



  
**Barnardos**  
Online Safety  
Programme



**Barnardos Online Safety Survey Results**  
Summary Report 2020

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**Children, Parents, Teachers**

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## Background to surveys

In September 2019, Barnardos expanded their Online Safety Programme with the support of Google.org and embarked on a 4 year plan with the hope of reaching 1000 schools and 75,000 children with online safety workshops for children, parents and teachers. We offer four workshops in a day (online or face to face) for 50 euro a day and our workshops signpost to Be Internet Legends, a Google online resource that schools can use as wrap-around materials.

In our pilot year, we had intended to have a face to face consultation with children, young people, parents and teachers and ask our target audience their thoughts on online safety. Unfortunately, due to the coronavirus pandemic, this face to face consultation couldn't take place and instead, we had a survey that asked similar questions to our intended audience (children aged 8+, parents and teachers). Their responses will inform our programme and make sure our workshops on online safety are relevant, useful and meeting the needs of the participants. Although most of the questions in this survey relate to online safety concerns, we did take the opportunity to ask some questions about Digital Learning during lockdown. We were especially interested in hearing how it was working, if children/teachers/parents liked this new way of learning and if technology was helping.

The survey was open from the 9th to 23rd June 2020 and was launched on social media (Twitter/LinkedIn/Facebook). It was also sent to 130 schools who had been in touch with Barnardos Online Safety Programme in its pilot year (Sep-March 2020). Our plan was that schools would pass on the surveys to parents, who would then, in turn, help their own children fill out their survey. It was our hope that by sending this survey to both parents and children, it would initiate conversations about online safety in the household. Increased communication between parents and children about online safety is one of the major aims of our programme.

In total, our small scale survey received responses from 243 parents, 77 teachers and 84 children (65 primary school age, 19 secondary school age). There was a broad geographical spread – 61% of respondents were from Leinster, 10% from Munster, 27% from Connaught and 1% from Ulster.



## Barnardos **Children's** Online Safety Survey 2020

## Background

In total, 84 children took part in this survey. We asked that children would be over 8 years of age in order to respond as our workshops are designed for 3rd-6th class. As a breakdown, 65 children were primary school age and 19 were secondary school age.

## Online Safety

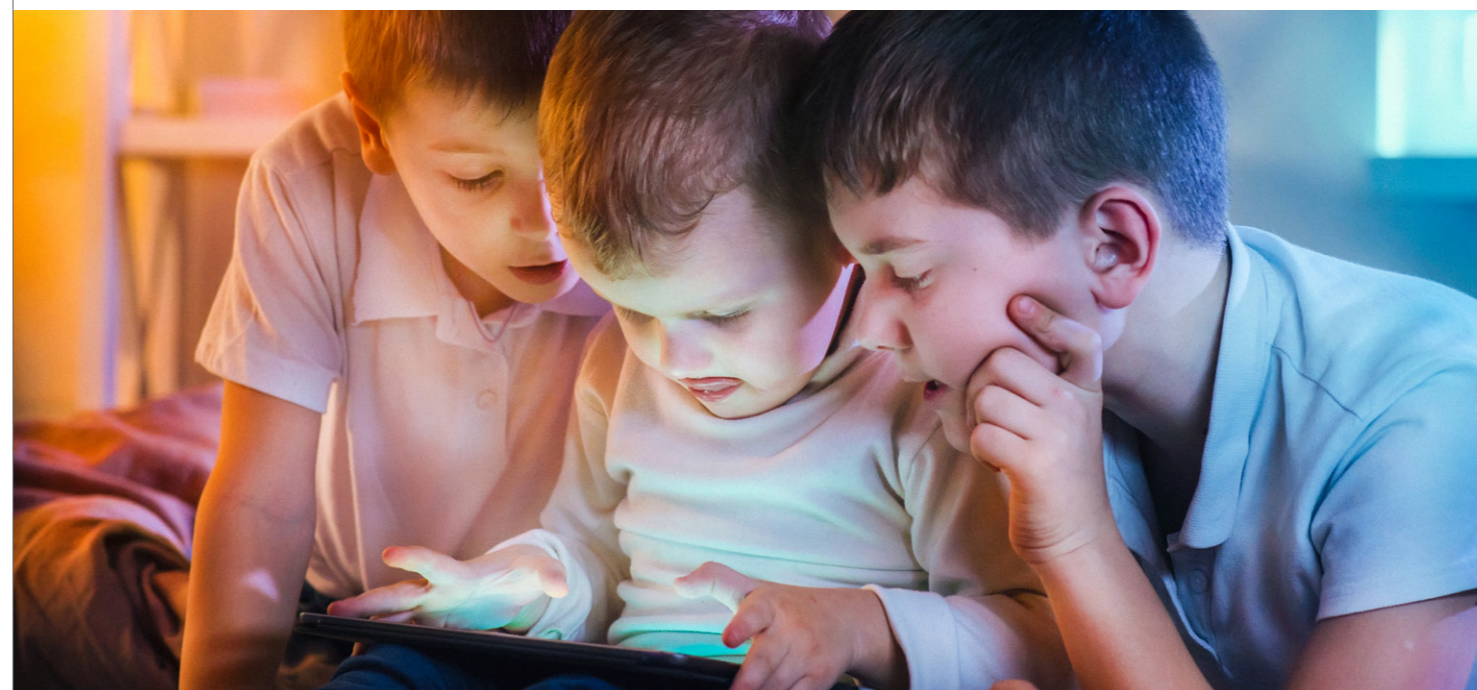
### Children's online risk worries

At Barnardos, we believe in children's rights and listening to children is one of the most important parts of our job. As such, our first question to children and young people was to ask them what their main concerns were regarding online safety. Children were allowed to choose a maximum of 3 risks from a list given to them, and they also had the option of adding to the list as well. **'An embarrassing picture or video being shared around or going viral' (40%), 'mean messages or being excluded from groups by friends you know' (37%) and 'mean messages from strangers online in games or on social media (32%) were the top 3 online risk worries of the children surveyed, more so than being scammed (22%) or privacy concerns (22%).**

#### Top 5 online risk worries of children surveyed

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| 1. An embarrassing picture or video of you being shared around, or going viral | 40% |
| 2. Mean messages or being excluded from groups by friends you know             | 37% |
| 3. Mean messages from strangers online in games or on social media             | 32% |
| 4. Seeing something scary or upsetting online                                  | 32% |
| 5. Not knowing if things are true online or not                                | 28% |
| <b>Other online risk worries included:</b>                                     |     |
| 6. Being scammed, or getting a virus   | 22% |
| 7. Privacy concerns - being hacked   | 22% |
| 8. Not knowing what to do when you see cyberbullying happening                 | 17% |
| 9. Becoming addicted to video gaming   | 10% |

“Being excluded by friends; a lot of things are organized over text, like meet ups and activities. It is hard to ask your friends, “am I being excluded from a group chat” without them thinking you are clingy or intrusive.” — Girl, 13-15 years old

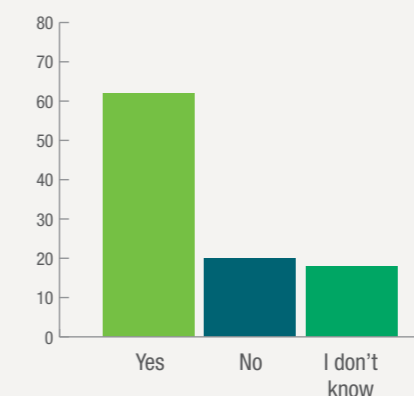


“It is difficult enough trying to convince parents to let you go on to websites or use social media platforms, so seeing something that makes you feel scared can be very hard to talk about with parents since you are afraid that they will completely ban you from using an app or social media platform.”  
— Girl, 13-15 years old

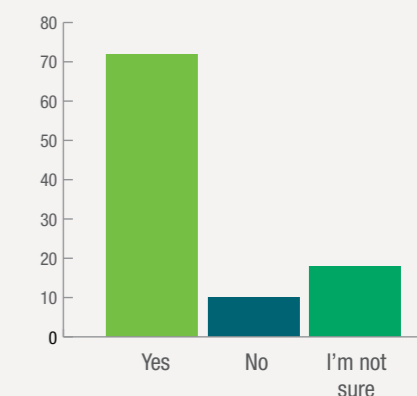
### Online Safety at home and in school

We also wanted to understand how or if children learn about online safety. Over **60% of children** responded that they have **rules in the house about online safety** with **72% reporting that they had specific classes about online safety in school.**

