Children and Online Privacy Survey

Child Privacy Report

Young people's use of social technology and their attitudes toward Data Protection

About The i in online

The i in online aims to educate primary school children aged 9-11 and secondary school children aged 14-19, their parents and teachers about using and providing their personal information online and also highlights the potential pitfalls of sharing too much personal information on the internet when using blogs or social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, etc, and not managing privacy settings effectively. Through interactive sessions, using PowerPoint and videos, legal experts highlight the regulatory and legal aspects of this topic, whilst also demonstrating technical issues and illustrating mechanisms to help protect personal data whilst using the internet. www.theiinonline.org

Background to Data Protection Day

On 28 January, The i in online had 135 presenters delivering 112 sessions at 82 primary and secondary schools in 16 different locations across the UK. Presentations and workshops were given to 6,260 school children for Data Protection Day on 28 January 2011. We were working alongside the Information Commissioner's Office and the Irish Data Protection Commissioner's Office, who are supporting the activities on Data Protection Day. We had Assistant Commissioners from the ICO, 110 law students from BPP Law School, academics from Plymouth University and legal professionals from Speechly Bircham LLP, Barclays, BBC and Field Fisher Waterhouse LLP involved in the event. The number of children involved in Data Protection Day went from 300 in 2010 to 6,260 in 2011.

Executive Summary

The i in online data provides a large population (4116 in total) analysis on the behaviours and attitudes of young people toward online technology and privacy. Some headline statistics confirm our beliefs around such matters:

- children and young people readily engage with online social media
- sometimes they struggle with the policies that are supposed to be in place to protect them
- they are aware of the need to protect their data, but are not always equipped to do so.

Our respondents were asked whether they engaged in any social networking activities themselves. In total 69% of our respondents said they did use social networking sites. There was some gender differences, with girls (72%) more likely to have a social networking profile than boys (65%).

The social network that is most popular is, unsurprisingly Facebook, with 47% of respondents saying they had a Facebook profile. Again unsurprisingly the vast majority of secondary school respondents (88%) had Facebook profiles. However, we also had over a third (39%) of young people of primary school age said they had Facebook profiles. Girls are slightly more likely (50% in total) to have Facebook profiles than boys (43%).

The second most popular social networking activity was MSN, with 20% of respondents using it. Girls are more likely (26%) than boys (15%) to use MSN. Somewhat surprisingly it was almost as likely for a young person of primary school age (21%) to use MSN as someone of secondary school age (27%).

Boys are also more likely (56%) than girls (33%) to have an avatar, a virtual representation of themselves. However, there is little evidence to show that having an avatar results in different behaviours or attitudes toward data protection.

Our respondents were asked whether they had ever read a privacy policy. In total 40% of respondents had, meaning 60% of young people have not read the privacy policies of the web sites they use. This statistic differed little between young people of primary and secondary school age, but girls were more likely (44%) than boys (35%) to read a privacy policy. Boys are likely to have a more relaxed attitude toward data and data sharing, although this is far from irresponsible with the vast majority still believing their data should only be seen by friends and family and parental consent was necessary all scenarios presented about where their data might be exposed.

When those who had not read a policy were asked why not, there were a variety of responses. 32% said they didn't know what a privacy policy was, with 23% saying they didn't know where to find it. A quarter felt they were too complicated, and another quarter did not feel it important. Interestingly more secondary school respondents (44%) felt they were too complicated, although more primary children didn't know what a privacy policy was (37%).

Those who had looked at privacy policies had divided opinions, with around half (51%) thinking they were easy to find and 57% understanding what was there. The vast majority (84%) looked at the policy because they thought it was an important thing to do. There was little statistical variation across the demographic groups for those who had looked at privacy policies.

So we had an interesting split in our population – those who do engage in privacy policies may understand what is presented and think they are important. However, the majority of our respondents hadn't seen a policy for a number of reasons. They were also asked what might be done to improve privacy policies and a large number of children said privacy policies should be made more simple with "less words".

However, it was also clear that our respondents felt that privacy on social networking was important, with the vast majority (85%) saying that social networks should have the strongest privacy settings by default and an even larger majority (94%) feeling that clear rules were needed to help with the removal of photos and videos posted without consent.

We can also show that under aged Facebook users are responsible with their data and show little variation in attitude with those who do not use it. In addition, they are more likely to read privacy policies (48.8% of primary Facebook users compared to 39.6% of the total primary population) and be aware of why they are important.

What our data does clearly highlight is the need for education at a primary school level. While the use of social networking used to be considered something for secondary aged pupils our data shows that the majority of primary aged pupils also engage. However, it also shows that primary aged pupils are potential more vulnerable as a result of not being aware of privacy policy or where to find it. While they are generally more protective of their data, the change in attitude at secondary age does suggest that without effective education at a primary school level, there is potential for more risky behaviours in adolescent life.

The data also shows that while not all of our population felt privacy policies were complicated there was a great deal of confusion around them. They were also very clear that service providers should provide the most private settings by default. Clearly this is a population that

feels service providers also have a responsibility to protect their data, but also provide policy and advice in a clear, understandable, and easy to find manner.

In conclusion, children and young people are very much engaged with digital technology and its social uses. However, there are still significant issues around education and practice to be addressed. While our population did not come across as naive around data protection issues, they were clearly not as well informed as they could be, and felt they needed help from service providers in ensuring “their” data was protected.

The analysis of the data was conducted by Prof Andy Phippen, Plymouth Business School, University of Plymouth.

Headline Demographics

The responses in terms of gender and age are presented below:

Are you:

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	1945	47.3	48.1	48.1
	Female	2096	50.9	51.9	100.0
	Total	4041	98.2	100.0	
Missing	System	75	1.8		
Total		4116	100.0		

How old are you:

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	8-9	572	13.9	14.1	14.1
	10-11	2438	59.2	60.3	74.4
	12-16	1020	24.8	25.2	99.7
	17-18	13	.3	.3	100.0
	Total	4043	98.2	100.0	
Missing	System	73	1.8		
Total		4116	100.0		

Overall there was a balanced gender split, almost 50/50 once non-responses were removed. In terms of age ranges just over 1,000 responses were from young people of secondary school age, and just over 3,000 from primary children. The volume of this response presents us with a good opportunity to explore attitudes toward data protection among primary school children.

Survey Design

The survey was designed to collect information on both the use of technology by children and young people and their attitudes toward privacy and consent. Aside from the key demographic information, it was broken into three main sections:

1. **Online behaviour:**

- Do you use social networking sites? And if so which ones?
- Do you have an avatar?

2. **Privacy policies and awareness:**

- Have you ever read the privacy policy on a website (if yes/no, why?)

3. **Attitudes toward online privacy:**

- How would you feel if your profile was viewed by (friend, mum, teacher, etc.)
- Do you think privacy settings on websites should automatically be set to most private?
- Should websites provide clear rules on how to go about removing a photo or video on a website which has been published without permission?
- How old do you think you should be to consent the use of your personal information (when signing up to a newsletter, putting CCTV in school, etc.)

The remainder of this report explores this at a number of levels. Initially we will investigate responses to the questions across the whole of the population, as well as gender splits to consider different attitudes for girls and boys. Following this, we will consider the difference in behaviours between older and younger children. Finally, we will focus on a specific group of primary aged children, those that use Facebook. Given the issues surrounding the use of Facebook by children under 13, and the concerns of teachers and parents regarding this, our data provides us with a rare opportunity to compare the attitudes and behaviours of “under aged” Facebook users compared to a wider population. While there are not many differences between practices and attitudes of Facebook using and non Facebook using primary aged pupils, there are a couple of clear differences that do present a potential benefit for those who do engage.

