



Greek children using Social Media: privacy risks and social networking opportunities

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This paper

- draws from the Greek Children Go Online (GRCGO) project (Παιδιά και Διαδίκτυο στην Ελλάδα: Ευκαιρίες και Κίνδυνοι), a 12-months long research project partially funded by the General Secretariat for Youth, and presents the first findings of this project
- focuses on the use of social media, such as Social Networking Sites, by children and young teenagers in Greece, and on the risks embedded and the opportunities afforded by this use

Contextual Framework

1. Children and life online

Online technologies offer a range of opportunities unheard of in previous generations which in the process, enables them to develop new online competences and literacies.

❖ *Attention to the following issues:*

- a. We need to balance online opportunities and risks, so as not to miss out on opportunities whilst minimizing the risks.*
- b. negative media influence builds moral panic and creates an endemic culture of fear of new technologies.*
- c. The dominance of screen entertainment media, and the emergence of the so-called 'bedroom culture', has led us to a zero-risk society, where safety is constructed on the basis of the most vulnerable child (to abuse)*

Contextual Framework

2. Children living in a risks-opportunities continuum

- ❖ the range of benefits and risks experienced by children are positively correlated, which means that the increase in opportunities goes hand in hand with an increase in risks and vice versa (Livingstone, 2004; Livingstone and Helsper 2009)
- ❖ The same goes for skills: children with good internet skills, take up more opportunities online and are thus exposed to more online risks

		Content: Child as recipient	Contact: Child as participant	Conduct: child as actor
OPPORTUNITIES	Education learning and digital literacy	Educational resources	Contact with others who share one's interests	Self-initiated or collaborative learning
	Participation and civic engagement	Global information	Exchange among interest groups	Concrete forms of civic engagement
	Creativity and self-expression	Diversity of resources	Being invited/ inspired to create or participate	User-generated content creation
	Identity and social connection	Advice (personal/ health/ sexual etc)	Social networking, shared experiences with others	Expression of identity
RISKS	Commercial	Advertising, spam, sponsorship	Tracking/ harvesting personal information	Gambling, illegal downloads, hacking
	Aggressive	Violent/ gruesome/ hateful content	Being bullied, harassed or stalked	Bullying or harassing another
	Sexual	Pornographic/harmful sexual content	Meeting strangers, being groomed	Creating/ uploading pornographic material
	Values	Racist, biased info/ advice (eg, drugs)	Self-harm, unwelcome persuasion	Providing advice eg, suicide/ pro-anorexia

Contextual framework

For the purposes of this paper,

- ❖ I decided to concentrate on a particular kind of contact risk, **provision of personal information and privacy risks**, and as to how this is related to a contact opportunity, **social networking**.
- ❖ I also focused on the **digital literacy skills** young users have developed and their level of **expertise when online**.

Giving out personal information and getting closer with SNSs

- ❖ Rapidly expanding body of empirical research investigating how people create personal profiles, network with familiar and new contacts (boyd, 2008; boyd and Ellison, 2007; Hinduja and Patchin, 2008; Lenhart and Madden, 2007; Livingstone 2008; Papacharissi 2002; 2009)
- ❖ It is the **blurring of public/private and the implications for privacy** that usually catch public and policy attention

4. GR Children Go Online: Research design and methods

The GR Children Go Online (GRCGO) project (Παιδιά και Διαδίκτυο στην Ελλάδα: Ευκαιρίες και Κίνδυνοι) was designed along the lines of the UK Children Go Online original study (Livingstone and Bober 2005, <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/399/>), adopted to the Greek reality.

The GRCGO project conducted a survey of 9 to 18-year-olds, and their parents, in Attica, the largest prefecture in Greece, which was then followed by a number of interviews, examining young people's Internet use in detail.

The Greek project, similarly to the British original, balances online risks and opportunities encountered by youth in order to contribute to academic and policy frameworks on children and young people's Internet use.

5. GR Children Go Online: Discussion of research findings

Diffusion of social media among the Greek youth

Social media have just started attracting academic attention in Greece, though at first glance, research focuses on adults instead of children.

