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ΓΙΑ ΕΝΑ ΑΣΦΑΛΕΣΤΕΡΟ ΔΙΑΔΙΚΤΥΟ

SURVEY

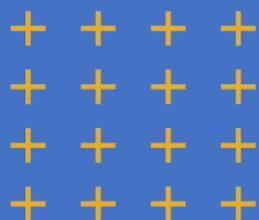
ONLINE HABITS OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

Panhellenic Survey of 2,500 Students Aged 10–18

2025



Με τη συγχρηματοδότηση
της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης



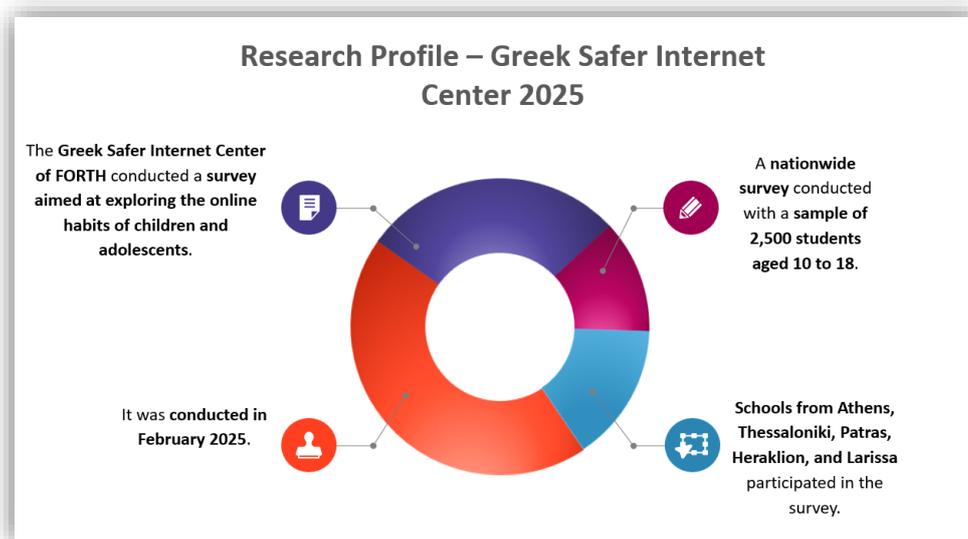
Panhellenic Survey of 2,500 Students Aged 10–18

New Insights Highlight the Need to Strengthen the Protection of Minors Online

The Challenges of Implementing the Digital Services Act (DSA) Through the Eyes of the New Generation

According to the Digital Services Act (DSA), which came into force across Europe in February 2024, online platforms are responsible for creating a safe environment for underage users by implementing age verification mechanisms, limiting the promotion of addictive behaviors, and excluding inappropriate content.

However, one year after the enforcement of the Act, a major survey conducted by the Greek Safer Internet Center reveals that we are still far from achieving the DSA's goals for the protection of minors in the digital world. The survey was carried out in **February 2025** with a representative sample of **2,500 students**, aged **10 to 18 years**, from the cities of Athens, Thessaloniki, Patras, Heraklion, and Larissa.



It focuses on minors' access to **Very Large Online Platforms (VLOPs)** such as **TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook**, and investigates related practices concerning:

- the circumvention of age restrictions,
- excessive screen time,
- exposure to inappropriate content,
- and the use of parental control tools.

The data indicates that the protection mechanisms implemented by VLOPs are insufficient to prevent early use, overexposure, and contact with harmful content by underage users.

The findings underscore the urgent need to strengthen child protection mechanisms in the digital environment.

Key Findings of the Survey

- The majority of children under the age of 13 use TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube, violating the age limits set by VLOPs. Most minors report using a false age, highlighting the platforms' inability to reliably verify users' ages.
- Social media use starts in primary school and is part of children's daily routine, intensifying the obligation to protect minors.
- Many children spend over 4 hours a day on platforms, with 1 in 4 secondary school students reporting excessive use, reinforcing the need for parental control and self-regulation tools.
- In secondary education, there is a significant lack of parental supervision, with 1 in 4 children opening accounts without their parents' knowledge.
- Exposure to inappropriate content is widespread and mostly accidental.
- While children are aware of how to report content, younger users face difficulties, pointing to the need for more user-friendly "Report & Block" mechanisms.

