



Usage and Abusage

You Tube

A 5 EU country survey

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Final Report



YouTube: Usage and Abusage

Final Report

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Executive summary

Age-verification is one of the most pressing issues regarding the Internet today. Countless studies have been carried out, all of them attempting to discover a fool-proof way of enforcing age-restriction on minors' access to harmful Internet sites, as well as preventing adults masquerading as children. However, none of these projects was carried out by a group of teenagers.

This European survey on behavioural patterns on one of the most popular sites on the Internet (YouTube) was carried out with a view to shedding some light on the age-verification issue.

The survey was carried out in primary and secondary schools in: **Ireland, Latvia, Poland, Holland and Switzerland.**

Although numerous investigations on other popular sites, especially social networking websites, have already been carried out, as far as we are aware there are no figures or statistics in relation to YouTube usage by teenagers. Consequently, this is a unique investigation and provides invaluable results:

- **How minors with accounts use YouTube**
- **How many minors access over-18s videos**
- **Passivity of minors on YouTube**

Section 1 – Introduction

From October 2008 to March 2009, a group of five Irish teenagers from the Anchor Youth Centre and Rockbrook Park school undertook a quantitative survey on under-age usage on YouTube, between people aged 12-17. This is the first of its kind to be conducted by teenagers. We received data from Ireland, Switzerland, Latvia, Poland, and Holland.

The reason we chose these countries is because we had contacts in schools in the countries. In total we received over 3,200 questionnaires. We received advice from an expert in *Dublin Institute of Technology* (members of the EU Kids Online network) on how to efficiently analyse our data. From that data, we made several observations. *InterMedia Consulting* also provided some advice and helped us to get some funding for the project.

Section 2 – Main Findings

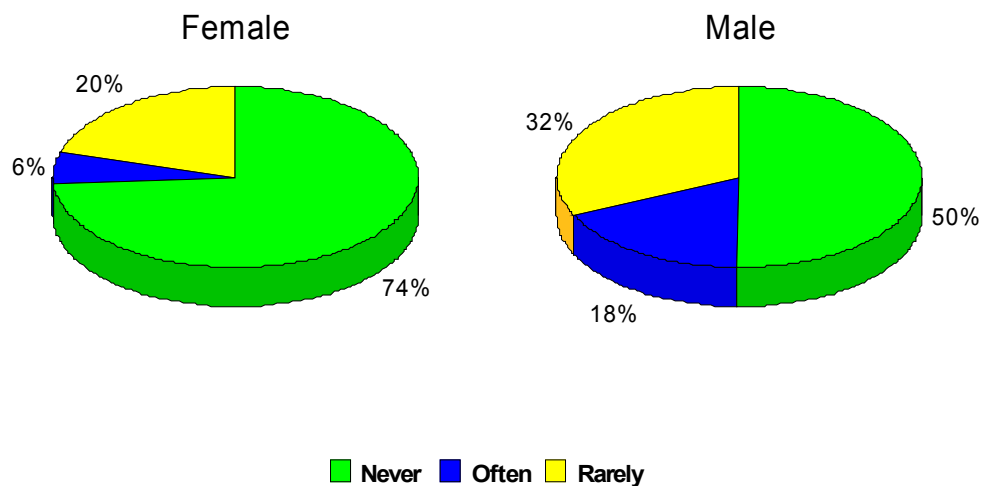
YouTube is the most popular website among teenagers, according to a European-wide survey carried out in 2008 among 1270 teenagers during the International Youth Advisory Congress. Of the 3200 youths we surveyed, 94% admit to using YouTube on a regular basis, which confirms the popularity of the website revealed at the IYAC survey.

Gaining access to over-18s Videos

In all five countries surveyed (Switzerland, Ireland, Latvia, the Netherlands and Poland) a significant amount of minors (aged under 18) admitted to gaining access to over-18's videos on YouTube (975 or 32% of those who use YouTube).

In order to access videos rated for over-18s YouTube requests that you create an account (or profile) and declare your age to be 18 or over. Of those who have profiles on YouTube, 17% didn't answer Question 20 (whether they access over-18s videos), but of those whose did, over 12%

admitted to *often* watching over-18s videos, and nearly 27% told us they watched them *rarely*. Just over 61% said they *never* watch over-18s videos.



It is interesting that boys admit to accessing over-18s videos more often than girls. We think that the reason for this might be related to the categories of videos they watch (see chart below): girls watch mostly music videos while boys also watch gaming, comedy and entertainment videos, some of which might require an over-18 rating.