Rules in the house about online safety



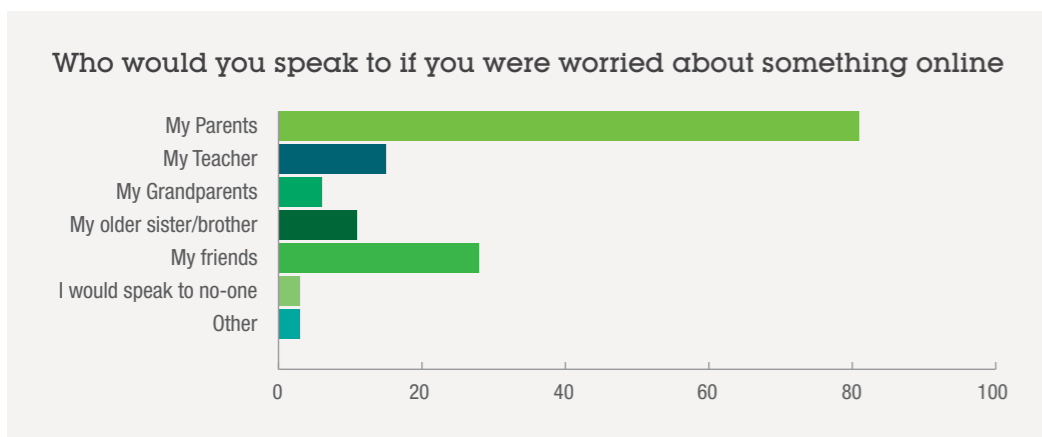
Did you learn about online safety in school?





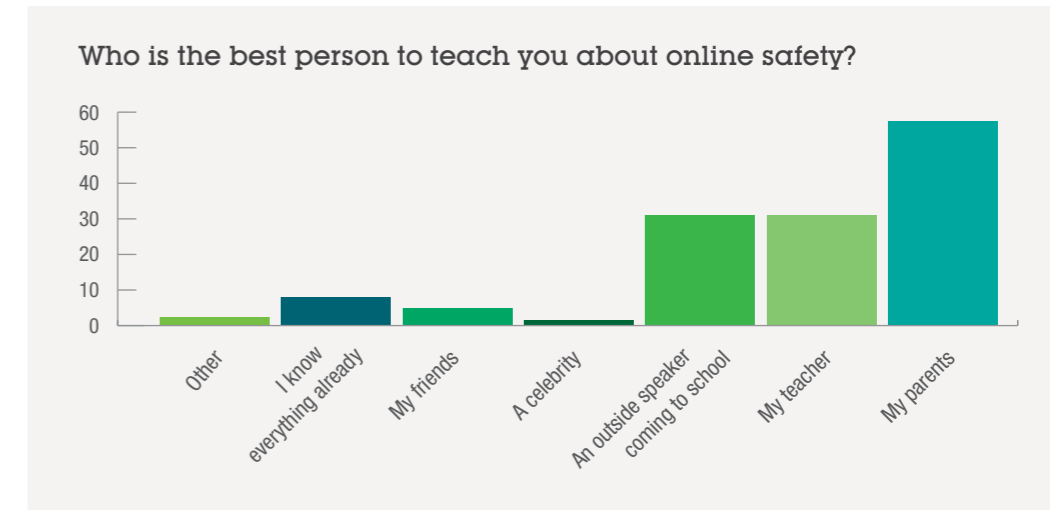
### Who would you speak to about online safety worries?

Regarding who to speak to if they had an issue online, it was interesting to see that over **80% said that they would speak to their parents**. Over half of these who responded this way were in the 10 -12 age range.



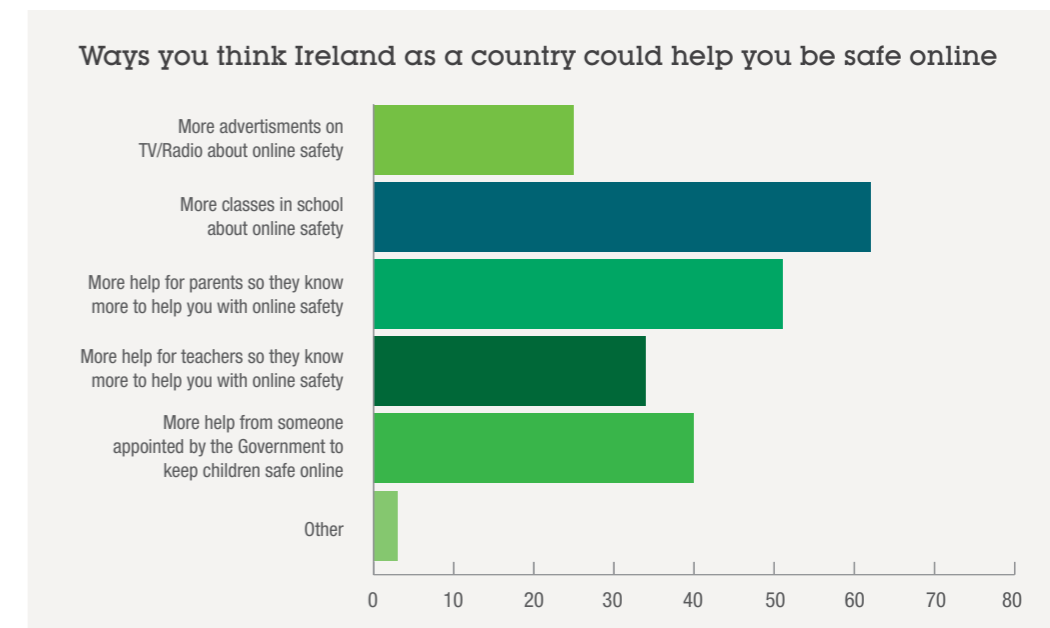
### Who is the best person to teach you about online safety?

**57% answered that they thought their parents** would be the best person to teach them about online safety and interestingly again, over half of these were in the 10 – 12 age range. *Teachers* and an **‘outside speaker coming into the school’** were given as equal second choices (32% each). ‘An older teenager’ was also given under the ‘other’ category as an alternative option.



### Ways in which Government could improve their safety online

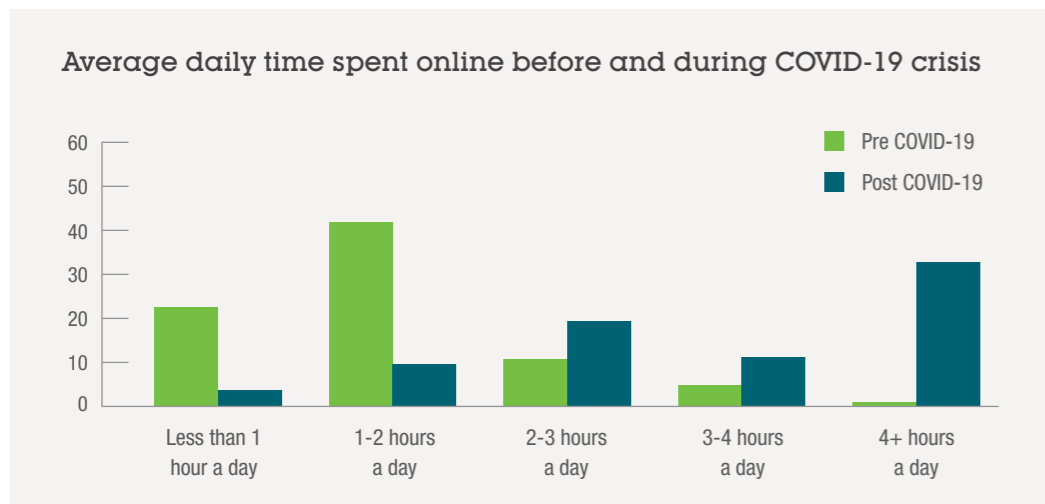
While it was clear from our survey results that parents play a big role in online safety for many children, we were curious to understand what more Ireland, as a country, could do to help all children be safe online. **More classes in schools in online safety (64%)** was the most popular way the children responded in which Ireland could do more to help them to be safe online. **More help for parents (52%), teachers (35%) and someone appointed by Government (40%)** were also chosen as popular ways in which Ireland could help them to be safe online. Children who chose the ‘other’ option asked for **“more rules on cyberbullying”** and **“safer social media platforms”**.



