

Safer Internet

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This document does not represent the point of view of the European Commission.
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INTRODUCTION

In this report we present the findings from a survey about Safer Internet that was carried out in the twenty-five Member States of the European Union, in the two acceding countries and the two candidate countries between 7 December 2005 and 11 January 2006. The survey was also carried out in the Turkish Cypriot Community but the results are not presented in this report though the data is included in the tables in the annexes.

The survey is part of the European Union's Safer Internet Programme. This programme has been running since 1999, and aims to equip parents and teachers with the knowledge and tools they need to ensure Internet safety¹. Earlier surveys were carried out in autumn 2003 in the 15 'old' Member States and at the beginning of 2004 in the 10 new Member States just before these countries joined the European Union on 1 May 2004.

The methodology used is that of the Standard Eurobarometer polls managed by the Directorate-General Press and Communication (unit "Opinion polls, press reviews, Europe Direct"). A technical note concerning the interviews, carried out by the institutes of the TNS Opinion & Social network, is annexed to this report. This note specifies the interview method used, as well as the confidence intervals². The survey questionnaire is largely based on the SAFT project, see www.saftonline.org. The Eurobarometer survey and its findings have been reviewed with assistance of Ms Elisabeth Staksrud, Project Director Interactive Media, The Norwegian Media Authority.

Although some of the questions about safer Internet were asked of all the respondents who participated in the Eurobarometer survey, most questions were only asked if the respondent had any child living in their household under their responsibility. If respondents had more than one child, they were asked to provide answers for the child whose birthday was closest to the date of the interview. Of the 7.560 parents and caretakers with children aged 17 and under a further selection was made and questions about the use of Internet were only asked of 3.791 of parents and caretakers whose child uses the Internet.

For the sake of the readability of the report, we refer to these respondents as parents. In reality, these respondents can also be siblings of the child or any other person who has responsibility over the child, as respondents were asked whether they have any children under their responsibility. Furthermore, in order to randomize the sample, respondents were asked to think about the child in their household whose birthday is first. The consequence of this selection method is that it is possible that respondents no longer thought about siblings under their responsibility but about all children living in their household³.

¹ http://www.europa.eu.int/information_society/activities/sip/index_en.html

² The results tables are included in the annex. The totals indicated may show a one point difference with the sum of the individual units. It should also be noted that the total of the percentages in the tables of this report may exceed 100% when the respondent has the possibility to give several answers to the same question.

³ Consequently, for example, 113 respondents aged 15 to 24 answered questions about children aged 16 or 17. For further information about the breakdown of the sample please see the table for Q.C3b in the annexes.

Replies of questions asked only of the 3.791 respondents with children under their responsibility are broken down by the geo-political regions of Europe: the 15 'old' Member States, the 10 new Member States and the 4 accession and candidate countries. Where data is available from earlier surveys, comparisons are presented. However, the questions were often modified making it difficult to interpret any changes with the previous surveys. We also comment on the way the replies vary according to the age and gender of the children as well as certain characteristics of the parents.

Readers are reminded that survey results are estimations, the accuracy of which rests upon the sample size and upon the observed percentages.

This report analyses the following themes:

- ◆ First of all, we shall examine general Internet usage in Europe, then turning to the use of Internet among children.
- ◆ We then analyse the extent to which and the locations where children have come across harmful and illegal content on the Internet.
- ◆ Finally, we examine measures parents take to protect their children when using the Internet and we look at awareness and information about safer Internet.

In the report, the countries are represented by their official abbreviations. Other abbreviations used in this report correspond to:

ABBREVIATIONS

EU25	European Union - 25 Member States
EU15	European Union - 15 Member States before the most recent enlargement (1 st May 2004)
EU15-2003	2003 survey carried out in 15 'old' Member States
NMS10-2004	2004 survey carried out in 10 New Member States
AC/CC4	Accession and Candidate countries: Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia and Turkey
TEA: <16	Respondent completed his or her full-time education before the age of 15.
TEA: 16-19	Respondent completed his or her full-time education in the ages of 16 to 19.
TEA: 20+	Respondent completed his or her full-time education at the age of 20 or older.
DK	Don't know

MAIN FINDINGS

With half of European parents declaring that their children aged 17 and younger use the Internet, the potential access to harmful or illegal content on the Internet is a serious problem. Nearly two out of ten European parents state that their child has encountered this whilst online (18%).

In comparing use of the Internet to owning a mobile phone, on average over a third of the respondents say that their child owns a mobile phone (36%), suggesting that among children this is a less common form of communication than the Internet. However, in Cyprus, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, the Czech Republic, Italy, Austria and Portugal, mobile phones are more common, or as common, as the use of Internet.

It also covers discrepancies between age groups: nearly all parents or carers with children aged 16 and 17 indicate that their child owns a mobile phone (87%) and among this age group a mobile phone is as common as the use of Internet. The wide majority of youngsters aged 14 and 15 also own a mobile phone (80%). Owning a mobile phone is less widespread when children are younger than 12, but almost a quarter of children (23%) aged 8-9 years own a mobile phone.

Sixty percent of parents whose children access the internet have not set any rules relating to internet usage.

Top rules mentioned by parents concern "not allowing access to certain websites" (55%), and "controlling time spent on the internet" (53%). Less frequent are parent's rules for "not allowing children to meet in person someone first contacted on the internet" (35%) and "not allowing downloads of music or films" (19%).

Close to half of parents say that filtering or blocking tools avoiding the access to certain web sites are applied when their child uses the Internet (48%) and around a quarter of parents sit with their children when they go online (24%). This measure to protect children from unsafe Internet is particularly common among parents of children aged six or younger, with 69% of these parents declaring that they regularly sit with their child.

Two out of three European parents believe that their child knows what to do if a situation on the Internet makes the child feel uncomfortable (66%).

44% of parents would like more information about how to protect their child from illegal or harmful content and contact. There are extreme differences between EU Member States, with scores ranging from 29% of the Danish respondents feeling they need more information to 86% of the respondents in Greece. This wish is most widespread in the 4 accession and candidate countries (64%).

Respondents are most keen on receiving information about using the Internet in a safer way from schools (36%), the Internet provider (31%) and the media (21%).

On average, half of the European Union citizens know where or to whom they can report illegal content seen on the Internet (52%). This applies to six out of ten respondents who used the Internet just prior to the survey and to four out of ten respondents who did not use it in the month prior to the survey. In the 15 "old" Member States, awareness levels have increased significantly since the previous survey. In autumn 2003, 41% of the respondents knew where or to whom they could report illegal content seen on the internet. In this survey it applies to 54% of the respondents living in the 10 "old" Member States. Most people think of the police as the institution where illegal content seen on the Internet can be reported (49%).

Finally, the survey highlights the growing popularity of the Internet with one European in two using it (49%). In the Netherlands (85%) and Sweden (81%) use of the Internet is particularly widespread. It is most popular among students (91%). Older people and in particular pensioners and people who left full-time education before the age of 16 are least likely to use the Internet (15%).

1. The use of Internet in Europe

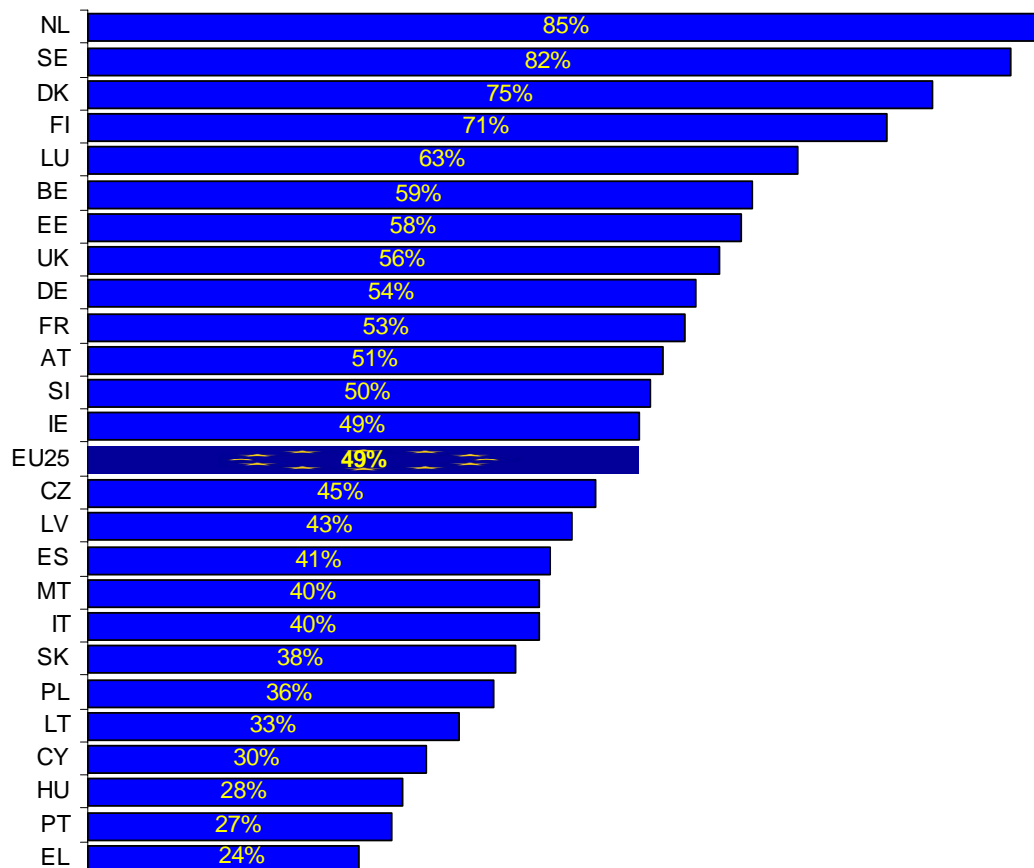
We begin this report with a general examination of the use of Internet in the European Union⁴. The survey provides insight into the use of Internet in the month prior to the survey, shows where people have used it and measures how knowledgeable people feel they are when they go online.

1.1 General use

Respondents were asked whether during the last month, they used the Internet at home, at work, at school, university or other study centre, at another place or whether they did not use it during the last month or not at all.

Whilst on average, one European Union resident in two used the Internet in the month preceding the survey (49%), at the country level this ranges from 24% in Greece to over 80% in Sweden and the Netherlands.

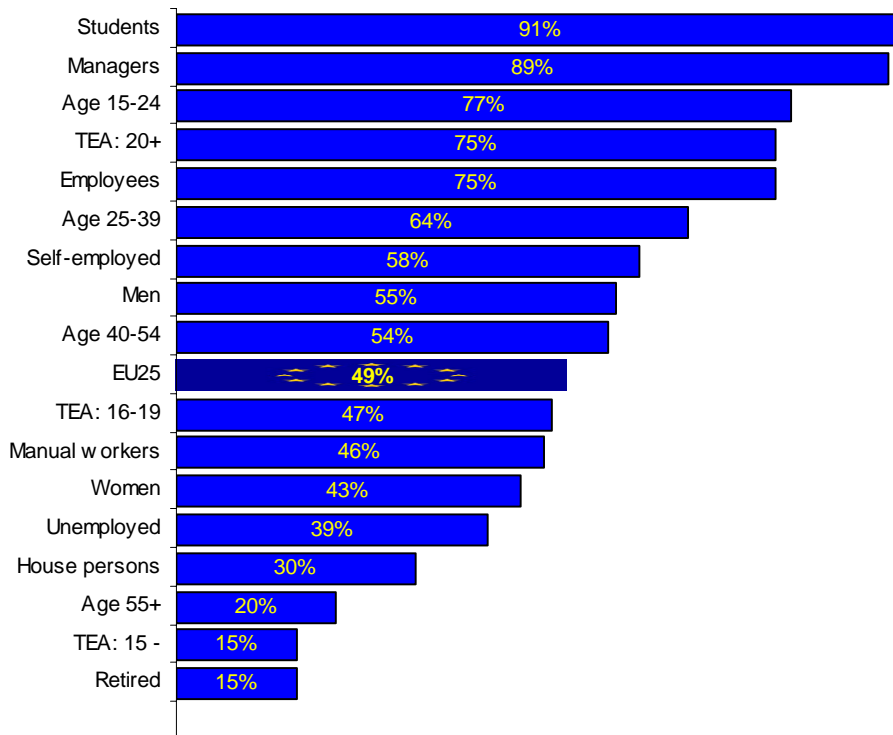
Use of Internet by country



⁴ The survey was also carried out in the two accession countries (Romania and Bulgaria) and the two candidate countries (Croatia and Turkey). The total results for these four countries are presented. Separate country results can be found in the tables shown in the appendices.

People's socio-demographic characteristics strongly predict whether they use the Internet or not, with age, educational status and occupational status being the most important factors. As the following graph shows, students and managers are most likely to use the Internet whereas retired people and people who completed their education before reaching the age of 16 are least likely to use it⁵.

Use of Internet by respondents' socio-demographic characteristics



To a lesser degree, the survey reveals that Internet use varies depending on household size (the larger the household, the more likely it is that people use the Internet), people's political orientation (people who place themselves on the left of the political scale are more likely to use the Internet than are those who place themselves on the centre or on the right of the scale) and subjective urbanisation (people living in a large town are more likely to use the Internet than are people living in rural villages).

In the accession and candidate countries, the use of the Internet is considerably less common than it is in the European Union. On average only one respondent in five living in the accession and candidate countries used it in the month preceding the survey (20%).

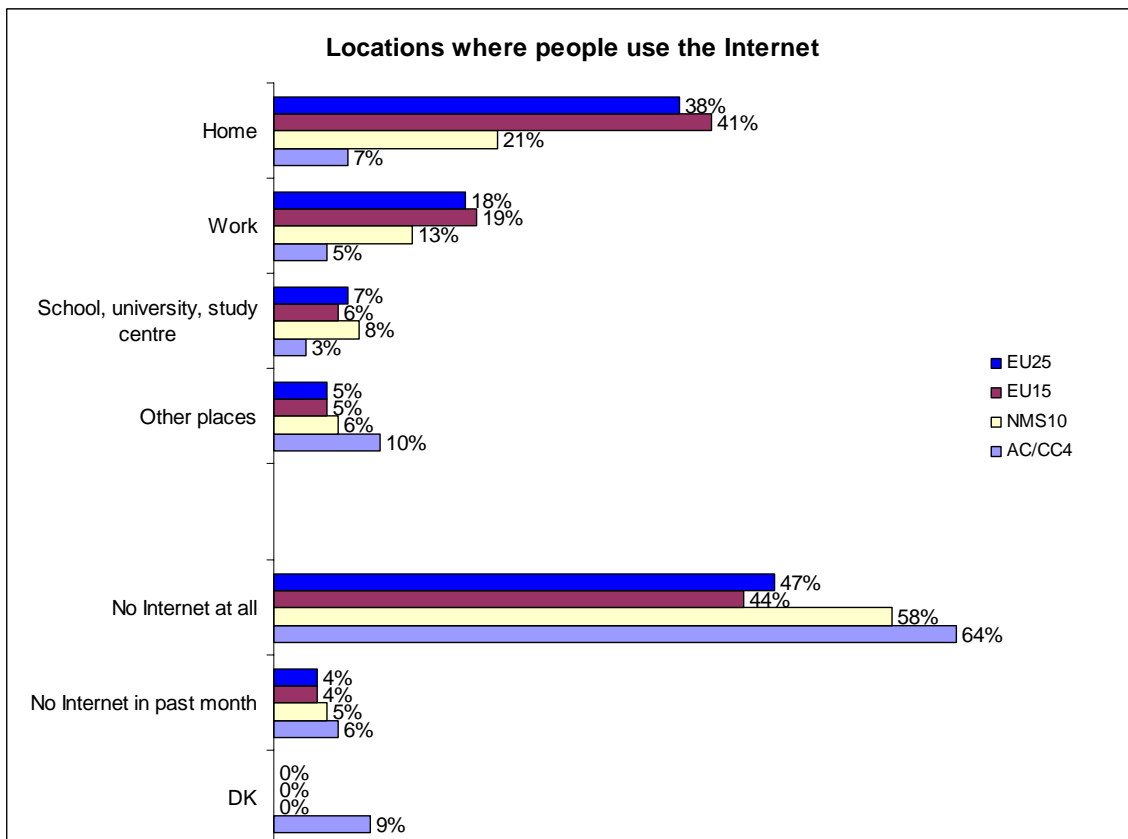
⁵ In the graph, the abbreviation 'TEA' stands for terminal education age and refers to the age at which the respondent completed his or her full-time education. 'House person' refers to people without any occupation who look after the home.

1.2 Where do people use the Internet?

Next we look at the places where people use the Internet by breaking down the total results presented in the previous section.

- The Internet is mostly used at home at and at work -

The survey shows that one's own home is the most popular place to use the Internet, with 38% of respondents indicating that this is where they went online in the past month. Close to one respondent in five used the Internet at work (18%) in the past month and 7% did so at school or university or other study centre. Places like Internet cafés were used by 5% of the respondents in the month leading up to the survey.



The home is the most frequently mentioned location in all countries, with the exception of Slovakia and Latvia where people are just as likely to use the Internet at work (17% in Slovakia and 14% in Latvia).

In the accession and candidate countries the Internet is currently used more frequently at other places than it is at home, at work or at school.