Out of the countries surveyed, the minors who accessed over-18s videos the least were from Poland – less than 28%. Then it was the Latvian YouTube users, of whom 37% watch over-18s videos. After that were the Dutch with 39%, then the Irish with 44%, and the country whose minors access the over-18s videos on YouTube the most is Switzerland, with almost 50% according to our survey.

This information clearly shows how alarmingly easily minors find it to access over-18s material on YouTube, and how many choose to access those videos. Besides, most of the people surveyed who have accounts on YouTube don't display their real age.

Passivity of young YouTube users

When we analysed the data referring to how young people use YouTube we noticed that a small percentage of them seem to use the site in an interactive manner (uploading and downloading videos, interacting with friends, leaving comments and rating videos, etc) while most of them simply use YouTube to watch videos or listen to music.

It is interesting that a great percentage of people surveyed (64%) do NOT create accounts on YouTube, which is necessary for any kind of interactive activity on the website. But of these, girls (30%) seem to have even less tendency to create accounts than boys (43%)

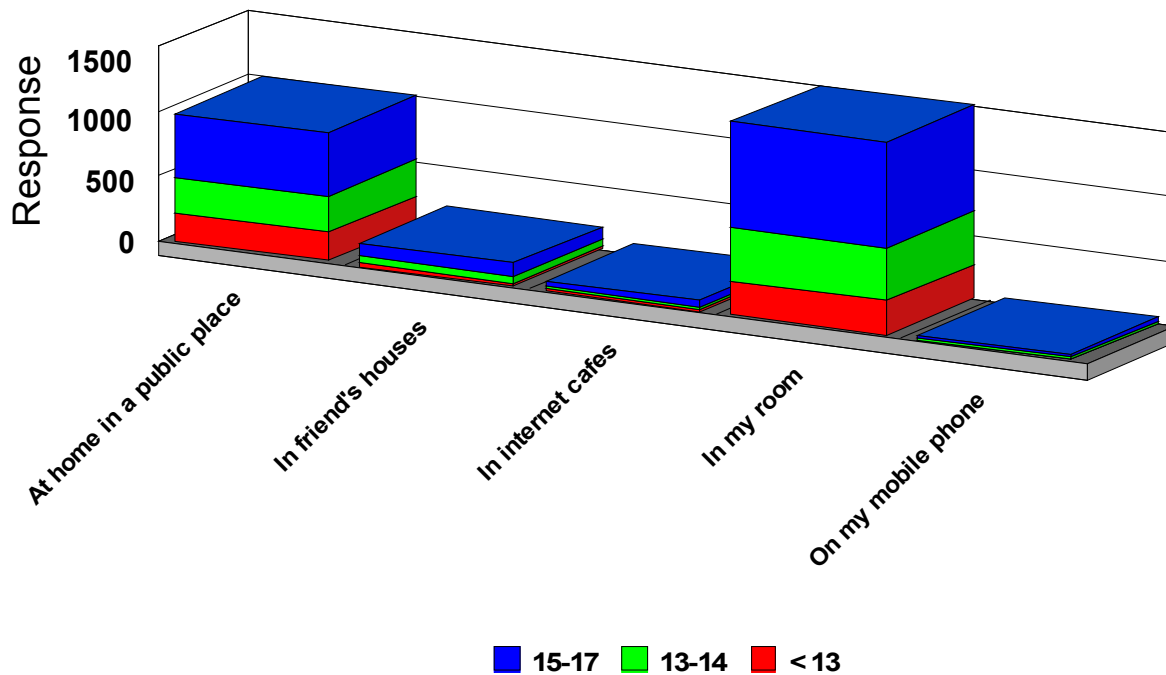
We can nearly conclude from this that –at least in the five countries we analysed– most young people don't use YouTube to "broadcast yourself" as their motto says but simply to passively watch videos: so it is more of an alternative entertainment box than a social networking tool for sharing personal things with others.

From where do they access YouTube

A major part of our survey involved the investigation of where youths used YouTube the most. Question 7 of the Questionnaire asked: 'Where do you access YouTube the most?' The results were surprising, but not unexpected.

Candidates were given the option of choosing between five different locations, including:

- A. At home/In a Public Place
- B. In Friends Houses
- C. In Internet Cafes
- D. In My Room
- E. On My Mobile Phone



- It is significant that the largest option chosen was In My Room (54%). A much greater number of 15-17 year olds use YouTube in their rooms (58%), which is understandable, but there is also a good number of u-13s (48%) and 13-14 years olds (53%) accessing it in their bedrooms.
- Hardly anybody uses YouTube in Internet Cafés (1.5%) or on their mobile phones (3%).
 - No surprises there. Today's teenagers have the opportunity to surf the Internet in the comfort of their own homes, so why go to an Internet Café? If they don't have the Internet, then they go to their friends' houses, or to their neighbour's house. Also, if you were to be watching videos on YouTube in an Internet Café, wouldn't you think twice about what you watch?
 - As for surfing the Internet on mobile phones, it is relatively new to technology, and it is outrageously expensive. That explains why it's not used that often.