# Digital Learning during Lockdown

## Screen time increased dramatically during the Covid-19 crisis

It is evident from the survey that there was a **huge increase in the hours spent online on a week day during the Covid-19 crisis with almost 40% spending 4+ hours per day online** as opposed to none reporting to have spent this long per day before the Covid-19 crisis. **30% spent less than 1 hour per day online before the Covid-19 crisis** whereas **only 5% spent less than 1 hour per day during the Covid-19 virus**.



## Digital Learning

At Barnardos, we were curious to understand how children and young people were coping with their school work through lock down, and to see their opinions and views about this new way of learning. We were conscious that some young people may not have the technology to be able to participate fully in this digital learning and we wanted to hear their thoughts on this. The **vast majority (96%) received school work to do at home** from their teachers using technology with just over **50% reporting that they enjoyed this way of learning while 23% responded that they did not or were not sure** respectively.

“ I liked updating my computer skills. I didn't like the lack of teacher interaction. Some teachers were great, others only emailed stuff and didn't offer online classes so lack of support. ”  
 — Girl, 13-15 years old

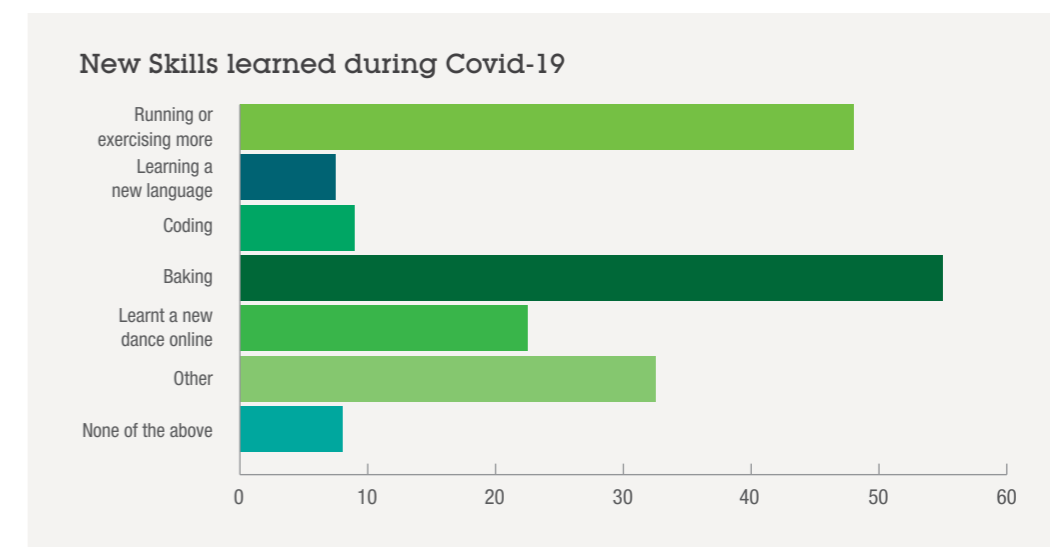
“ Too much work to do and not always having the proper tools to do it ”  
 — Boy, 10-12 years old

“ I liked that my handwriting didn't matter because I could type my work ” — Girl, 10-12 years old

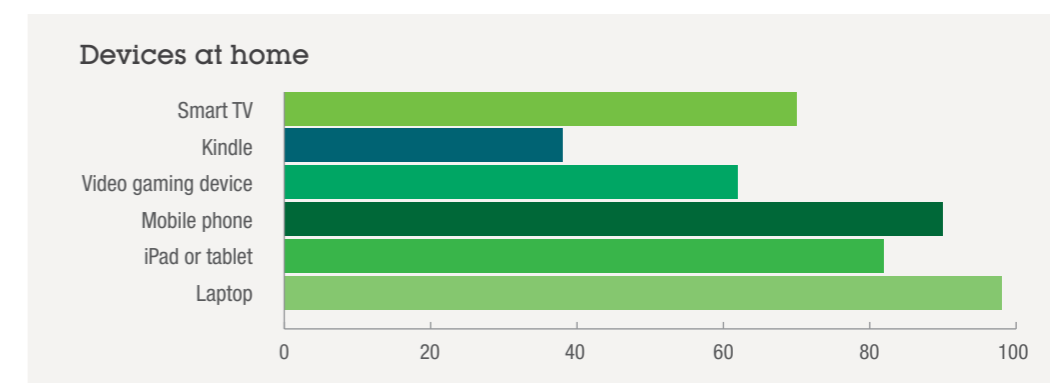
“ It's not that I didn't enjoy it but I prefer learning in school, as you miss the school atmosphere and environment. ”  
 — Boy, 16-18 years old

## New skills learned during Covid-19

We were also keen to learn if there were any positives for children and young people during lockdown, if they used this time to learn anything new. Many of the children surveyed reported to have learned new skills during the Covid-19 crisis. Some of these skills included cycling, cooking dinners, sign language and sewing.

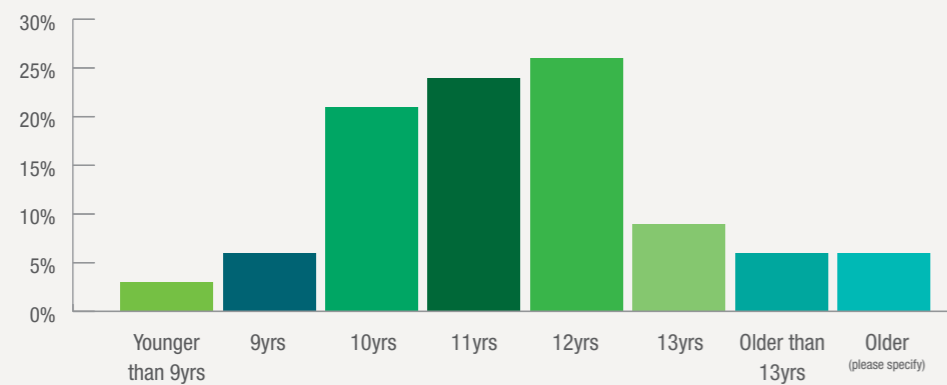


When asked what devices they had at home to support their learning, the large majority of the children surveyed had a **laptop (96%), ipad (85%) or mobile phone (90%)** in their house. Children were able to tick more than one device.



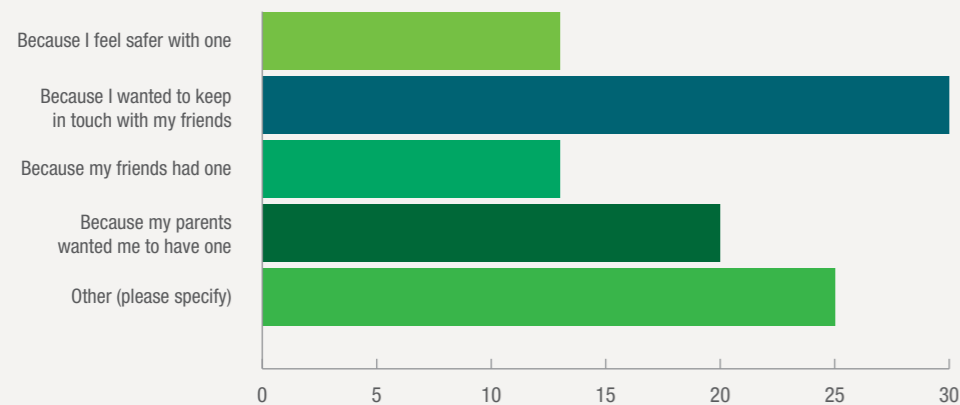
Often in our workshops, we hear from both children and parents about their issues and concerns about the age in which their child should have their first phone. Children in our workshops, complain about feeling left out of group chats as they don't have their own phone, while parents worry about giving children their own phone too early. We were interested to see what was the most common age that children acquired a phone and the reasons for it. **12 years old (26%), 11 years old (24%) and 10 years old (21%)** were the most common ages at which children claimed to own their first phone.