The use of Social Networking by the population as a whole

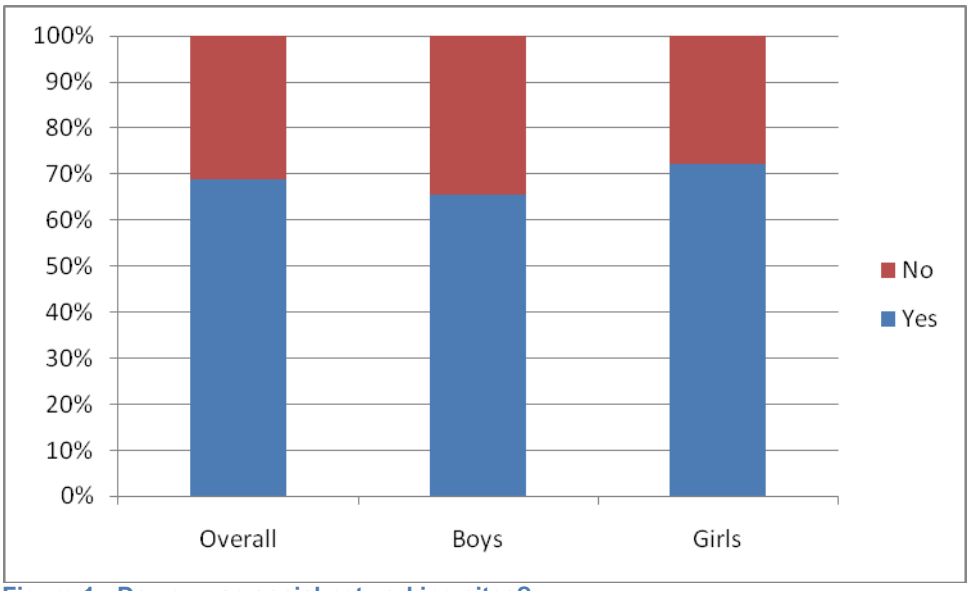

Figure 1 - Do you use social networking sites?

As can be seen from figure 1, the majority of our respondents used social networks of one type or another. While there was a slight gender difference between boys and girls (with girls more likely to use social networks), overall there is a consistent picture that the majority of young people use social networks.

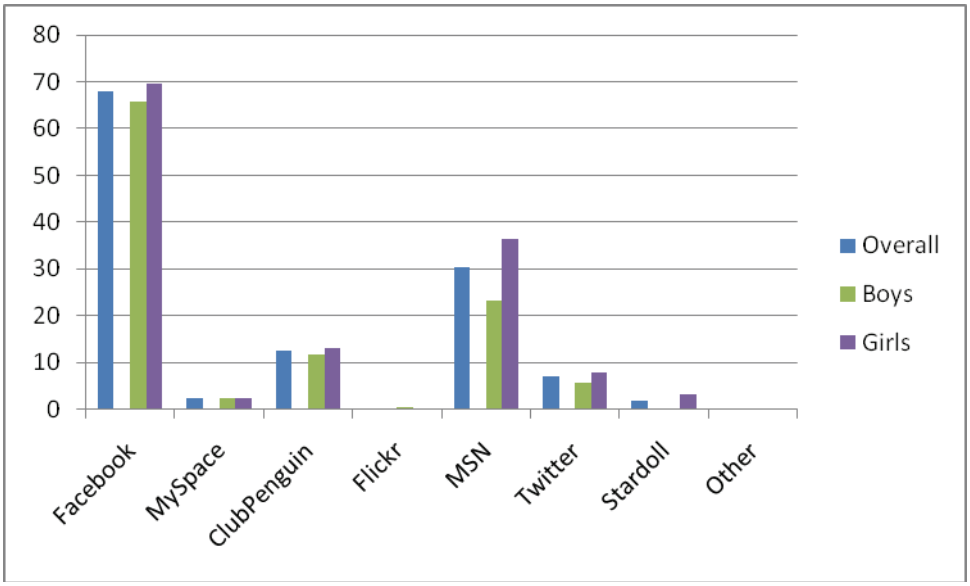

Figure 2 - If yes, which social networks do you use?

If we consider which social networks are used it is unsurprising to see that Facebook is by far the most popular with almost 70% of respondents using it. While there is a slight gender split

with Facebook, it is most evident with MSN, where over 10% more girls use the service than boys. More exploration of these responses is conducted when comparing practice between primary and secondary children, as it is acknowledged that some service (for example Club Penguin) have a younger demographic than others.

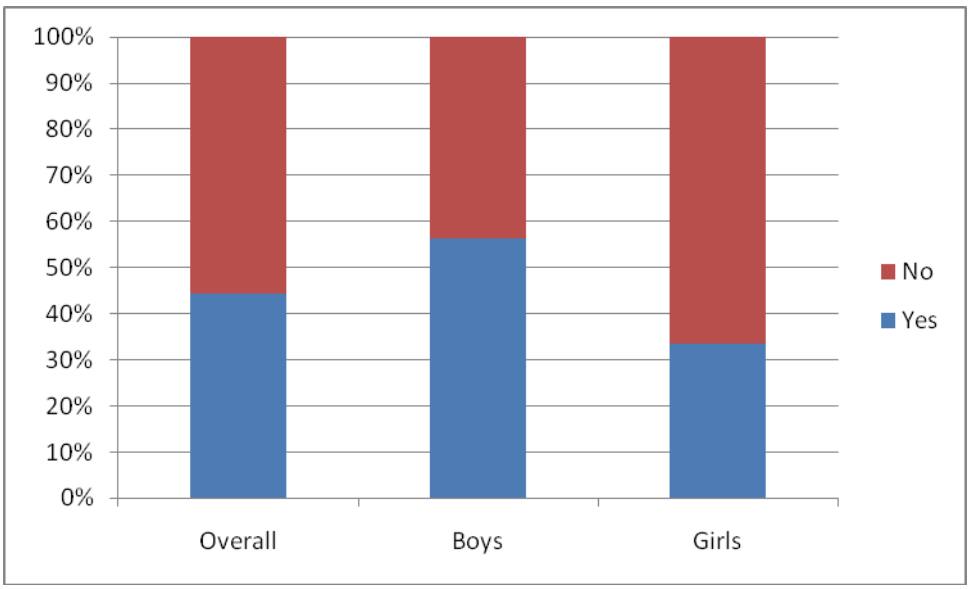

Figure 3 - Do you have an avatar?

A final "practice" based question asked whether the respondent had an "avatar" – a virtual representation of themselves in online worlds. Almost half of our respondents said they did, and there is a clear gender split with this question. This is unsurprising, given that avatars are closely linked to gaming sites and services and we are aware that more boys than girls engage with such. However, it is good to see data confirming opinion in this instance.

Privacy Policies and Awareness

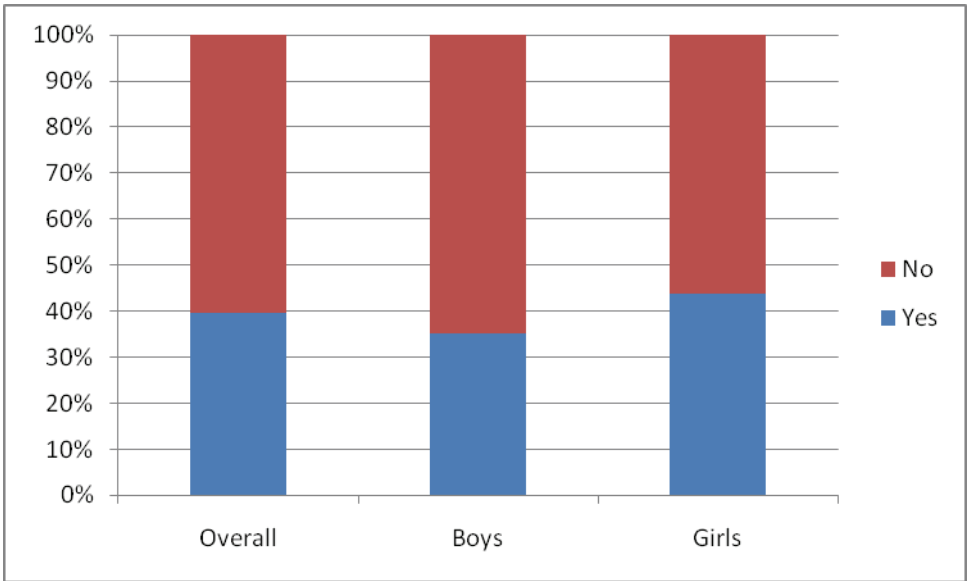

Figure 4 - Do you read the privacy policies on websites?

Clearly the results presented in figure 4 show are cause for concern. We have a population very much engaged in social networking and online activities yet less than half (only just a third in the case of boys) have ever read a privacy policy. When we isolated those respondents who said they did use social networking, the statistic only increased slightly, with 45% saying they had read a privacy policy. This means that over half of children and young people who use social networking sites do not consider the privacy policy before engaging.

If we consider the reasons why our respondents did not read privacy policies, there is no clear single reason. While we might hypothesise that the reason they aren't read is they are too complicated, in our responses only around a quarter said this was the case. What was more likely was to be they didn't know what is was.