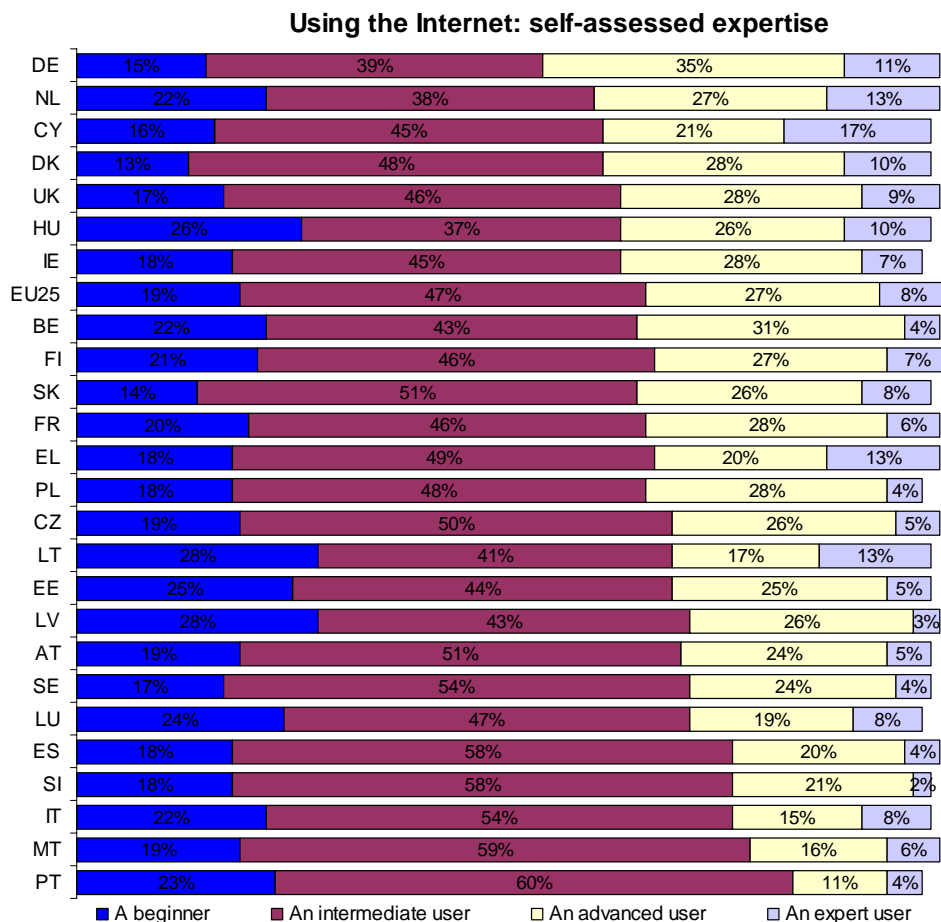
Analysis of the socio-demographic variables shows that for all the socio-demographic groups identified in the survey, the home is the most popular location, although the places where people use the Internet clearly vary depending on their personal situation. Hence we find that 57% of students use the Internet at an educational institution though they are even more likely to use it at home (68%) and since students are not very likely to work, the proportion that uses it at work is negligent (7%). Equally, a large proportion of managers use the Internet at work (64%) but since they don't frequent educational institutions, very few say they use it at these locations (4%).

1.3 Self-assessed expertise of using the Internet

In the final section of this chapter we analyse the results of a question that asks respondents that use the Internet to indicate whether they consider themselves as a beginner, an intermediate user, an advanced user or an expert user when they go online.

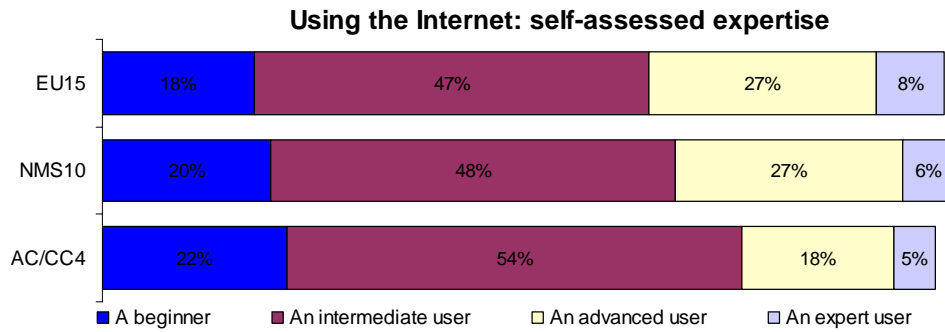
-More than a third of EU citizens consider themselves as advanced or expert Internet users-

At 46%, people in Germany are most likely to consider themselves advanced or expert users of the Internet and in the Netherlands, this applies to four out of ten people. In Portugal, on the other hand, only 15% of people feel they are advanced or expert Internet users and the wide majority (60%) rate themselves as intermediate users. As the following graph shows, in all countries people are most inclined to place themselves at the intermediate level⁶.

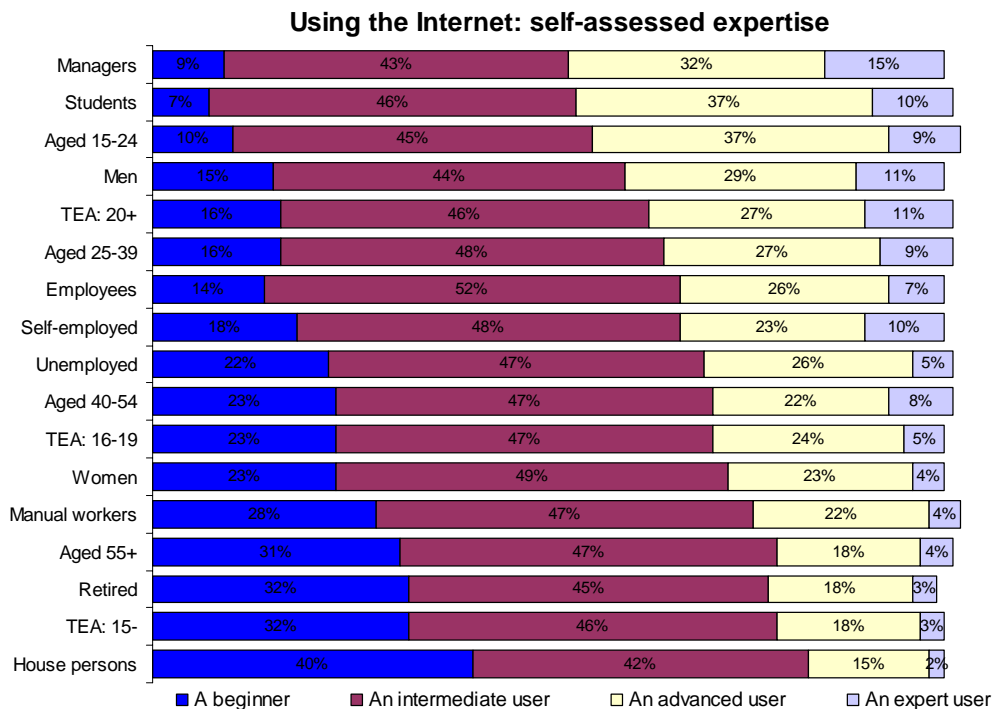


⁶ This graph and the two that follow do not show the percentage of 'don't know' responses obtained for this question. Any differences in the total between the separate countries, groups of countries and socio-demographic characteristics are explained by this omission.

As the following graph shows, people living in the four accession and candidate countries are somewhat less likely to rate themselves as advanced or expert Internet users than their counterparts in the European Union Member States are.



We reported earlier that students, managers and people aged 15 to 24 are most likely to use the Internet. They are also most likely to consider themselves as advanced or expert users. Only 17% of house wives and house men that use the Internet feel this way. However, similar to the national results, we find that people are most likely to rate themselves as intermediate users regardless of the socio-demographic characteristics. There is a significant difference in the way men and women assess their expertise (only 27% of women consider themselves as advanced or expert users whereas 40% men consider they are in this category).



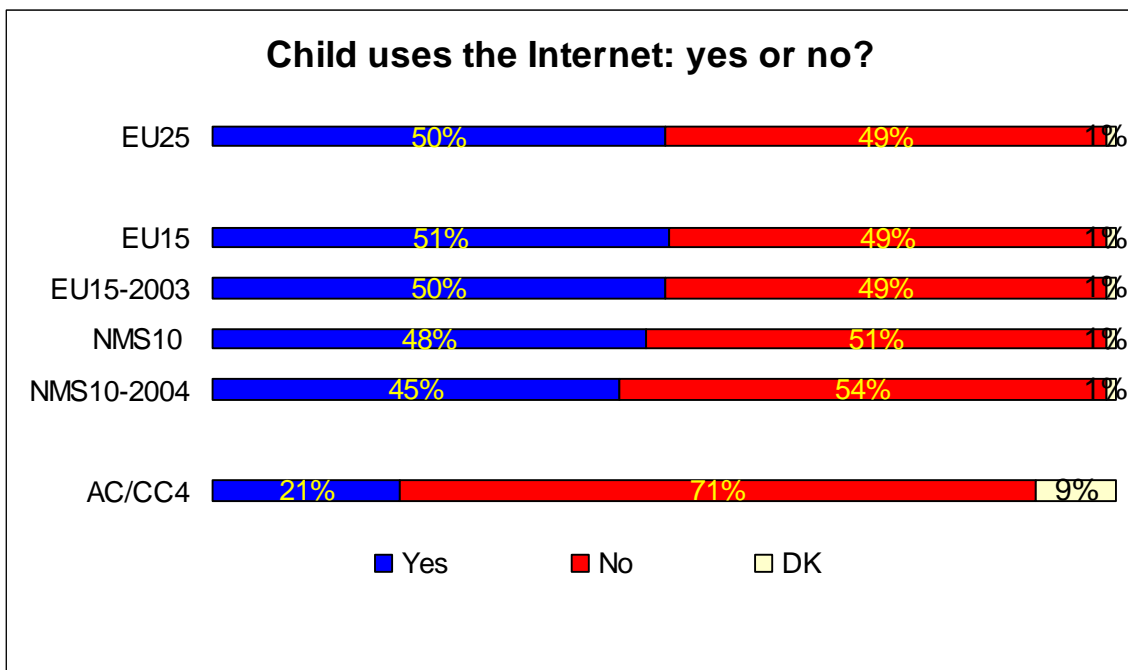
2. The use of the Internet among children

In this chapter the focus is on the use of the Internet among children aged 17 or younger as judged by the respondents in this survey with children under their responsibility⁷. The use of Internet is also compared to the ownership of mobile phones.

2.1 Use of the Internet: general overview

In this section we analyse the use of the Internet by children in comparison to the previous survey⁸, by country, by the age and gender of the children and by a number of characteristics of their parents, the respondents.

-On average, one child in two living in the European Union is said to use the Internet -



In the 10 new Member States, the percentage of children deemed to be using the Internet has increased from 45% in 2004 to 48% in the most recent survey. In the 15 'old' Member States, the assessment of the proportion of children using the Internet has not changed significantly since 2003 and now stands at 51%⁹.

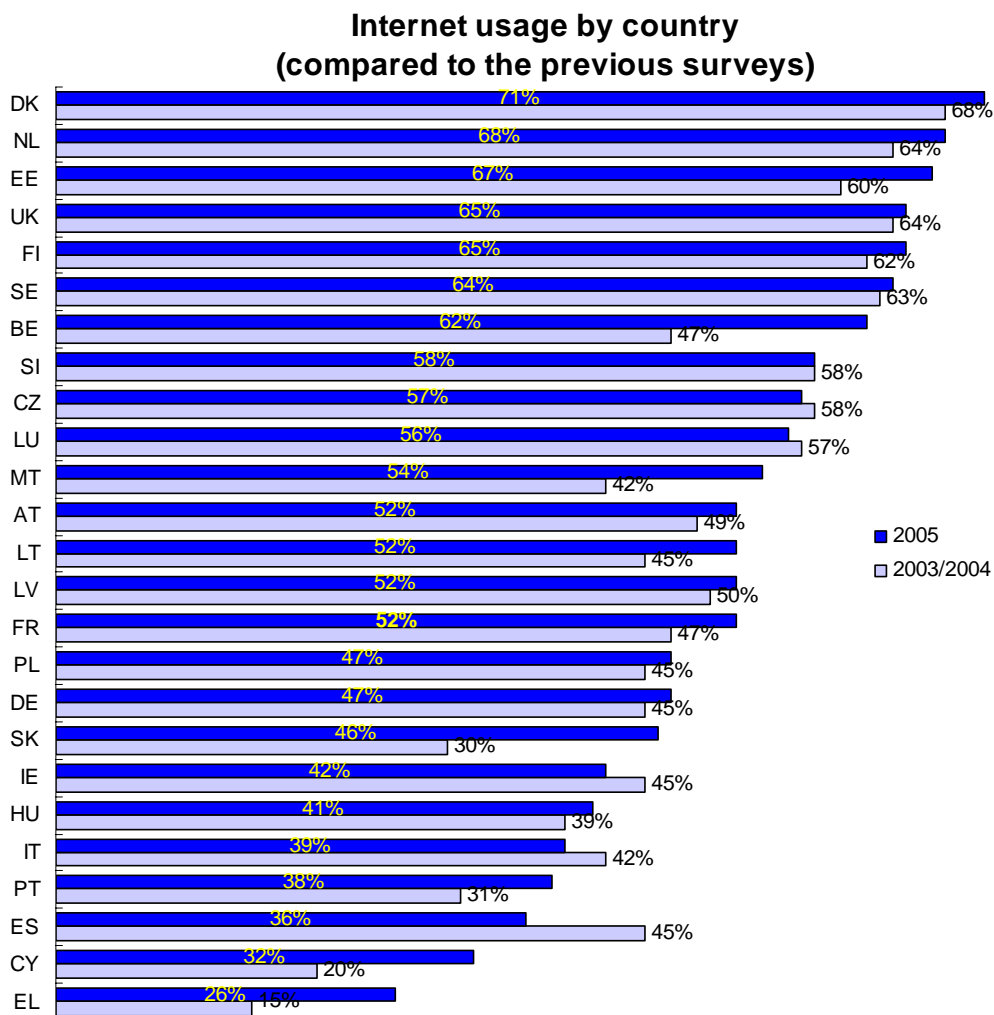
⁷ Respondents with a child under their responsibility can be parents, caretakers or a sibling of the child. For the sake of readability, the respondents are referred to as parents.

⁸ In the graph, the results from the 2003 survey in the 15 'old' Member States and the 2004 survey in the 10 new Member States is shown as EU15-2003 and NMS10-2004, respectively.

⁹ The SAFT survey 2003, which included the same questions, but interviewed children as well as parents, showed that parents' belief on children's use is lower than children's reported use. One must therefore expect that the actual penetration among children is significantly higher.

The proportion of children reportedly using the Internet is considerably lower in the accession and candidate countries (21%).

The country pattern for the use of the Internet among children is fairly similar to that of the population aged 15 and over. As was noted in chapter 1, Internet use among adults is most widespread in the Netherlands and least widespread in Greece. Internet use among children is assessed as being most widespread by parents and caretakers in Denmark (71%), with the Netherlands (68%) and Estonia (67%) in second and third place, respectively. It is least widespread in Greece (26%).



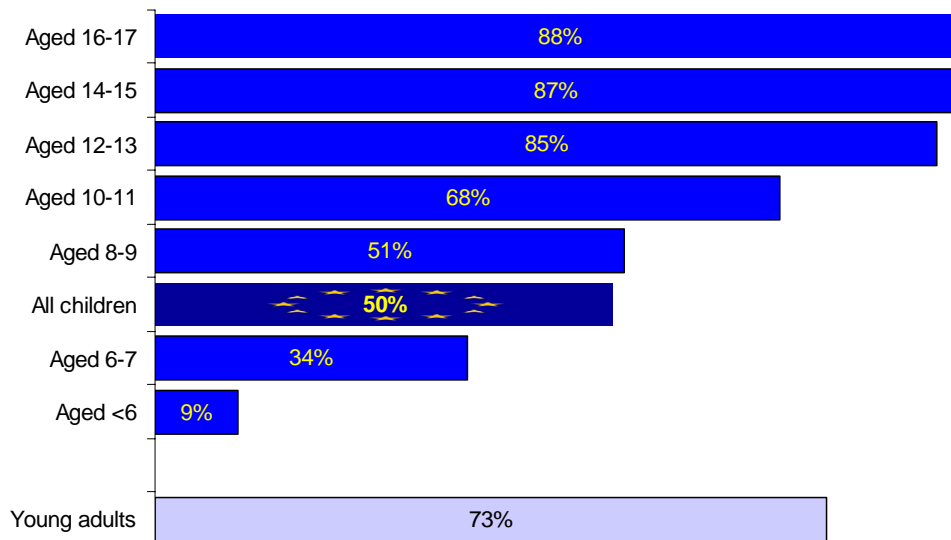
In comparison to the previous surveys, the proportion of children reportedly using the Internet increased by more than 10 percentage points in Slovakia, Belgium, Malta and Cyprus with significant increases also recorded in Greece, Lithuania, Estonia and France. On the other hand, a significant drop in levels of Internet use among children was recorded in Spain (-9 points)¹⁰.

¹⁰ Please note that the Spanish sample in 2005 contains a higher percentage of young children (who use the Internet less) than in 2003 (10% vs. 20%). The make-up of the sample influences responses to this question.

The reported use of the Internet becomes more or less a given when children reach the age of 12 with more than 80% of parents with children aged 12 and older declaring that their child uses the Internet. In fact, the survey shows that children in this age group are more likely to use the Internet than the generation that is just ahead of them – young people aged 18 to 24 – is (73%)¹¹.

Even among children as young as 8, the use of the Internet is quite common, with one parent in two with children aged 8 and 9 declaring that their child goes online. The penetration rate is lower for younger children, with 34% of those aged 6 and 7 using it and only 9% of children under the age of 6 reportedly going online.

**The use of Internet among children
(by age brackets)**



¹¹ This percentage is for respondents aged 18 to 24 who say they use the Internet (question C1).

Overall, boys are slightly more likely to use the Internet than girls are (52% vs. 48%) and boys tend to use it at an earlier age. 37% of boys aged 6 and 7 use the Internet compared to 30% of girls. This gap continues until the age of 9. Boys aged 14 and 15 are again more likely to use the Internet than girls are whereas no differences are found between boys and girls aged 16 and 17.