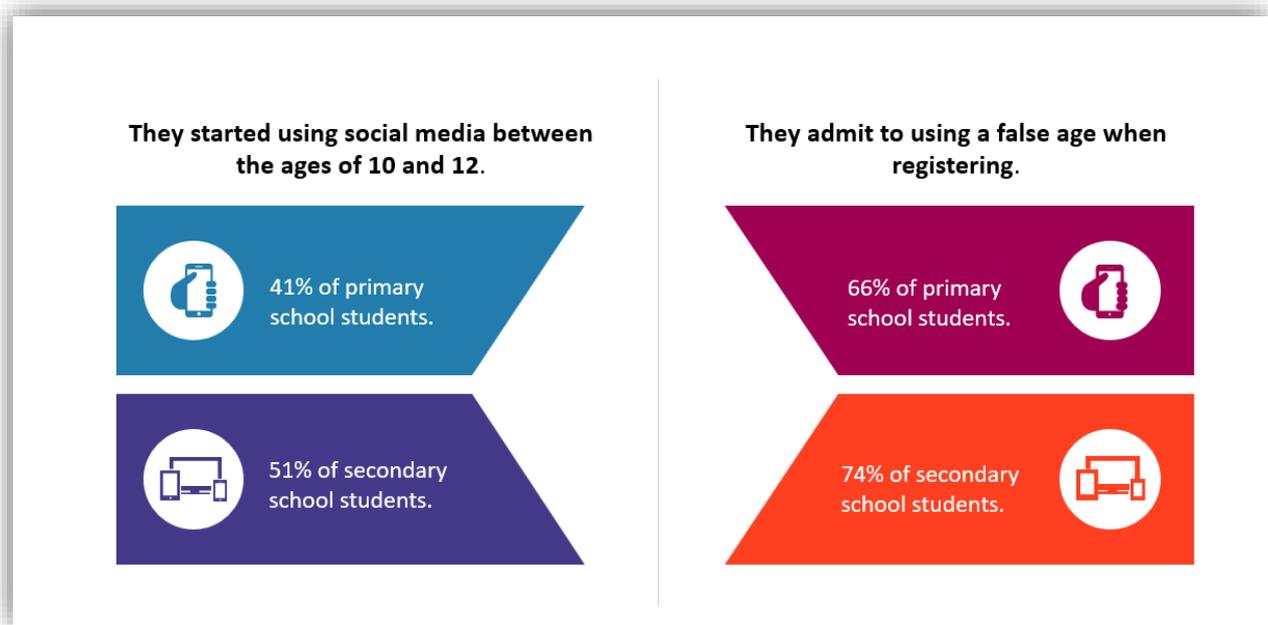
Detailed Results

Widespread Use of Social Media by Minors – Violation of Age Restrictions

The findings reveal that social media use among minors is **widespread and begins well before the age of 13**, violating the age requirements set by Very Large Online Platforms (VLOPs).

Specifically:

- **41% of primary school students** and **51% of secondary school students** reported that they began using social networks between the ages of **10 and 12**.
- Among the students who use social media, **66% in primary education** and **74% in secondary education** admitted to entering a false age during registration, easily bypassing the platforms' age verification mechanisms (age gates).

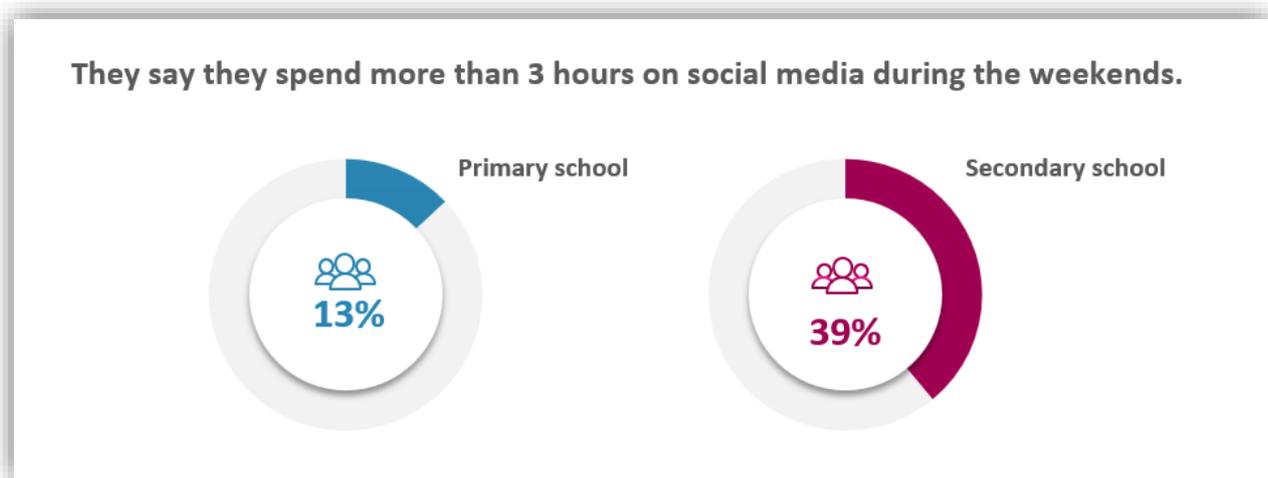


This practice raises serious concerns regarding the adequate implementation of age assurance obligations as outlined in the Digital Services Act (DSA).

