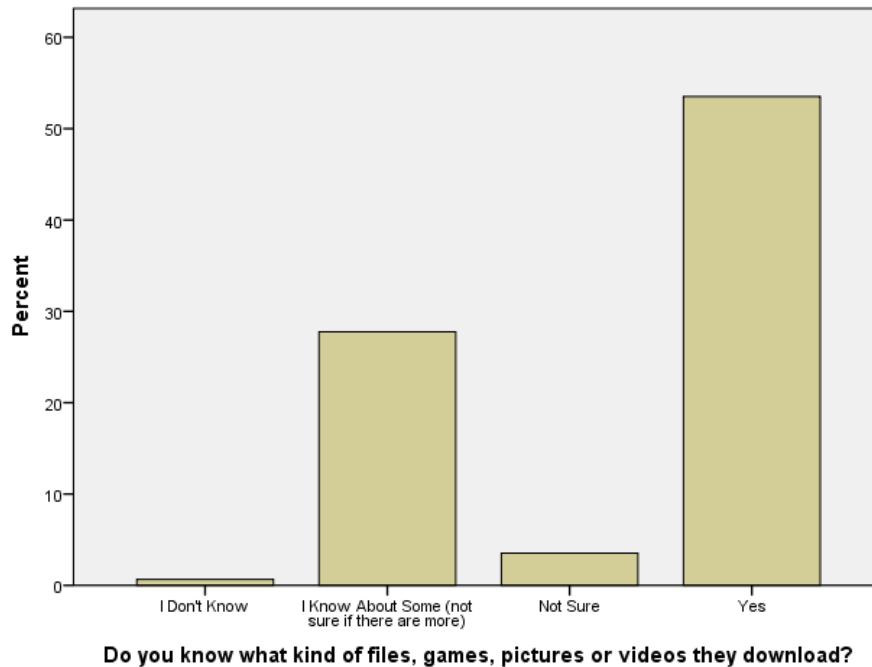
Figure 5
Knowledge of their children’s websites



When the parents who said they knew were asked how they knew which websites their children used, 74% stated that it was because their child told them which ones they were. 36% said they heard their children talk about the websites in question. However, 60% reported that they were present during use, while 61% stated that they checked their devices sometimes and 26.5% blocked devices requiring their child to ask their permission.

Parent’s knowledge of the files, games, pictures and videos their children download online.

**Figure 6
Knowledge of children’s downloads**

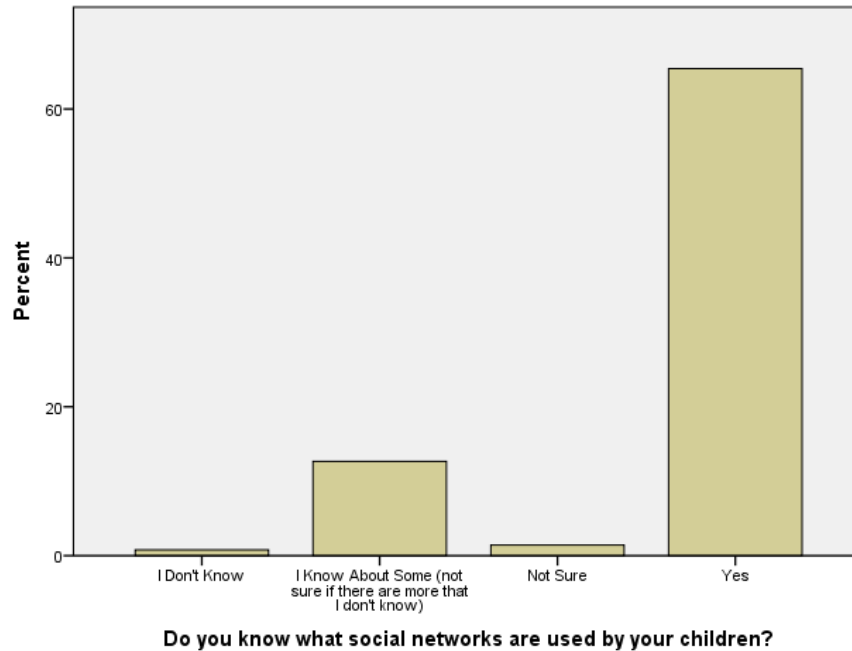


When asked if they knew what kinds of files/games/pictures or videos their children downloaded 63% of respondents said they did, with a further 32% saying they knew some though not all of what was downloaded. Only 5% stated that they did not know or were unsure what their children downloaded.