	Boys	Girls
% using Internet		
Age 5 or younger	9%	9%
Age 6-7	37%	30%
Age 8-9	55%	47%
Age 10-11	67%	69%
Age 12-13	85%	84%
Age 14-15	91%	84%
Age 16-17	88%	88%

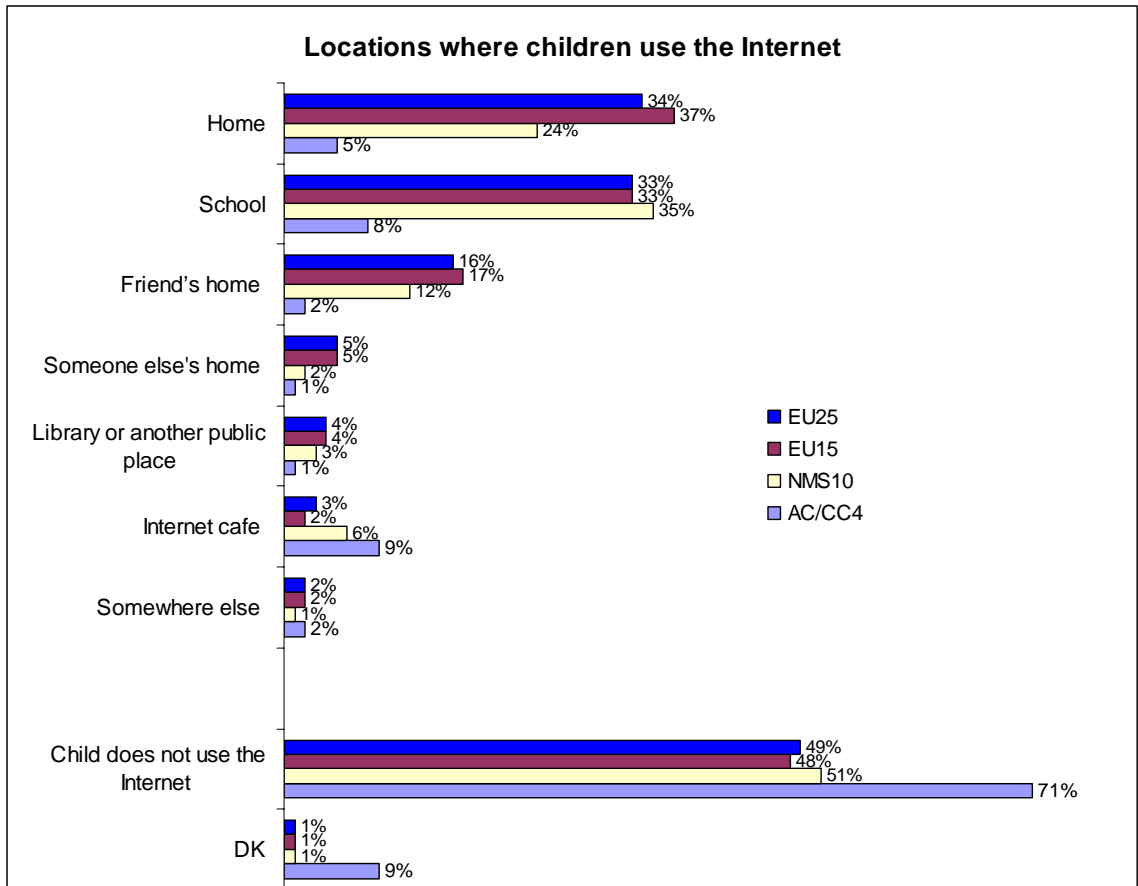
2.2 Where do parents say their child uses the Internet?

This section presents an analysis of the locations where parents say their children use the Internet.

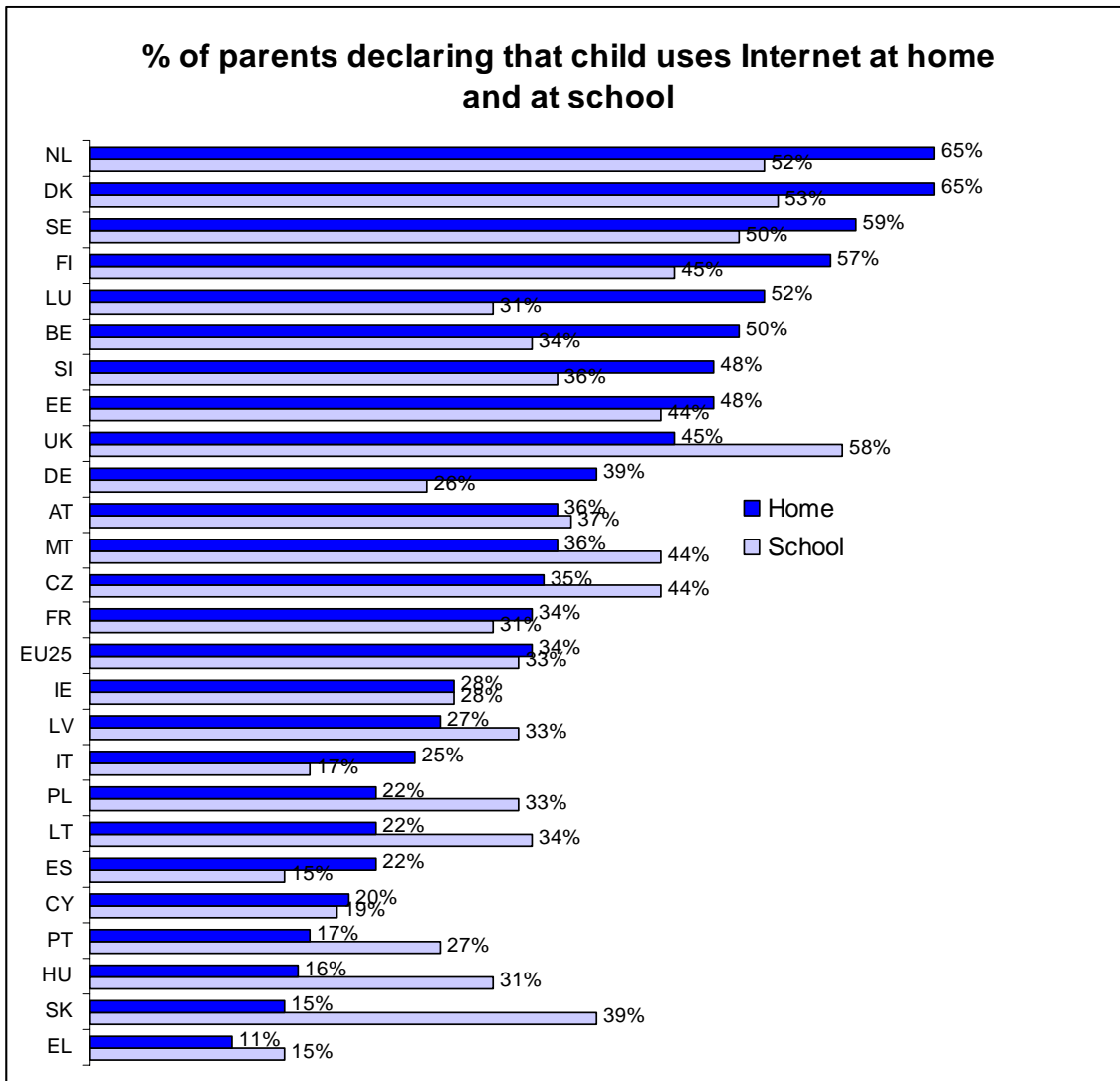
- Home and school remain most common locations-

According to parents, children are most likely to use the Internet at home (34%) and at school (33%) with one parent in six declaring that his or her child uses the Internet when visiting friends (16%). Other places are mentioned by only a very small minority of parents.

A comparison between the three geo-political regions shows that in the 15 'old' Member States, parents are most likely to declare that their child uses the Internet at home (37%), whereas parents in the 10 new Member States and the accession and candidate countries are most likely to declare that their child uses the Internet at school (35% and 8%, respectively).



The country results for the use the Internet at home and at school show that the home is the most common place in nearly all of the 'old' Member States. The clear exceptions are the United Kingdom and Portugal and to a lesser extent Greece. School is the most frequently mentioned location in most of the new Member States with the exception of Slovenia and Estonia. In Austria, Ireland and Cyprus the two locations are used by approximately the same proportion of children.

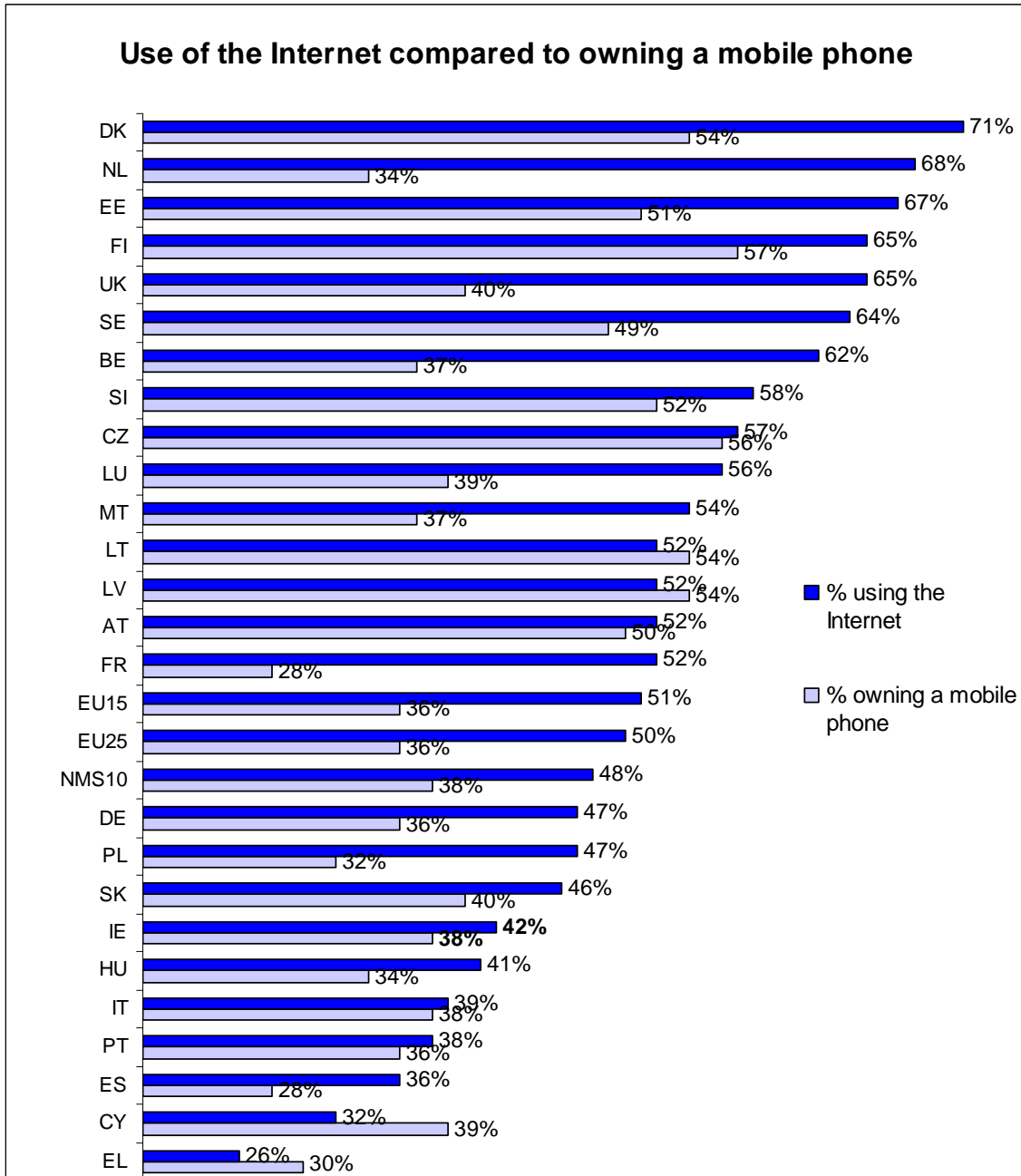


In a number of countries the gap between the two locations is quite significant. This is particularly true in Slovakia, where the use of Internet at school is mentioned by more than twice as many parents as is the use of Internet at home (39% vs. 15%).

2.3 Use of the Internet compared to owning a mobile phone

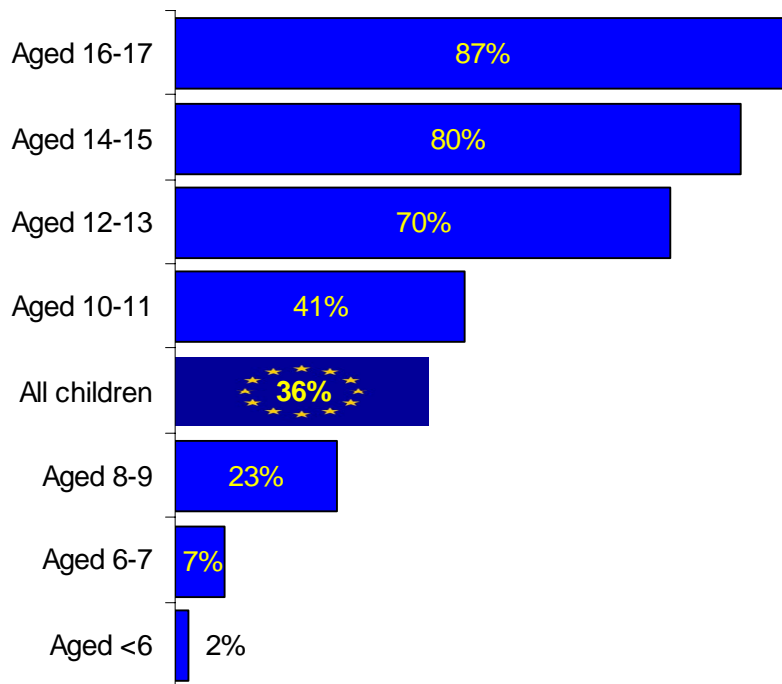
- In most countries, children are more likely to use the Internet than they are to own a mobile phone -

On average, just over a third of the respondents say that their child owns a mobile phone (36%), suggesting that among children this is a less common form of communication than the Internet is. However, as the graph below shows, in Cyprus, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, the Czech Republic, Italy, Austria and Portugal, mobile phones are more common, or as common, as the use of Internet is.



Nearly all parents with children aged 16 and 17 indicate that their child owns a mobile phone (87%) and among this age group a mobile phone is as common as the use of Internet is. The wide majority of youngsters aged 14 and 15 also own a mobile phone (80%). Owning a mobile phone is considerable less widespread among children younger than 12, but almost a quarter of children aged 8-9 years own a mobile phone.

% of children owning a mobile phone (by age brackets)

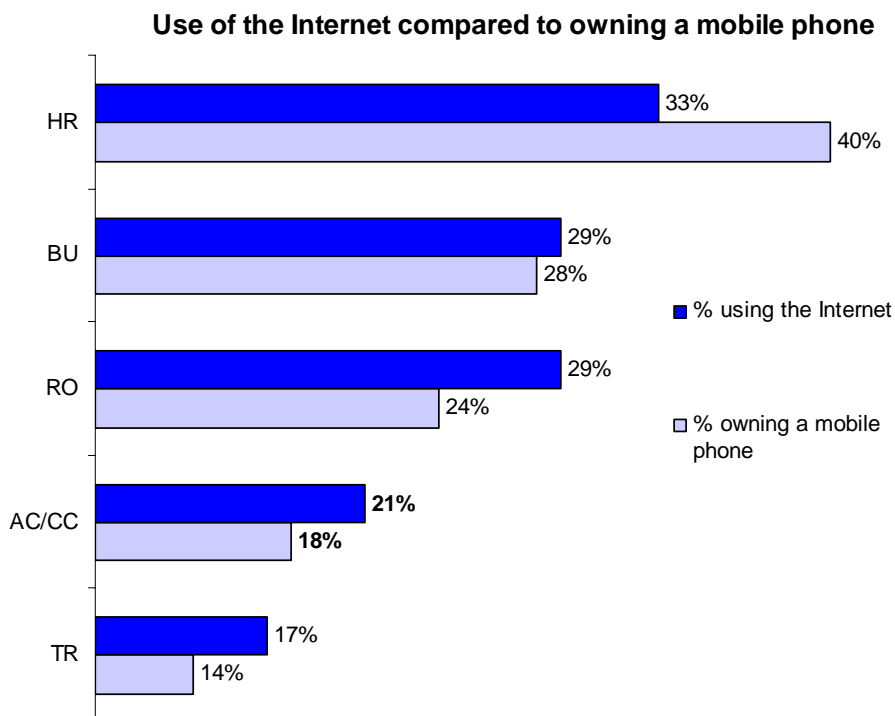


Overall, girls and boys are equally likely to own a mobile phone (37% vs. 36%). However, girls tend to be a bit younger when they start and at age 16 and 17, the proportion of girls with a phone is significantly higher than the proportion of boys.

	Boys	Girls
% owning a mobile phone		
Age 5 or younger	2%	2%
Age 6-7	7%	8%
Age 8-9	21%	24%
Age 10-11	40%	42%
Age 12-13	68%	71%
Age 14-15	79%	80%
Age 16-17	85%	91%

2.4 Situation in the accession and candidate countries

In the four accession and candidate countries, around one child in five uses the Internet (21%) and slightly fewer children own a mobile phone (18%). This is lower than the European Union average. However, there are large differences between the four accession and candidate countries. Ownership of a mobile phone is quite widespread in Croatia and comparable to several of the EU Member States. In Turkey, the proportion of children owning a mobile phone or using the Internet is lower than in the other three countries and than in any of the European Union Member States.



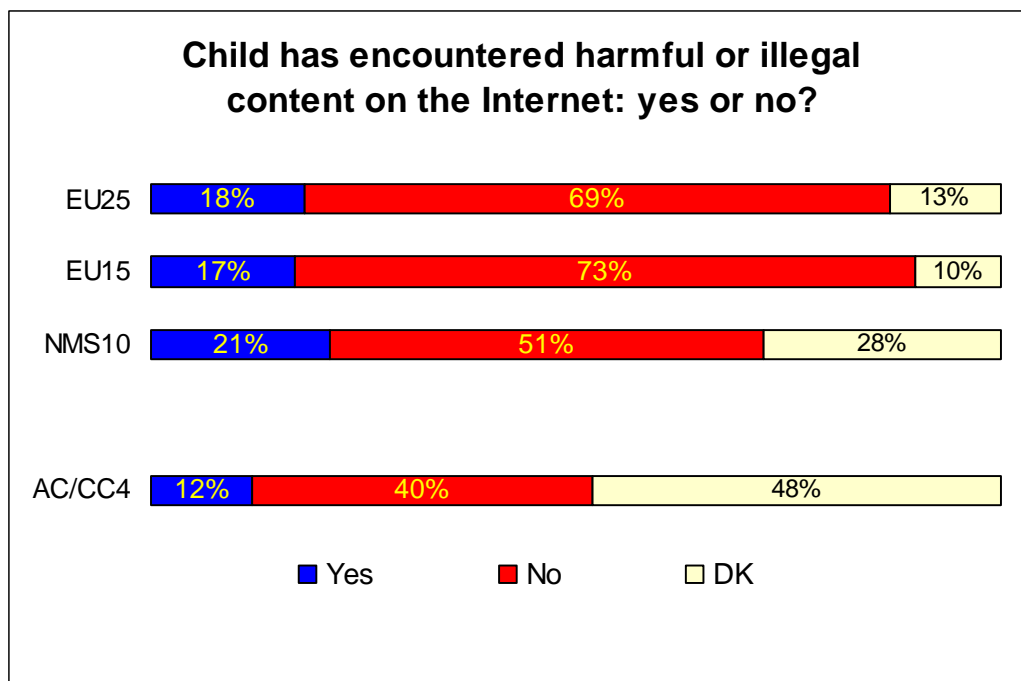
3. Harmful or illegal content on the Internet

In order to assess the measures parents take to protect their children against harmful or illegal content on the Internet, we firstly look at the extent to which parents think their children encounter this on the Web and where they think this happens¹².