### Age when got phone (if have one)



The main reason children chose from the list provided for wanting to own a mobile phone was to keep in touch with friends (30%). Other reasons were because their parents wanted them to have one (20%), because their friends had one (12%) or because they felt safer with one (12%).

### Why wanted a mobile phone



“ I wanted to start walking home on my own and I wanted something that I could use to contact my mum and dad with ”  
 — Girl, 13-15 years old

# Barnardos Parents' Online Safety Survey 2020

## Background

In total, 243 parents answered this survey, with 86% identifying themselves as female and 12% as male. Many of the parents who responded had more than one child, but the majority of them had children between the ages of 9-12 years old.

## Online Safety

### Parents' worries with regard to the online safety of their children

To make sure our workshops were meeting the needs of parents, our first question was to ask them what their worries were in relation to online safety. **When presented with many different risks online, it is clear from our survey that cyberbullying (64%)** remains at the forefront of parents' minds with regard to worries about their children's online safety.

#### Top 5 worries reported by parents with regards the online safety of their children

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| 1. Cyberbullying   | 64% |
| 2. My child may stumble across inappropriate material (ie pornography)               | 63% |
| 3. My children speaking to strangers who may be trying to groom them (paedophiles)   | 58% |
| 4. Social Media and the mental health implications for my children                   | 52% |
| 5. Amount of screen time my child has  | 37% |
| <b>Other online risk worries chosen by the parents included:</b>                     |     |
| 6. My children falling for scams online  | 24% |
| 7. Addiction and video gaming  | 24% |
| 8. Digital footprint – whatever my child writes online now might affect their future | 21% |
| 9. Other please specify  | 4%  |

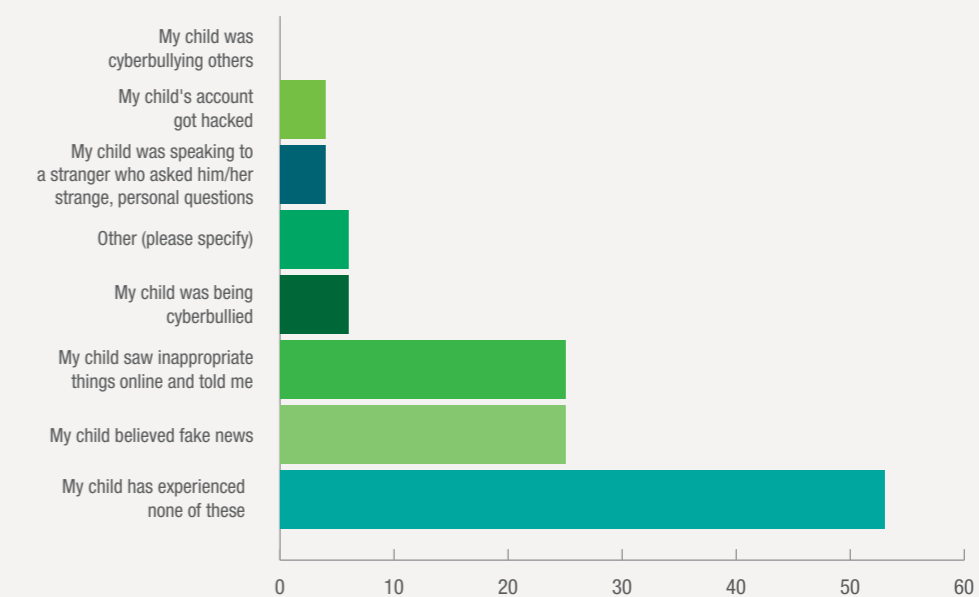
A parent who decided to choose the 'other' option explained *"my child personality changes due to screen time. Plays with headphones shouts and screams, abusive language. Inability to come off for family time, bed time or social time. Gaming in middle of night. Not a nice person when asked to stop."* Parent



### What has happened to your child online?

It was interesting to note that although **64% of parents were worried about cyberbullying** as a risk to their children online, a mere **6% of parents reported that cyberbullying had actually happened** to their children. **Believing fake news (25%)** and **seeing inappropriate things online (20%)** were the most common online safety risks that parents reported had happened to their child. It was reassuring to note that **over half (53%) of the parents who responded** explained that their **children had "experienced none of these"**, referring to the list of online safety worries presented.

#### Which of following has happened to your child online



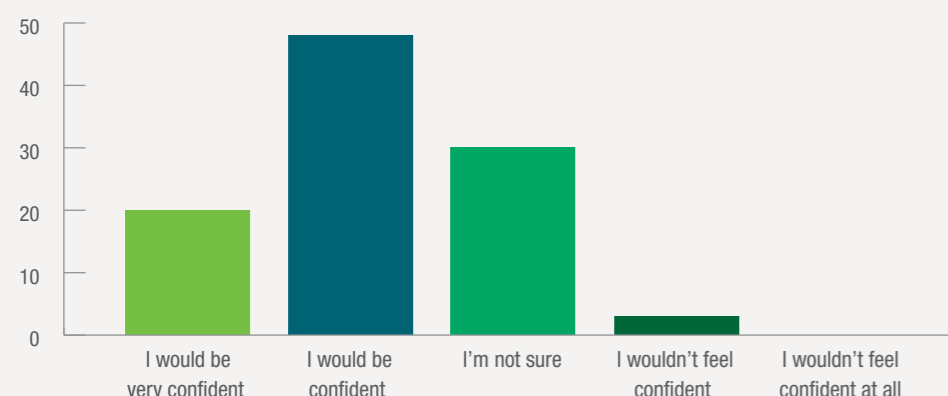


“ One of my child’s friends had stated if people joined his crew they would receive V bucks on their fortnite account. We had a discussion about scamming and he was unaware of this. I caught it on time and he removed the friend and explained he didn’t want to be part of a scam. ” — Parent

### Confidence in ability to deal with children’s online safety worries

What is reassuring to see is that from the parents who answered our survey, **70% said they would be confident** or very confident in dealing with an online safety issue of their child. That said, there was still **30% who said ‘they weren’t sure’ if they would be confident.**

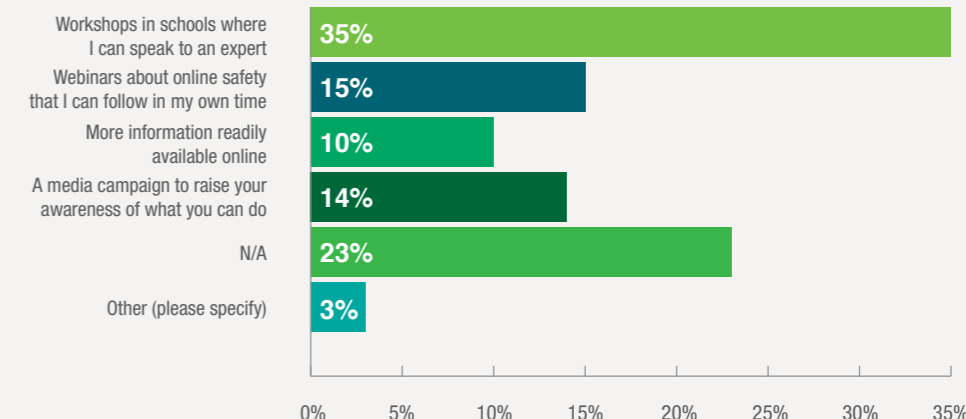
How confident parents’ reported being if child came to them with a worry about something online



When asked what would make them more confident, of the choices provided, parents chose **‘workshops in schools where they can speak to an expert’ (35%)** as the main way in which their confidence would increase so they could help their child deal with issues online. **‘Webinars about online safety that they can follow in their own time’ were also popular (15%)** as well as **‘media campaigns to raise awareness of what you can do’ (14%).**

“ I may be confident however many may not be. More media campaigns, education in schools and for parents is needed. ” — Parent