What are the most popular categories

The eighth question in our survey asked: 'Which category do you access the most?'

Candidates were given the decision to choose between eight categories:

- A. Autos and Vehicles
- E. Gaming

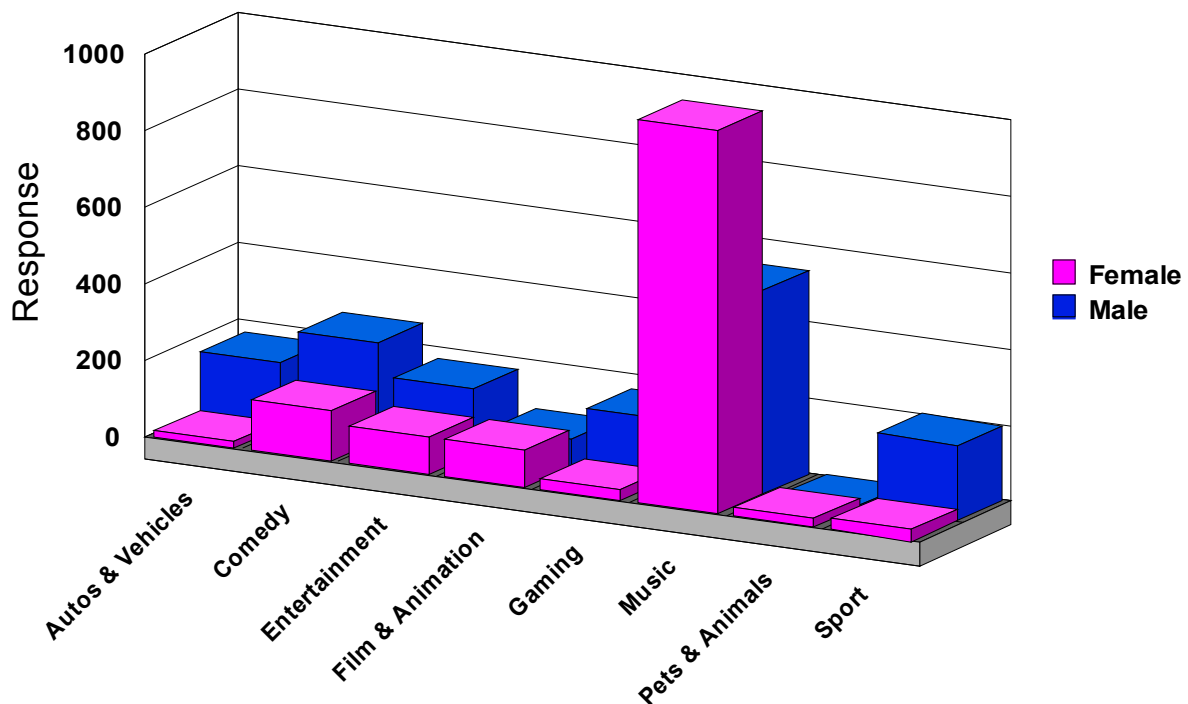
B. Comedy

F. Music

C. Entertainment

G. Pets and Animals

D. Film and Animation



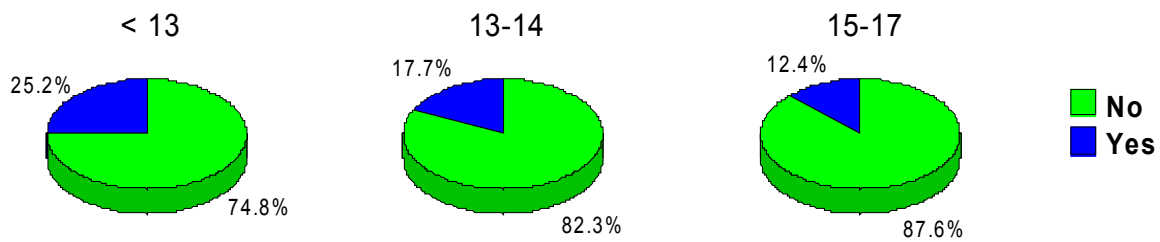
From our results we can gather that Music is by far the most popular category (53%). Of the three thousand adolescents surveyed, over half chose Music as their most popular group. Consequently, as we also found from the information we drew from the qualitative interviews, students regularly open YouTube and listen to music in the background when they work on a different project. Candidates stated that they could listen to music without having to purchase, and yet not download illegally.

