

Key findings



Access to Internet

- Albanian children **start using the Internet** at an **average age of 9.3 years**, while the **younger generation of girls and boys** are more likely to **start using it earlier, at 8 years or less**.
- Almost **8 in 10 children** can **access the Internet whenever they want or need to**.
- **Parental restriction** is the most common reason for **children not to access the Internet always** when they want or need to, especially among the **youngest children (9–11 years)**. The **high cost of Internet connection or mobile data** is the second most common **barrier to Internet access**, and is most common among **children of age 15–17 years**.
- **Home** is the most common place where **95.8% of children access the Internet** at least weekly. Internet is also often used where the child is alone somewhere.
- **Children of age 15–17 years** are **online more often** and in a wider range of places **than younger children**.
- **Smartphones** are the **most commonly used devices for Internet access**, while **more than half of children** have **never used a desktop computer or a tablet** for Internet access.
- Children spend an average of **2.9 hours online on a weekday**, and **3.3 hours online at a weekend**.
- **Three out of ten parents** of surveyed children **do not use the Internet**, while **almost all of their children** are Internet users.



Online activities and digital skills

- The **most popular activities** that children engage in online are related to **entertainment, learning** and **social interactions**. The least popular activities involve community and civic participation.
- Children's **most developed digital skills** are in the field of **operational skills** and **social relations**, while **creative skills** are the least developed.
- As they **get older**, children engage in a **wider range of activities** and are **more confident in their digital skills**. Younger

children feel less confident in skills related to their **social behaviours online**.

- There is a consistent gender gap in terms of online activities and digital skills, with **boys generally engaging more in online activities** and **having better digital skills than girls**.
- **YouTube and Instagram** are the **most popular** websites or applications among children, **followed by Facebook and WhatsApp**.



Online risks and (potential) harm

- Some **14% of children interviewed** have had **upsetting experiences** over the Internet.
- When something upsetting happens to them on the Internet, **children tend to prefer their peers as a source of support**, and are **very reluctant to speak to teachers or child-care professionals**.
- The **most common content risks** that Albanian children face is their **exposure to real violence**, affecting more than **3 out of 10 children**.
- Children are **exposed to sexual content online mostly involuntarily**, through pop-ups. At the same time, **more than half of children reported seeing sexual content on the Internet because they wanted to**. Only a **small proportion**, mostly **the youngest**, were **upset after seeing sexual content**, while the majority were either indifferent or happy about it.
- **One in four children reported** had **at least one contact online with someone whom they had never met** face-to-face before and almost **2 in 10 reported** meeting in person **someone they had previously known only on the web**. Only a **small portion** of these children were **upset by these face-to-face meetings**.
- **Online bullying** was reported by **fewer than 1 in 10 children**, but this figure is probably an underestimate given the much higher levels of bullying in person.
- **One in ten children** reported at least **one unwanted sexual experience through the Internet**. A **considerable proportion** of those who initiated such an **experience were someone the child already knew**.

- The present study found that exposure to all forms of online risks increases with age. Also, for the most part, **boys are more likely to be exposed to online risks than girls**, though **girls report being more upset by such experiences**.
- **Parental reporting of their children's exposure to online risks is considerably less common than the reporting by the children themselves**, indicating a possible lack of communication and trust between parents and their children.



Mediation by parents, peers and teachers

- Children report that **most of the parents surveyed do not employ an active parenting approach to their Internet use**, while parents have a more positive view of their supportive engagement.
- **Parents tend to report a higher level of restrictive mediation**, including through the use of **parental controls** and **Internet monitoring**, than do children.
- There is a **gender gap in terms of parental mediation**, with **girls being subject to more restrictive parenting than boys**, including monitoring by their parents.
- As **children grow**, parental mediation of Internet use becomes **less restrictive**.
- Overall, the **use of parental control mechanisms**, such as web filtering software, seems to be at a **low level**.
- **Parents prefer** to receive information on **child online safety through schools and mass media**.