3.1 Extent to which children come across harmful or illegal content on the Internet

- Nearly one parent in five believes his or her child has encountered harmful or illegal content on the Internet -

According to 18% of European parents or carers, their child has come across harmful or illegal content on the Internet. This figure is slightly higher in the 10 new Member States than it is in the 15 'old' Member States (21% vs. 17%).



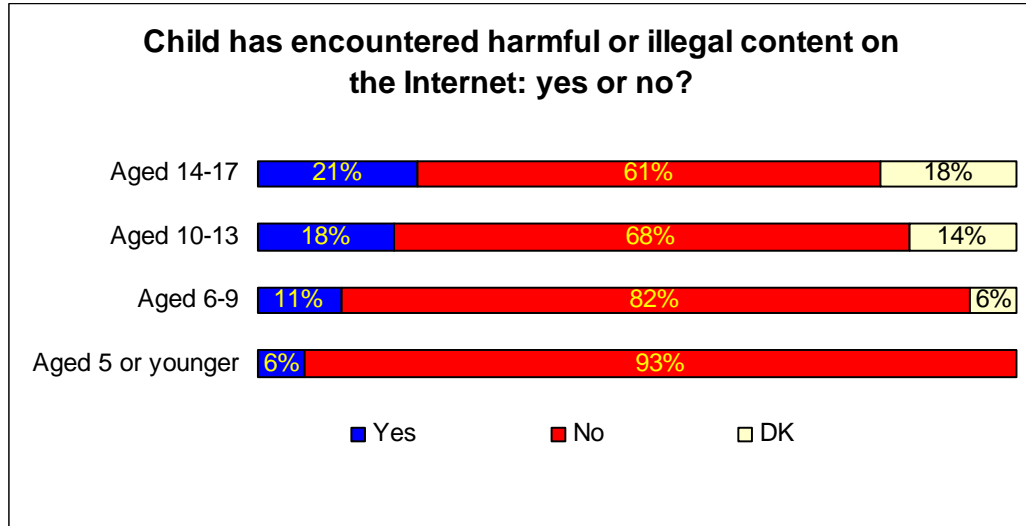
In the four accession and candidate countries, only 12% of parents affirm that their child has encountered harmful or illegal content on the Internet. In these countries, the majority of parents don't know whether this has ever happened or not (48%). In the 10 new Member States more than a quarter of parents also lack an opinion (28%).

-Likelihood that children encounter illegal or harmful content increases with age -

According to the parents, one child in ten aged five or younger has come across illegal or harmful content on the Internet. The likelihood that this happens increases as children get older. Furthermore, the results indicate that parents have less control over

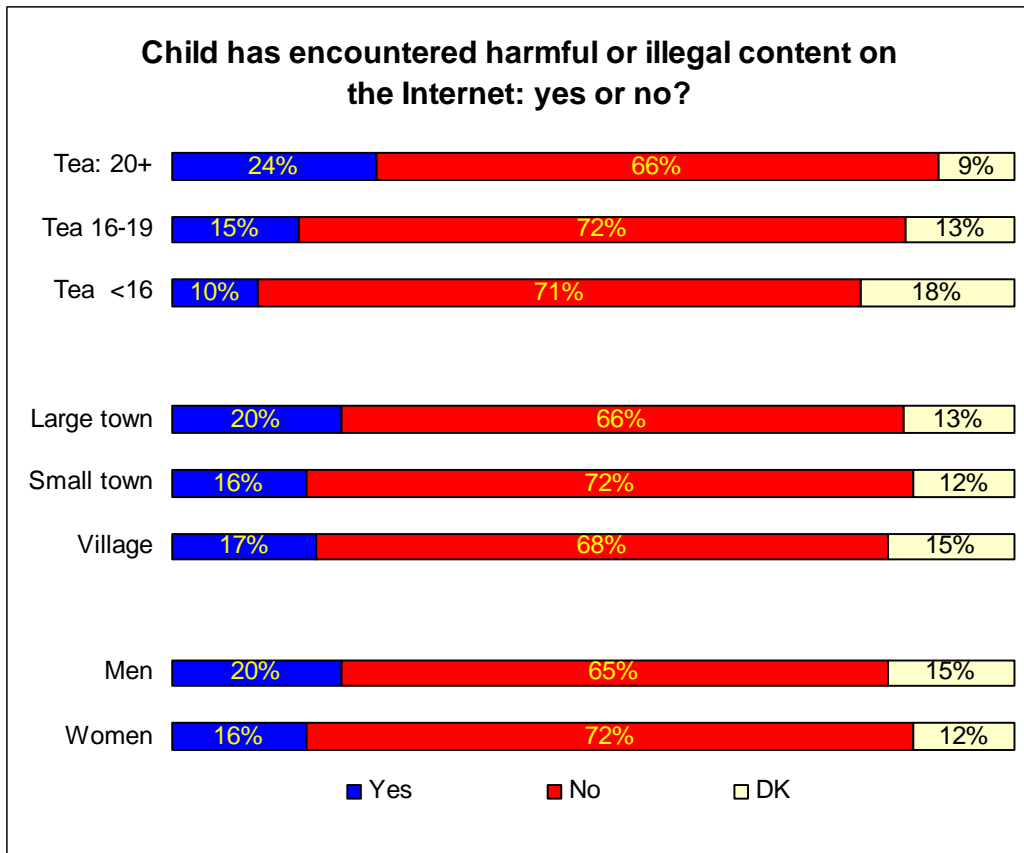
¹² Respondents with children aged 17 and younger with children were asked whether they think their child has ever encountered harmful or illegal content on the Internet (question C10).

what older children do when they are online, as the percentage of parents that was unable to answer the question also goes up with the age of the child.



Analyses of the characteristics of the parents highlight that the longer parents have stayed in full-time education¹³, the more likely it is that they believe their child has encountered harmful or illegal content on the Internet. As the following graph shows, gender and the size of the locality in which the parents live are also important factors.

¹³ In the graph, results for this variable are abbreviated as 'Tea'. Please see the introduction of this report for a definition of this abbreviation.



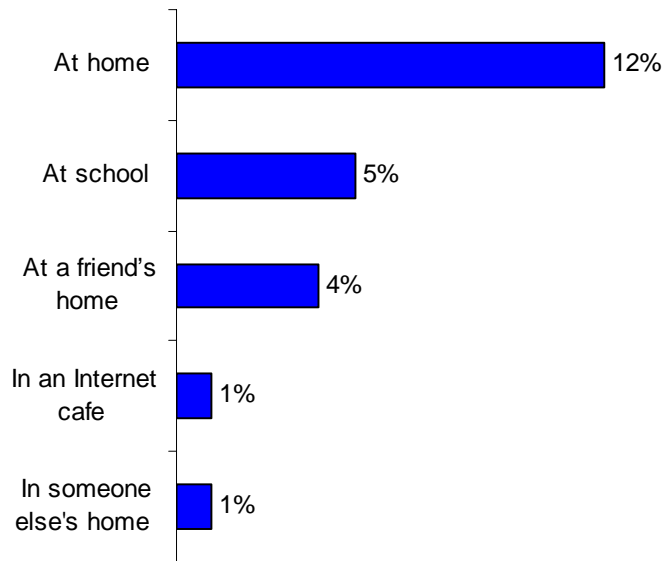
Furthermore, it is worth noting that 17% of parents who hardly or never sit with their child, and 23% of parents who sometimes do so, still think their child has come across illegal or harmful content.

Child has come across illegal or harmful content	Respondent sits with child when using the Internet		
	% Frequently	% Sometimes	% Hardly or never
% Yes	15%	23%	17%
% No/DK	85%	77%	83%

3.2 Locations where children come across unsafe content

As the home is the location where children are most likely to use the Internet, this is also where according to their parents most of them encountered harmful or illegal content. The other locations are mentioned by less than 10% of parents, though it must be borne in mind that parents have less control over what happens outside of their own home.

Locations where children encounter unsafe content



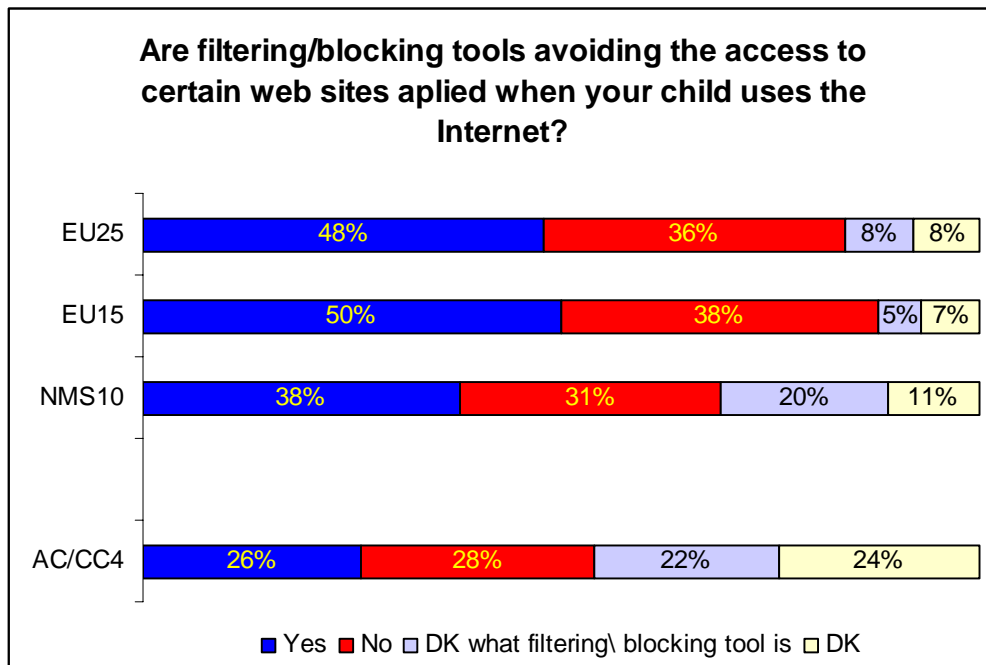
4. Parental control over the use of the Internet

In this chapter we analyse what kind of measures parents and caretakers take to protect their children when using the Internet, how widespread the use of these measures is, where these measures are used and what factors influence people's use of these measures.

4.1 The use of filtering or blocking tools

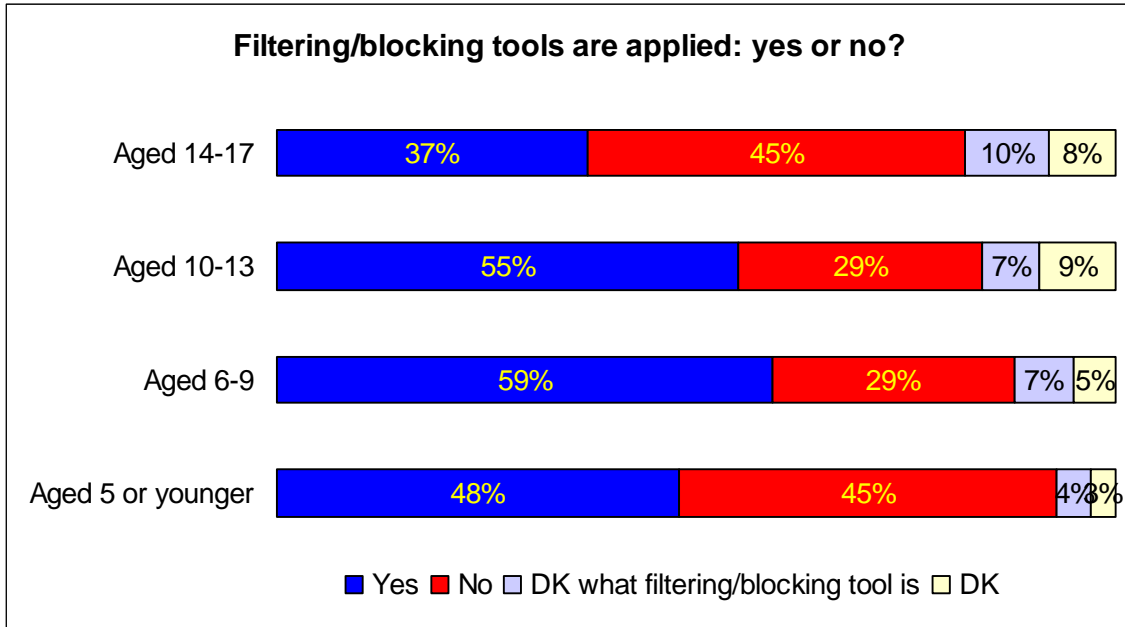
- Filtering or blocking tools are widely used by parents -

Close to half of the respondents say that filtering or blocking tools avoiding the access to certain web sites are applied when their child uses the Internet (48%).



The use of these tools is more widespread among parents living in the 15 'old' Member States (50%) than it is among parents in the 10 new Member States (38%) and the accession and candidate countries (26%).

Parents with children aged 6 to 9 are most likely to declare that filtering or blocking tools are used (59%), followed by those with children aged 10 to 13 (55%).



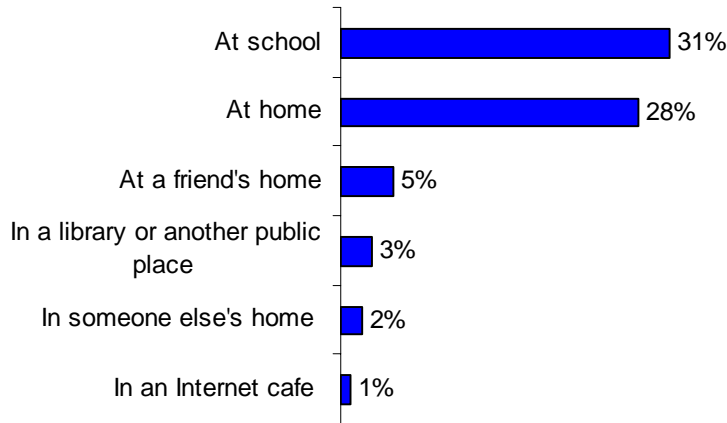
The analyses of the socio-demographic characteristics of the parents and caretakers show that these tools are most applied among people aged 25 to 39 (56%), advanced users of the Internet (55%) and those living in large towns (50%). They are least common among people who left full-time education before reaching the age of 16 (37%).

The following table shows the breakdown by the self-assessed level of expertise of the respondents. As can be seen, there is no strong relationship between the self-assessed level of respondents and their use of filters.

	Applying filtering or blocking tools by self -assessed level of expertise among Internet users			
	Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced	Expert
Tools are applied	47%	47%	55%	47%
No tools are applied	40%	46%	40%	49%
Don't know what tools are	6%	3%	3%	1%
DK	7%	5%	5%	2%

Finally, we analyse where parents think these filtering or blocking tools are applied.

Where are filtering/blocking tools applied?



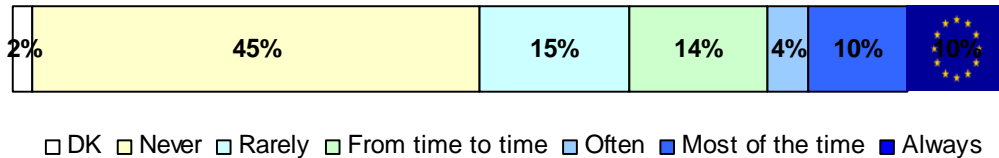
Parents are somewhat more inclined to think that the filtering or blocking of certain web sites happens at school than it does at home (31% vs. 28%). Very few parents are of the view that these tools are applied at other locations.

4.2 Sitting with children when they use the Internet

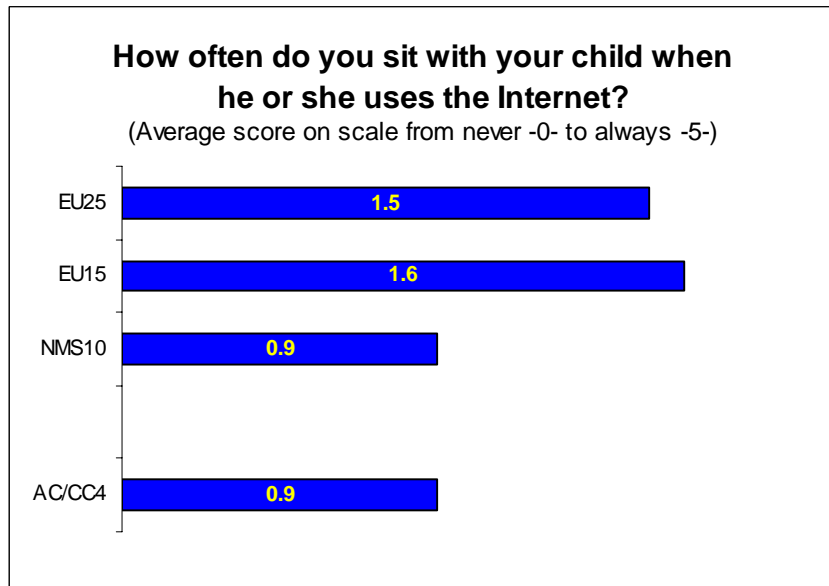
- Young children are frequently accompanied by an adult when they use the Internet -

A quarter of parents (24%) regularly (that is often, most of the time or always) sit with their child when he or she uses the Internet. Close to half of the parents never do so (45%)¹⁴.

How often do you sit with your child when he or she uses the Internet?