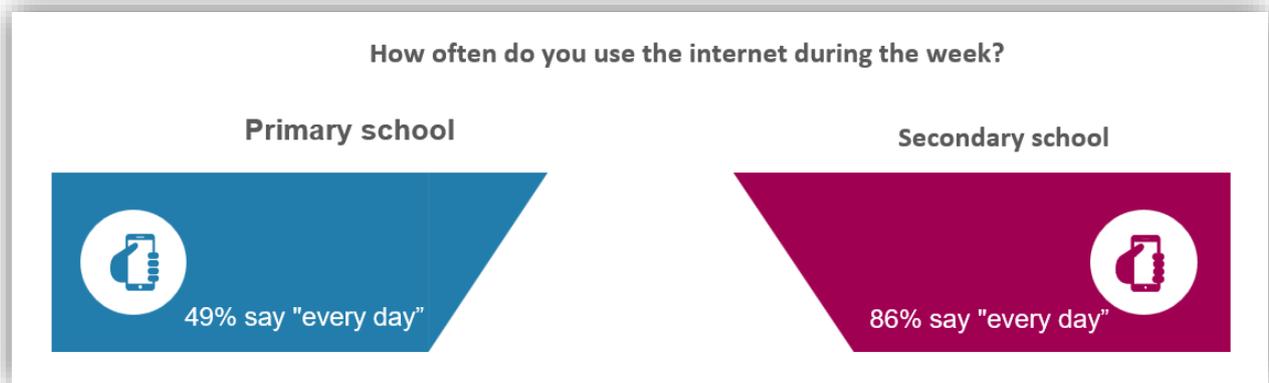
Excessive Screen Time – The Need for Self-Regulation Features

The survey records **significant levels of excessive use of social media by minors**, with **56% of secondary school students** and **29% of primary school students** reporting that they spend more than 3 hours online during weekends. Worryingly, the figures for weekdays are also high.

- In **secondary education**, **39% of students** report using the internet for **more than 3 hours per day**.
- In **primary education**, **18% of students** report the same.

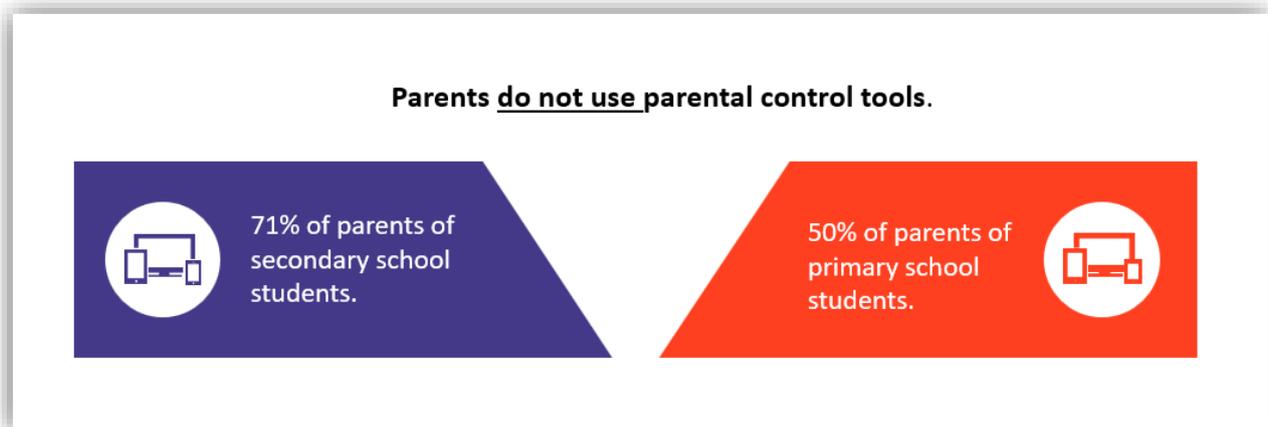


These findings highlight the urgent need for effective self-regulation tools to help minors manage their screen time and develop healthy digital habits. Additionally, 1 in 4 secondary school students reports excessive use of the internet and states that they need help to reduce it. This finding is directly linked to the DSA's provisions for the implementation of self-regulation tools, usage notifications, and access break features, aimed at reducing addictive use of digital services.