Interaction with social media is scarce among young children and teenagers:

Only one third of them uses the internet for chat or Instant Messaging (30%), and a mere 8% has their own blog.

SNS: Almost 2/3 of children and teenagers (64%) abstain from such sites. For those few who do take part, Hi5 is the most popular medium (27%), with MySpace and Facebook barely having a presence (5% and 4%)

(Greek Observatory for the Information Society, 2008)

5. GR Children Go Online: Discussion of research findings

GR Children Go Online

What kind of decisions do children and teenagers make when it comes to sharing personal information with distant others? How well aware are they about breaches of privacy and the risks related to it?

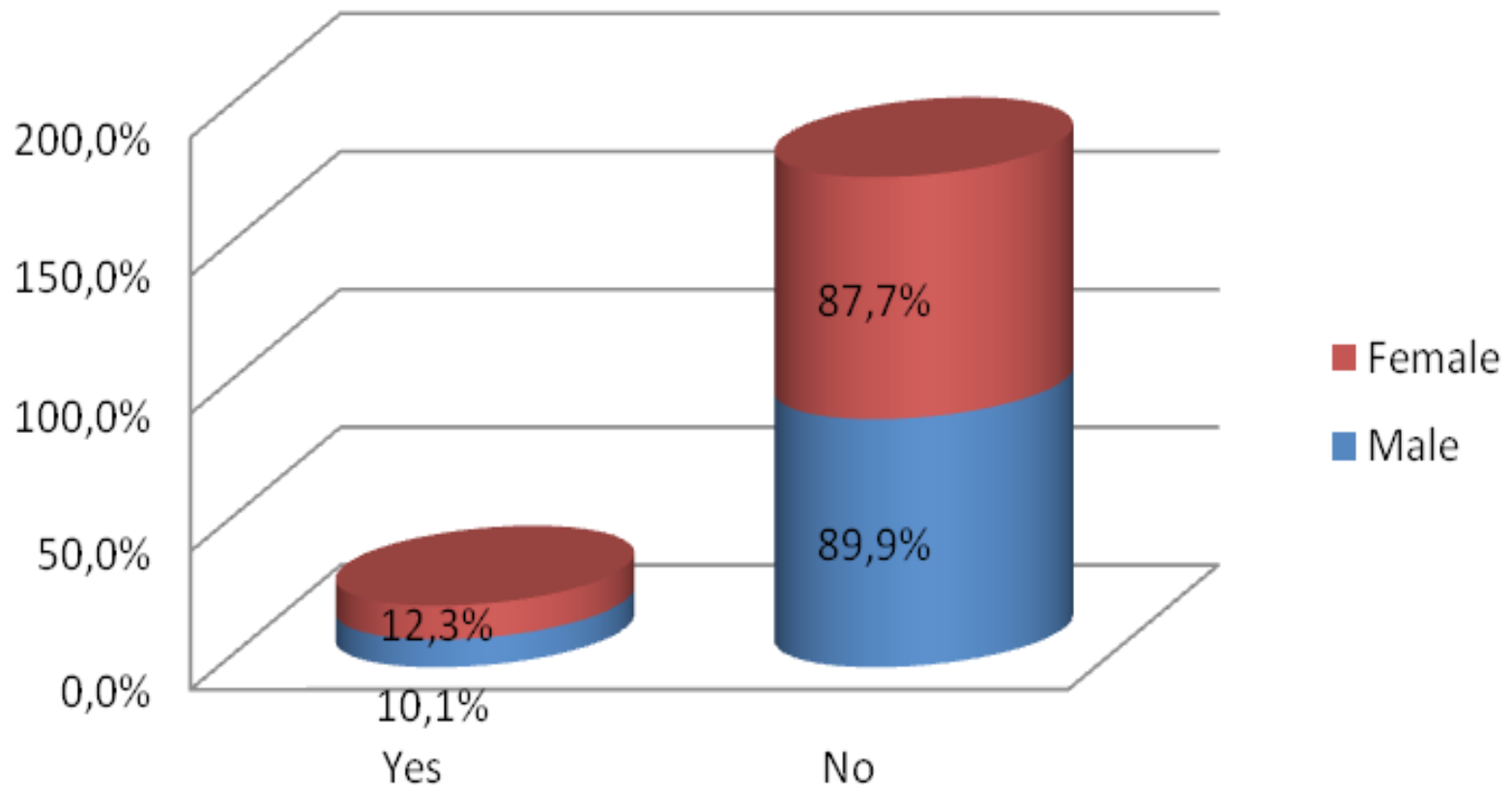
Younger children (10-14) mention social networking fourth (10% for boys: 12% girls)