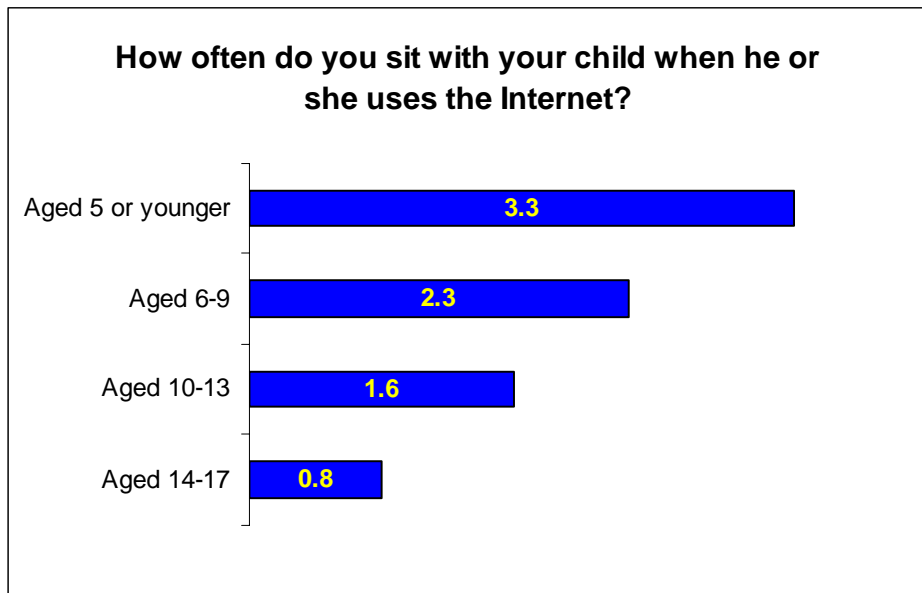
The frequency by which parents sit with their children can also be analysed by using average scores. We have calculated these, whereby people saying that they never sit with their children score '0' and those who always sit with their children score 5. "Don't know" responses have been excluded in the calculation. For the total sample (that is: respondents from the 25 EU Member States with children aged under 17 who use the Internet), the average score is 1.5.



¹⁴ This question is originally from the SAFT survey 2003, which included the same question asked to parents and children. It should be noted that the results had shown a substantial difference between parents' and children's perception (parents' perception being much higher). This difference is related to parents' assumption of children's usage habits and locations and lack of knowledge of children's actual use

The average score is higher in the 15 'old' Member States than it is in the 10 new Member States and the accession and candidate countries, indicating that in the latter parents are less likely to sit with their children when they use the Internet.

The age of the child strongly influences parents' choice to sit with the child. 69% of parents with a child aged under 6 years regularly sit beside the child when he or she goes online. This applies to 45% of parents with children aged 6 to 9, to 26% of parents with children aged 10 to 13 and to only 10% of parents with children aged 14 to 17. Parents do not act differently depending on the gender of their child.



Whilst the data do not point to any significant differences based on the socio-demographic characteristics of the parents, the likelihood that people sit with their children increases in line with their self-assessed level of expertise.

	Sitting with children by self -assessed level of expertise among Internet users			
% sitting with children...	Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced	Expert
...frequently	24%	24%	28%	30%
... sometimes	20%	23%	25%	23%
... hardly or never	55%	51%	46%	46%
DK	1%	2%	2%	0%

4.3 Setting rules for using the Internet

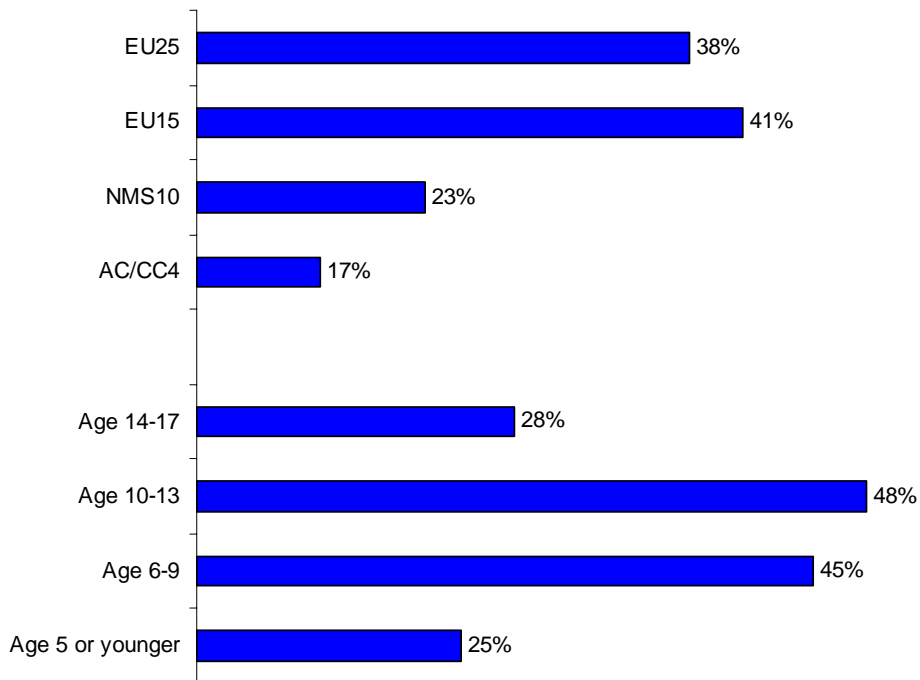
Another measure that parents with children that use the Internet can do to ensure their children's safety is to set rules about what they are allowed to do and what not when they are online.

- Around two out of five parents set rules for their child's use of the Internet -

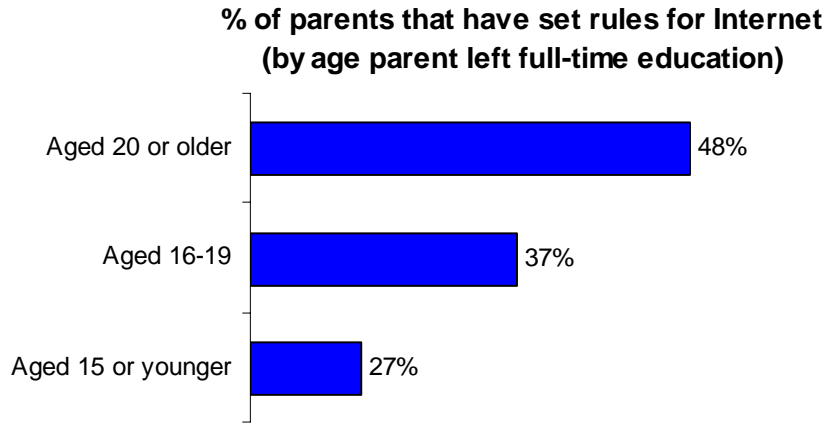
The analyses show that on average two out of five parents with children who use the Internet have set rules regarding this use (38%). Parents living in the 15 'old' are more likely to set rules than are parents in the 10 new Member States and the 4 accession and candidate countries.

As children get older, the likelihood that they are bound by rules regarding the use of the Internet or their mobile phone diminishes. Rules are most applied when children are aged 10 to 13. Yet, even among this group, less than half of the children that go online are bound by rules.

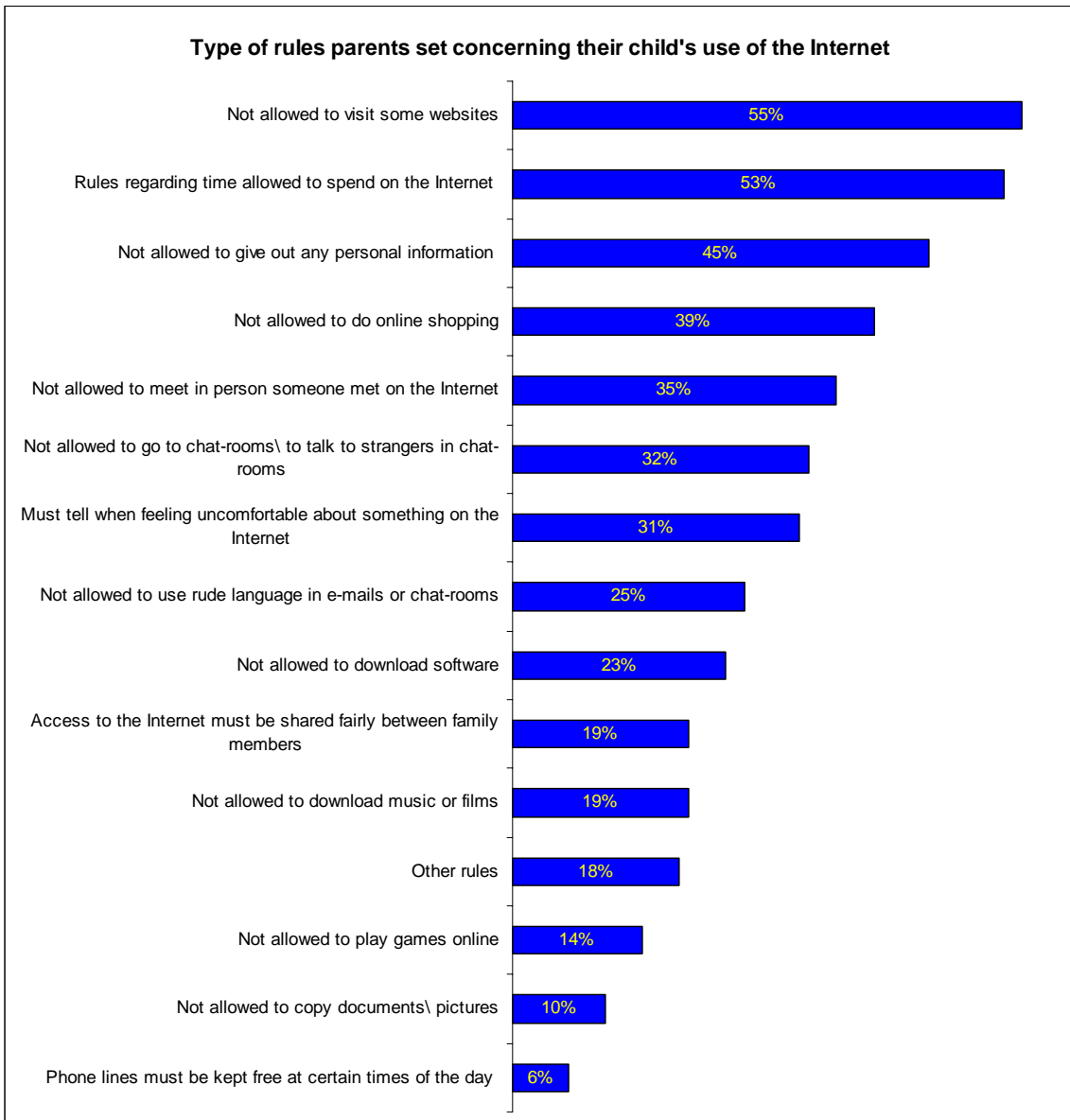
% of parents declaring that they have set rules for when their child uses the Internet



Parents do not behave differently based on the gender of their child. In terms of the socio-economic and socio-demographic characteristics of parents, education is the only relevant factor for which significant differences are found.



The survey also asks respondents who have set rules about the child's use of the Internet what rules they have set regarding this use. As the following graph shows, the most commonly implemented rule is that children are prohibited from visiting certain websites (55%). Another much used rule concerns the amount of time children are allowed to spend on the Internet (53%). Many parents also do not want their children to give out any personal information (45%).



Comparisons between the various ages of the children show that parents apply age specific rules. Children aged 10 and older are most often forbidden to visit certain websites. For children aged 6 to 9, this is the second most frequently set rule and for children aged 6 and younger this is the third most frequently set rule. For these very young children, parents were most likely to indicate that other rules are in place.

RULES APPLIED BY PARENTS (BY AGE OF THE CHILD)				
Rules:	Aged 6 or younger	Aged 6 to 9	Aged 10 to 13	Aged 14 to 17
Not allowed to give out any personal information	14%	43%	54%	36%
Not allowed to visit some websites	28%	48%	63%	51%
Must tell if uncomfortable about something on the Internet	9%	34%	40%	18%
Not allowed to use rude language in e-mails or chat-rooms	10%	27%	30%	18%
Not allowed to meet in person to someone only met on the Internet	10%	24%	45%	33%
Not allowed to copy documents\ pictures	5%	16%	10%	6%
Not allowed to go to chat-rooms\ to talk to strangers in chat-rooms	10%	34%	40%	23%
Not allowed to play games online	3%	17%	17%	11%
Not allowed to do online shopping	3%	33%	47%	38%
Not allowed to download music or films	1%	24%	24%	10%
Not allowed to download software	6%	28%	27%	16%
Rules regarding how much time child is allowed to spend on the Internet	42%	54%	55%	51%
Keeping phone lines free at certain times of the day	11%	8%	7%	3%
Ensuring that access to the Internet is shared fairly between family members	8%	22%	19%	18%
Other rules	46%	18%	16%	19%
Don't know	10%	5%	1%	2%
Most frequently mentioned				
Second most frequently mentioned				
Third most frequently mentioned				

Rules are also applied to varying degrees depending on people's self-assessed level of expertise when it comes to the Internet. Among people who rate themselves as beginner or intermediate users, the most widely applied rule is that children are not allowed to visit certain web sites. For advanced and expert users this is the second most widely applied rule. The more advanced users are most likely to set rules about how much time their children are allowed to spend online.

RULES APPLIED (BY SELF-ASSESSED INTERNET EXPERTISE)				
Rules:	Beginner	Interme- diate	Advan- ced	Expert
Not allowed to give out any personal information	41%	48%	49%	37%
Not allowed to visit some websites	55%	58%	52%	48%
Must tell if uncomfortable about something on the Internet	33%	33%	33%	29%
Not allowed to use rude language in e-mails or chat-rooms	24%	26%	27%	24%
Not allowed to meet in person to someone only met on the Internet	33%	41%	37%	24%
Not allowed to copy documents\ pictures	13%	8%	14%	10%
Not allowed to go to chat-rooms\ to talk to strangers in chat-rooms	27%	37%	33%	29%
Not allowed to play games online	16%	15%	18%	14%
Not allowed to do online shopping	40%	43%	34%	36%
Not allowed to download music or films	19%	19%	25%	13%
Not allowed to download software	17%	25%	29%	23%
Rules regarding how much time child is allowed to spend on the Internet	40%	55%	58%	58%
Keeping phone lines free at certain times of the day	4%	5%	8%	10%
Ensuring that access to the Internet is shared fairly between family members	19%	18%	24%	21%
Other rules	22%	17%	16%	37%
Don't know	0%	3%	4%	0%
Most frequently mentioned				
Second most frequently mentioned				
Third most frequently mentioned				

4.4 Effect of measures in protecting children from coming across harmful or illegal content on the Internet

Having looked at the extent to which parents take measures to protect their children against potential dangers on the Internet, we next analyse whether children whose parents have taken measures are less likely to come across harmful or illegal content.

The analyses show that children whose parents always or most of the time sit with them whilst online are least likely to encounter illegal or harmful content on the Internet. Use of other measures does not seem to relate to whether or not the child has encountered unsafe content. Of course sitting with a child is a measure that can only be applied when children are at home and is something that parents only tend to do when their children are very young¹⁵.

	Child has <u>not</u> encountered unsafe content (%)
Measure taken: yes or no	
Parent always or most of the time sits with child	82%
<i>Parent never sits with child</i>	65%
Uses filters	71%
<i>Does not use filters</i>	70%
Rules for Internet use	69%
<i>No rules for Internet use</i>	69%
EU25 average	69%

4.5 Comparisons with other new technology tools

In order to understand how parents and caretakers assess the risks associated with the use of the Internet, respondents were not only asked whether they set rules for the Internet but also whether they do so for watching television, the use of a mobile phone, using electronic game consoles and using the computer¹⁶.

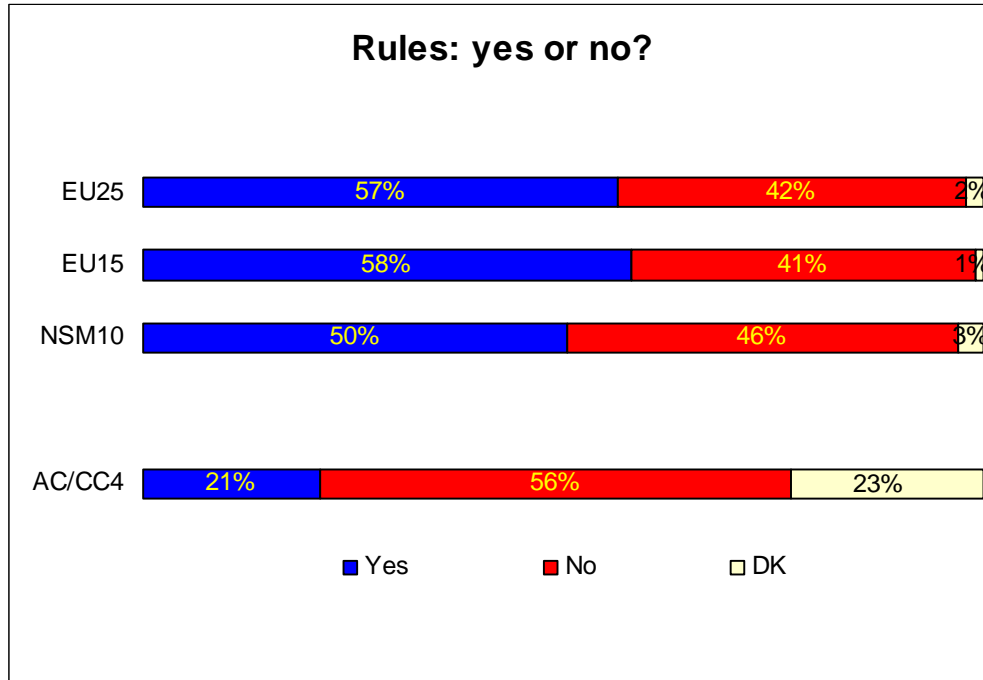
We firstly analyse what percentage of European parents set rules and then look at how common the setting of rules is for each of the new technology tools included in the survey.

¹⁵ This conclusion must be related to the fact that children are online with parents now knowing, and that the older the children get, the less likely they are to talk to their parents about encounters they have online.

¹⁶ QC8 Have you set any rules for him / her about using any of the following either in your household or elsewhere? Answer options: 1 - Yes, for the television, 2 – Yes for the mobile phone, 3 – Yes, for electronic games consoles, 4 - Yes, for the Internet, 5 – Yes, for the computer (apart from the Internet), 6 – Yes, there are rules but not set by me, 7 – No, no rules have been set, 8 – Don't know. Multiple answers could be given.

