

Cyberspace

'Cyberspace' can be identified as the complex environment resulting from the interaction of people, software and services on the Internet by means of technology devices and connected networks, which does not exist in any physical form¹.

By 2019 Jan, there are over 4.3 billion Internet users in the world which is 57% of total population. Globally, at an average rate of more than 1 million new users enter to cyberspace each day. In 2019 Jan, average internet user spends more than 6.5 hours online each day, meaning that the world's digital community will spend a combined total of more than 1.2 billion years using the internet in 2019².



Social media continues to account for the greatest share of that time. Among various services in internet, 80% of internet users are active in Social Media. From 2018 Jan to 2019 Jan, while global population has increased from 1.1%, internet users and active social media users has increased over 9%².

Sri Lankan Context



By 2019 Jan, there are over 7.1 million Internet users in Sri Lanka which is 34% of total population. Among various services in internet, 87% of internet users are active in Social Media³.

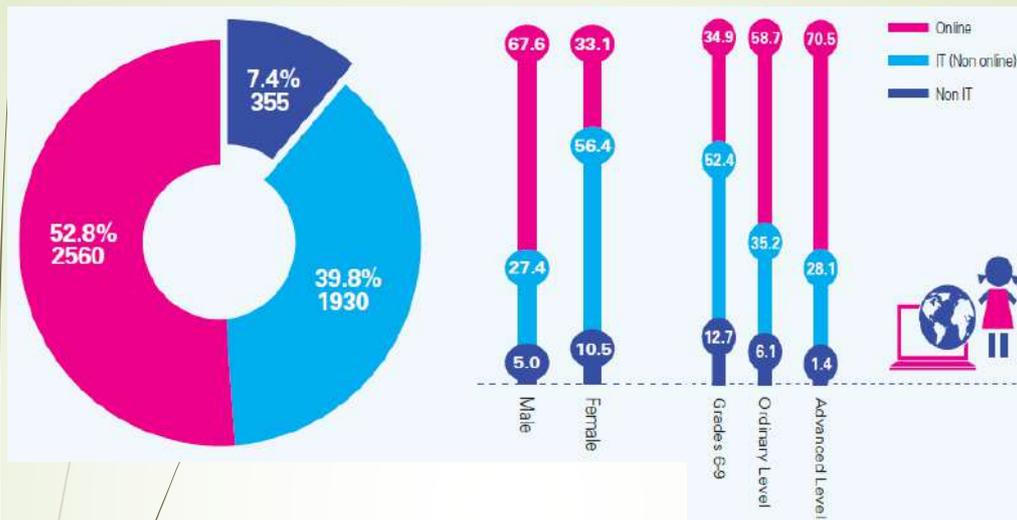
It was revealed that 50% of the Sri Lankan youth (16 – 30 years) spend 1-5 hours on social media per day while 10% spend more than 6 hours per day on social media sites. 40% spend less than one hour per day on social media⁴.

a. Computer Literacy 28.3%
(Urban 41.1%, Rural 26.5%, Estate 9.5%)
b. Digital Literacy 38.7%
(Urban 54.5%, Rural 36.4%, Estate 16.4%)

Devices use to Connect to Internet
Desktop or Laptops 38.1%
Smart Phones 56.9%
Tablets 2.1%
Mobile Phones 2.9%

Our Children

52.8% of Sri Lankan children (11 – 18 years old), have access to digital device and internet (Online users). Although 39.8% have access to digital devices but do not have access to internet(Non Online IT users). 7.4% do not have access for both digital devices and internet(Non IT users)⁶. Below children are categorized based their usage, gender and grades⁶.



Two third (68%) of Non online IT users are interested to use internet but unable mainly due to unavailability of computer with internet access (43.3%), unavailability of mobile phone/tablet with internet access (36.4%) and parent's objections to use internet (41.8%)⁶.

Children tended to access the Internet for the first time around the age of 13, irrespective of their ethnicity or gender. Around 77% of the early users (5-7 years old) were boys, and 75% of the late users (around 18 years old) were girls⁶.

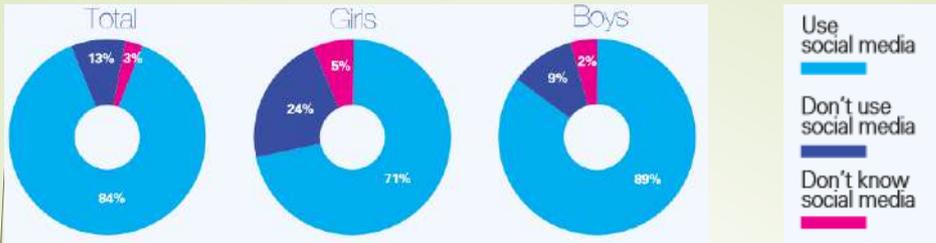
74.8% from children use mobile phones and 66.5% use computer to access internet. Majority of boys (60.3%) are self taught to use internet while majority of girls (47.3%) were taught by siblings on how to use internet.

