

Children and young peoples's contacts with BRIS about the Internet, computers and mobile phones

Thomas Jonsland
BRIS
(Children's Rights in Society)
Sweden

World Summit, 17 june, 2010

BRIS

The report: The Children, BRIS and it 2010.

- The report is a part of the “Young Internet” project, which is partially funded by the European Union and run by the Swedish Media Council in cooperation with BRIS
- The report also includes a description of BRIS’ webbased support services for children and young people.

- **BRIS is an Non government organisation** (NGO) build on volunteer work and financial support.
- The goal of BRIS is to strengthen the rights of children and young people and improve their living conditions, which is done with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as a guide.
- BRIS works to influence public opinion and decision makers.
- BRIS provide opportunities for children and young people to have a dialogue with adults through the support services; the phone BRIS 116 111, the BRIS-mail and the BRIS-chat.
- BRIS provide opportunities for children and young people to express themselves and get support from other young people through BRIS Forum.
- BRIS also have support services for adults; the phone *BRIS Adult Helpline – about children* and the web *Barnperspektivet.se* (thechildperspective.se).

Materials and methods

- A text search among BRIS contacts in the BRIS-mail, the BRIS-chat and BRIS Forum. For 102 words, abbreviations or terms that are related to Internet, computers or mobil phones.
- All texts that resulted in hits were read and coded by content.
- A heavy increase of number of IT-related contacts since last year.

Code	In mail & chat	In Forum
Handling and use of IT	52%	38%
Love and friend relationships	48%	63%
Poor mental health	9%	3.5%
Sexually related	8.8%	6.4%
Humiliation, threats, abuse	8.5%	8.5%
Parents' IT	8.5%	3.1%
Other	3.2%	1.0%
Ties to violence IRL	2.9%	2.7%
Pictures and videos	5.6%	5.8%
Anonymity/distance	13%	11%
Security and protection	7.2%	6.2%

Love and friend relationships

- About half of all contacts about love and friend relationships, and the handling of them. Even more common in the Discussion Forum than in other support services.

Main submission from a 17-year-old girl

I think I'm in love. With a guy I've never met, just chatted with for more than two years. What do you think? Can you fall in love with somebody you've never met?

Response from a 17-year-old girl

I'm also in love with a guy I've never met. It's also real tough, especially since I've lied to him about my age and don't dare tell the truth, which means I can't meet him. You're not alone.

Response from a 16-year-old boy

i'm together with a guy i never met, on msn. haha. we're homosexuals. so of course you can be in love with someone without meeting them. i am. lots of other people are too.

Response from a 14-year-old girl

I think it's ok I'm also in love with a stranger :) although we've exchanged numbers and msn and stuff. It led to us getting together which is a little weird since we've never met and he's only seen pictures of me xD

Handling and use of IT

- A broad theme, that includes a lot.
- About an advanced way of using the Internet

When I sit at my computer and create, hack, draw, stream, listen, view, read, just about anything, I can disappear. Disappear from time and my family, from all the threats and looks. I can be an avatar in an online game that has to save his princess, I can do something different than... well, life

E-mail from a 15-year-old girl

- When about the law, technology and security, the young people prefer to use the Discussion Forum to get the views and support of their peers.
- Blogging has become a part of a growing number of young people's everyday lives. The young people themselves blog and keep track of each others' and celebrity blogs.

Humiliation, threats and abuse

- Humiliation on the Internet and by mobile phone often goes hand in hand with humiliation in real life.
- Security and protection are important aspects when young people describe their experiences of IT-related humiliation. They often choose to get advice on this from their peers on the Discussion Forum.

Main submission from a 14-year-old girl

I've been threatened on msn, it was a 20-year-old guy, I don't dare tell my parents, they would take my computer away, . he said he was going to kill me after school, I was sooo stupid n said what school I go to.

Response from a 17-year-old girl

I don't actually think he'll come, you know that 90% of everyone who says that is lying about showing up, and about their age, it could just as well be 14-year-old guys messing with you. But you should tell your parents anyway.

Response from a 14-year-old girl

Does this guy know what you look like? If not, I don't think you don't actually need to worry.

Response from a 13-year-old girl

I agree with everyone else, report him to the police.

Sexually related

- General testing is something that is closely tied to sexually related topics.