Of those that reported that they did know 69% stated it was because their children told them which ones they were. 37% said it was because they had heard them talk about it. 54% reported they were present during use. 35% said they checked their children’s devices often. 30% blocked downloads requiring their child to ask their permission.

Parent's knowledge of what Social Networks used by their children use and information in regards to their usage of those networks

Figure 7
Parent's knowledge of social networks used by their children



A higher proportion of respondents stated that they knew what social networks were used by their children than their website or download use, with nearly 81% saying they knew what networks were used by their children. 16% stated that they knew some but not all, while only 2% not sure which ones with a further 1% stating they didn't know.

When asked how they knew 69% reported that their children told them which networks they used were and 38% said they had heard them talk about it. 40% stated that they checked their children's devices often while 29% blocked downloads requiring their child to ask their permission. A lower amount of parents at 46% reported they were present during their children's use of social networks than the other categories.

In regards to social networks parents were also asked whether they knew various aspects of their child's social network use.

From Table 6 it can be seen that they expressed quite a high level of confidence in their knowledge, with 79.5% confident they knew if their child had handed out information about their home address, and 74% of respondents stating they knew what their child's privacy settings on social networks were. 74% of parents also stated they knew whether their child gave out public information on the net about the school they attended, and 71% stated they were aware if their child gave out information online about they places their child visited/spent their time.

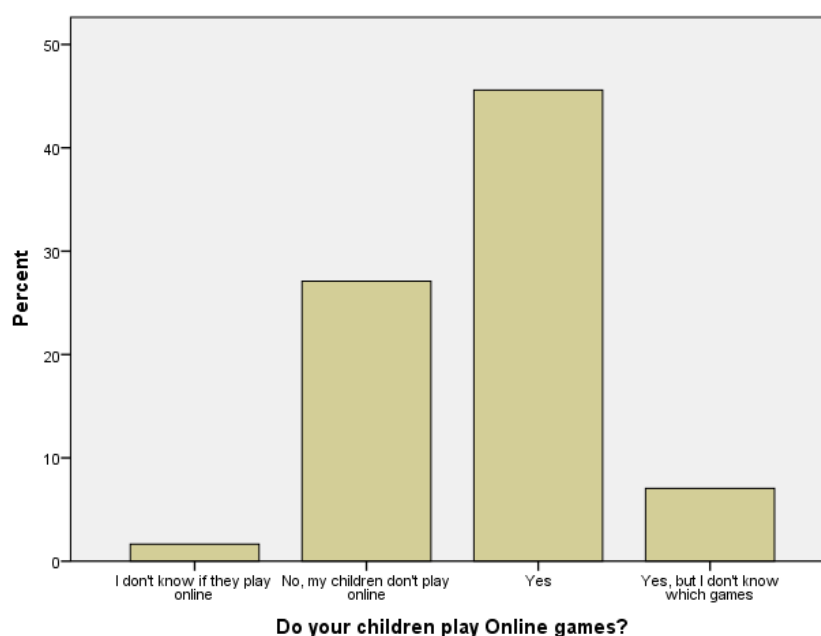
Table 6
Parent's knowledge of their children's settings of social networks

	Yes	Some, not all	Not sure	I don't know	Total
Do they know their online friends personally?	63.61% 374	33.16% 195	1.70% 10	1.53% 9	588
Privacy settings (if their information is public)	74.32% 434	12.84% 75	9.25% 54	3.60% 21	584
About pictures/videos they upload	64.37% 374	25.65% 149	6.71% 39	3.27% 19	581
About pictures/videos they download	57.98% 338	31.56% 184	7.20% 42	3.26% 19	583
If they give information about their address	79.52% 462	8.43% 49	9.29% 54	2.75% 16	581
If they give information about the name of their school	74.31% 431	12.07% 70	10.34% 60	3.28% 19	580
If they give information about places they visit/spend their time	71.63% 414	14.71% 85	10.90% 63	2.77% 16	578

In terms of who their children know, almost 64% reported that they felt their children knew their online friends personally.