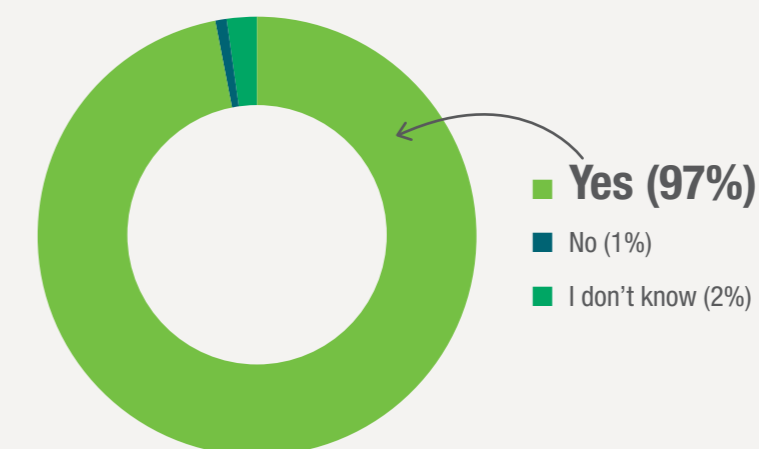
### Ways to increase parents’ confidence in dealing with children’s issues online



### Online Safety in Schools

At present, online safety is not a formal part of the school curriculum (primary/secondary), although many schools place an emphasis on this topic as they feel it is important. When parents were asked if online safety should be a formal part of the school curriculum, **an overwhelming 97% of parents agreed, with 70% responding that their child already learns about online safety in school.**

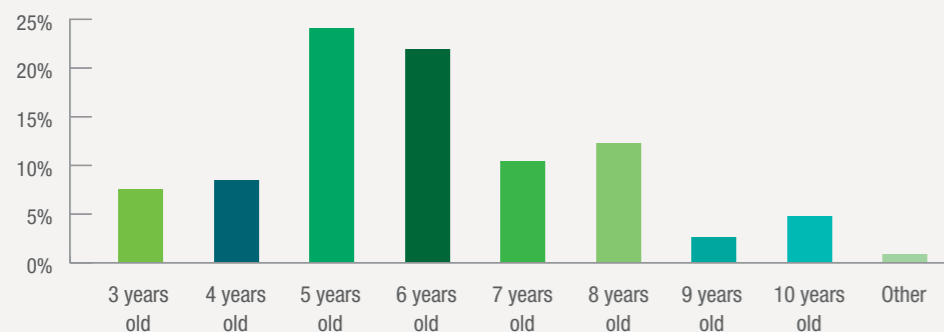
Should Online Safety be part of the Curriculum in schools



### Appropriate age for children to learn about Online Safety (in an age appropriate way).

**Over half** of parents felt that between the ages of **5 and 6 years old** was the appropriate age for children to start learning about online safety in an age appropriate way.

Appropriate age to start learning about online safety (in age appropriate way)

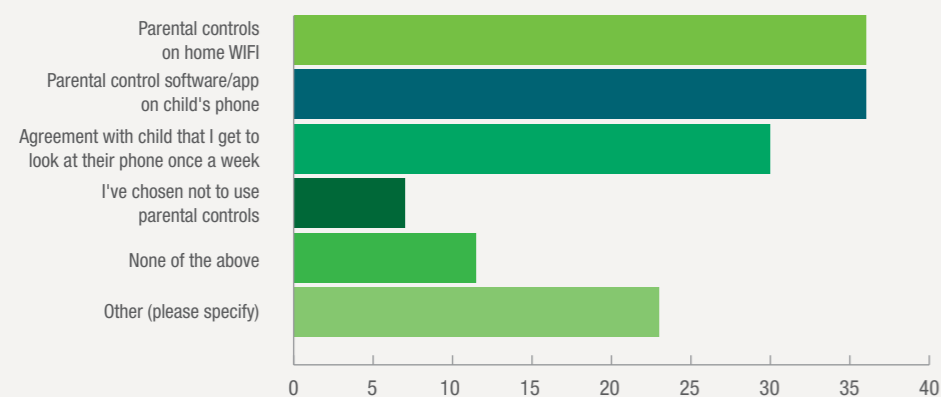


### Parental Controls

In our workshops, many parents inquire about parental controls as a way of keeping their children safe online. While we always support the use of parental controls, we do note that they are not always fool-proof and often as children get older, they learn ways around parental controls. We advise that the best way to keep children safe online is to have **open communication and a close relationship** with your child. This way, should anything negative happen online for a child, they may be more willing to tell you and you can work out together how best to resolve it.

However, in our survey, we wanted to understand how families were implementing their parental controls and which ones they favoured. **Parental controls on wifi (36%)** and **parental control software/app on child's phone (36%)** were the most popular form of parental controls used by parents with **an agreement with their child that they get to look at their phone once a week being the third most popular (30%)**.

Parental Controls used by Parents



After choosing the 'other' category one parent explained "We don't give them phones, but I allow them to use Kids Youtube under strict supervision. No online without supervision in our house". Another said "Phone stays downstairs, no phone in bed". Instead of parental controls, one parent said "we discuss their activity online regularly". One parent explained that they didn't have parental controls, but had other ways to

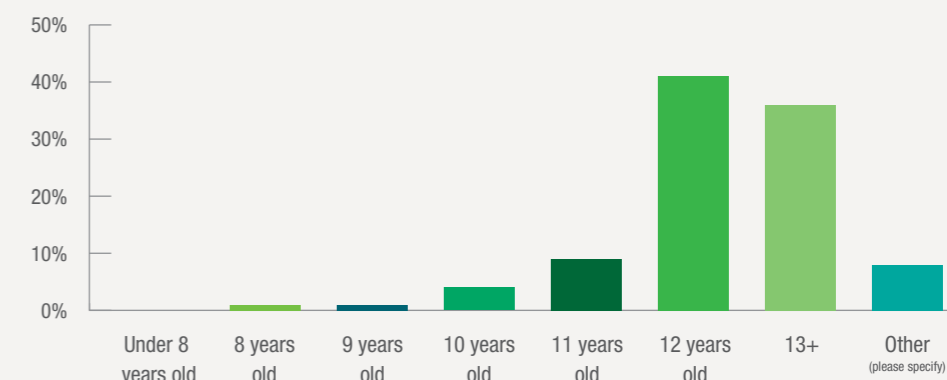


supervise their children "I do not have parental controls. I check his phone regularly, he is not allowed to delete messages or web history. His tic tok and Instagram are linked to my phone and he is not allowed to respond to private messages unless he asks. I have notifications for his messages and posts. He is not allowed to post without my permission. His phone is removed from the room at 11pm."

### Mobile Phones

Similarly to the children, we wanted to ask this same question about mobile phones to parents to understand their rationale and logic around what age is the most appropriate to get their first phone. The majority of parents responded that **between the age of 12 (41%) and 13 years of age onwards (36%) was the most appropriate age for children to get their own mobile phone.**

Appropriate age for children to get own mobile phone





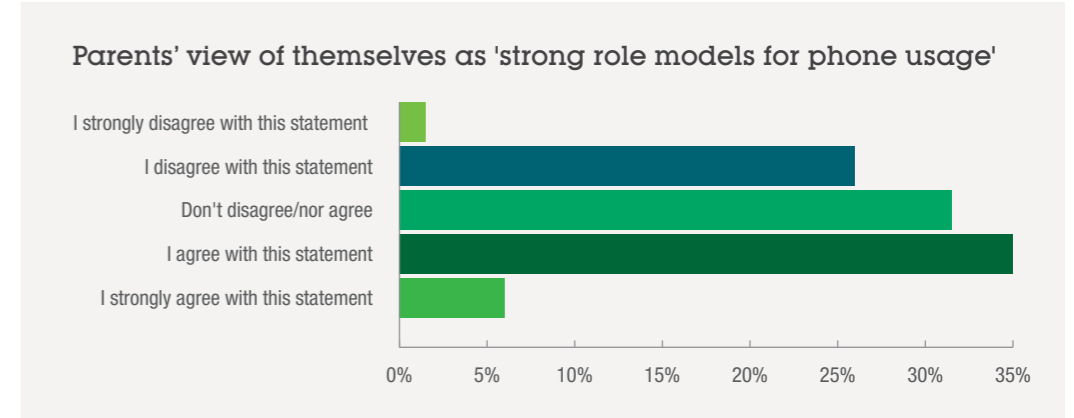
**What was the reason for giving your child a mobile phone?**