For older teenagers (15-18), social networking, along with searching for information, is the second most popular online activity (for about a third of them)

From a gender point of view, girls, overall, outperform boys, regardless of the age cohort

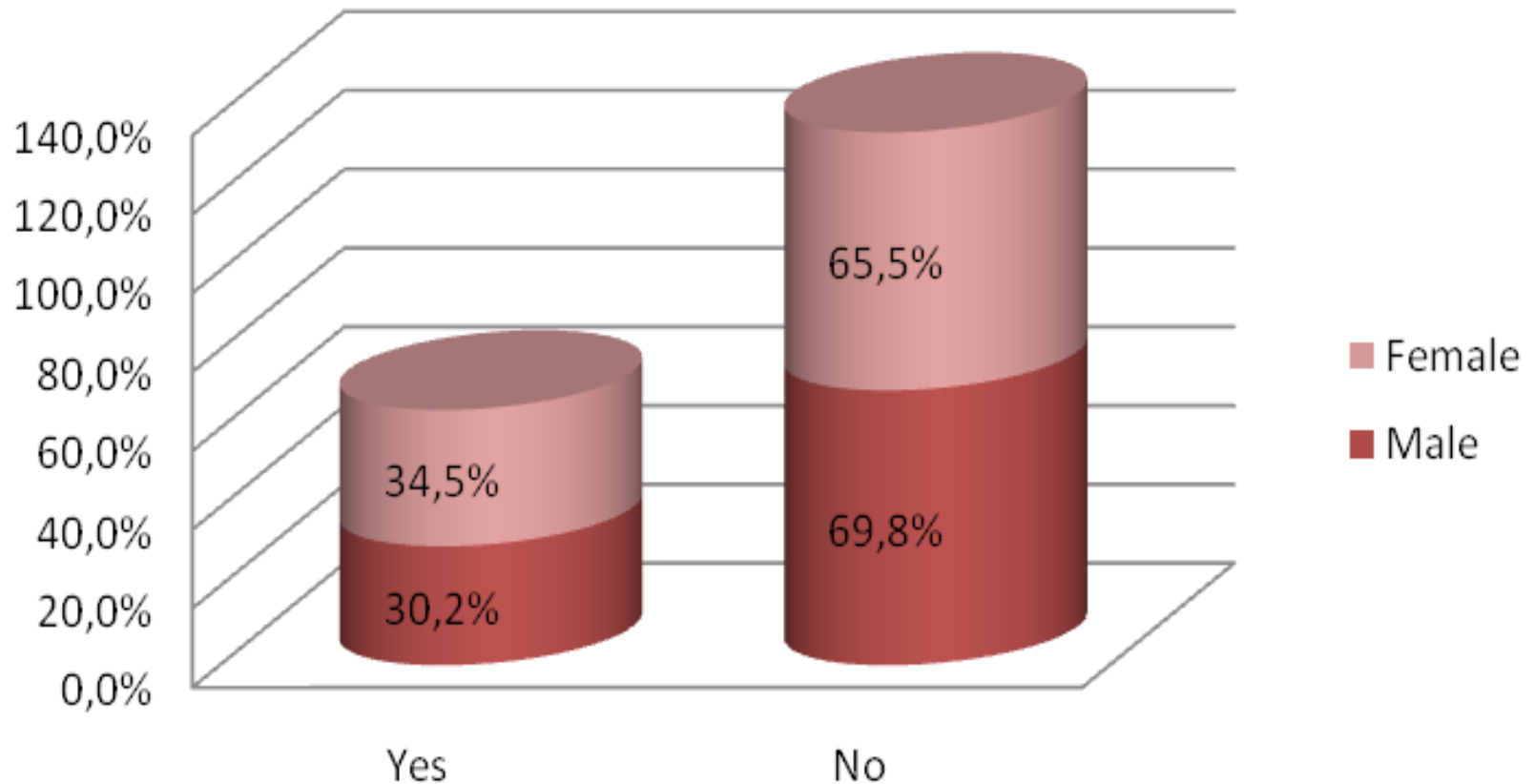
Children aged 10-14: 4th-6th grade of primary school,
1st and 2nd grade of gymnasio

