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Children Unsupervised Online for Hours a Day During Lockdowns; Parents Want Support from Operators

1 in 2 parents want mobile operators to provide the safeguards and are willing to pay for it.

A new global survey from Enea reveals that lockdowns in many of the world's leading economies contributed to children being left unsupervised online for extended periods. The survey suggests an urgent need for internet parental controls, especially on mobile devices. Unsupervised mobile activity was a challenge for parents of children of all ages. 44% of 11 – 15-year-olds and 30% of 6 – 10-year-olds spent at least three to six hours a day unmonitored while even parents of under-fives revealed that their children spent at least an hour a day unsupervised on a mobile device.

The survey conducted last month interviewed 4,000 households in the UK, US, France, Germany, Italy, and Spain on children's mobile internet use. Enea's survey highlights concerns from parents who are looking for effective safeguarding action when kids are using their mobile devices. The challenge appears to be most prevalent in the US where children spent the most amount of unsupervised time online.

When parents were asked whom they trust for online safeguarding, eight in ten parents said they would welcome assistance with parental controls from mobile operators. By contrast, less than a quarter of all parents said they would trust Facebook, Google or any other social media provider with their children's online safety.

“The mobile internet has provided a lifeline to keep us connected during the pandemic and network operators rose to the challenge,” said Indranil Chatterjee, Chief Customer Officer at Enea. “But as we all know the internet also has its dangers. It's clear that parents overwhelmingly trust mobile operators to support them, in contrast to other Big Tech players. And that means operators not only have a responsibility – they also have a commercial opportunity - to strengthen their safeguards for children.”

There is money available to operators that provide parental controls. Nearly six in ten (58%) parents said they would willingly pay an additional \$5 to \$14 per month for more effective safeguard controls for their children. What's more, 56% of parents said they even would leave their mobile operator for one that offered parental controls at the same price, making children's online safety a top priority for operators looking to retain their customers in the years to come.

One of the issues facing providers of content filtering and parental controls is high levels of encryption. Gorkem Yigit, Principal Analyst, Analysys Mason: “Encryption protocols such as HTTPS and QUIC have made it more challenging for operators to stop inappropriate content such as adult, gambling or violence reaching vulnerable users. And things could get worse later this year as existing parental control solutions could be rendered obsolete due to the growing adoption of TLS 1.3 with encrypted SNI that will blind-side operators. So, to effectively safeguard children, operators should consider deploying AI-based traffic classification systems that can instantly identify content based on statistical prediction, behavioral analysis and heuristics.”

About the survey

Censuswide interviewed 4,000 households in April 2021 across the US, France, Germany, Spain, Italy and the UK.

References

- Infographic to accompany the press release - [available via Dropbox](#)
- Mobile Operator Parental Controls – [Safeguarding children in a post-pandemic world](#)

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About Enea

Enea is one of the world’s leading suppliers of innovative software for telecommunication and cybersecurity. Focus areas are cloud-native, 5G-ready products for data management, mobile video traffic optimization, edge virtualization, and traffic intelligence. More than 3 billion people rely on Enea technologies in their daily lives.

Enea is headquartered in Stockholm, Sweden, and is listed on Nasdaq Stockholm.

For more information: www.enea.com