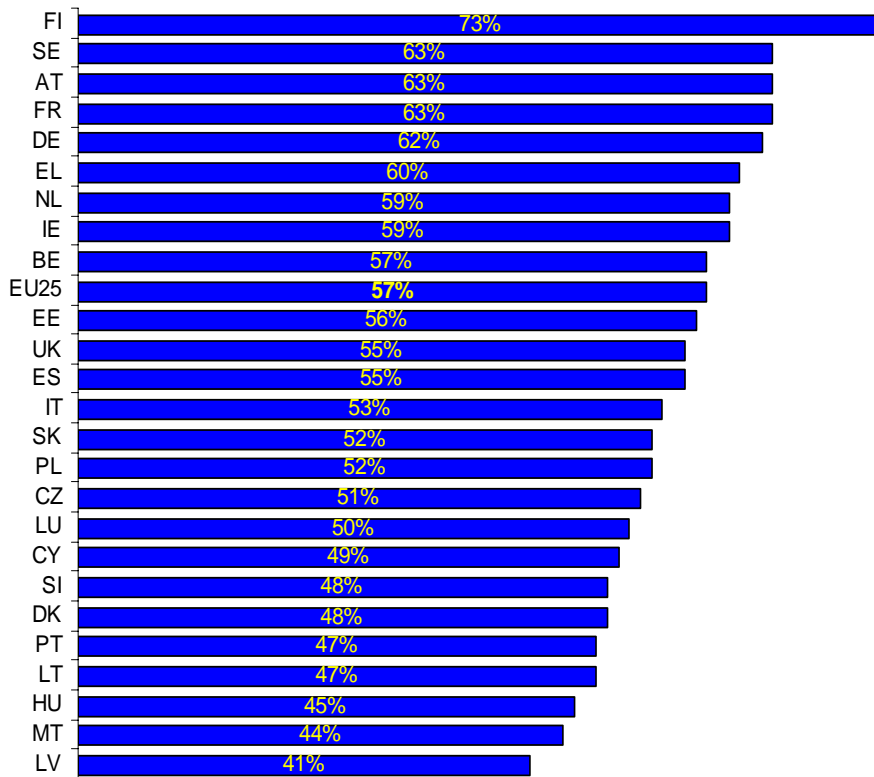
- Rules are in place in six out of ten European household -

In many European households, some kind of rule is in place concerning the use of modern technology and communication tools. However, in 4 out of 10 households no rules have set in this regard.



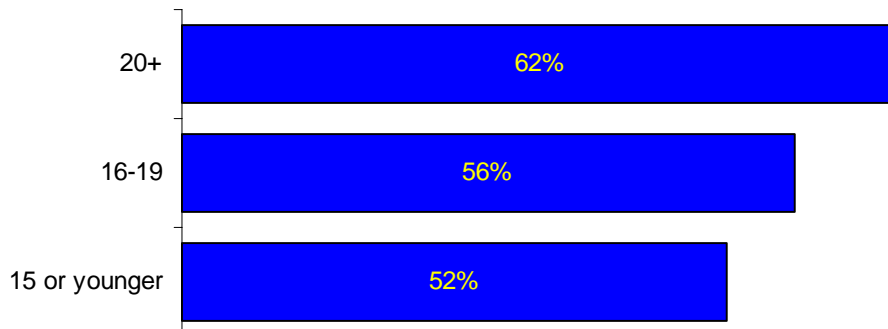
A comparison of the three geo-political regions shows that setting rules is more common in the 15 'old' Member States than it is in the 10 new Member States and much less common in the accession and candidate countries.

The country results show that parents in Finland are most likely to set rules, followed by Sweden, Austria and France. Rules are least likely to be set in Latvia, followed by Malta and Hungary.

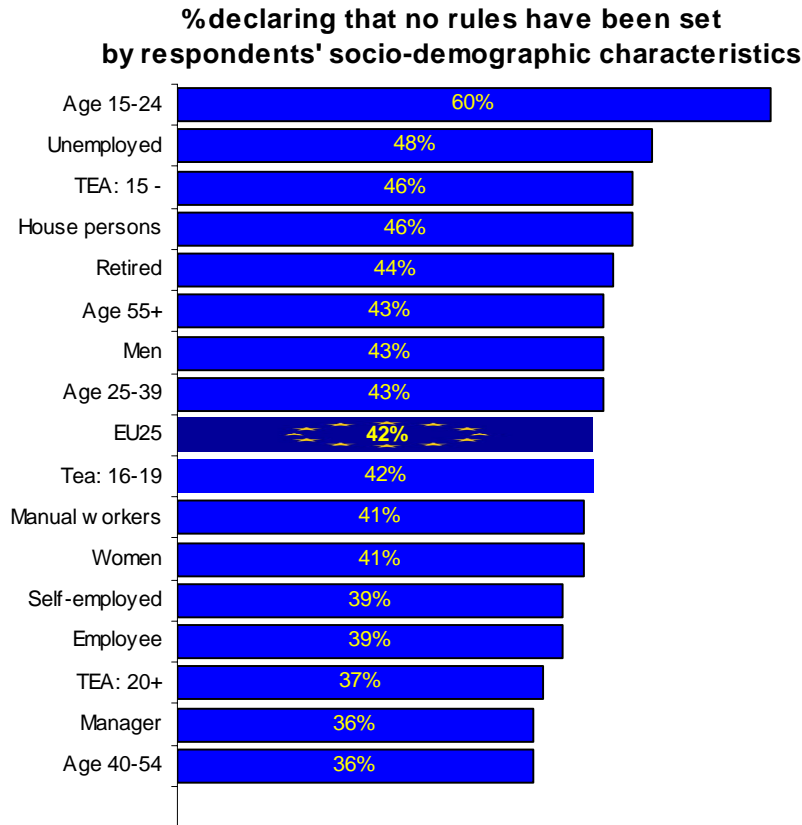
% of parents that have set rules (by country)

On average, 42% of Europeans have not set any rules. However, there are large discrepancies among the Member States with the proportion of people for whom this is the case ranging from 27% in Finland to 56% in Malta and Latvia.

Analyses of the socio-demographic characteristics of the parents show that the longer they have stayed in full-time education, the more likely it is that they have set rules for their children's use of media tools.

**% of parents that have set rules
(by age parent left full-time education)**

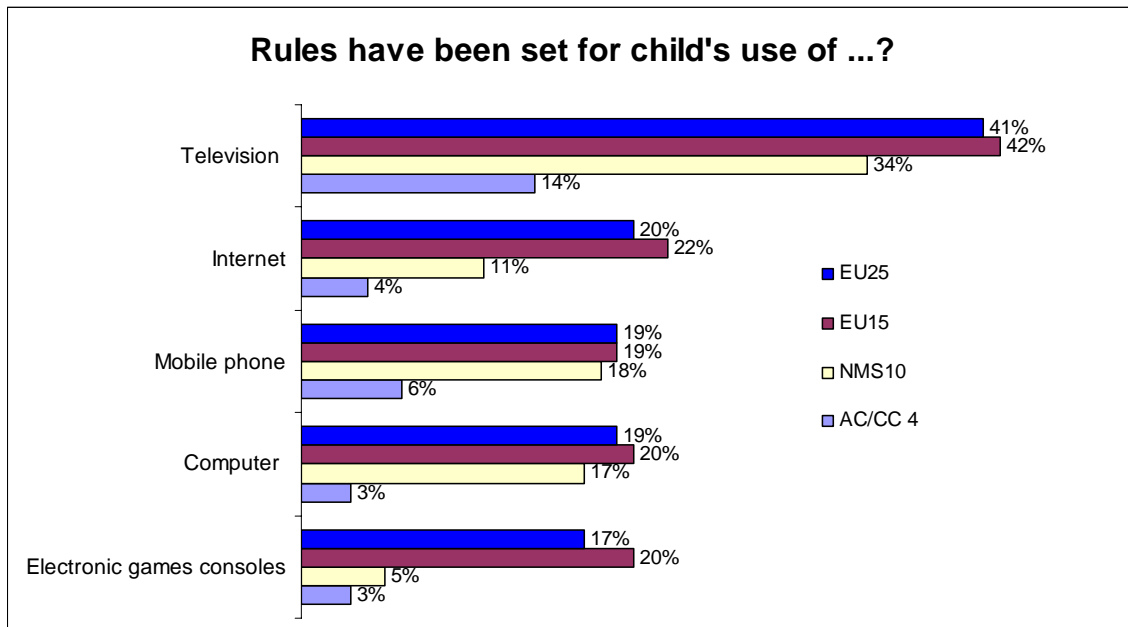
However, if we analyse the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents that have not set rules, we find in addition to education, significant differences depending on the age and the occupation of the respondents.



Additional analyses show that rules are more common in households where the child has Internet access (67%) than it is the case in households where the child does not have access (46%). Furthermore, as the table below shows, in household where the child owns a mobile phone, parents are more likely to have set rules than in households where the child does not own one (62% vs. 54%).

	Internet access	No Internet access	Mobile phone	No mobile phone
Rules				
Yes	67%	46%	62%	54%
No	33%	54%	38%	46%

European households are most likely to have rules about watching television. The survey shows that just over two out of five parents and caretakers have set rules about their child's use of the television (41%). In the 10 new Member States and the accession and candidate countries this is lower than it is in the 15 'old' Member States (34% and 14% vs. 42%)¹⁷.



Of all European parents, one in five sets rules for the use of the Internet¹⁸. These rules are significantly less common in the accession and candidate countries and in the 10 new Member States than they are in the 15 'old' Member States.

When it comes to rules for the use of mobile phones, the computer and electronic games consoles parents in the 15 'old' Member States do not differ significantly from those in the 10 new Member States. However, in the accession and candidate countries, far fewer parents set rules for the use of these tools.

¹⁷ In interpreting these results, it should be borne in mind that the tools listed are not equally used in all countries. Any reported differences in the proportion of parents that have set rules are influenced by whether or not the tool in question is used in the first place.

¹⁸ This result is based on responses from all parents, including those whose children don't use the Internet. This compares to 2 out of 5 parents with children that use the Internet who have set rules regarding this use (see page 32).

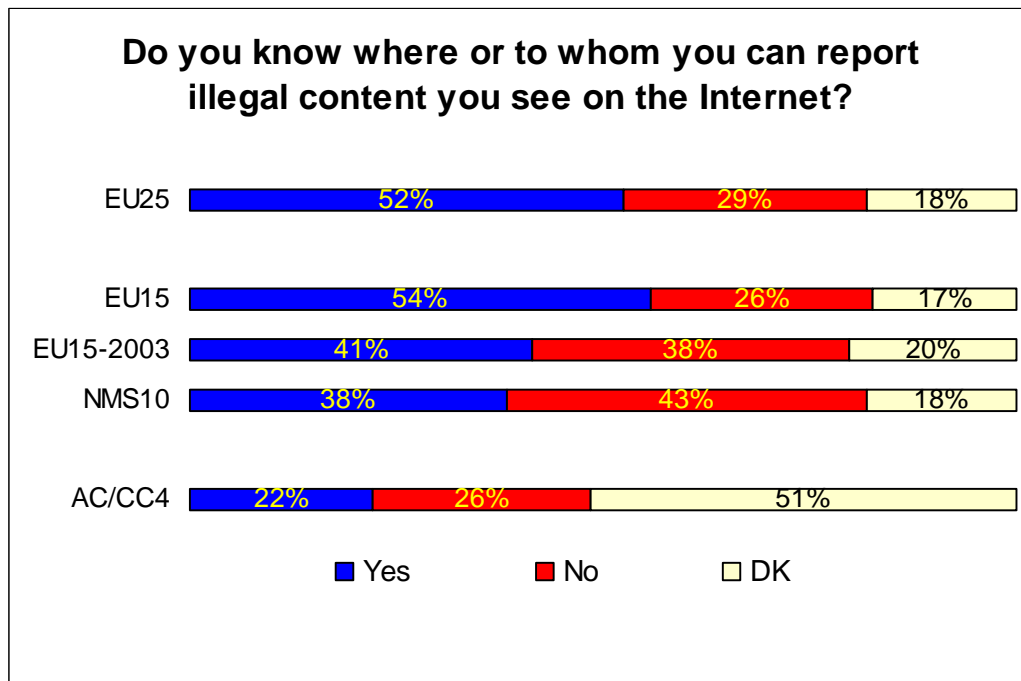
5. Awareness and information about safer Internet

In the final chapter of the report the focus is on public awareness levels when it comes to safer Internet. We analyse the extent to which people know what to do when they see illegal or harmful content on the Internet, whether children know what to do should this happen to them and we look at the extent to which parents of children that use the Internet would like to receive more information about how to protect their children from potential dangers of the Internet.

5.1 General awareness levels

- Around one European in two knows how to report illegal content seen on the Internet -

On average, over half of European citizens aged 15 and older know where or to whom they can report illegal content seen on the Internet (52%).



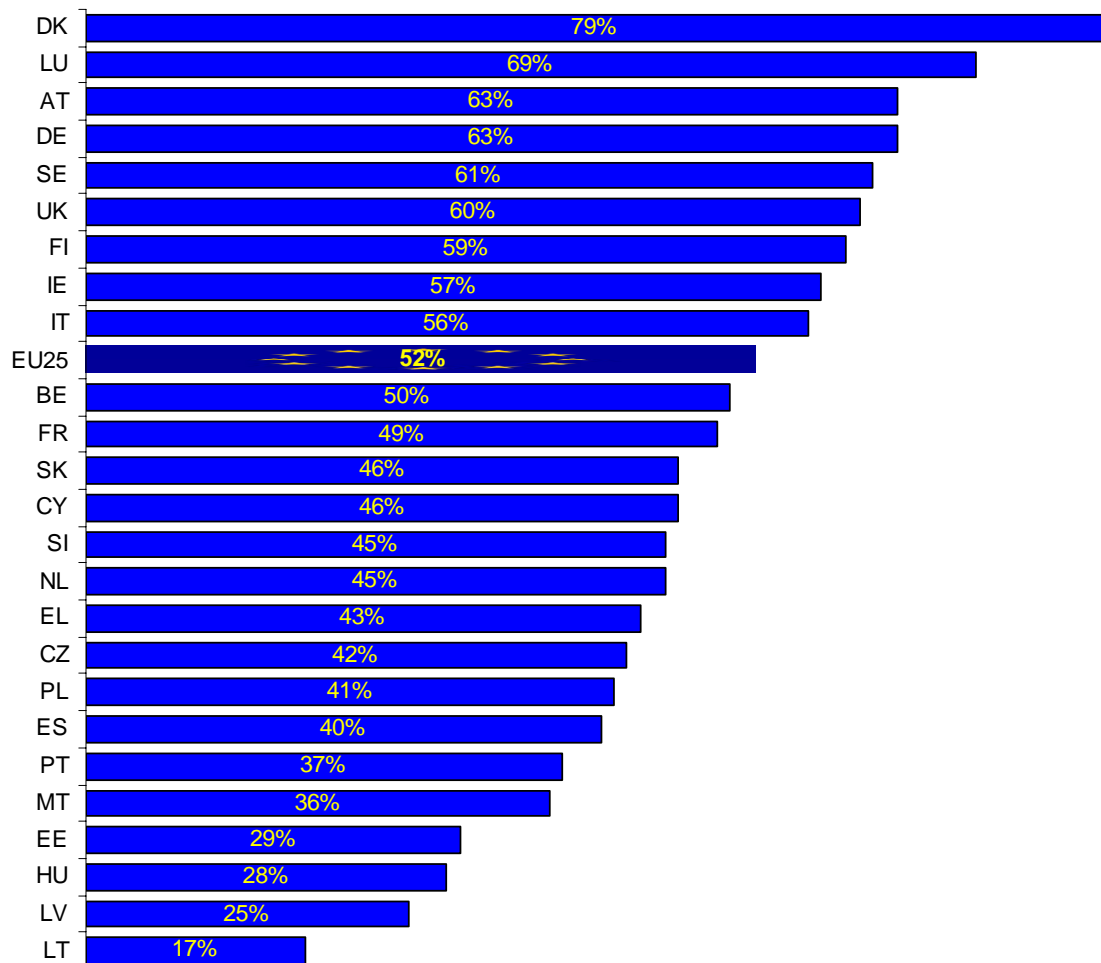
In the 15 'old' Member States, awareness levels have increased significantly since the previous survey. In autumn 2003, 41% of respondents knew where or to whom they could report illegal content seen on the Internet. In the latest survey, this applies to 54% of respondents living in the 15 'old' Member States¹⁹.

Awareness levels are significantly lower in the accession and candidate countries than in the Member States. On average, just over one person in five living in the accession and candidate countries would know what to do if confronted with illegal content on the Internet (22%).

¹⁹ Results from the 2004 survey carried out in the 10 new Member States are not included in the graph as the question on that survey was asked differently, making the results unsuitable for comparison.

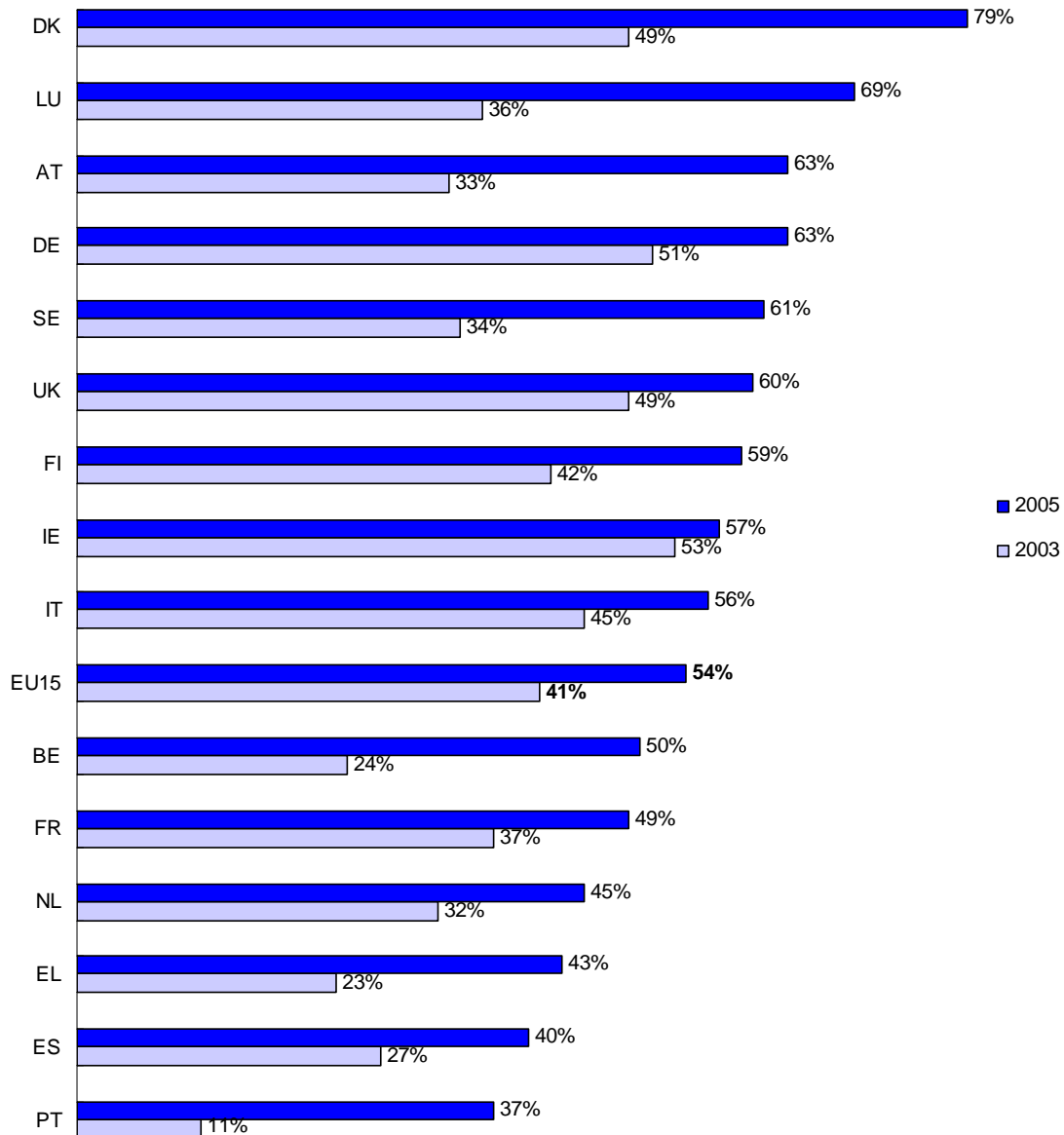
Analyses of the situation in the 25 Member States show that there are large variations in awareness levels between the countries. In Denmark, around 8 out of 10 people know where or to whom they can report illegal content seen on the Internet (79%). In nine further 'old' Member States at least half of the public knows what to do. The highest awareness levels in the new Member States are found in Slovakia and Cyprus (both 46%). Awareness levels are lowest in Lithuania (17%), followed by Latvia (25%).