Parent's knowledge of the online games played by their children

Figure 8
Parent's knowledge of the online games played by their children



56% of respondents said their children played online games, and knew which ones they were, with a further 9% also saying their children played but did not know which games they were. When the parents who knew what the games were, were asked which ones they were, the main ones reported were:

- Minecraft
- Clash of Clans
- Moshi Monsters
- FIFA
- Plants versus Zombies
- Call of Duty
- and 'Xbox Live'

How at risk do parents feel their children are from online dangers?

In order to assess parents own understanding of the various risks to children and whether they felt their children were at risk from them, parents were asked to peruse a non-exhaustive list of some of the more prominent threats currently facing children online and assess in their own minds how exposed they might be.

Table 7
Percentage of parents who feel their children are exposed to various online dangers

	I don't know what this risk involves	I know the risk. My children are safe	I know the risk. I am worried they are exposed	I know the risk. I'm not sure if my children are exposed to it	Total
Cyber Bullying	2.01% 14	52.87% 369	25.07% 175	20.06% 140	698
Grooming (Sexual Harassment)	2.30% 16	63.22% 440	16.24% 113	18.25% 127	696
Sexting (use of sexual pictures, texts, videos.)	2.32% 16	61.22% 423	18.09% 125	18.38% 127	691
Access to Adult Content (sex, gambling, violence)	2.16% 15	54.18% 376	24.78% 172	18.88% 131	694
Toxic Contents	9.99% 69	46.16% 319	23.88% 165	19.97% 138	691
Identity Theft	4.22% 29	52.62% 362	21.08% 145	22.09% 152	688
Addictions	6.17% 42	54.77% 373	20.85% 142	18.21% 124	681
Health Issues (eating disorders)	5.38% 37	56.10% 386	20.35% 140	18.17% 125	688
Jihadists	13.41% 90	56.33% 378	12.82% 86	17.44% 117	671
Being Robbed	8.03% 55	54.60% 374	17.08% 117	20.29% 139	685

As can be seen from Table 7 parents responded that the issue they were most worried about (25%) was their children being exposed to adult content online, with a further 19% aware of the risk but unsure if their child was exposed to it or not. A similar number (24%) were worried their children might be exposed to toxic contents online, with 20% aware of the risk but unsure if their child was exposed to it or not.

In regards to cyberbullying, while 53% responded they knew of the risk and were happy their children were safe. 47% of parents were either worried their child was exposed, weren't sure if they were exposed, or didn't know what the risk involved.

Parents perspectives on their interaction with the internet

In order to ascertain their viewpoints on their own interactions and level of involvement with the internet and their children a number of statements were put to them.

Table 8
Parents opinions on their involvement with their children and the internet

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral/Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
I don't get involved enough in preventing dangers to my children using the internet	5.15% 35	18.70% 127	14.58% 99	32.99% 224	28.57% 194	679
I don't know where to get information about prevention tools for danger on the internet	5.03% 34	18.93% 128	15.24% 103	38.46% 260	22.34% 151	676
In general, my children are well informed and able to detect and prevent risky situations	13.27% 90	47.64% 323	27.29% 185	8.55% 58	3.24% 22	678
I know most of the dangers on the internet and how to prevent my children from getting involved/being exposed to them	12.81% 87	41.83% 284	24.45% 166	16.35% 111	4.57% 31	679
The Security level of the use of the internet by my children is very low	5.72% 38	23.34% 155	23.04% 153	31.78% 211	16.11% 107	664
I know what my children do on the internet	23.15% 156	51.48% 347	17.80% 120	6.38% 43	1.19% 8	674
Teacher or authorities must be the main parties responsible for preventing dangers on the internet	2.24% 15	5.51% 37	9.24% 62	48.14% 323	34.87% 234	671
My children know how to protect themselves from dangers when using the internet	6.20% 39	23.85% 150	40.38% 254	22.10% 139	7.47% 47	629
My children would inform me quickly if they have a problem on the internet or are in danger	28.08% 189	50.22% 338	15.75% 106	4.46% 30	1.49% 10	673
I am prepared to use prevention tools for my children	52.28% 355	35.64% 242	6.48% 44	2.65% 18	2.95% 20	679