“ His older brother got a new phone and gave his old one as a gift. He is using phone for playing games for half an hour per day. ”  
— Parent

“ My stepson goes between our house (his father and I) and his mother’s. Communication between parents was strained for a time – we gave my stepson his own phone to facilitate communication with him. ” — Parent

**Parents' view of themselves as 'strong role models for phone usage'**

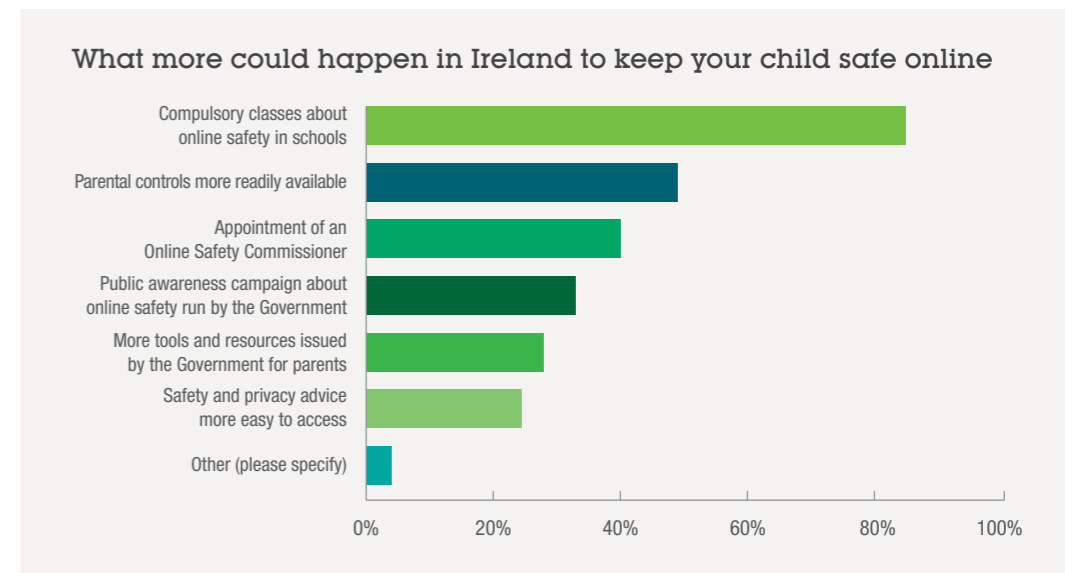
In the 'constantly connected' world that we live in and especially as parents learn to work from home and try to find a work-life balance, we were curious to understand from parents if they felt they were a good, strong role model for phone usage for their children. **35% of parents surveyed believe they are a strong role model** for phone usage as opposed to **26% who disagree with this statement** and **31% who neither agree nor disagree**.



**What more could happen in Ireland to keep children safe online**

Taking a step back from their family use and their own personal opinions about online safety, we wanted to ask parents on a broader, societal level, what more the Government could do to make sure children are safe online. We offered a range of options and also allowed parents devise their own.

**Over 80% of parents** feel there should be **compulsory classes in online safety in schools**.



**Other suggestions parents gave for ways in which Ireland could do more to keep their children safe online were:**

- “Social media platform designed specifically for children put into every school”
- “Less capitalistic control of surveillance”
- “Effective parental controls must be a regulatory prerequisite”
- “Stronger legislation for tech companies to adhere to”
- “Cyber gardai who can track and trace culprits and penalise them for their actions.”
- “Parental controls easier to set up on pcs etc”

## Digital Learning during Lockdown

**Are the internet and technology helping you and the household through the Covid-19 crisis?**

To understand how parents were coping through lock down, balancing work, family commitments and other pressures, we wanted to understand the role of technology in this. **85% of parents responded that they felt the internet and technology was helping them through the Covid-19 Crisis.**

“ Working from home so essential. Helping children with school work and online classes. Supporting children with online research. Reducing children’s boredom, watching movies, games etc. ”  
— Parent

“ Communicating with isolated family and family members that were self isolating. ” — Parent

“ Great learning apps for the kids. ” — Parent



**Do you think distance learning is an effective way of teaching your children?**

Similarly to children, we wanted to hear parents’ views on distance learning. It was interesting to read their comments and that **only 23% thought it was effective for their child. 46% of parents surveyed feel that distance learning was not an effective way in teaching their children and 23% gave other answers below:**

“ For those with poor internet coverage it was a nightmare. My daughter had to take photos of the homework assigned to her and text it to her friend who only had mobile data. ” — Parent

“ In the particular instance of Covid-19, where everyone in the household was working/learning from home, there simply weren’t enough devices available to simultaneously access necessary resources for all ” — Parent

“ Only to a certain extent, easier for older children and not so easy for younger children (age 6) ” — Parent

### As an adult, are there any online initiatives that you have availed of during the Covid-19 crisis that you would like to see continued post corona-virus?

To understand if there were any positives to take away from lockdown, we asked parents if they would like to see any online initiatives continued after lockdown.

| Online initiative would like to see continued post Covid-19 crisis | Percentage |
|--|------------|
| Online yoga or other wellness activities                           | 28%        |
| Webinars in lieu of face to face training                          | 36%        |
| Working remotely as an option                                      | 55%        |
| Online Counselling   | 6%         |
| Online fitness classes   | 38%        |
| Other  | 14%        |

### Other online initiatives parents gave that they would like to see continued after the Covid-19 crisis included:

- Online religious services
- Online consultation with a doctor/practitioner
- Quizzes for fun & keeping in touch
- Online study/CPD

# Barnardos Teachers' Online Safety Survey 2020



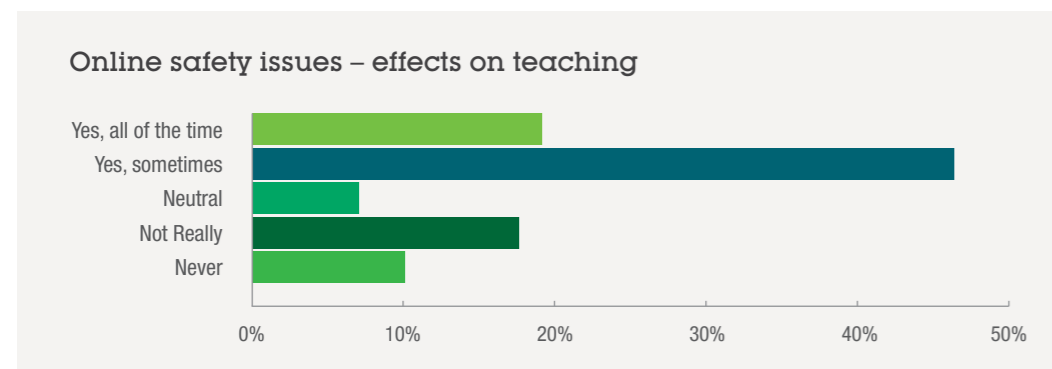
## Background

In total, 77 teachers responded to this survey. While over half of those who responded were primary school teachers, 40% explained that they were resource teachers, or taught in an Autism unit or taught a combination of classes together (5th/6th class teacher).

## Online Safety

### Effects of online safety issues on teaching in school

In our workshops, we often hear from teachers that things that can happen at home with regards to online safety, can spill into their teaching day and they need to address it. Although cyberbullying or gaming may not take place in school, teachers were finding it was affecting their teaching. In our survey, we wanted to understand how often this happened. **Almost half of teachers** surveyed responded that **online safety issues affected their teaching**, with **19%** reporting that they **affected their teaching all the time**.



### Main online safety issues impacting on teaching

We also wanted to understand what were the main online safety issues that impacted their teaching. When asked to choose from the below list of issues ‘Excessive screen time and then being tired in school’ appears to be one of the most prominent online safety issues affecting teachers with **78% responding that it affected their teaching**. ‘Playing inappropriate video games’ (55%) and ‘cyberbullying’ (49%) were also chosen as common online safety issues affecting teaching.