Awareness levels by country



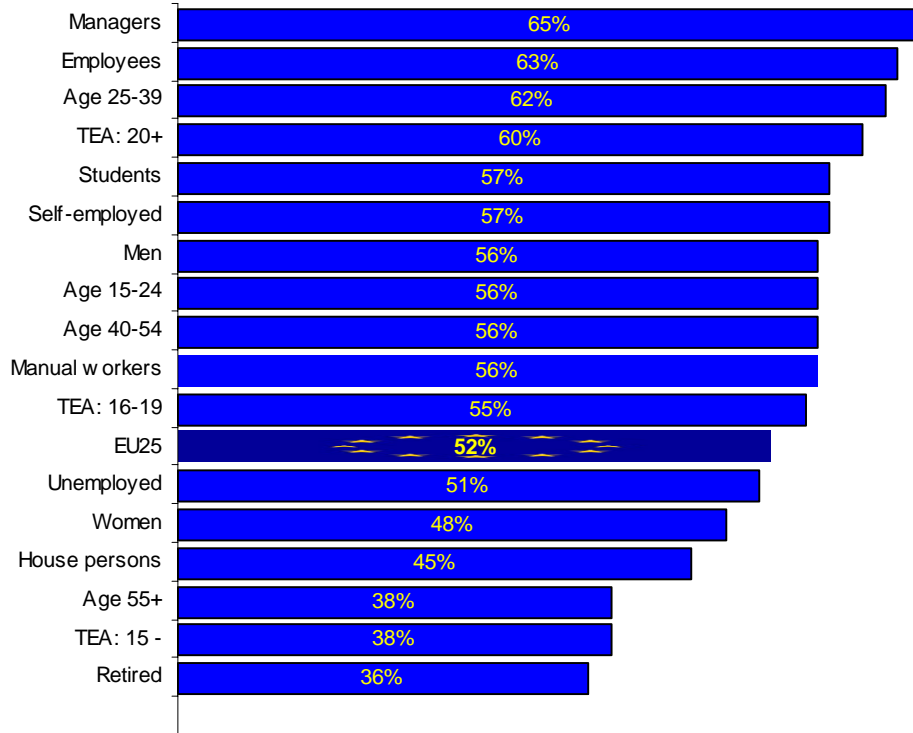
In comparison to the 2003 survey, awareness levels increased significantly in each of the 15 'old' Member States.

Awareness levels in the 15 'old' Member States (compared with 2003)



Analyses of the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents indicate that managers are most likely to know where or to whom they can report illegal content on the Internet (65%), followed by other white-collar employees (63%) and people aged 25 to 39 (62%). Retired people (36%) and people who left full-time education before reaching age 16 (38%) are least likely to know what to do when be confronted with this situation.

Awareness levels by respondents' socio-demographic characteristics



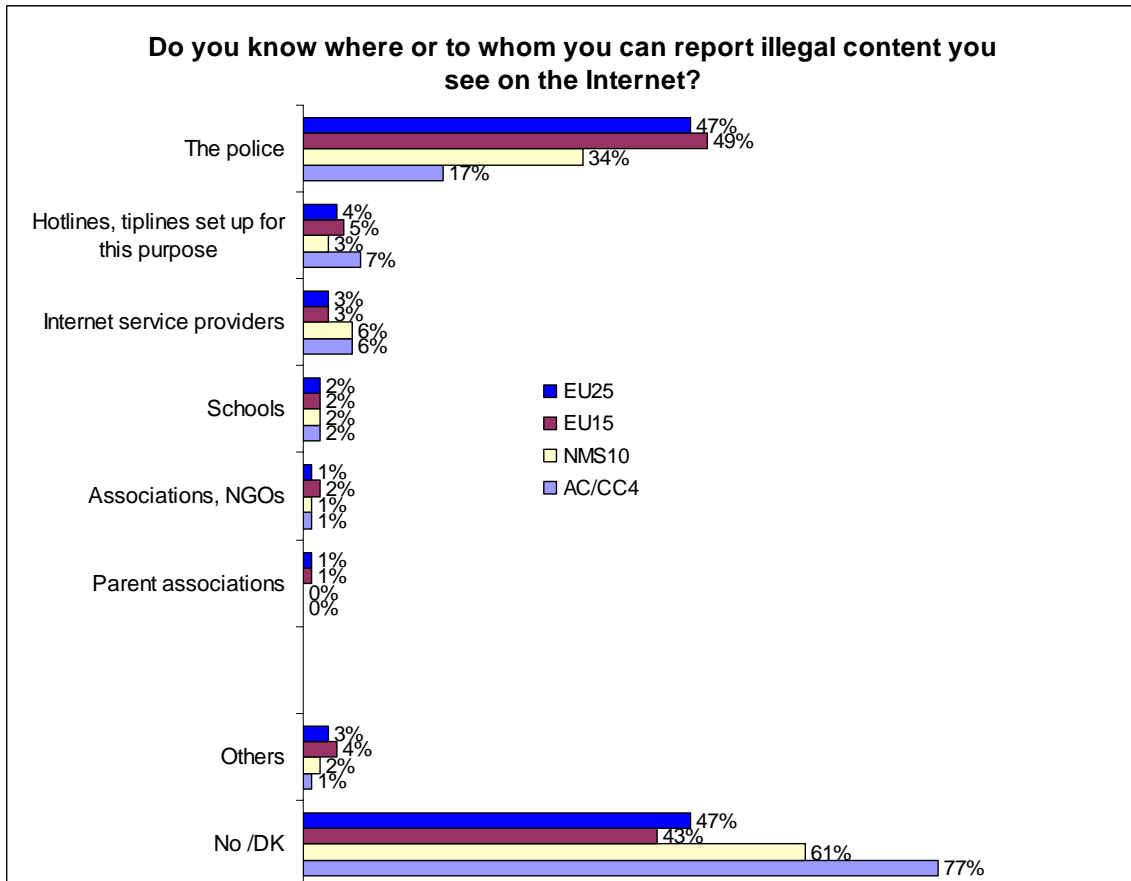
As one would expect, respondents who indicated that they used the Internet in the month prior to the survey are significantly more likely to be aware of what they can do when they see illegal content online than are respondents who didn't.

Knows what to do?	Used Internet last month?	
	% Yes	% No
% Yes	61%	40%
% No	39%	60%

Furthermore, the higher respondents that use the Internet rate their own level of expertise, the more likely it is that they know what to do when they are confronted with illegal content on the Internet.

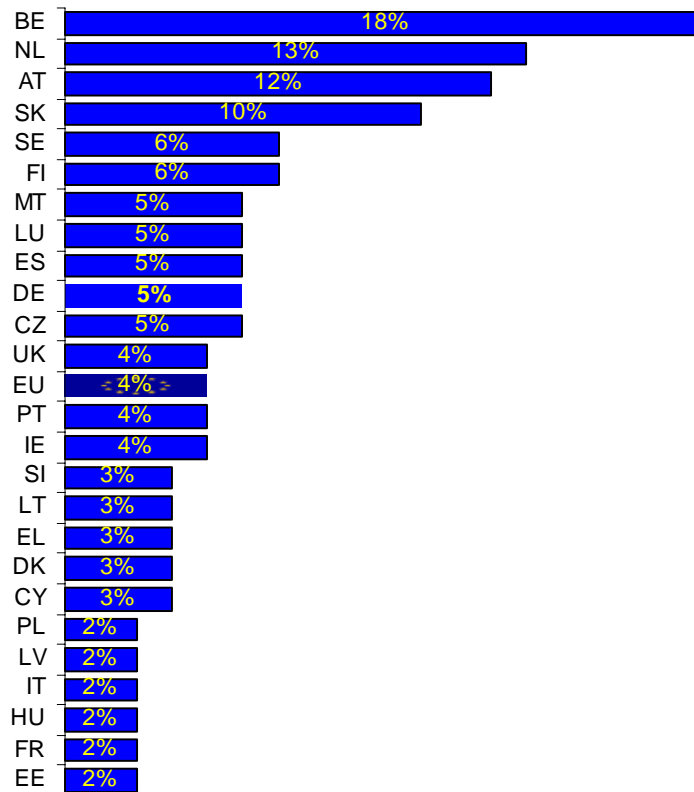
	Self-assessed level of expertise among Internet users			
	Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced	Expert
% Aware	54%	63%	67%	72%

People are most likely to think of the police when asked where or to whom they can report illegal content. Knowledge of other services or institutions is very low among the European population. On average, only 4% of the public knows that there are hotlines or tiplines, which have been set up for this purpose.



An analysis of the percentage of respondents that knows of the existence of hotlines shows significant variations at the country level. Awareness levels are significantly higher in Belgium (18%), the Netherlands (13%), Austria (12%) and Slovakia (10%) than they are in the rest of the European Union Member States.

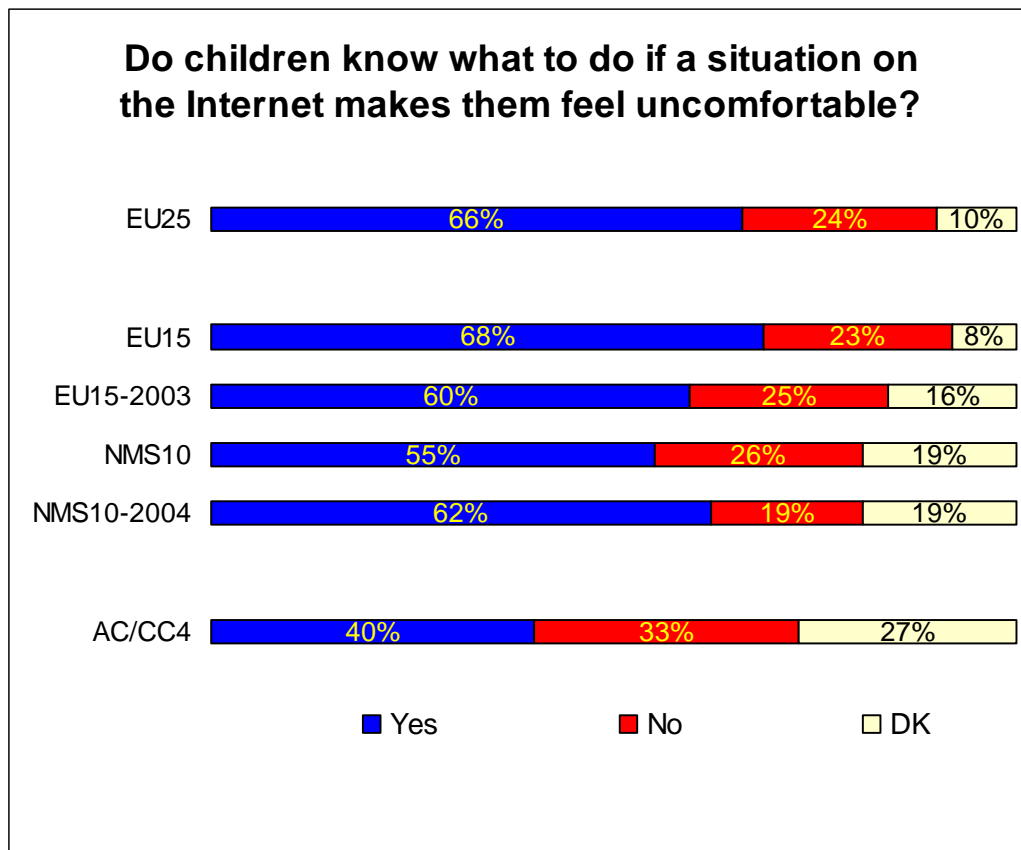
Knowledge that illegal content seen online can be reported to the "hotline"



5.2 Awareness among children that use the Internet

- Two-thirds of children are presumed to know what to do if a situation on the Internet makes them feel uncomfortable -

On average, 66% of parents with children that use the Internet declare that their child knows what to do if a situation on the Internet would make him or her feel uncomfortable.

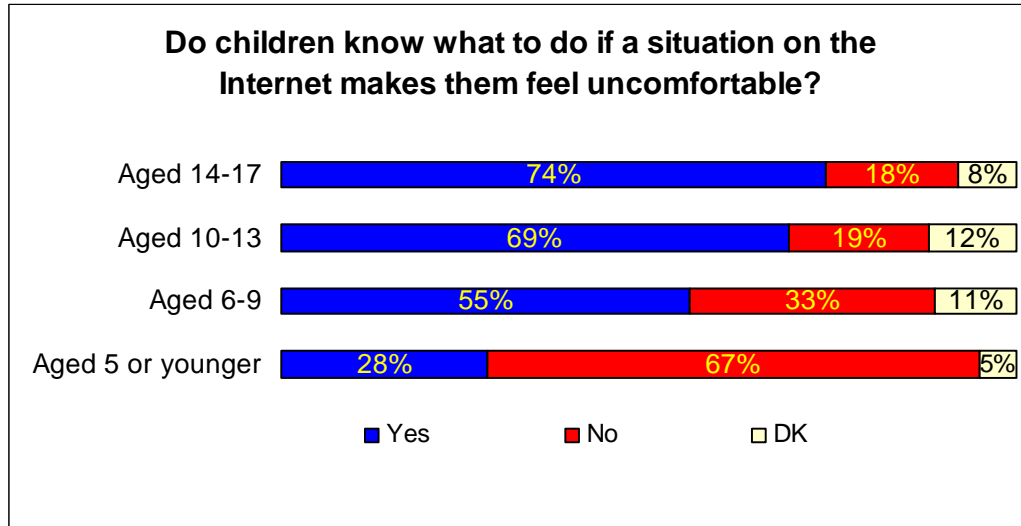


In the 15 'old' Member States, parents are now more likely than was the case in 2003 to feel that their children know what to do if a situation on the Internet makes them feel uncomfortable (68% vs. 60%). In the 10 new Member States, we see the opposite development with parents now less likely than was the case in 2004 to hold this view (55% vs. 62%).

In the accession and candidate countries, parents are significantly less likely to believe that their children know what to do is (40%).

-Awareness greatly increases with age -

Three-quarters of parents with children aged 14 to 17 believe their child would know what to do if a situation on the Internet makes him or her feel uncomfortable (74%). Only 28% of parents with children aged 6 or younger share this view.



Analyses of the socio-demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the parents do not reveal any clear patterns or correlations. Parents who left full-time education aged 15 or younger and parents who are unemployed are somewhat less inclined to think that their child would know what to do than are (59% and 55%, respectively).

The following table shows that parents with children who have encountered harmful or illegal content on the Internet are more likely to believe their child knows what to do than when the child has not encountered any unsafe information online.

Child knows what to do?	Child has encountered harmful or illegal content online?	
	% yes	% no
% Yes	77%	67%
% No & Don't know	23%	33%

Furthermore, the analyses show that parents who themselves know where to report illegal content are more likely to believe their child knows what to do than parents who do not know where to report this.

Child knows what to do?	Parents know where to report illegal content	
	% yes	% no
% Yes	71%	57%
% No & Don't know	29%	43%

5.3 Information about safer Internet

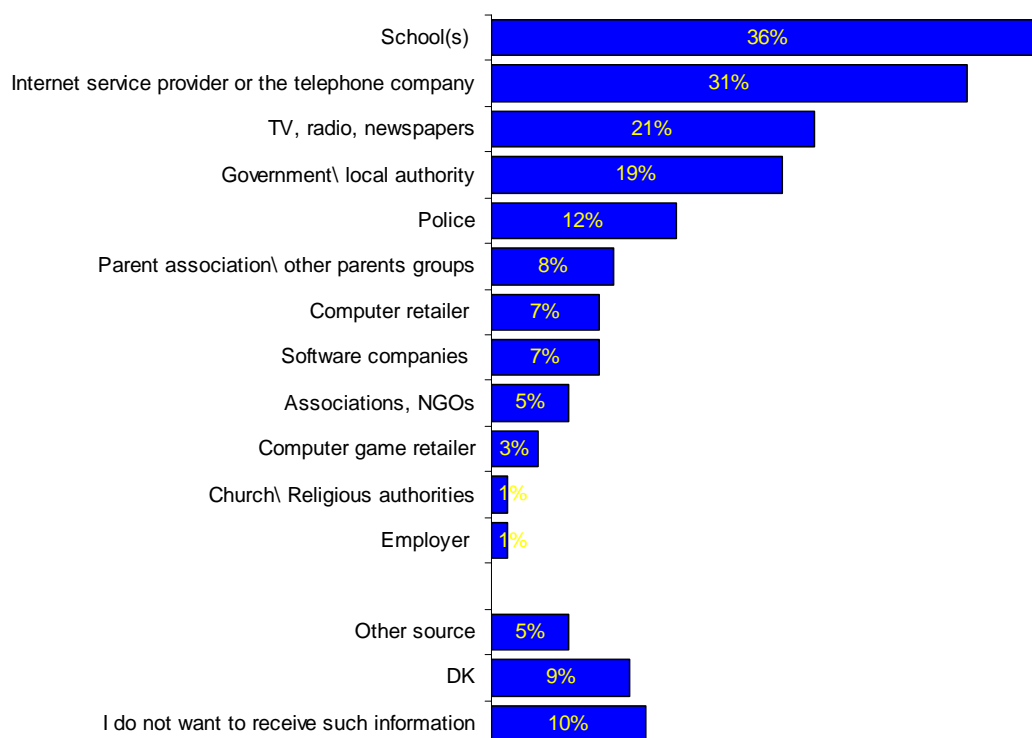
- *Widespread interest in information about safer Internet* -

The survey measures how respondents with children who use the Internet would like to receive information about using the Internet in a safer way.