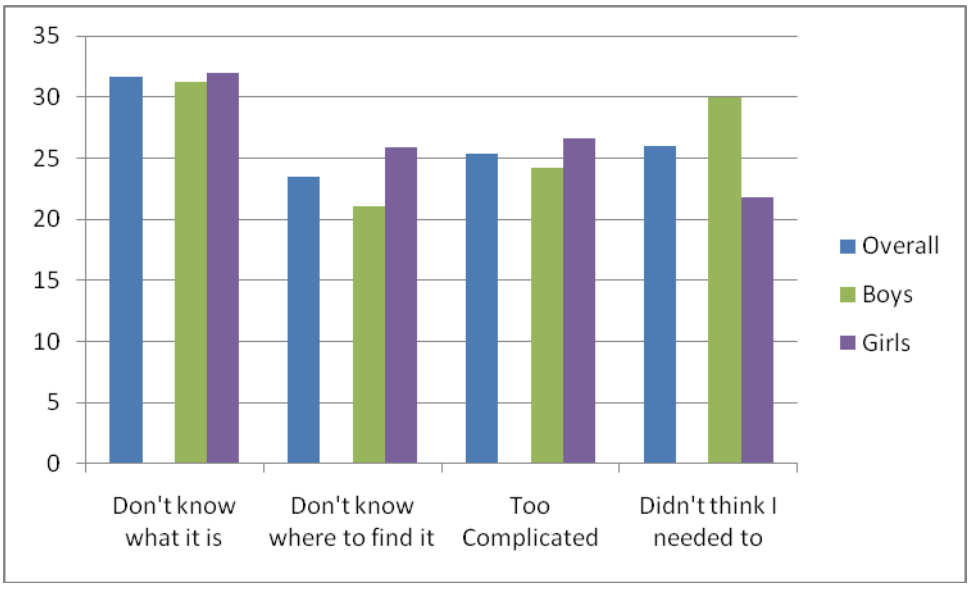

Figure 5 - If no, why not?

In contrast, those who had read privacy policies had done so because they thought them important. And, again, our respondents here show they did not find policies complicated to understand although almost half did say they did not think it was easy to find.

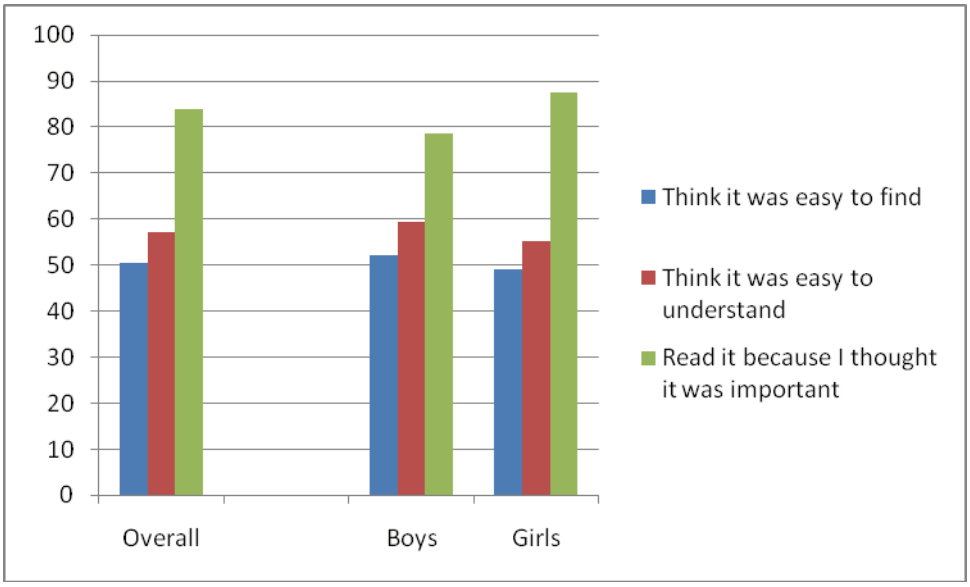

Figure 6 - If yes, did you...

From this level of analysis, we can develop a theory that privacy policies are ignored not because they are complicated, but because they are either difficult to find or there is a lack of awareness about what they are. We will return to these two issues later in the report.

Attitudes toward online privacy

The next series of graphs (figures 7-9) explore attitudes toward the sharing of our respondent's own data:

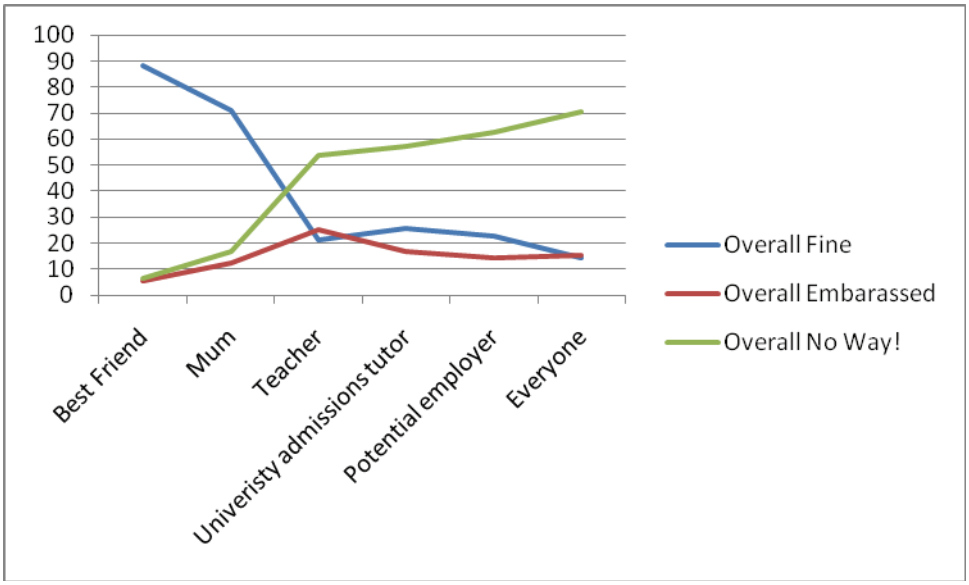

Figure 7 - Overall attitudes to social networking profile being viewed by various figures

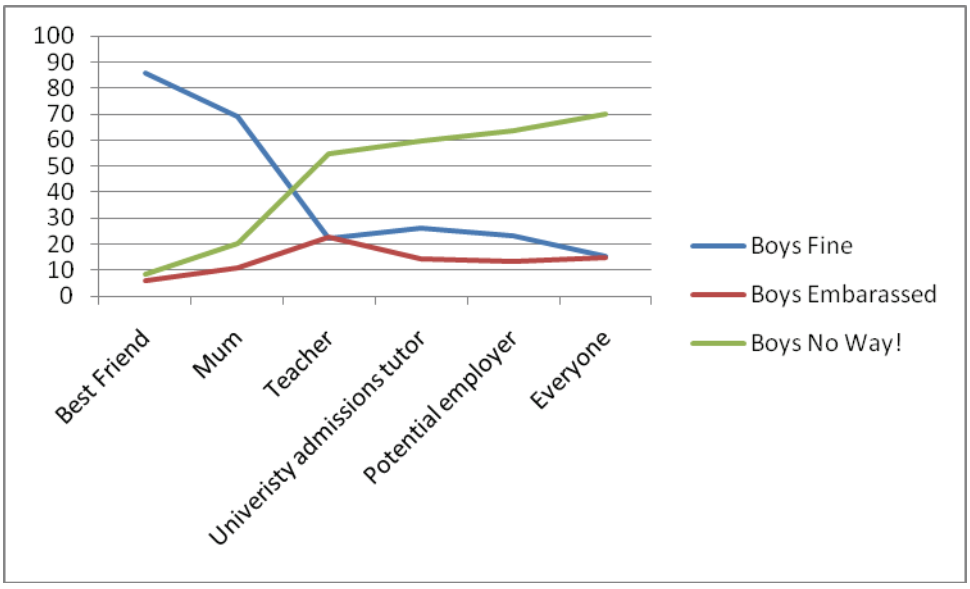

Figure 8 - Boys attitudes to social networking profile being viewed by various figures