From Table 8 it can be seen that parents evinced a high level of confidence in their knowledge of their children's online actions with almost 75% of respondents either agreeing/strongly agreeing that they knew what their children did on the internet, while 78% agreed/strongly agreed that their children would inform them quickly if they a problem on the internet. 61% agreed/strongly agreed that their children were well informed and able to detect risky situations, though only 30% felt that their children would know how to protect themselves from online dangers.

Parents also showed a relatively high level of confidence in regards to their knowledge of the dangers of the internet and how to prevent their children from exposure with 54% of respondents agreed/strongly agreeing. Nearly two thirds (61%) disagree/strongly disagreed with the idea that they were not sufficiently engaged in preventing online dangers to their children, though 24% admitted that they did not get involved enough with preventing these dangers and 29% felt that the security level of their child's internet use was too low.

88% of respondents agreed/strongly agreed they were prepared to use prevention tools for their children. However 39% reported that they either were unsure/undecided about where to get information about prevention tools for use on the internet.

8% of respondents felt that a teacher or authorities should be the main parties for preventing dangers on the internet.

Parental use of /implementation of preventative tools

The parents were also asked about their own knowledge and use of various tools used to increase security/privacy, including: filters; anti-virus software; permits; research on websites visited; passwords; control of webcams and timetable/restriction of internet use.

Table 9 shows that the most prevalent form of online tool known and used by respondents (79%) was antivirus software with 46% aware of and having used the filter options within antivirus software. 56% of parents forbade the use of internet with the door closed.

50% have used privacy levels on their social network while 52% have checked the permits when installing software or games. 48% of parents had researched websites before allowing access, and a further 48% had placed limits on the use/control of their webcams.

However almost 59% of respondents either didn't know where to verify a website or had heard of doing but didn't know how. A similar percentage (58%) either didn't know of filters in online navigators or didn't know how to use them.

Filters in general seemed to be the item that provided the most difficulty with parents responding that in the case of filters in social networks (52%), operating systems (52%) and search engines (45%) they either didn't know of them or had heard of them but didn't know how to use them. 34% had never heard of certificates of safety for appropriate websites.

52% also didn't know, or had heard of, but didn't know how to use passwords to block screens, while 43% hadn't heard of/or didn't know how to use passwords to block uploads/downloads on their computer.

Table 9
Parents knowledge/implementation of Online Prevention Tools

	Don't know it	Heard of it, but don't know how to use it	Know how to, but never used it	Know it and used it	Total
Filters in Navigator	33.17% 207	24.68% 154	15.22% 95	26.92% 168	624
Filters in Search Engines	19.33% 122	25.83% 163	15.37% 97	39.46% 249	631
Filters in Social Network Usage	25.24% 155	26.38% 162	16.78% 103	31.60% 194	614
Filter options included in antivirus software to block pages	19.24% 122	20.50% 130	14.51% 92	45.74% 290	634
Filters in operation systems to block, limit or inform of use	25.08% 156	27.33% 170	17.04% 106	30.55% 190	622
Uses and characteristics of privacy levels in social networks	19.74% 123	16.85% 105	13.16% 82	50.24% 313	623
Timetable of internet use control	28.73% 179	21.35% 133	19.58% 122	30.34% 189	623
Websites to learn about security use of internet	23.56% 147	20.67% 129	24.36% 152	31.41% 196	624
Research on websites visited	20.91% 129	15.88% 98	15.56% 96	47.65% 294	617
Where to verify if a website is safe	35.40% 217	23.16% 142	14.03% 86	27.41% 168	613
Forbid internet in rooms with closed door	17.18% 106	10.05% 62	16.37% 101	56.40% 348	617
Certificates of safe an appropriate websites	34.21% 207	22.31% 135	14.55% 88	28.93% 175	605
Block webs and apps for mobiles	25.21% 153	21.75% 132	19.28% 117	33.77% 205	607
Antivirus software	7.05% 44	7.69% 48	6.41% 40	78.85% 492	624
Check permits when you install and app, game, or program	21.20% 131	14.40% 89	12.46% 77	51.94% 321	618
Control/limit of use of webcam	22.98% 139	15.87% 96	12.89% 78	48.26% 292	605
Use of password for blocking screen or visualization of pictures	32.32% 201	19.29% 120	14.15% 88	34.24% 213	622
Use of password for blocking uploads/downloads	24.52% 154	18.79% 118	13.85% 87	42.83% 269	628