'It's a great tool to have, to have music on in the background for free, when you work' (John, 17).

Furthermore, girls were significantly more likely to use YouTube primarily to listen to music, with more than twice the amount than boys. Boys tended to be more varied in the types of videos they watched, Comedy and Entertainment being the next largest categories, followed by Sport, Autos and Gaming

How many read the Safety Advice on YouTube

One of the findings of this survey that shocked us the most is that hardly anybody (only 18%) has accessed the Safety Advice provided in all the pages of the YouTube website. However 26% of Under-13 year olds have accessed the Safety Advice, but as they get older, the percentage decreases: 16% for 13-14 year olds, and 12% for 15-17.



Perhaps it is not that surprising, as the link to the Safety Advice pages is buried at the bottom of the YouTube webpages. There should be more action taken on this issue, perhaps a more visible HELP button to make it easier to report things that minors may consider to be wrong, and that it will be dealt with efficiently, or even Safety Advice based advertisements before the videos.

Section 4 – Qualitative Survey (Interviews)

We also did qualitative interviews with twelve students in between the ages of 12 to 17. We selected the twelve based on the following backgrounds: 6 from Rural and 6 from Urban, each group containing 3 boys and 3 girls of the following ages: u-13, 13 to 14, and 15 to 17.

We found lots of similarities between the data from the +3000 quantitative surveys and what came out of the personal interviews. Some of the findings that stuck out most from those interviews were:

- The interviewees told us their parents were quite clueless about their doings on the Internet, and on YouTube in particular. We think that this is linked to the children not having Filters that can track what they do on the Internet and also to the fact that many adults are techno-phobes.
- They were rarely influenced by the feature "Videos Watched Now", which is good because a lack of purpose or curiosity when on the internet can lead to becoming astray and stumbling over abusive or offensive videos ("Curiosity Killed The Cat"). Some cared about the ratings of videos when choosing what to watch but not much. However several of those we interviewed were influenced by videos their friends had told them to watch.
- All the younger kids interviewed (2 boys and 2 girls under-13) had looked at the safety features, whereas none of the older ones hadn't. We don't think this was representative of the total population of under-13s: perhaps we just happen to be given conscientious kids for our exercise.
- Downloading was very rare among the people we interviewed (which is good because it is illegal), and Uploading was also rare but not as much. Those who were more technically aware tended to upload videos more.
- It is clear from our interviews that YouTube is hardly used for social interaction, unlike other popular social networking sites like Facebook, Bebo or Myspace. None of the users we interviewed had developed friendships on YouTube or used it to stay in touch with friends. It seems to be used primarily for watching videos, and in particular music videos.
- Most of the interviewees said that they rarely, if ever, came across abusive behaviour (e.g. offensive comments and videos) or disturbing material. Very few of them seemed to pay any attention to the comments that were being left by others on particular videos.

Section 5 – Recommendations/Conclusions

Through the course of our investigation, we have gained a large amount of knowledge about usage patterns on YouTube by young people. We have also learned a valuable amount of information about safety on the Internet. As we reflect on our study, we have gathered several recommendations regarding child safety on YouTube. Summarised, they are as follows:

- It is far too easy to access over-18s videos: this needs to be restricted somehow. It may not be a revelation, but we have established that it is far too easy for minors to create over-18 accounts on YouTube and further more access over 18 videos. However, over 18's videos on YouTube are on some occasions not worthy of the over 18's label. What many consider to be adult material, i.e. Over 18's content, is not available on YouTube. For the most part, 18's videos on YouTube tend to be material that may in rare circumstances offend. Perhaps YouTube new initiative (Safe Channel) will go some way to prevent minors gaining access to these videos.
- Parents need to get more involved in what their children are doing on-line but they have to respect their privacy also. There is a very thin line between protecting someone and invading their privacy. Better if they can advise them so that the minors don't go looking for those videos.
- We think that they should have the Safety Advice stand out on YouTube's main page. That way, while thinking of what videos they want to watch, they might read it, perhaps?
- Provide short video clips on Safety Advice as ads before playing videos. Many popular video hosting sites play sponsored advertisements before their uploaded videos can be viewed. The user has no choice but to watch the 15 second advertisement or put their hands on their ears and close their eyes. We propose that some form of this advertisement be utilised to warn or remind users of internet safety
- Impossible to solve the problem. While we hosted the qualitative interviews, one candidate stated: *' You can do all you want to try to stop it, but it will never be fully resolved'*. Whatever measures professionals attempt to impose, there will always be the one percent that will find their way around the measures.