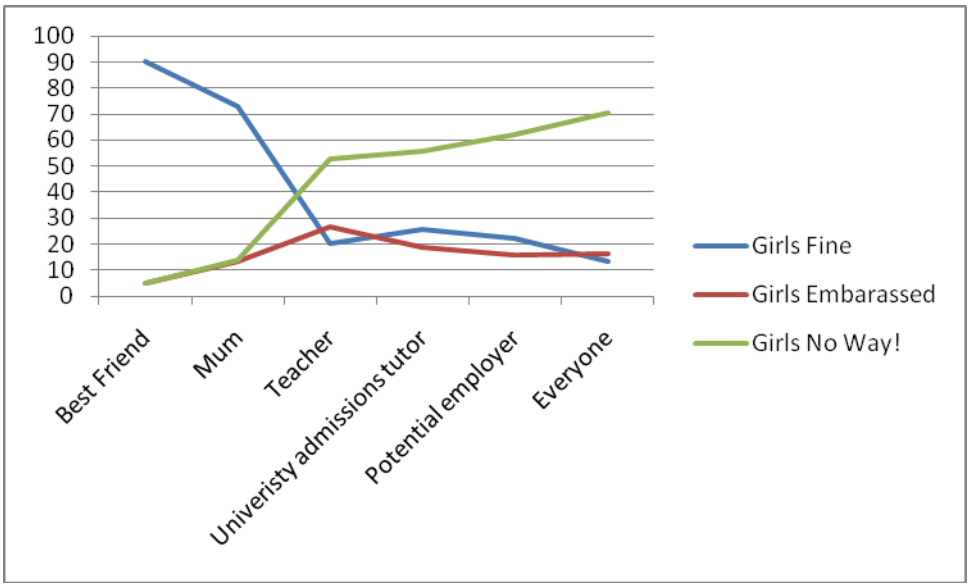

Figure 9 - Girls attitudes to social networking profile being viewed by various figures

Line graphs have been used to explore responses to illustrate trends around attitudes toward data sharing and privacy. It is clear that beyond friends and family data becomes precious to our respondents and they are not comfortable sharing it. There is some gender difference with boys, in general, being more open about their data than girls. However, there is a consistent pattern in all groups analysed.

Following on from this question, figure 10 shows that the vast majority of our respondents felt that social network providers should be responsible to provide settings that are “most private” by default. Again, there is a slight difference with boys being less concerned in the minority than girls. However, the vast majority in each group thought most private should be default and this shows a clear call to service providers to ensure users do not have to be solely responsible for protecting their data.

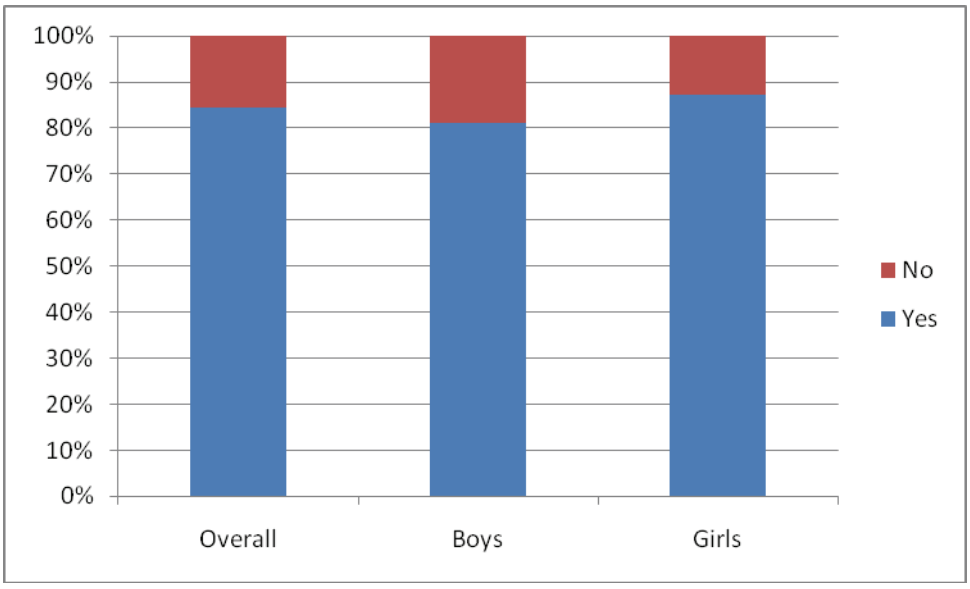

Figure 10 - Do you think settings should default to most private?

Finally, we asked our respondents to consider at what age consent should be able to be granted in different scenarios, illustrated in figures 11-13.

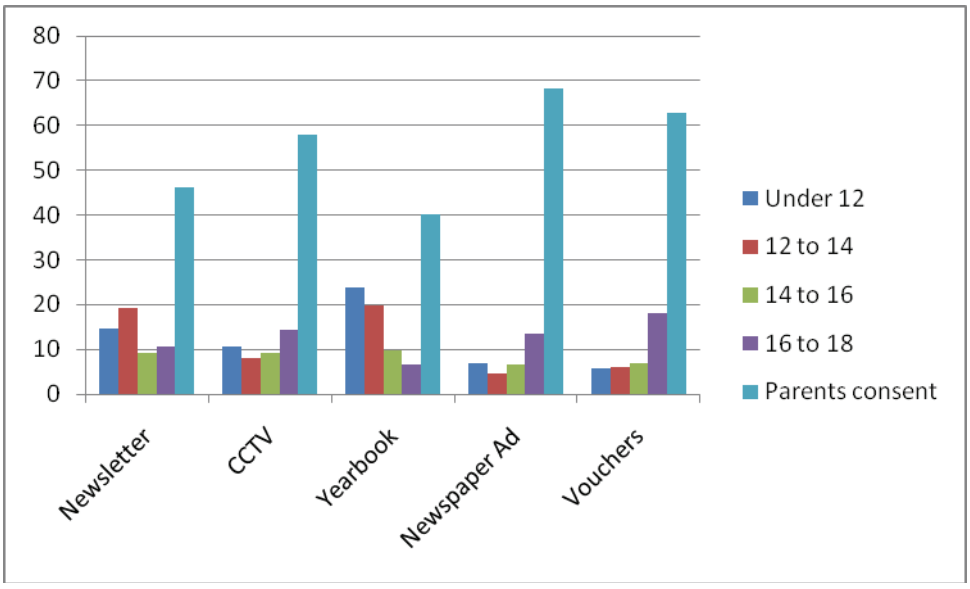

Figure 11 - Consent, overall group

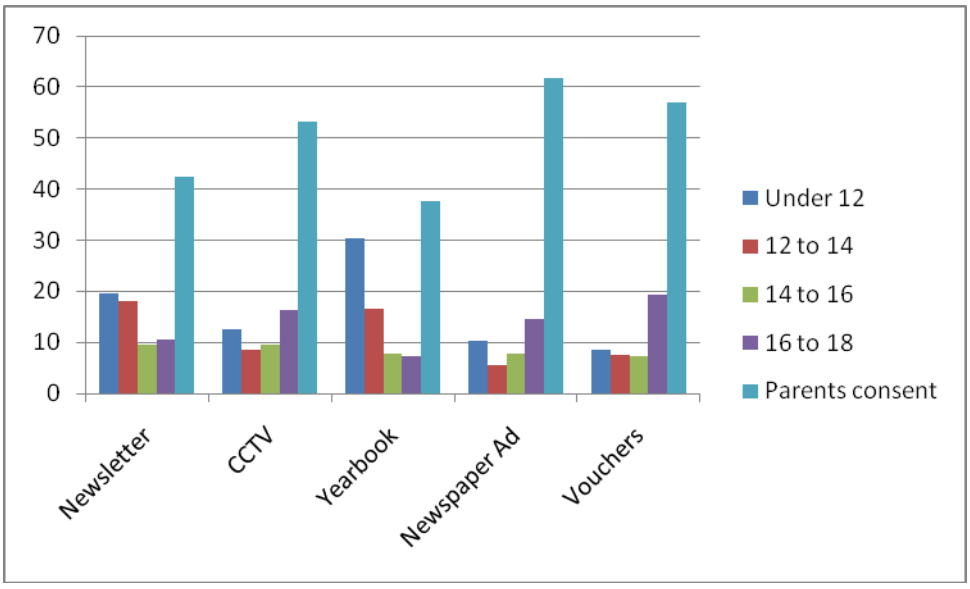

Figure 12 - Consent, boys

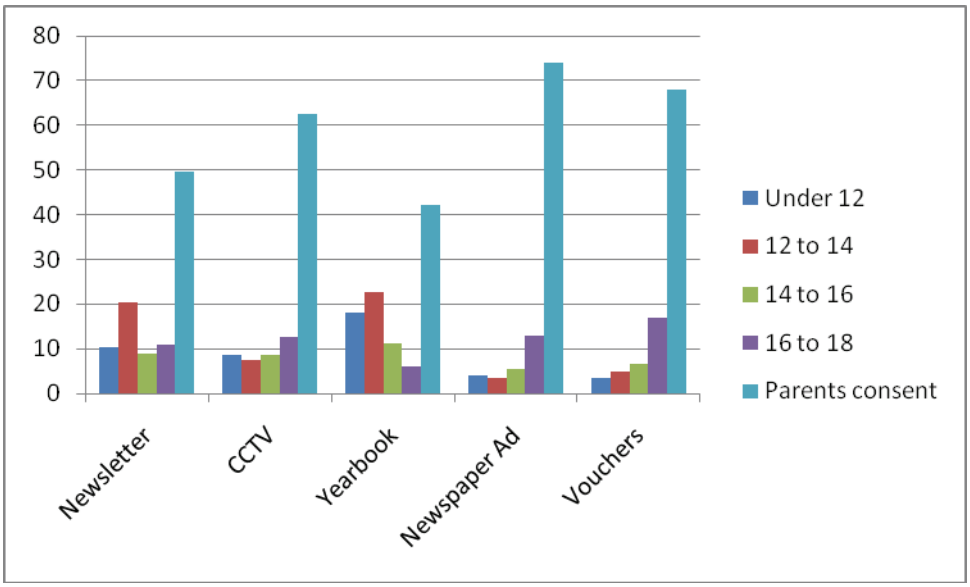

Figure 13 - Consent, girls.