The results show that the large majority of parents (and others with children in their care) are interested in receiving information about using the Internet in a safer way. Only 10% do not want to receive any information.

Parents are most interested in receiving this information from schools (36%) and from Internet service providers or telephone companies (31%). Around one parent in five would like to receive such information from the media or from their (local) government.

From whom would parents like to receive information about using the Internet in a safer way?



A comparison of the results for each of the three geopolitical regions shows that schools are the most frequently mentioned providers of information in each of them. In the 15 'old' Member States, the Internet service providers or telephone companies come in second place with (local) government in third place. In the new Member States and the accession and candidate countries, the media comes in second place with the Internet service providers or telephone companies in third place.

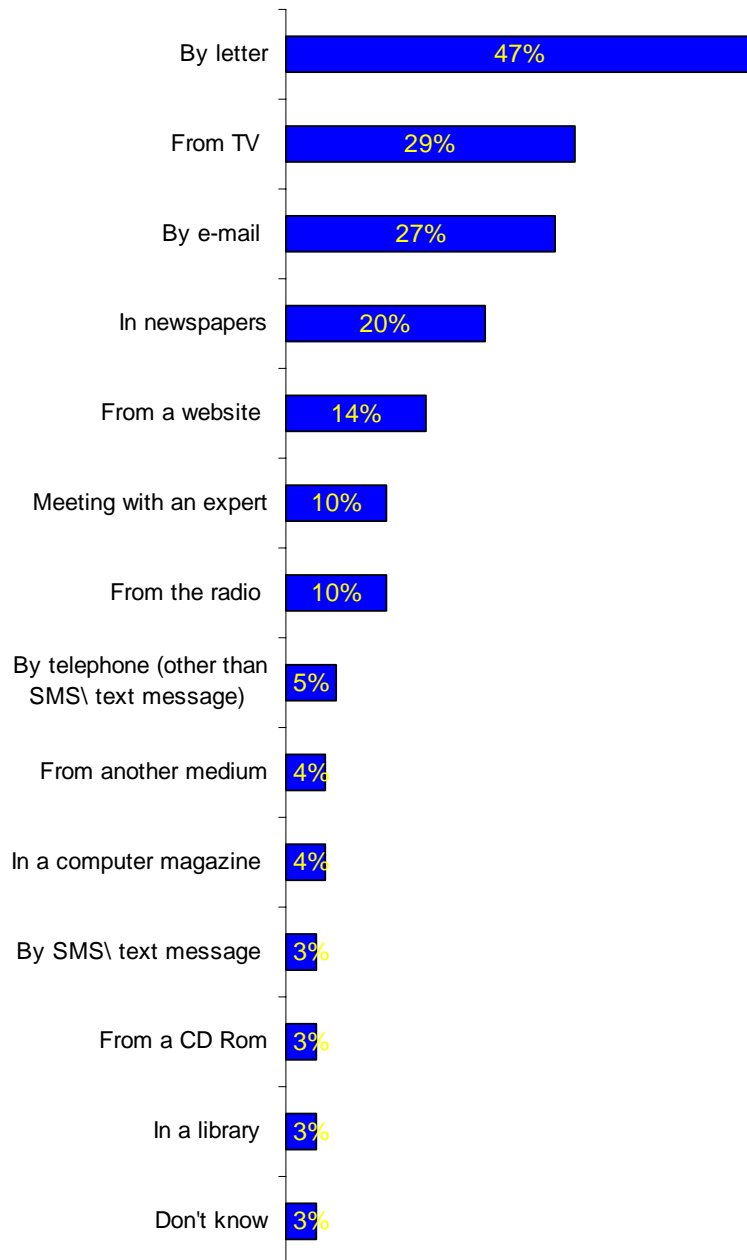
DESIRED INFORMATION PROVIDERS			
	EU15	NMS10	AC/CC4
School(s)	36%	33%	43%
Parent association\ other parents groups	9%	4%	3%
Government\local authority	22%	4%	18%
The Internet service provider or the telephone company	32%	29%	22%
Software companies	7%	6%	9%
Computer retailer	7%	7%	11%
Computer game retailer	3%	4%	4%
Your employer	1%	0%	0%
Associations, NGOs	5%	3%	3%
TV, radio, newspapers	18%	32%	32%
Police	14%	7%	7%
The Church\ Religious authorities	1%	2%	1%
I do not want to receive such information	10%	12%	7%
Other source	5%	4%	5%
DK	8%	15%	12%
	Most frequently mentioned		
	Second most frequently mentioned		
	Third most frequently mentioned		

The next table shows that for parents with children in each of the four age groups, schools and the Internet service providers or telephone companies come in first and second place, respectively. In third place we find (local) government for parents with children aged 9 or younger and the media for parents with older children.

DESIRED INFORMATION PROVIDERS (BY AGE OF THE CHILD)				
	Aged 6 or younger	Aged 6-9	Aged 10-13	Aged 14-17
School(s)	35%	38%	38%	33%
Parent association\ other parents groups	11%	7%	9%	8%
Government\Local authority	26%	21%	19%	17%
The Internet service provider or the telephone company	35%	32%	32%	29%
Software companies	17%	7%	6%	7%
Computer retailer	10%	6%	7%	8%
Computer game retailer	6%	2%	3%	2%
Your employer	2%	1%	0%	1%
Associations, NGOs	7%	4%	5%	4%
TV, radio, newspapers	10%	18%	22%	22%
Police	8%	13%	13%	13%
The Church\ Religious authorities	0%	1%	1%	1%
I do not want to receive such information	9%	12%	9%	11%
Other source	2%	4%	5%	5%
DK	7%	9%	9%	10%
	Most frequently mentioned			
	Second most frequently mentioned			
	Third most frequently mentioned			

Respondents who indicated that they would like to receive information about safer Internet were asked how they would like to receive this. As the graph below shows, the by far most frequently given response was 'by letter', which 47% of respondents chose.

How would parents like to receive information about safer Internet ?



A comparison of the results for each of the three geopolitical regions shows differences between the rank order in the 15 'old' Member States on the one hand and the 10 new Member States and the 4 accession and candidate countries on the other hand. In the 15 'old' Member States, the most frequently mentioned response is by letter whereas

this comes in second place in the 10 new Member States and the 4 accession and candidate countries. In these two regions, the television comes in first place.

DESIRED METHOD TO RECEIVE INFORMATION			
Method	EU15	NMS10	AC/CC4
By letter	52%	24%	25%
By e-mail	28%	20%	9%
From a website	13%	17%	9%
By SMS\ text message	2%	6%	13%
By telephone (other than SMS\ text message)	5%	4%	13%
In newspapers	19%	23%	25%
In a computer magazine	3%	8%	7%
From TV	25%	46%	40%
From the radio	9%	16%	22%
In a library	3%	2%	2%
From a CD Rom	3%	2%	3%
Meeting with an expert	10%	13%	18%
From another medium	4%	4%	5%
Don't' know	2%	5%	8%
	Most frequently mentioned		
	Second most frequently mentioned		
	Third most frequently mentioned		

The next table shows that a letter is the favourite method of receiving information among parents with children in each of the four age groups. E-mail comes in second place for parents with children until the age of 13. For parents of older children this is the third most favourite method. Parents with very young children are more likely to want to receive information from a website and less likely to want it via the television than are parents with older children.

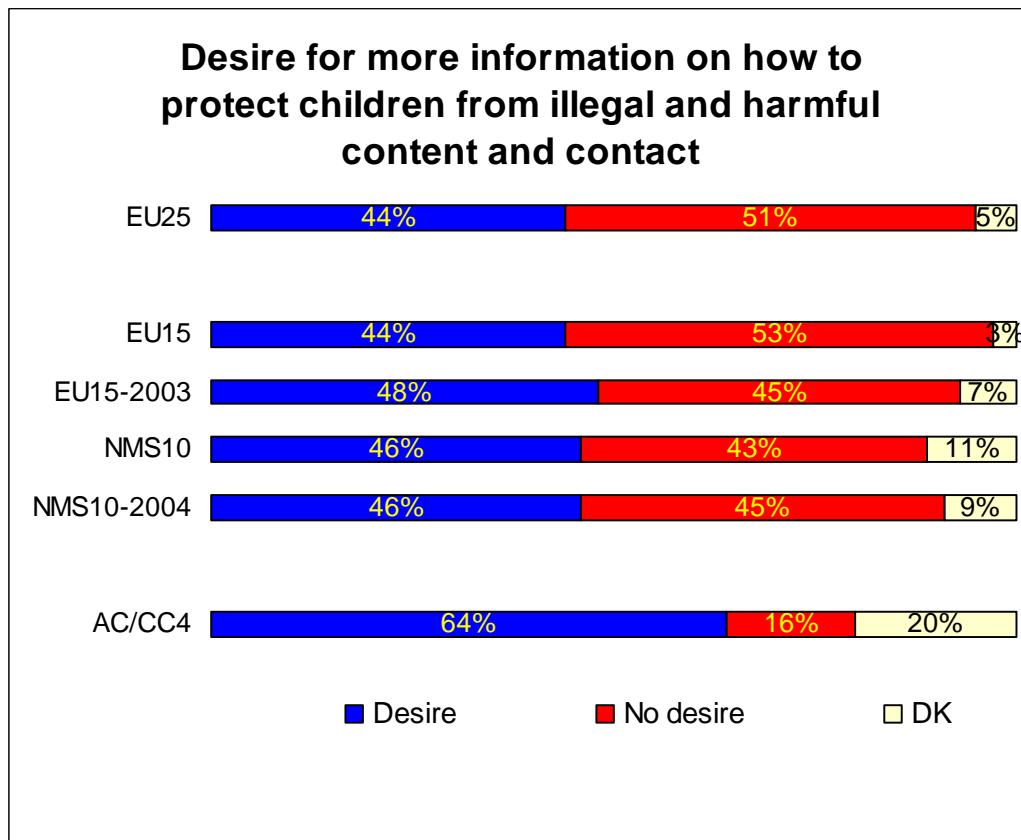
DESIRED METHOD TO RECEIVE INFORMATION (BY AGE OF THE CHILD)				
Method	Aged 6 or younger	Aged 6 to 9	Aged 10 to 13	Aged 14 to 17
By letter	56%	50%	50%	43%
By e-mail	38%	28%	28%	23%
From a website	22%	12%	14%	13%
By SMS\ text message	5%	2%	2%	4%
By telephone (other than SMS\ text message)	6%	6%	5%	4%
In newspapers	15%	20%	18%	22%
In a computer magazine	0%	2%	4%	5%
From TV	12%	27%	27%	33%
From the radio	8%	10%	9%	12%
In a library	2%	4%	2%	3%
From a CD Rom	1%	3%	3%	3%
Meeting with an expert	6%	10%	10%	11%
From another medium	2%	4%	4%	3%
Don't' know	3%	3%	2%	3%
	Most frequently mentioned			
	Second most frequently mentioned			
	Third most frequently mentioned			

5.4 Desire for more information about safer Internet

In the final section of this report we present the results of the question which asks respondents with children that use the Internet whether they feel they need more information or not about how to protect the child / the children in their household from illegal or harmful content and contact on the Internet. The report ends with an analysis of how these parents would like to receive information about safer Internet.

On average, slightly less than half of the European parents with children that use the Internet feel that they need **more** information about how to protect their children from illegal and harmful content and contact on the Internet (44%).

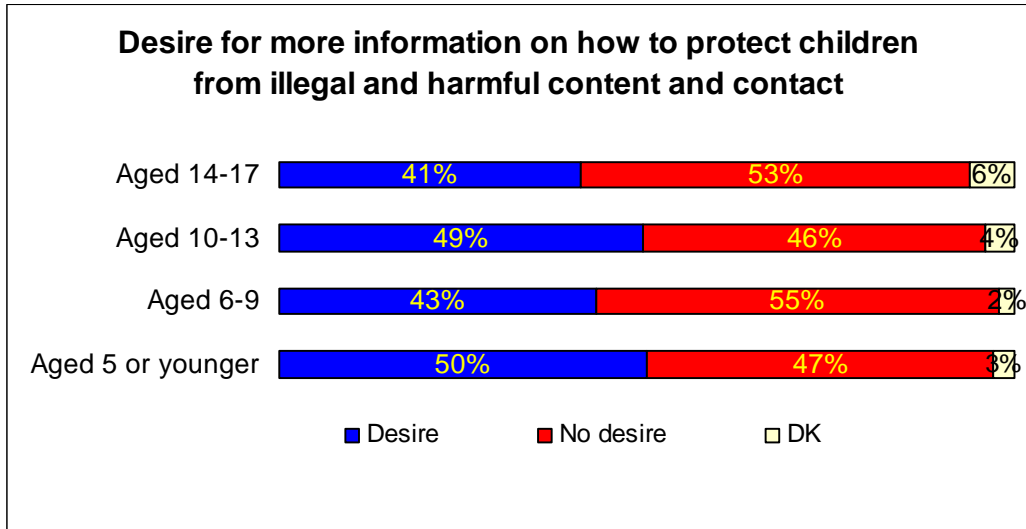
- Desire for more information is particularly widespread in the accession and candidate countries -



In comparison to the earlier surveys, we see that in the 15 'old' Member States the need for more information is now slightly less widespread (44% vs. 48%) whereas it has stayed the same in the 10 new Member States (46%). There are extreme differences between countries with scores ranging from 29% of the Danish respondents feeling they need more information to 79% of the respondents in Cyprus.

In the 4 accession and candidate countries the need for more information ranges from 48% in Croatia to 70% in Romania.

The analyses do not reveal a clear-cut relationship between the need for more information and children's age. The need is most widespread among parents with children aged 5 or younger and parents with children aged 10 to 13.



Analyses of the socio-demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the parents also do not reveal any clear patterns or correlations. The results do show that women are more likely to feel the need for more information than men are (48% vs. 41%). Whether or not parent use the Internet does have an effect on their need for more information as does the level of expertise they feel they have.

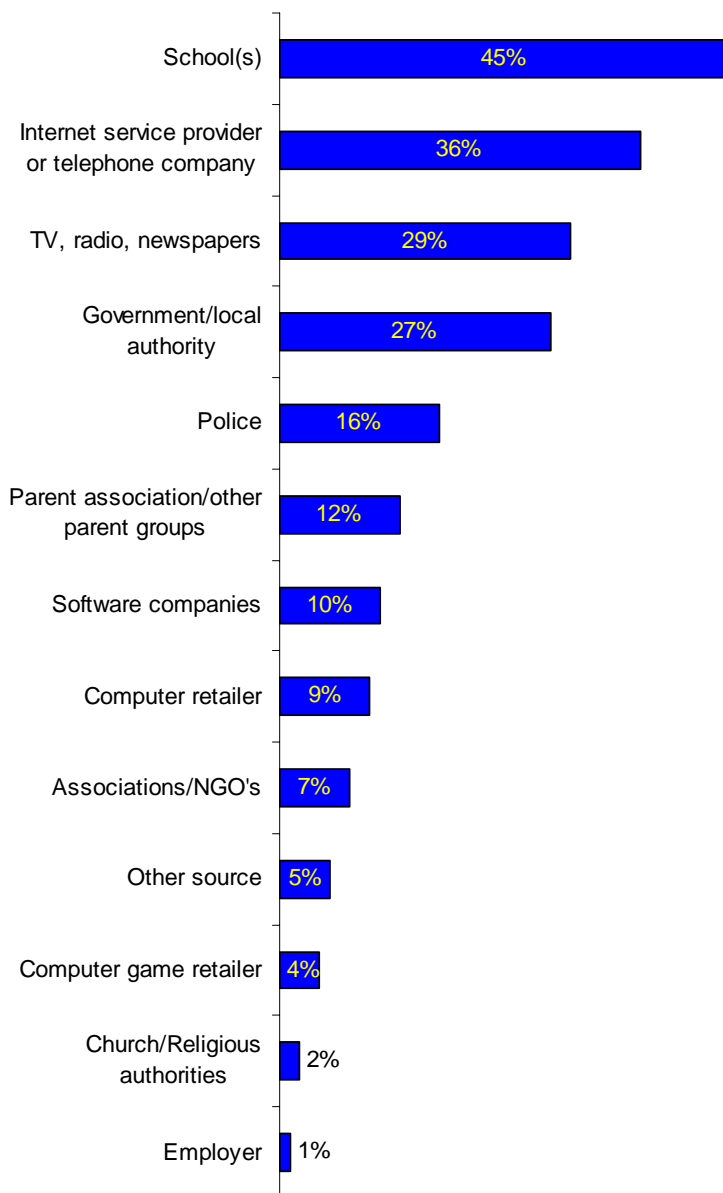
Need for more information	Uses Internet?	
	% Yes	% No
% Yes	43%	50%
% No/DK	57%	50%

Need for more information	Self-assessed level of expertise among Internet users			
	Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced	Expert
% Yes	53%	45%	34%	30%
% No/DK	46%	55%	66%	70%

Analyses show that there is no difference in the need for more information between parents of children who have encountered harmful or illegal content on the Internet and parents whose children have not encountered any unsafe information online.

Finally, we present an overview of how respondents who believe they need **more** information would like to receive this.

From whom would parents with a need for more information about using the Internet in a safer way like to receive this?



Although the ranking of the responses is more or less the same as it is for all parents with children that use the Internet, including those that do not want more information (see the graph on page 49), the percentages for this specific group of parents are higher, particularly when it comes to schools (45%, compared to 36% for all parents with children that use the Internet), Internet service providers or telephone companies (36% vs. 31%), the media (29% vs. 21%) and Government/local authorities (27% vs. 19%).