Conclusions

In summarily reviewing the results, it is notable that there is a high level of internet use reflected by parents within this survey, which is no doubt in part due to the questionnaire being deployed online, however the percentage access/use of the internet by parents at home (98%) is in keeping with that reported by Irish children (87%) in studies such as E.U. Kids Online.

This expansive use of the internet within Irish households is further reflected by the parents in this study reporting that of the children aged 6-8 years old in their homes over 50% had access to a computer with the internet, with more than a quarter of children at that age having access to the net on their own portable device, something which would indicate that further studies into cyberbullying may need to expand their age scope to cover still younger children.

In regards to parents, the level of education evinced by the respondents, with most having a University or post-Secondary education, would also play a part in their high rate of internet use, and perhaps inform the relatively high level of confidence expressed by parents in this study both in regards to their own safe use of the internet, their vigilance in regards to their children, and their children's personal use of the net.

However, while a great deal and variety of vigilance is expressed here, and parents do express a wide breath of knowledge of both the risks and the preventive measures, there are some questions raised as the results are reviewed.

Firstly when asked what type of social networks they use, parents do register a high net usage in regards to texting and Facebook. However their use of other networks like Twitter and Instagram, which would have a much lower age user profile than Facebook, more suited to their children, is quite low, and this age gap of usage would be in keeping with the tendency of children to avoid the places their parents use. This in tandem with the low percentage of frequent parental supervision in regards to social networks (18%) and the significant proportion of 11/12 year olds (19%) already active on social networks prior to the age limit set by many networks, would seem indicate an area that could provide a fertile ground for abuse.

In addition there is some concern around the comparative lack of use of basic preventative measures, e.g. lack of parental filters on the computer (29% of 13/14 year olds operate without a parental filter on their computer) or the non-placing of computers with internet capability in common areas (28% of 13/14 year olds and 38% of 15/16 year olds with access to a networked computer in a private place).

There should certainly be caution too around the feedback from parents in regards to how they know what social networks, websites, and downloads their children use/avail of. In each case between 80-66% of respondents stated that they knew what these were because their children told them. While other avenues of discovery were listed (e.g. supervision, parental blocks etc.) their children's telling them was considerably the most prominent. It is certainly the case that children are often honest in their dealings with their parents in terms of the internet, but with natural curiosity, peer pressure and other outside influences, parents should be wary of placing too much faith in this method of discovery.

While parents continued to express a high level of confidence in their activity in regards to their children's online safety, they do express worry in regards to certain areas including toxic and adult contents, while in regards to cyberbullying 47% of parents were still worried their child was exposed at some level. In addition despite their confidence in their own internet usage, many expressed a lack of knowledge about various preventative measures including filters and passwords.

These issues and concerns are reflected in the comments that parents were invited to make at the end of the questionnaire in regards to how they feel children could be better protected on the internet. Some felt that the taking of this survey was a wakeup call to them as they had realised that they were not as aware of the dangers and how to combat them as they thought they were. Many parents expressed a strong and often frustrated desire to increase their own knowledge and the desire to take 'parent specific' courses and websites on preventative measures where they could - learn more about privacy techniques; filtering at ISP level; cyberbullying legislation, how to keep the lines of communication open with children.

So while it is certainly edifying to see so many parents both aware of issues and expressing confidence in their abilities to protect their children from online threats, these issues and the expressions of desire for further education on the part of the parents would indicate that further tools for aid and education specifically for and aimed at parents would be welcome.