Parental Supervision: Lacking in Secondary Education

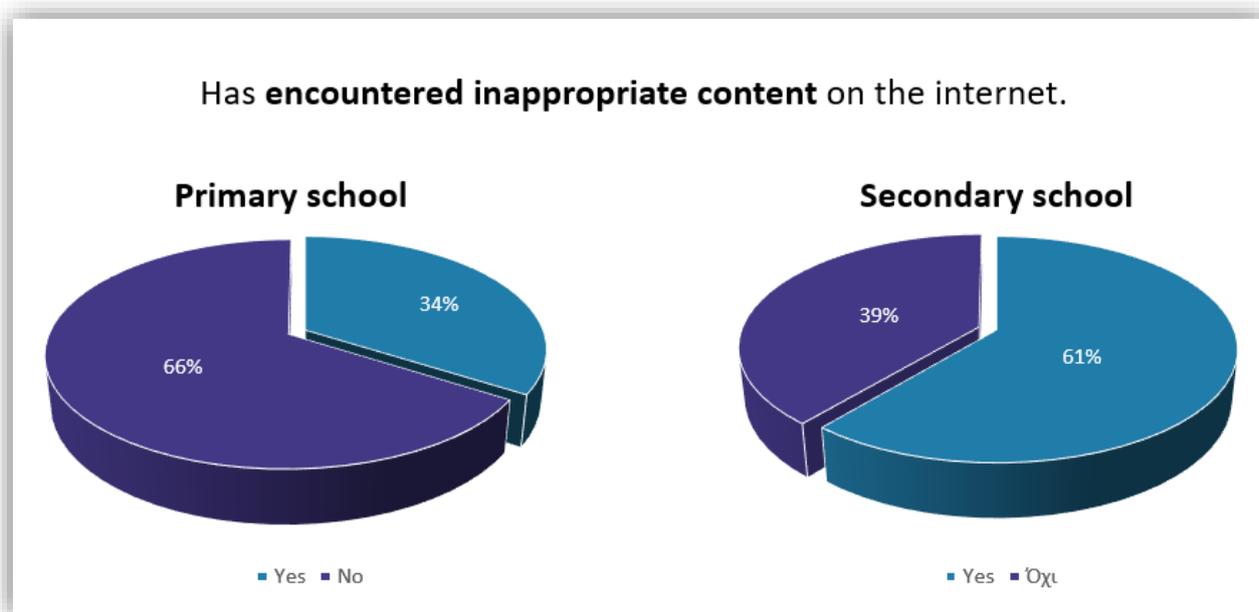
While in **primary education**, 50% of students report that their parents use **parental control tools**, the situation in **secondary education** reveals a clear **lack of oversight: 71% of students** state that **their parents do not use any tools at all**.



Notably, **26% of secondary school students** admitted to having created a social media account without their parents' knowledge or consent, highlighting the need to strengthen parental consent mechanisms, particularly for users under the age of 13, as required by European regulatory frameworks.

Exposure to Inappropriate Content

34% of primary school children and 61% of secondary school students reported having encountered **harmful or inappropriate content**, and in the **majority of cases (over 60%)**, this exposure occurred **accidentally**.