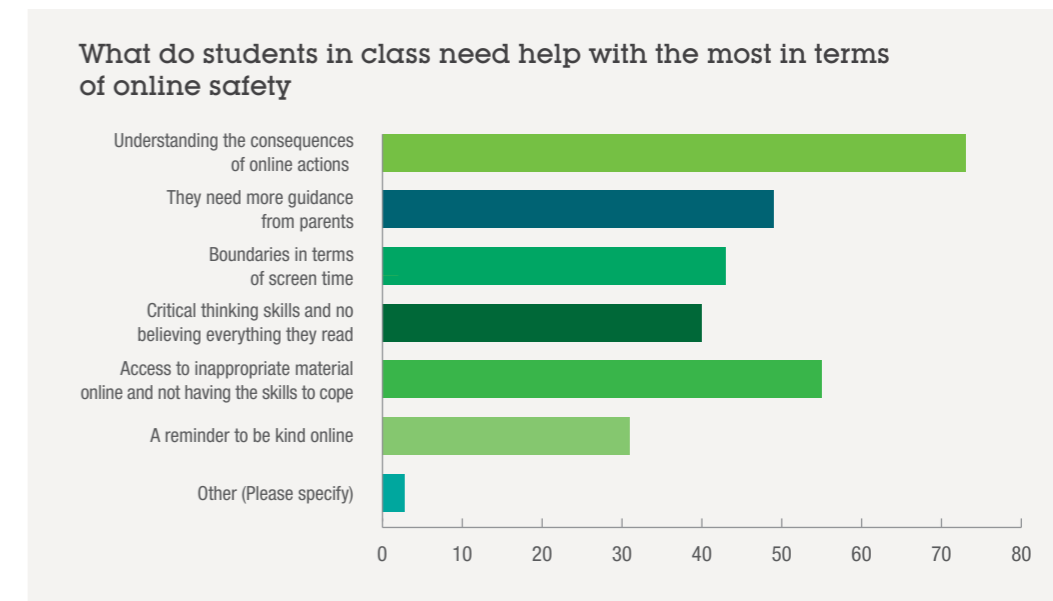
### Top 5 online safety issues affecting teaching

|   |      |
|---|------|
| 1.Excessive screen time & then being tired in school              | 78%  |
| 2. Playing inappropriate video games                              | 55%  |
| 3. Cyberbullying  | 49%  |
| 4. Oversharing personal information online                        | 15%  |
| 5. Trying to be ‘famous’ online & asking teachers to follow them  | 3%   |
| <b>Other online risk worries chosen by the teachers included:</b> |      |
| 6. Access to pornography  | 1.5% |
| 7. Sexting  | 1.5% |

### Areas children need help with in terms of online safety

When asked to choose the top 3 areas children need help with most in terms of online safety ‘**understanding the consequences of their actions**’ (74%) was chosen most, followed by ‘**more guidance from parents**’ (49%) and ‘**boundaries in terms of screen time**’ (43%).

Of the teachers who chose ‘other’, one explained “support while accessing any online platform”. With regards to what they need help with most, one teacher said “all of the above”.

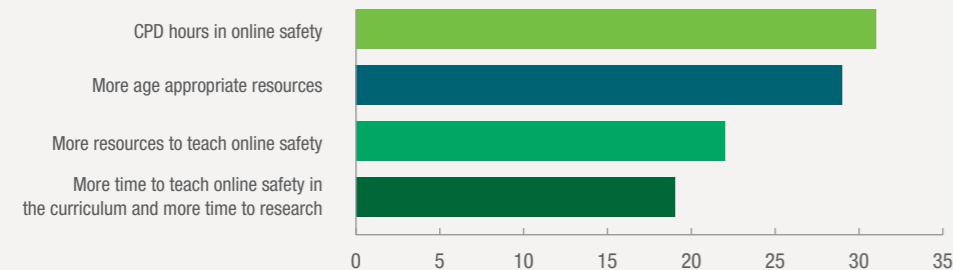


### Confidence in ability to teach online safety

Of the teachers surveyed, **53% reported that they had taught a class on online safety in the last year**.

While 70% of parents felt confident or very confident to deal with online safety issues for their children, teachers came just under that – **65% of teachers felt confident or very confident teaching about online safety**. When asked what would help increase their confidence almost a third responded that **CPD hours in online safety** would help. This was followed by **more age appropriate resources (29%)** and **more resources to teach online safety (21%)**.

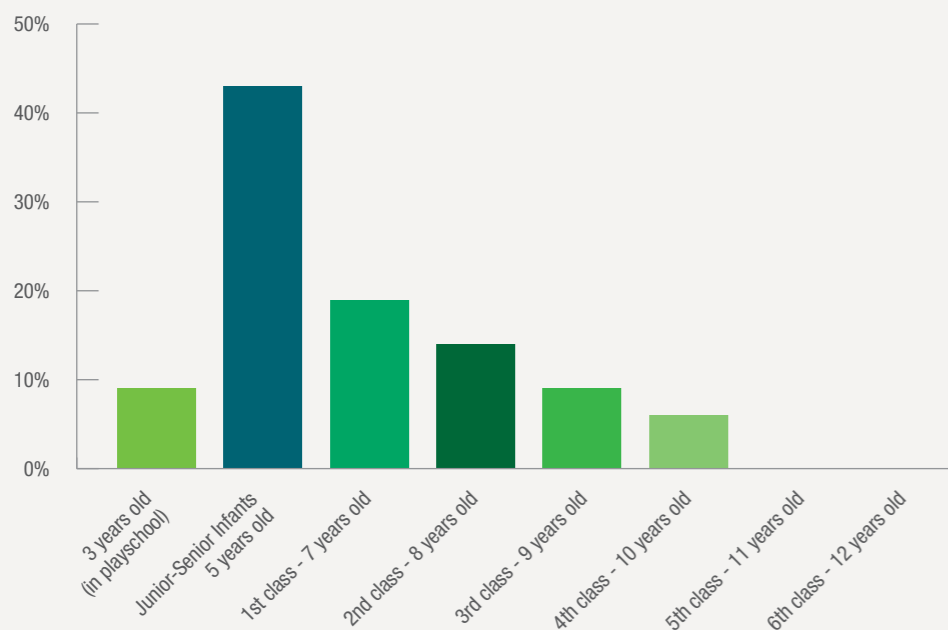
### How could you increase confidence in teaching online safety



### At what age do you think children should learn about online safety (in an age appropriate way)

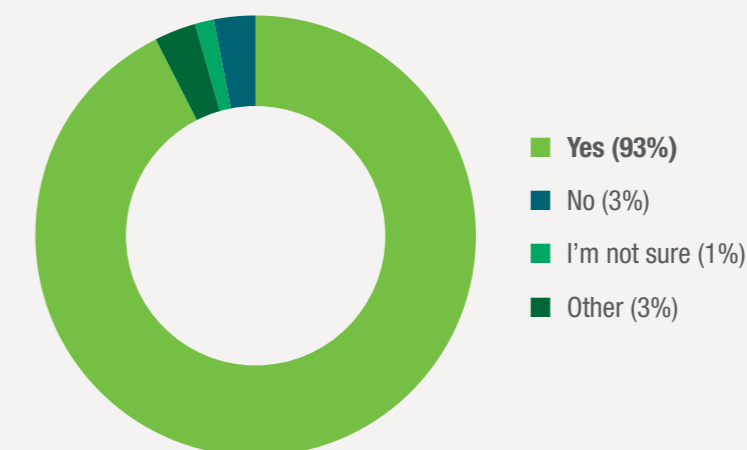
Similarly to parents, teachers felt it was appropriate to teach children about online safety at a young age, in an age appropriate way. **43% of teachers** responded that they thought **Junior-Senior Infants – 5 years old** was the appropriate age for children to start learning about online safety (in an age appropriate way), **19% responded that it should be 1st class- 7 years old.**

### Age think children should learn about online safety



It is clear that some schools need more resources to teach online safety, with **65% of Gaelscoileanna outlining clearly that it was important to have resources and workshops as Gaeilge about online safety.** Similarly to parents, **the overwhelming majority (93%) of teachers surveyed believe online safety should be an explicit part of the SPHE curriculum.**

### Should online safety be an explicit part of the SPHE curriculum



“ Yes with more time allocated weekly to SPHE ” – Teacher

### Who is responsible for teaching children to be safe online

When asked whose responsibility is it to take the lead role in teaching children to be safe online, **almost 90% of teachers** surveyed believe **parents** and **teachers** are responsible for teaching children how to be safe online.