In general, it is clear that the majority felt children and young people should not be responsible for consent, with the majority feeling parental consent was necessary in all scenarios. Again, boys show a slightly more relaxed attitude toward privacy, and in general have lower ages expectations than girls. Figure 14 provides an interesting illustration of this attitude, with a very similar pattern holding with the proportion of respondents thinking parental consent was necessary in scenarios:

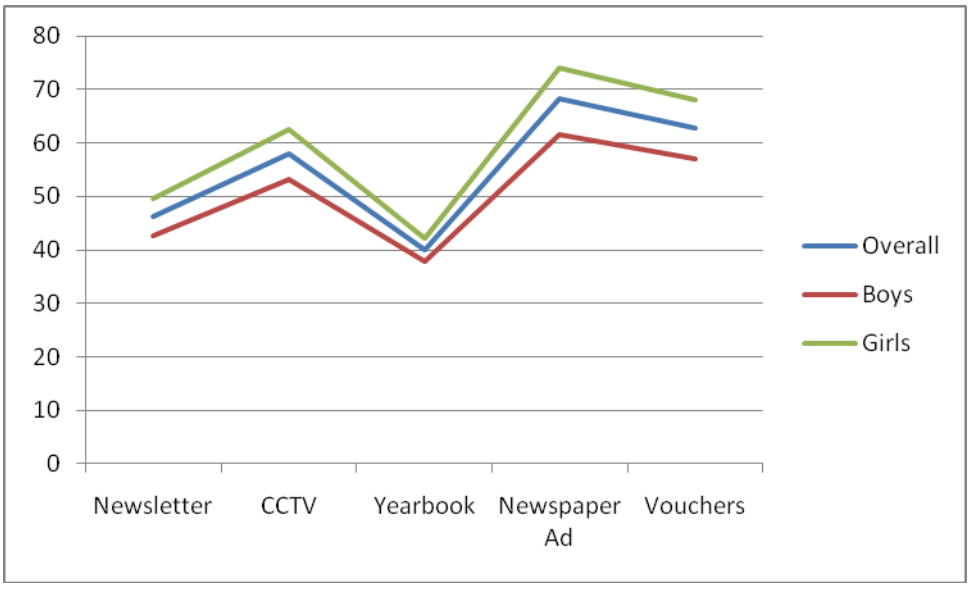

Figure 14 - Comparison, parental consent only

Primary/Secondary Comparisons

The second major piece of comparative analysis split the group into primary and secondary school respondents. As mentioned above, The i in online data set represents one of the largest ever detailed studies on the attitudes of primary school children toward privacy and data protection. In this section we explore their attitudes in more detail compared to their older counterparts.

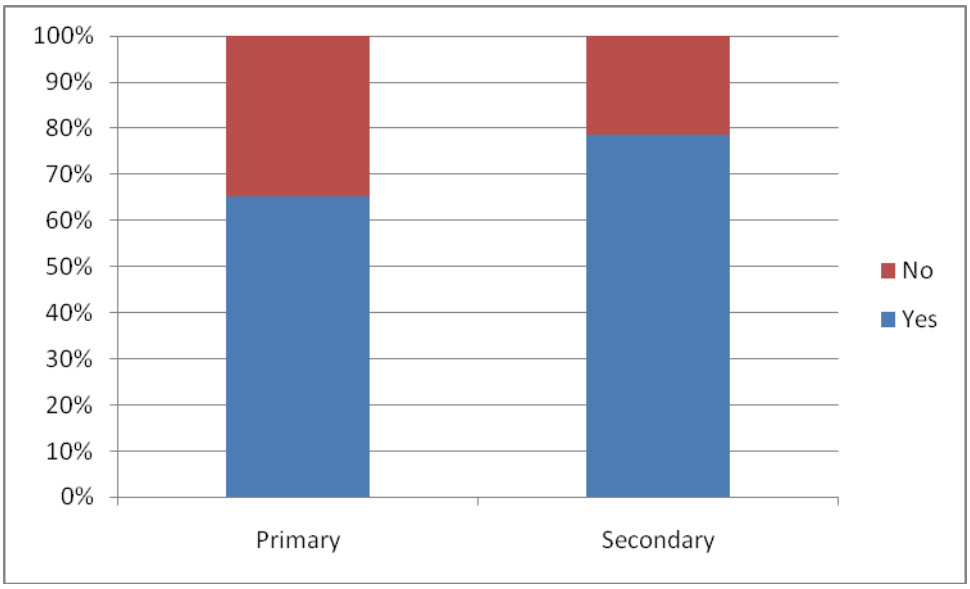

Figure 15 - Do you use social networks? Primary vs secondary

While it is unsurprising that more secondary aged respondents use social networks than primary school pupils, there is still a majority response of well over 60% which shows that

many younger children are very much engaged in social networking and the privacy issues therein.

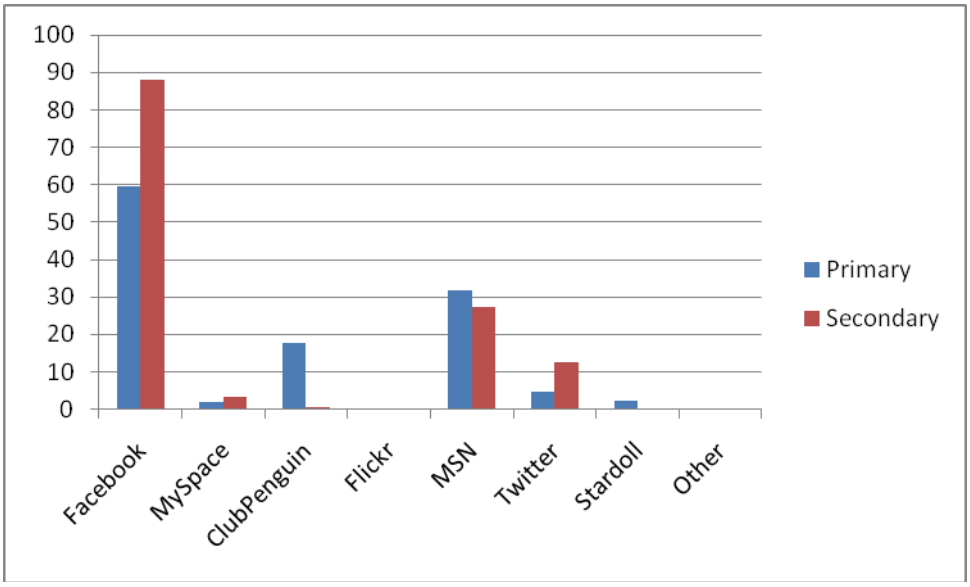

Figure 16 - Social networks used - primary vs secondary

For those who did use social networks, we have greater use (unsurprisingly) of Club Penguin by primary aged people, but it is very interesting to note that more primary aged pupils will use MSN than secondary school children. We are also looking at a population of primary school children very much engaged with Facebook, even though 13 is the "official" age limit for Facebook users. 60% of primary school children who use social networks will use Facebook. In total from our overall population 39% of primary aged children had used Facebook.