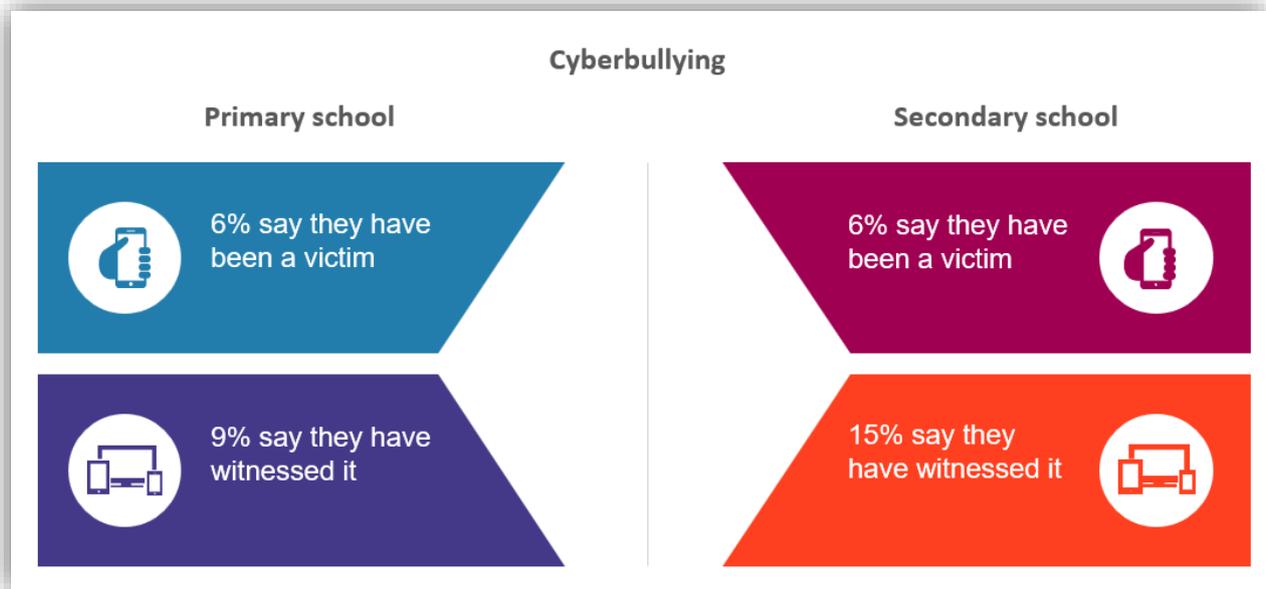
In response to the question, "**Does it bother you when the platform constantly shows content similar to what you're already watching?**", opinions among secondary school students are divided: **43% responded yes**, while **56% said they do not find it bothersome**. However, **49% of students** recognize a potential risk in this platform practice. Among them, **39%** pointed out that this tactic leads them to spend more time online than they originally intended.

This phenomenon is linked to the so-called **addictive design** of platforms, which aims to keep users as engaged and connected as possible—often without them realizing it.

This finding reinforces the need for greater transparency and accountability in content recommendation mechanisms, as explicitly required by the DSA for Very Large Online Platforms (VLOPs), especially when it comes to underage users.

Cyberbullying - affects both primary and secondary school students

In **primary school**, 6% report having been victims, and 9% have witnessed such incidents. In **secondary school (middle and high school)**, 6% have been victims and 15% have witnessed cyberbullying. However, most students try to handle the situation on their own or support the victim without reporting the incident.

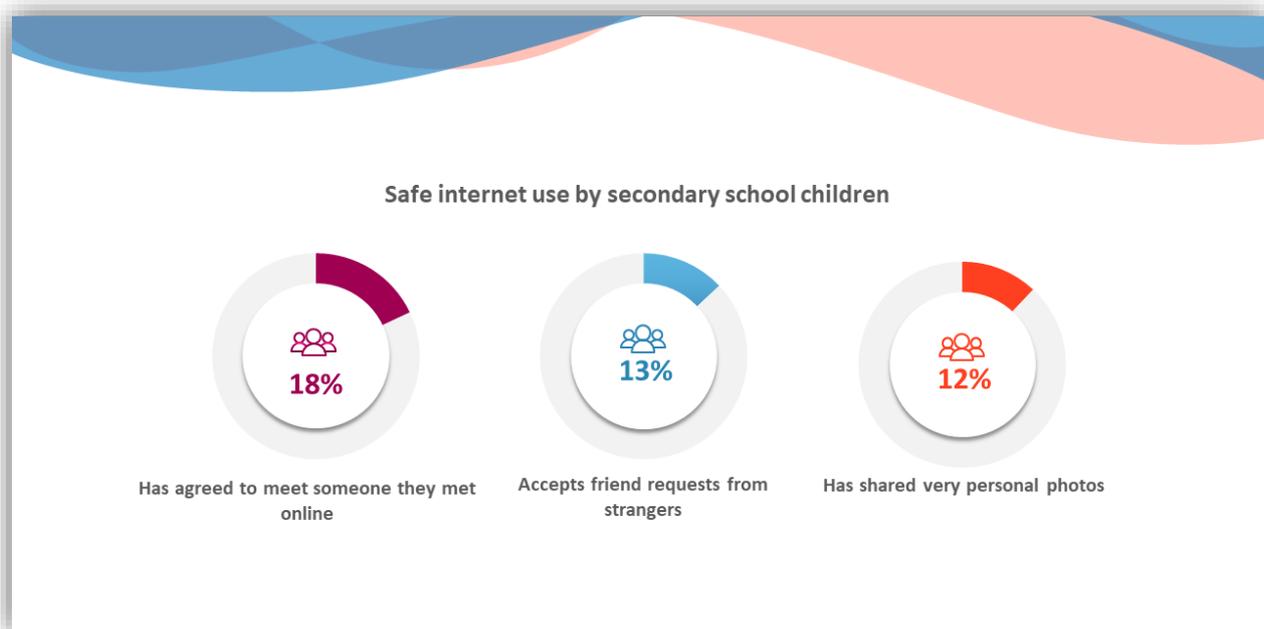


These findings highlight the need to strengthen awareness and support systems across all age groups.