Other answers include:

“ Professionals in the area ” – Teacher

“ Mostly parents as they have control of access to online ” – Teacher

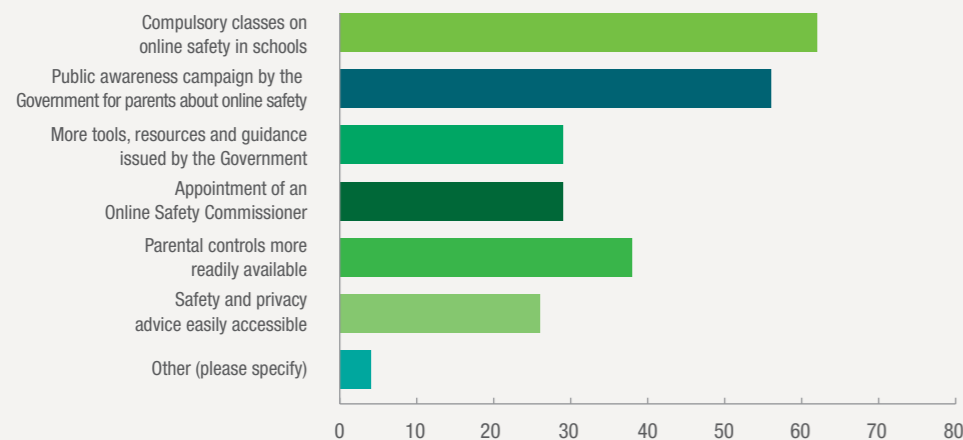
### What could Government be doing to keep children safe online

Finally, from a teacher perspective, we were keen to understand how they felt online safety fit in the bigger picture in Ireland. It was clear from their responses that both parents and schools have a role to play in teaching children to be safe online, but we wanted to hear their thoughts on what more Government could be doing to help children stay safe online in Ireland.

From the list given, **62% of teachers responded** that Ireland could do more to help children stay safe online by making classes **on online safety compulsory in schools**, with **56% responding that a public awareness campaign by the Government as well as more tools, resources and guidance (28%)** would also be helpful. **38% responded that parental controls** should be more readily available.



What more could happen in Ireland to keep your child safe online?



“ More emphasis on parental involvement. I believe schools have a responsibility to teach children about online safety but I do not agree that schools should have to act as a mediator when an issue occurs outside of school. ” — Teacher

# Impact of the Covid-19 Crisis on teaching

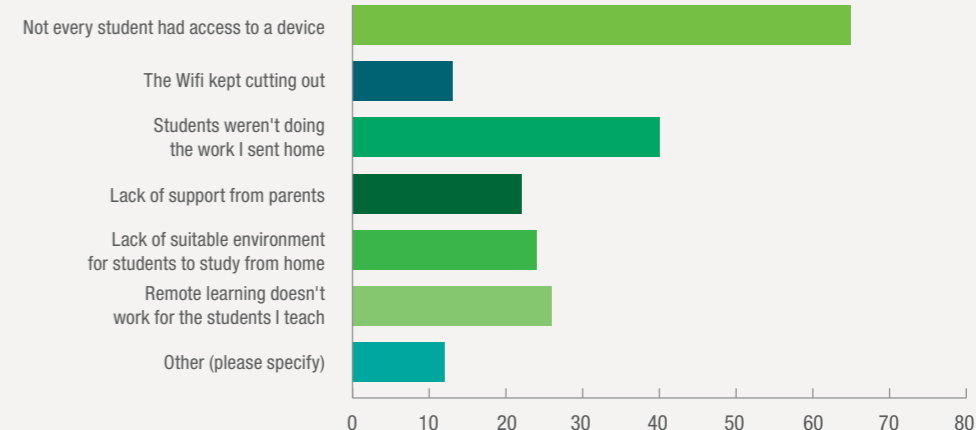
## Teaching during Covid-19 Crisis

After hearing from children and parents, it was very important for us to understand how teachers felt as they tried to continue their teaching during lockdown. **87% of teachers surveyed** responded that they were able to **keep teaching during the Covid-19 Crisis**, however some **(6%) explained this way of teaching didn't really work for their students as they had learning difficulties.**

“ I was able to continue teaching but I feel it was more problematic than beneficial and a very poor engagement from parents. ”  
— Teacher

Teachers were asked if they had issues with e-learning, what were the main problems when trying to send work home. **The main issue chosen (64%) was not every student had access to a device.** The second problem most frequently chosen was that **students weren't doing the homework sent home (39%).**

### Issues impacting teaching during Covid-19 crisis



“ Not every student had access to a device ” — Teacher

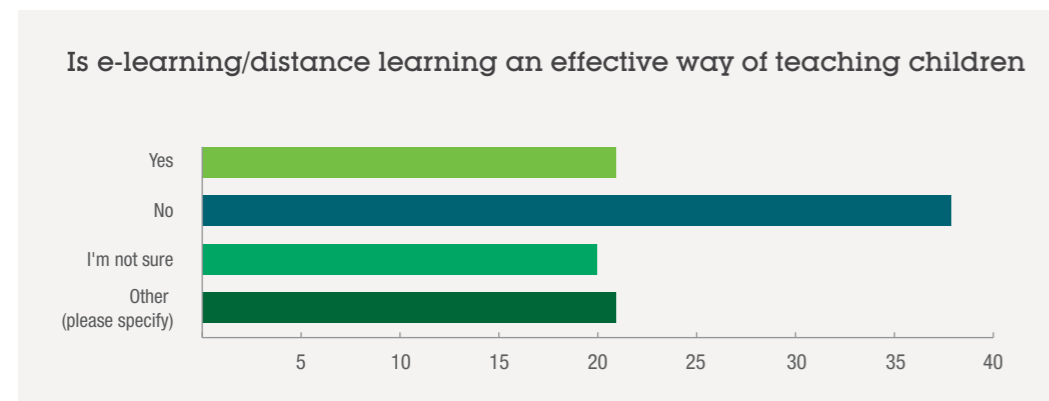
“ Lack of suitable environment for students to study from home ”  
— Teacher

“ Parent with more educational needs than young son ” — Teacher



## Do you think distance learning is an effective way of teaching children?

We understand that distance learning was not something that teachers chose to do from March 2020 onwards, or had much support or guidance in how best to do it. What was interesting was that only **20% think distance learning is an effective way of teaching children. 40% felt it was not, 20% were not sure and 20% gave other reasons.**



“ It can be, where staff are digitally literate, pupils have reliable access (hardware & connection), and parents have time to support ”  
— Teacher

“ E-learning is only valuable to reinforce or consolidate learning that has taken place in the classroom ” — Teacher

“ For some children and some subjects ” — Teacher

“ Depends on the ability of the children and the support from parents and teachers ” — Teacher

**70% of teachers responded** however that their **school is setup with technology for remote learning.**

## Conclusion

We are very grateful to all the parents, teachers and children who took the time to fill out this survey. The data was extremely rich and gave a great insight into their thoughts on online safety and digital learning during lockdown. Their responses and input have allowed us to update our online safety programme and focus on topics and issues we know children, parents and teachers would like to know more about.

What was interesting for us to note was that 80% of children said they would speak to their parents if they had an issue online, however only 57% said that parents would be the best placed people to teach them about online safety. Moreover, when asked what Government could do in Ireland to help, 52% of children said that parents needed more help regarding online safety. In contrast to this, 70% of parents felt confident or very confident in dealing with issues their children may face online.

Another noteworthy point from this survey was that both parents (97%) and teachers (93%) felt quite strongly that online safety should play a more formal role in the school curriculum, specifically the SPHE curriculum. Although online safety is taught in most schools, it isn't a curriculum requirement.

As an alternative to face to face workshops, our plan is to launch online workshops for primary and secondary schools. Teachers outlined in this survey that they needed more resources, and as such, we will also have video lessons for them on a phased basis that will be found on our website. For parents, we will have parent webinars ready in October. For more information on how to book, look at [www.barnardos.ie/osp](http://www.barnardos.ie/osp) or email [onlinesafety@barnardos.ie](mailto:onlinesafety@barnardos.ie)



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