Do you take part in SNS sites?



Children aged 15-18: 3rd grade of gymnasio; 1st-3rd grade of lykio

Do you take part in SNS sites?



5. GR Children Go Online: Discussion of research findings

GR Children Go Online: A-social-media-generation-in-the-making?

IM: over one third of older boys and just about a third of older girls use instant messaging on a daily basis; younger children may use IM less in relation to older teens, but there is still 22% of young boys and 18% of girls who do

Chat rooms: use of chat rooms is very limited: more than half of the older boys and almost 2/3 of older girls never use chat rooms, Almost 2/3 of younger children never use chat rooms, regardless of gender:

I think I'm still young to get into chat. I know kids even from gimnasio who don't do chat as yet. I don't even want to know what this chat is (Panagiotis, 11 years old).

5. GR Children Go Online: Discussion of research findings

GR Children Go Online: Risk awareness, maintaining privacy and digital literacy

What kind of coping strategies do children and teenagers employ in order to maintain and control their privacy?

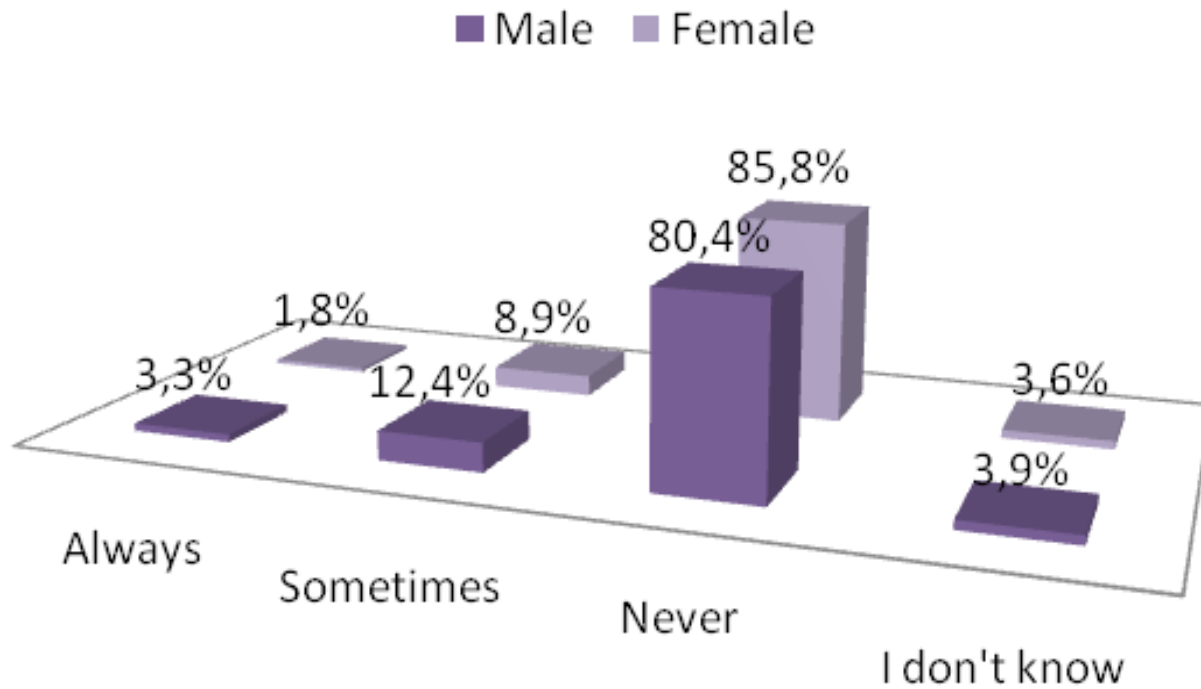
A substantial number of youngsters seem reluctant to give out personal information easily when online:

No, because I've been informed how dangerous this is, (11 year-old Panagiotis)

Over 80% of younger boys and girls (more girls than boys) never give their personal information when asked

Children aged 10-14: 4th-6th grade of primary school, 1st and 2nd grade of gymnasio

Personal Information Provision Online



5. GR Children Go Online: Discussion of research findings

GR Children Go Online: Risk awareness, maintaining privacy and digital literacy

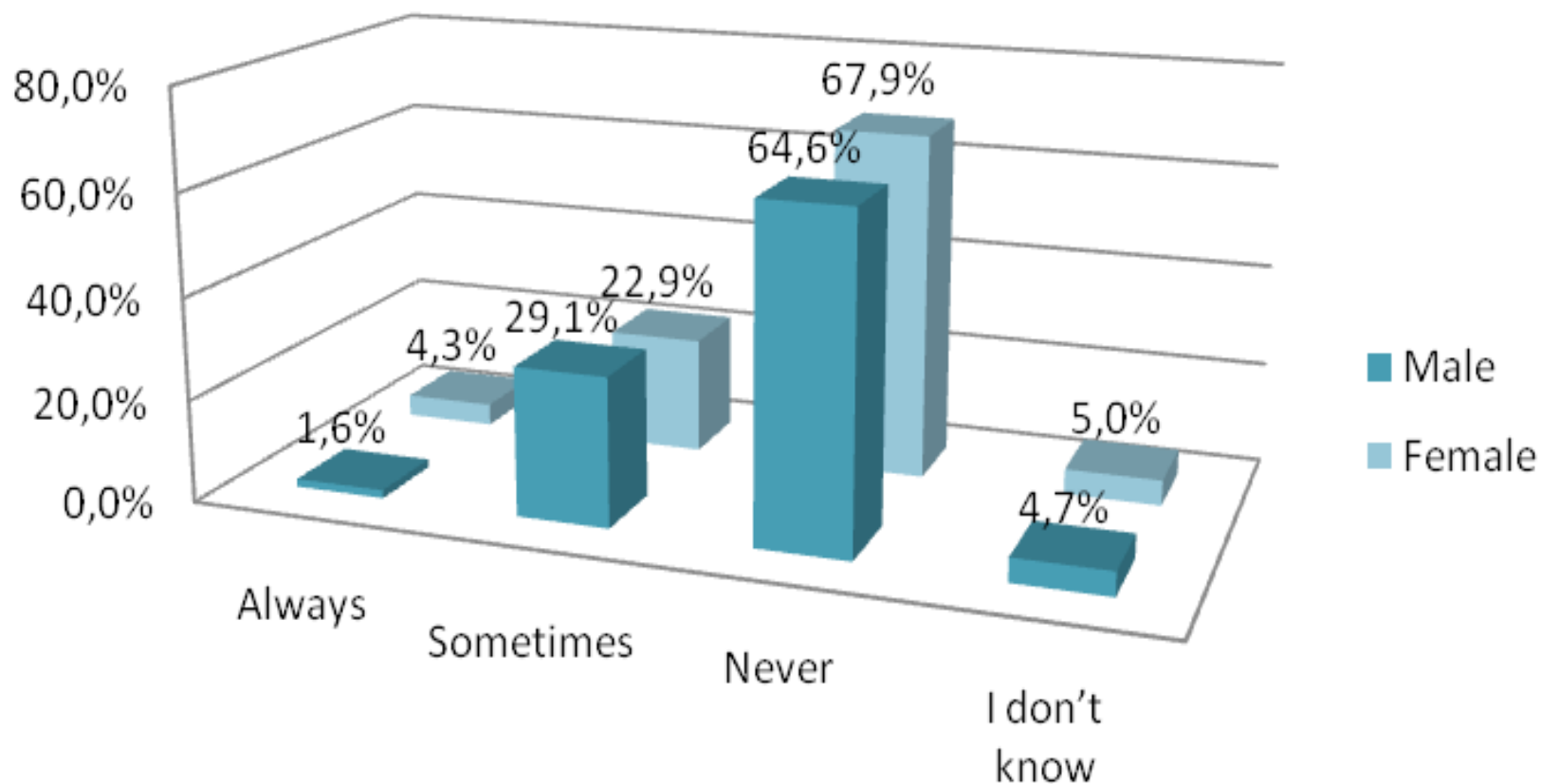
Less than half of the older boys (48%, down from 64%) and 68% of the girls (down from 75%) say that they never offer their personal information on their favourite site:

Let's say, on msn, if it's a friend (who asks), it's OK; But, never to a stranger. 15 year-old Panagiota

Around 65% of older teens (more girls than boys) never give their personal information once asked (down from over 80%)

Children aged 15-18: 3rd grade of gymnasio; 1st-3rd grade of lykio

Personal Information Provision Online



5. GR Children Go Online: Discussion of research findings

GR Children Go Online: Risk awareness, maintaining privacy and digital literacy

Although 85% of parents fully agree that the publication of personal information online is risky,

- a large part of them **has no knowledge** as to what their children do when they go online,
- or how to help them stay safe online

5. GR Children Go Online: Discussion of research findings

GR Children Go Online: Risk awareness, maintaining privacy and digital literacy

pretending to be somebody else:

60% of younger boys and half of younger girls have given false names online,

around 15% of younger boys and 10% of girls have changed their gender and nationality online, while about one third of those youngsters have lied about their age; another 15% of young boys and almost 20% of girls have lied about their physical appearance

Older teens:

give false names (2/3 of older boys and over half of older girls); lie predominantly about their age (more than half of the older boys compared to a third of the girls), though less about their gender (13% boys: 8% girls), nationality (17% boys: 5% girls) and appearance (13% boys: 17% girls)

5. GR Children Go Online: Discussion of research findings

GR Children Go Online: Risk awareness, maintaining privacy and digital literacy

I've been warned that you may get fooled on Facebook and be given false information.. I never wanted to join this Facebook...(10 year-old Alexandros)

This being a digital generation in-the-making, exactly how competent children and teenagers are? What is their perceived level of expertise?

88% of younger children are aware of online risks compared to 84% of older boys and 91% of girls

I don't think it [the internet] is safe. I take all precautions possible, being a child and all. My parents have installed an antivirus programme (Anna, 10 years old).

5. GR Children Go Online: Discussion of research findings

GR Children Go Online: Risk awareness, maintaining privacy and digital literacy

older teens come across as more assertive and confident regarding their level of expertise compared to younger children

When it comes to being internet experts, older teens, predominantly boys, see themselves as such (45% of older boys: 26% of girls, as opposed to 37% of younger boys: 25% of girls).

According to their own views, more younger children always find what they are looking for online in relation to older ones

(41% of younger boys: 28% of younger girls compared to 30% of older boys: 18% of girls)

5. GR Children Go Online: Discussion of research findings

GR Children Go Online: parental digital literacy and expertise

According to the Eurobarometer (2009), Greek parents

- are considerably lagging behind other parents in the EU (54%: 84% EU27);
- 35% set no rules and restrictions to their children's internet use (25% in EU27);
- only 17% of them uses filtering or surveillance software of online content (27% in EU27).

5. GR Children Go Online: Discussion of research findings

GR Children Go Online: Risk awareness, maintaining privacy and digital literacy

Parental digital literacies:

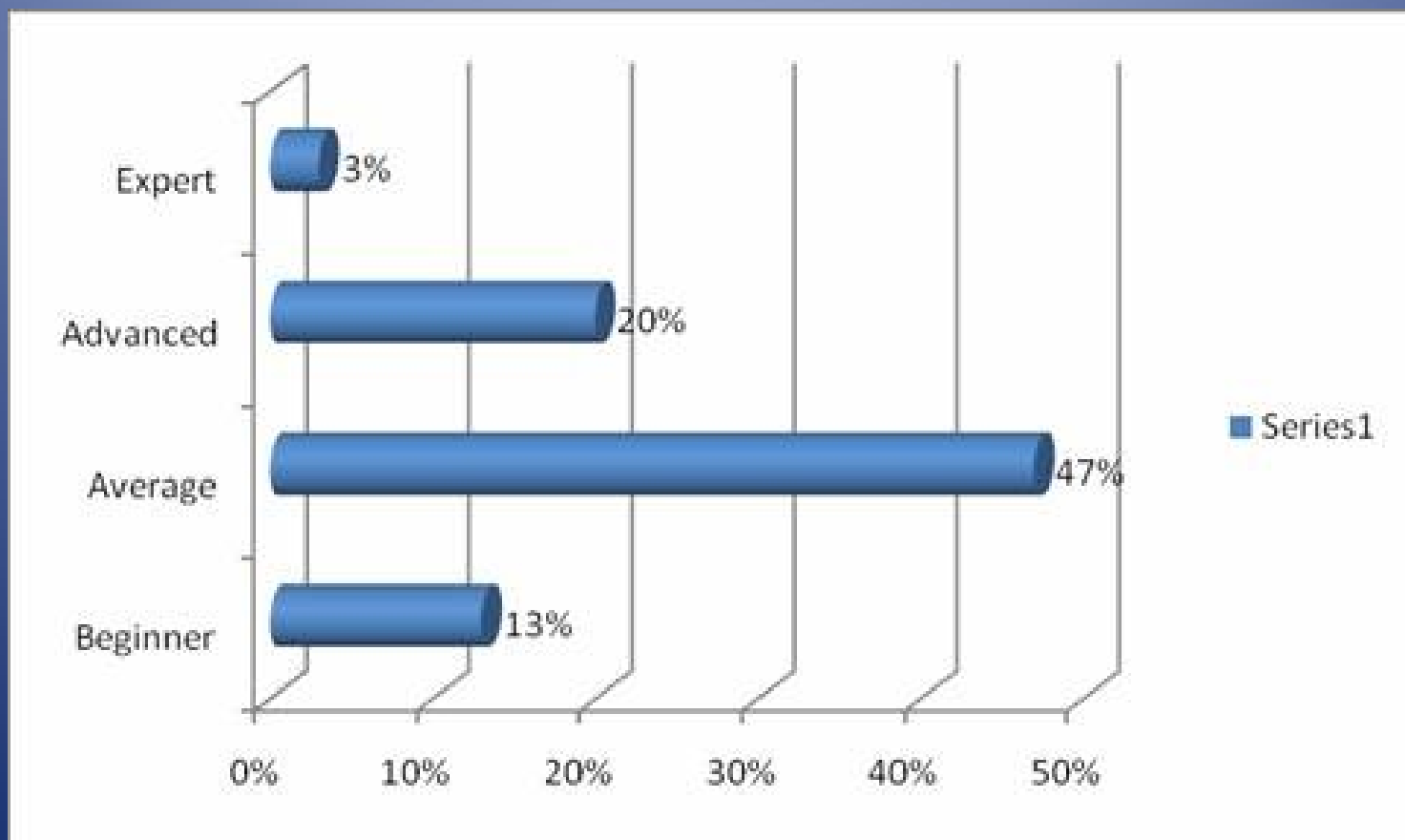
compared to parents of *older* children (15-18 yr olds), more parents of *young* internet users (9-14 yr olds) consider themselves good at:

- finding the information they are searching for online (72%: 54%);
- setting an email account (34%: 15%);
- sending IM (16%: 11%);
- installing filter software (9%: 7%);
- managing technical problems (11%: 5%).