Online Risks

Although **secondary school students feel they are well-informed** about safe internet use, the reality appears to differ.

- **18% have agreed to meet someone they met online,**
- **12% accept friend requests from strangers,**
- **and 12% have shared highly personal photos.**



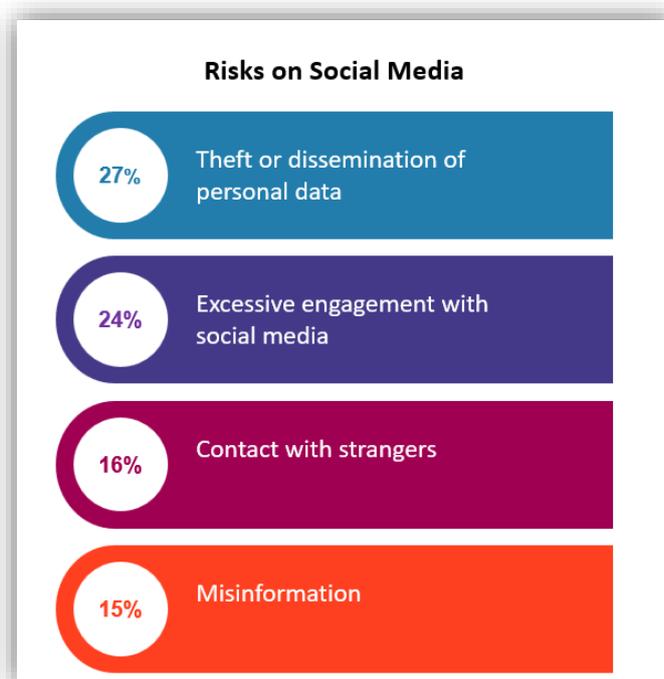
These behaviors indicate gaps in actual online safety practices, despite the perceived awareness, and emphasize the ongoing need for education and prevention.

Risks on Social Media

According to the responses of **secondary school students**, the **most significant risk** they perceive from using social media is theft or dissemination of personal data, identified by **27%** of participants. This is followed by **excessive engagement with social networks (24%)**, indicating that students are aware of the risks of **addiction and time-wasting**.

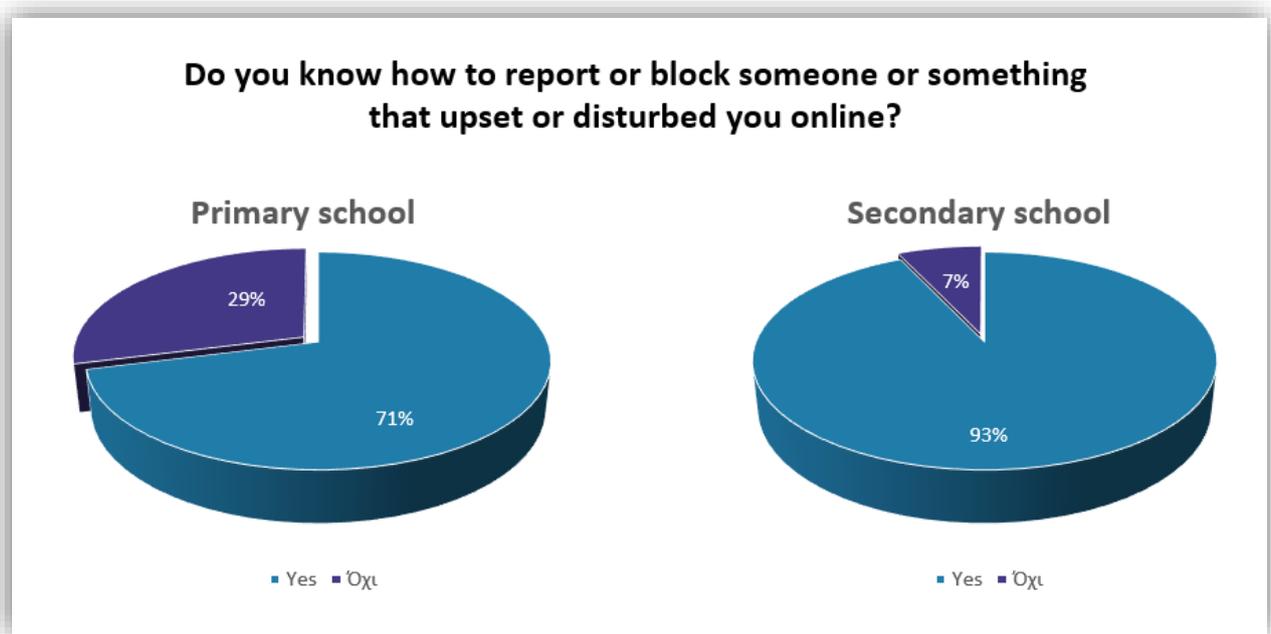
Other concerns include:

- **interacting with strangers (16%)**
- and **misinformation (15%)**, which is recognized as a real, though less immediate, threat.



Knowledge and Limitations in the Use of Report & Block Tools

The majority of secondary school students (92.5%) state that they know how to report or block



content or users. However, 29 of primary school students say they lack the same knowledge or skills.

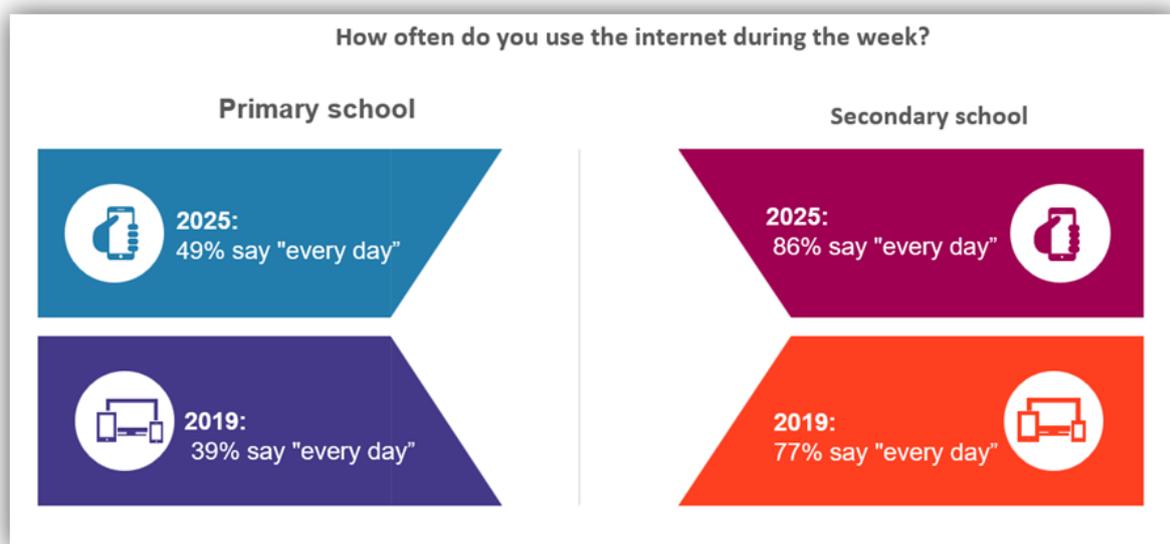
Comparison of Children's and Teenagers' Online Habits: 2019 – 2025

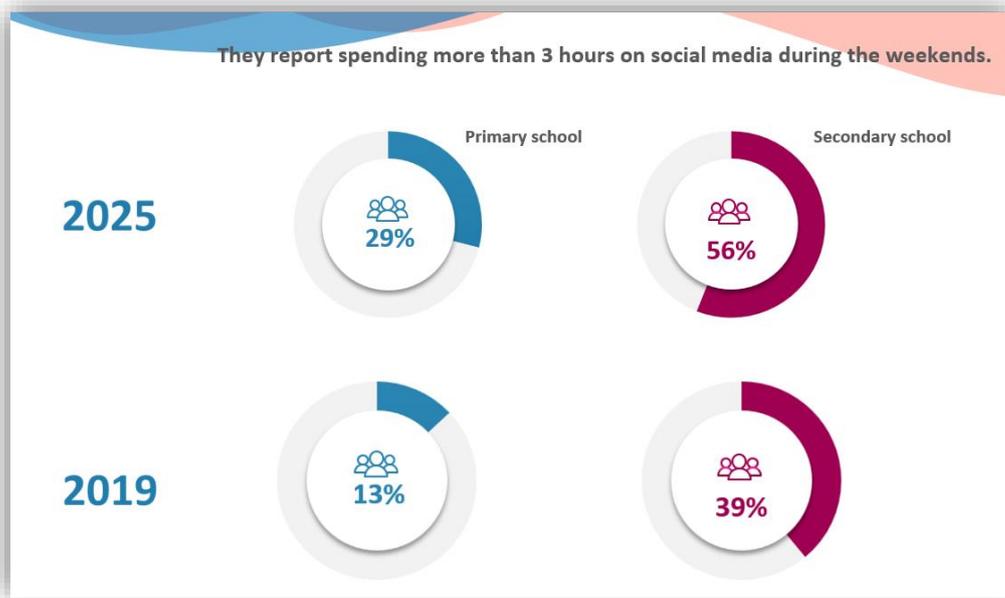
The results of the comparison between the [2019 survey conducted by the Greek Safer Internet Center of FORTH](#) and the current 2025 survey — both of which used the same questions, focused on the same age group, and drew from the same regions — highlight several interesting trends and changes in the way children use the internet and social media.