So there was a guy who was 15 (probably an old man of 55) who began chatting with me and he thought I was “freakin hot” bla bla. He wanted me to show my breasts, and I was so dumb and thought, after all nobody will find out anyway. The next day he was there again and told me to show myself again. I said NO! Then he said he had recorded it and he was going to post it up on the web with my name and everything.

E-mail from a 14-year-old girl

- Grooming - adults that contact young people for sexual purposes.

How many of BRIS contacts that describe this is difficult to say.

A sexual contact in real life, with an adult the young person got to know through IT, was described in a handful of contacts in 2009.

Poor mental health

- There seems to be something about the Internet that means that young people gladly use this possibility to handle their or other's poor mental health.

I have a friend online. I found out she doesn't feel good when she sent me an autobiography. And the thought that I can't help her makes me cry. She is planning on running away this summer and if that does not help, she's going to kill herself.

E-mail from a 16-year-old girl

I have had a lot of suicidal thoughts lately and, yesterday, it went so far that I sat and read a suicide guide on the Internet...

E-mail from a 15-year-old boy

- Much more common for young people to use BRIS' web-based support services to ask questions about and discuss mental illness, compared with the phone.

Parents IT

- Parents' use of IT is giving rise to concerns for the children in various ways.

I borrowed dad's mobile and was going to take some pictures. When I was looking for the picture,, I saw that there were pictures of penises, my little sister naked and a lot more...

E-mail from a 13-year-old girl

- The parent's excessive time on the computer is another aspect

Main submission from a 14-year-old girl

My mum plays wow... that's all she does! She just sits there and stares into the computer screen and plays... she doesn't listen... she doesn't care...

Response from a 13-year-old girl

damn i understand you :') my mum played wow for 3 years and my brother and sister were 1 so i had to feed them, dress them, put them to bed and all that crap! i live in a foster home now, and my mum has stopped playing with the help of social services. maybe that's what your mum should do?

Adult presence

When adults are mentioned, it is often in the form of concern for their reactions.

like a guy. now my parents won't let me chat with anyone or meet anyone from the internet. So what can I do with him?

Main submission from a 16-year-old girl

Sometimes it is like the parents use the access to IT as a means of power.

Soon I won't have access to the internet anymore cause mum "punishes" me that way and that means no more bris. Hate her so damned much!

Main submission from a 15-year-old girl

A growing number of young people say that they have contact with adult professionals by text messaging or e-mail, even if the need is much greater.

Then Anna (the social worker) called again and talked with me and then said that she would call me the next day and ask how things were. She did too, by texting, then she also asked if I wanted to meet her one more time before she met me and my parents. I said that I wanted to.

E-mail from a 16-year-old girl

A relative anonymity and distance

- New conditions that entails both risks and opportunities.

I have no friends in my new class. my online friends are who I talk to after school and stuff. I like them better and don't have to feel a mess when I talk with them.

E-mail from a 16-year-old girl

- It seems so much easier both to write something mean or something with love on a blog or in a text message, than doing the same thing face to face.

she recently posted a text on her picture diary blog and wrote that she wished me and my mum were hung up on the cross!

Main submission from an 11-year-old girl

- This relative anonymity seems to allow a form of liberation, not least in the photos.

last summer i met a guy who was reeeally cute and nice to me. and when we chatted on msn he wanted me to take off my sweater and show myself in a bra and i did it cause he went on about it i know its stupid to do stuff like that but i didn't think about it till i had dun it and now i really regret it!!

E-mail from a 13-year-old girl

Pictures, videos and webcams

- Of central importance in regular daily life.

Pictures, videos and webcams are used as a way of showing who one is and of getting to know each other.

last summer i met a guy who was reeeally cute and nice to me. and when we chatted on msn he wanted me to take off my sweater and show myself in a bra and i did it cause he went on about it i know its stupid to do stuff like that but i didn't think about it till i had dun it and now i really regret it!!

E-mail from a 13-year-old girl

The handling of pictures, videos and webcams often leads to problems and serious humiliation.

And once we had the webcam on, i had just showered, and had a towel on. Then i put a shawl around me so he wouldn't see so much. But in school he said that i was a whore who had shown myself on camera :o

E-mail from a 14-year-old girl

Thanks for your attention!

Thomas Jonsland

BRIS

thomas.jonsland@bris.se

BRIS