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GR Children Go Online: Risk awareness, maintaining privacy and digital literacy

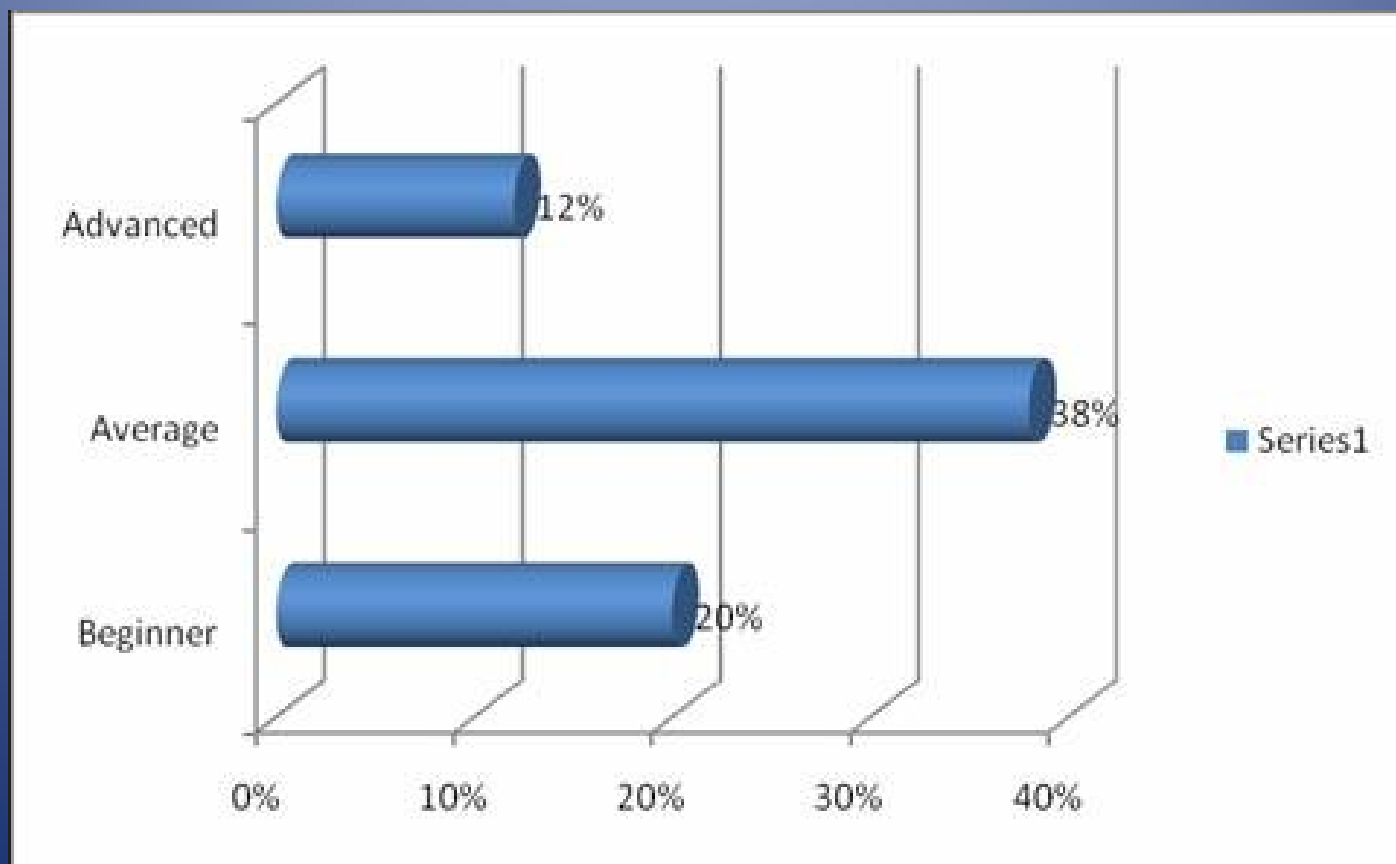
Parents' perceived level of expertise (9-14 YEAR-OLDS)



5. GR Children Go Online: Discussion of research findings

GR Children Go Online: Risk awareness, maintaining privacy and digital literacy

Parents' perceived level of expertise (15-18 YEAR-OLDS)



5. GR Children Go Online: Discussion of research findings

GR Children Go Online: Risk awareness, maintaining privacy and digital literacy

Conclusions:

- Risks are positively correlated with age
- Just as life offline, the internet will never be risk-proof
- Need to build children's digital competencies and literacies
- Need for a multi-stakeholder approach