Overall, the comparison of the two surveys shows that there is:

- Increased internet usage among children and teenagers in 2025 compared to 2019.
- More restrictions imposed by parents on internet use for children in primary education.
- Greater familiarity with digital technology, especially among teenagers.
- Development of better strategies for protection against online risks.
- Strengthened awareness and sensitization towards a safer and more responsible digital environment.

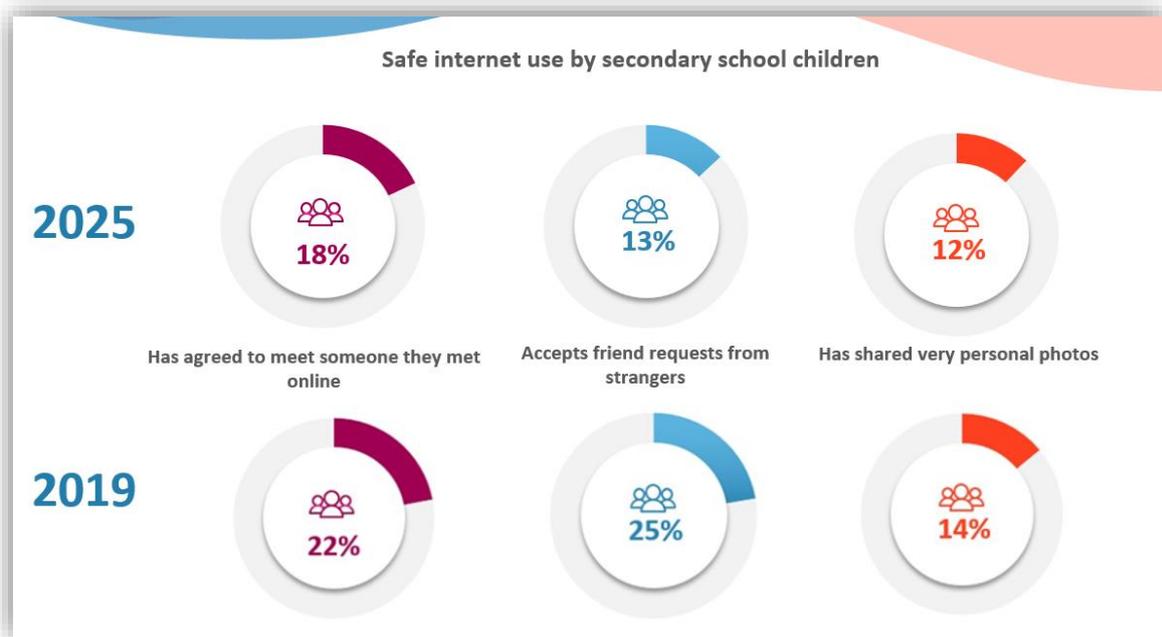
More specifically, one of the main findings is the increased use of the internet and social media by children in 2025 compared to 2019.





However, it is observed that primary school children continue to limit their weekly exposure to these platforms. This may indicate that parents are enforcing restrictions on their daily use, possibly for protective reasons or to ensure a better balance between school and social life. This differentiation also reflects the increased awareness among parents regarding the potential risks of excessive internet use during childhood.

It is also noteworthy that, despite the rise in internet use, secondary school children who participated in the 2025 survey appear to be more informed about online risks and the importance of self-protection. Specifically, children seem to understand how to safeguard their personal security on social media and are able to recognize dangerous situations related to online interaction.





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Awareness center of the Greek SIC

help 
saferinternet **line**

Helpline 210 6007686 for support and advice on issues related to the use of the Internet, mobile phones and electronic games

safeLine.gr

Hotline for Illegal Content on the internet



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