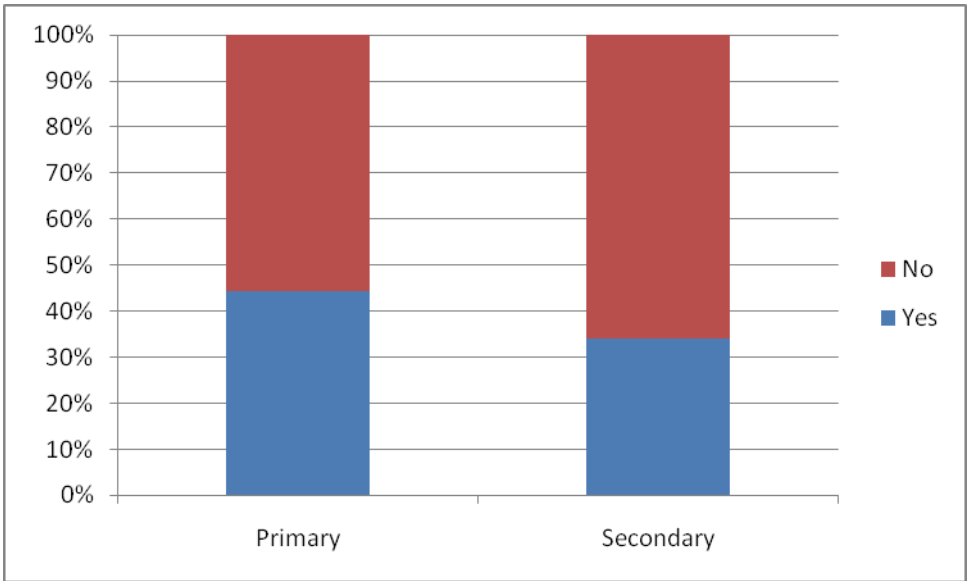

Figure 17 - Do you have an avatar - primary vs secondary

In terms of use of avatars, our results show that more primary aged children will use avatars than their older peers. While our data does not show much impact on the use of avatars in terms of attitudes toward privacy, it does highlight an interesting trend that younger children's behaviours do differ from their older counterparts. While conventional wisdom might suggest that younger children emulate their peers, our data suggest they are finding their own practices. This will have implications for the future (i.e. when these younger children become adolescent) as the behaviours of the younger children and attitudes will differ from their older peers.

Privacy Policies and Awareness

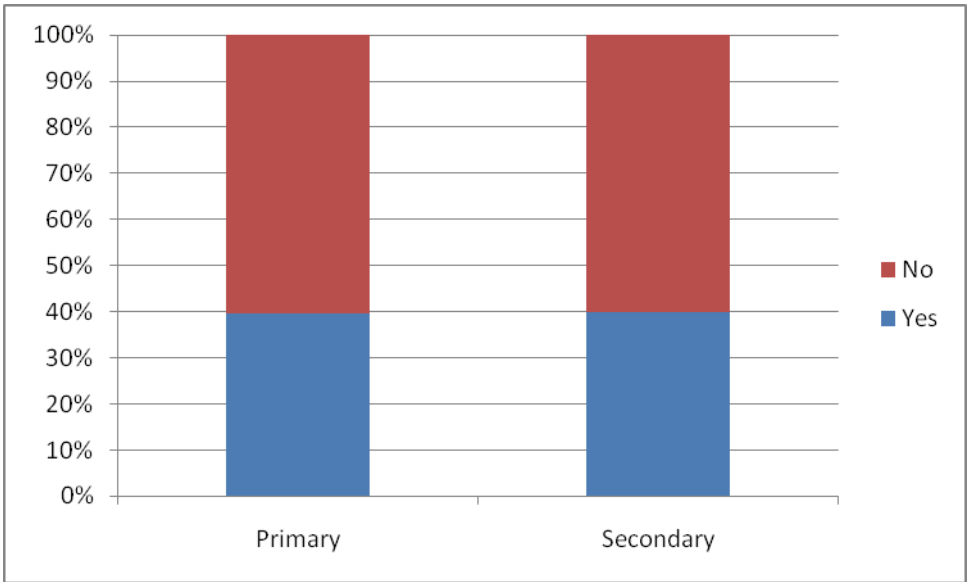

Figure 18 - Do you read privacy policies - primary vs secondary

In figure 18 it is clear that there is virtually no difference between the proportion of primary and secondary aged children who have read privacy policies. However, there are differences in terms of the reasons for both reading, and not reading, policies, explored in figures 19 and 20.

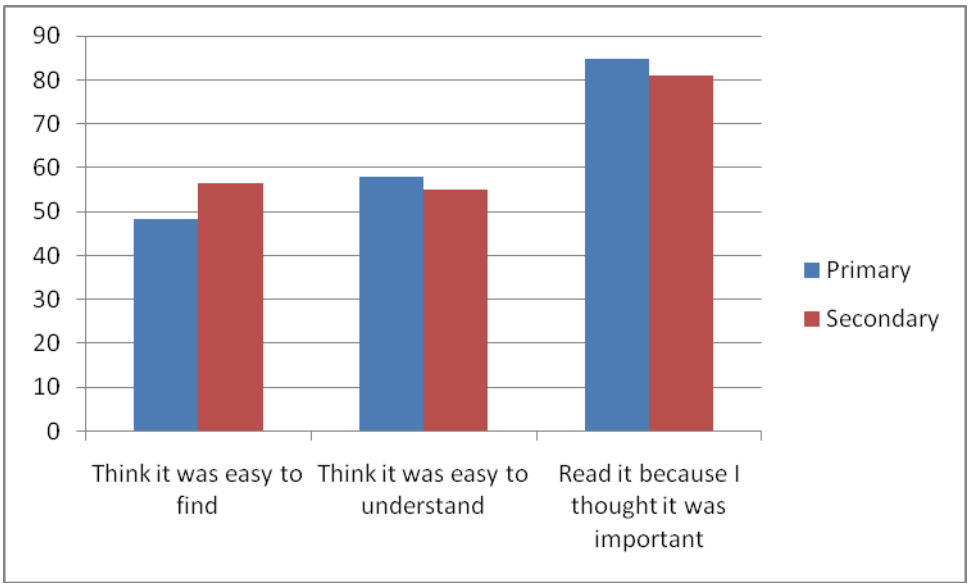

Figure 19 - If yes, did you...

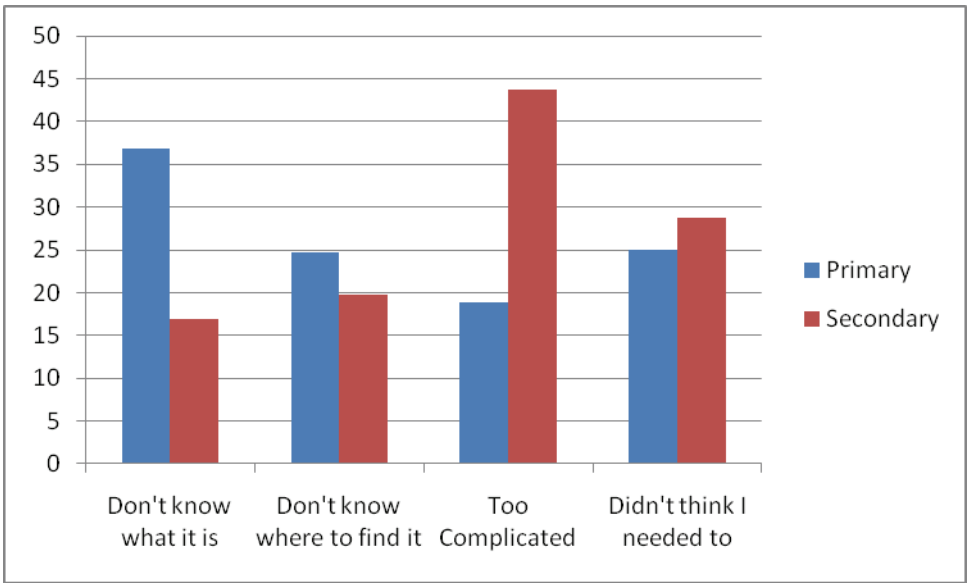

Figure 20 - If no, why not?

From these figures we can see that for those who have read privacy policies, primary school children are slightly less likely to think the policy was easy to find, but more likely to think it was straightforward to read, or read it because it was important.

The reasons for not reading policies are vastly different between the two sub populations. Primary school children are far less likely to be aware of what a privacy policy is (over a third of all primary school children in our population). Far less said they thought it was too complicated to read, but this might be because they either did not know what it was or couldn't find it.

Attitudes toward online privacy

In exploring the differences between primary and secondary aged pupils and their attitudes toward privacy, we consider the pattern of data sharing and also issues of consent once again.

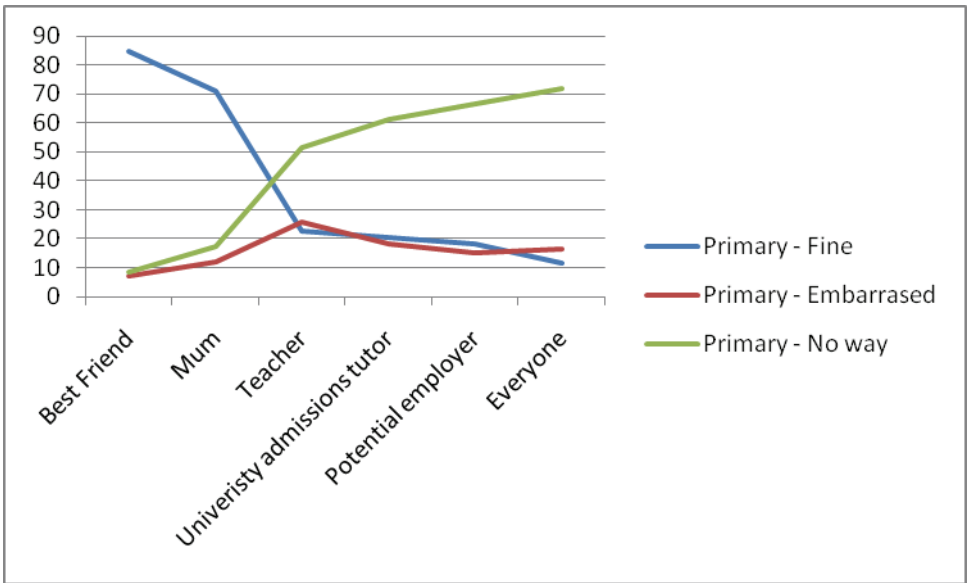

Figure 21 - - Attitude toward profile being seen, primary aged respondents

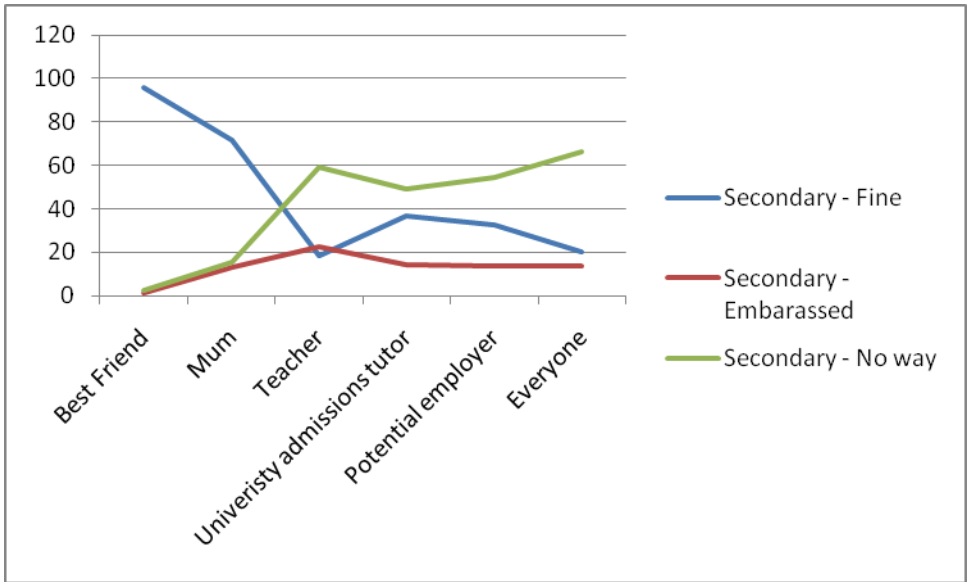

Figure 22 - Attitude toward profile being seen, secondary aged respondents

In figures 21 and 22 the difference in attitudes is clear to see. Primary aged pupils are very definite in that they would not be happy for anyone away from friends or family to see their profile. There is far less “no way” responses for secondary aged pupils and greater variation in who might see it and their attitudes toward such.

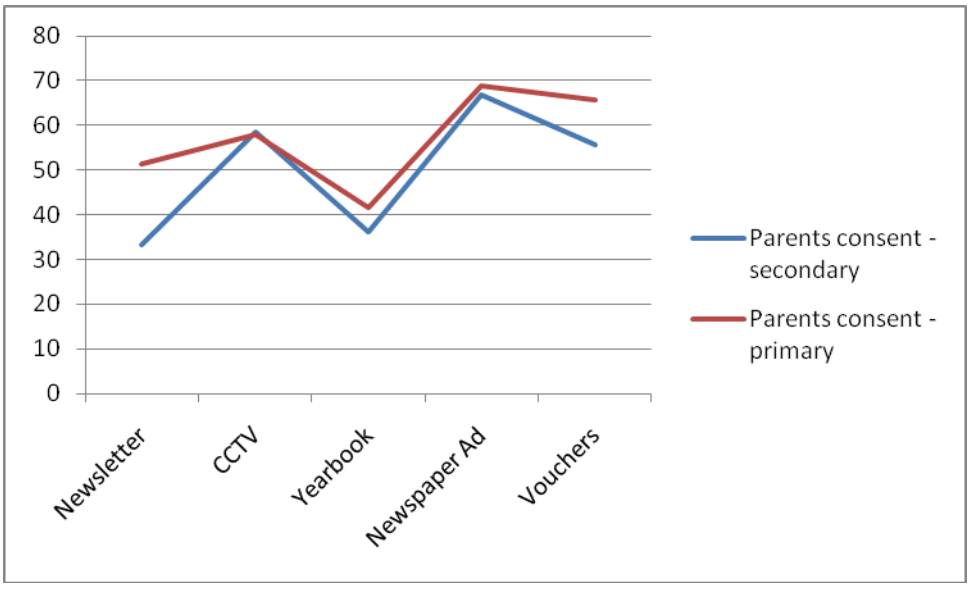

Figure 23 - Parental consent for a range of scenarios

Figure 23 returns to the issue of scenarios and the age of consent. Again a similar shape is shown for both sub populations, but we also have a difference between primary pupils, who are consistently more likely to say parental consent is needed for all scenarios.

In a final analysis, we will now move to focus on a specific group of primary users, those who use Facebook. This analysis holds a great deal of interest because it is rare to capture this amount of information about a population of under-aged Facebook users.

Primary Facebook Users

In total, 1128 respondents of primary age said they used Facebook. The most significant difference we can see in comparing Facebook primary users to the overall primary profile can be seen in figure 24. Facebook users are 10% more likely to have read a privacy policy than the overall primary population.

If we explore attitudes from those who had read policies, we can see that the Facebook users were more likely to know what a privacy policy was, and more likely to find a privacy policy complicated. This ties in with our earlier assumption that primary aged pupils do not think policies are complicated because they do not know what they are. Those who engage with them do find them complex in some instances.

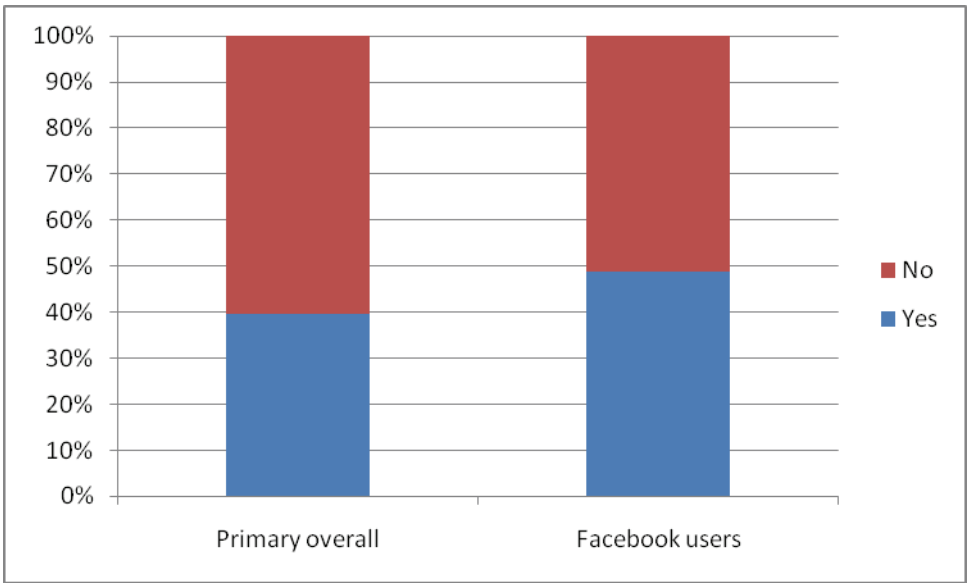

Figure 24 - Read privacy policy

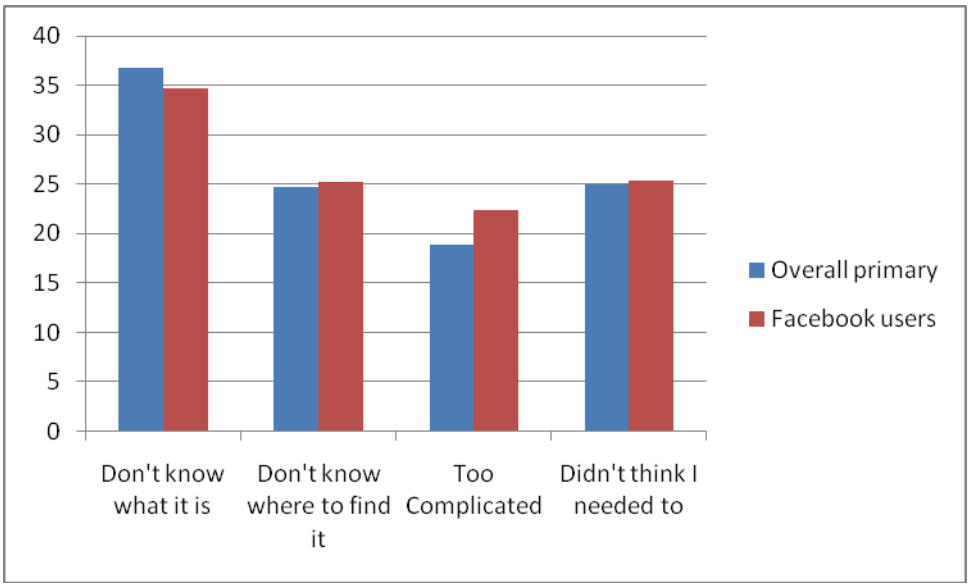

Figure 25 - If no, why not?

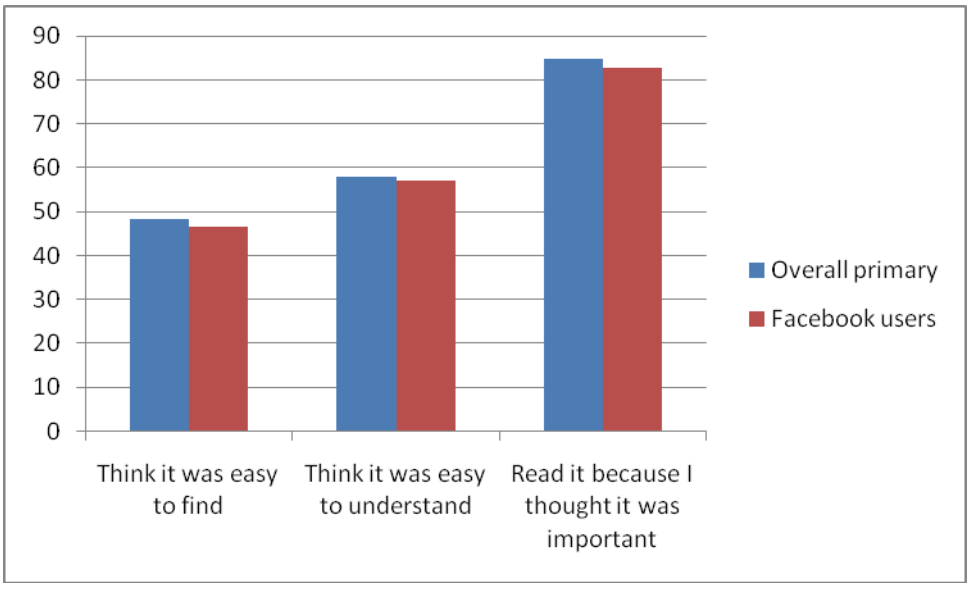

Figure 26 - If yes, did you...

However, as illustrated in figures 27 and 28, the Facebook users share similar beliefs in terms of who has their data. While there is slight variation in how they might feel for certain types of strangers saw their profiles, the variation is slight. This counteracts some of the more hysterical beliefs that social networks are responsible for children and young people becoming irresponsible with their data and with whom they share it. In fact, we can suggest from our data that those who engage in social networking practice are more responsible regarding privacy than those who do not.

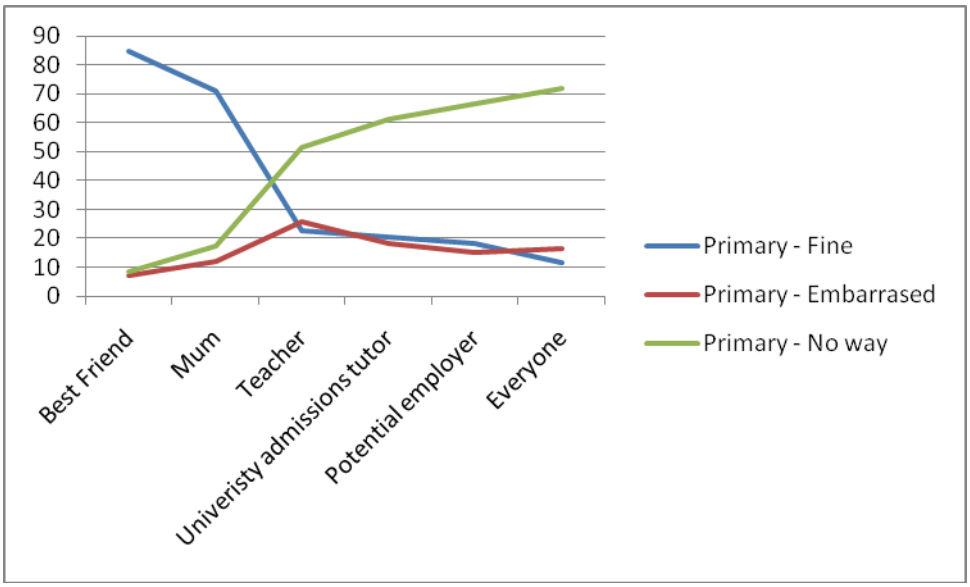

Figure 27 - Attitude toward profile being seen, primary aged respondents

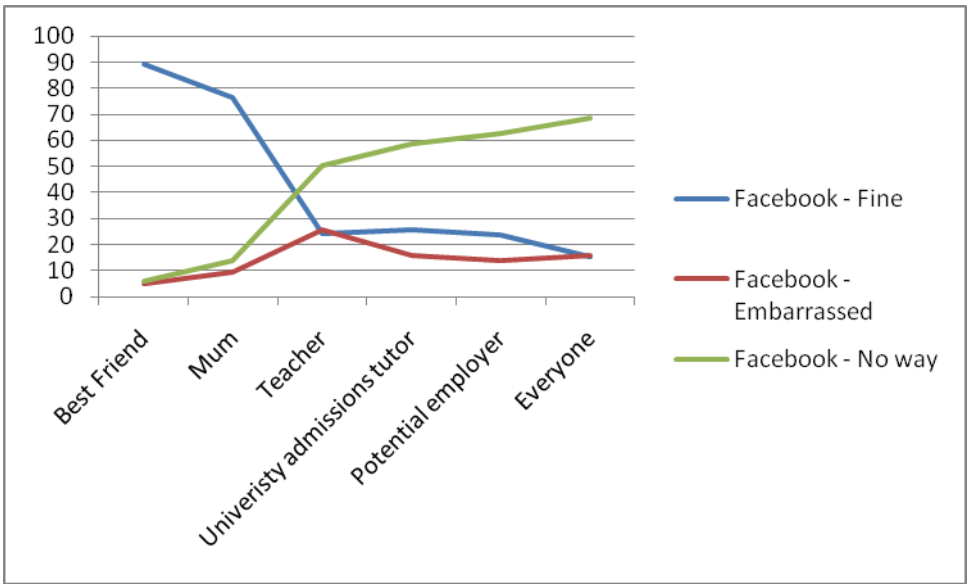

Figure 28 - Attitude toward profile being seen, primary aged respondents who are Facebook users

Acknowledgements

The i in online would like to thank the following people for their support with producing the Child Online Privacy Code and the Privacy Survey.

- Christopher Graham, The Information Commissioner
- Professor Andy Phippen, Plymouth University
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- Laura Gerrard, BPP Law School and their students
- Andrew Jeffcoat, BPP Law School
- David Rosenberg, Velorose