Below are the main reasons for children to access internet:

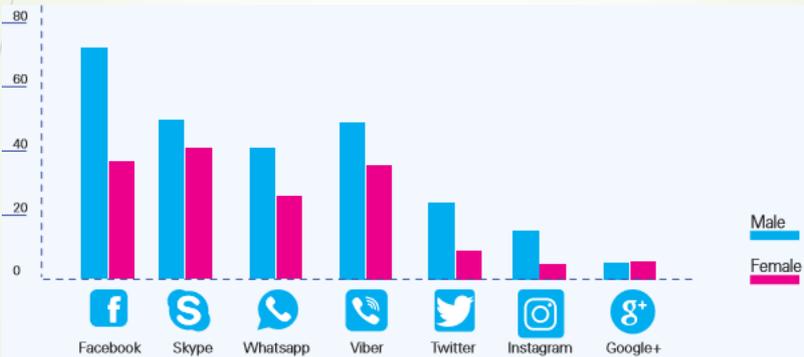
- Search for educational information – 86.2% (Boys 84.1% & Girls 92.1%)
- Download information/software/videos, etc. – 71.8% (Boys 74.3% & Girls 65.1%)
- Watch films/You Tube/videos – 60.8% (Boys 62.4% & Girls 56.5%)
- Use social media – 60.3% (Boys 65.8% & Girls 45.1%)

Our Children(cont.)

An analysis of the top 20 site rankings shows that Facebook is the top accessed site in the country⁷. Among online user children, high usage of social media is recorded which is 84% (Girls 71% and Boys 89%)⁶.



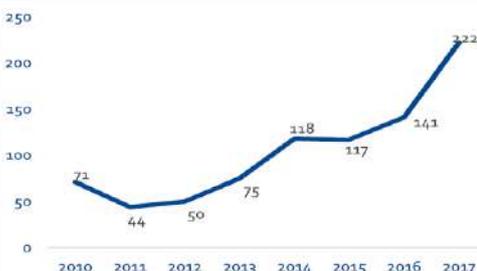
Among online user children, Facebook is the highest accessed platform with 61.7% (Boys 72.0% & Girls 33.1%). Skype 47.5%, Viber 45.0%, Whatsapp 37.2%, Twitter 20.3% and Instagram 12.7% are the other highest accessed platforms⁶.



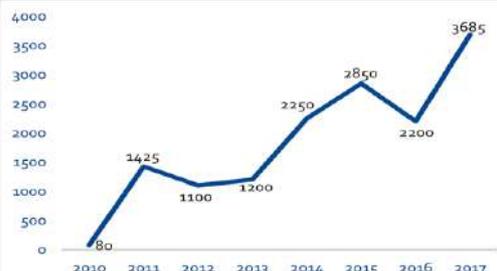
Safety in Cyberspace?

Along with numerous benefits in cyberspace, numerous cyber threats are recorded. In 2016, from the 193 membership countries in International Telecommunications Union, Sri Lanka is ranked at 72 in the Global Cyber Security Index (GCI). In 2015, 59.06 million cyber security incidents recorded in globally. In 2017, 3907 such incidents recorded in Sri Lanka. Along with, social media related incidents has been increased by over 4500% from 2010 to 2017⁵.

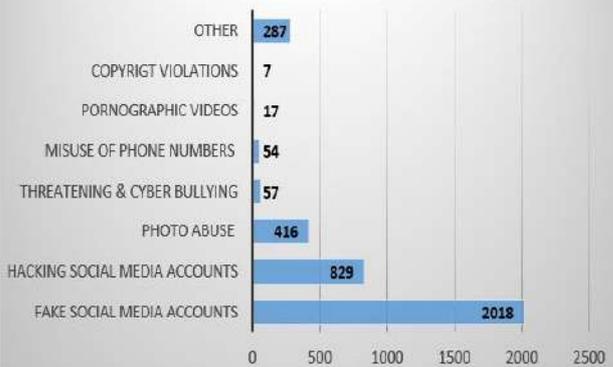
Growth in Cybersecurity related incidents



Growth in Social media related incidents



Social Media related incidents 2017



- 35% of Sri Lankan online users use same password for all accounts⁵.
- 31% Sri Lankan online users, save passwords in browsers⁵.
- 43% of Sri Lankan youth online users accept friend requests from unknown. Among them 33% faced negative experiences after accepting unknowns⁴.

Our children's safety in Cyberspace?

Table 32: Indicators of exposure to risk: as a percentage of sampled population by gender

Improper behavior	Total (2,560)	Boys (1,879)	Girls (681)
Content: Sent/uploaded texts, images, videos, photos more suitable for adults	10.7%	11.9%	7.3%
Conduct (any of the following four actions):	24.7%		
Lied about their age	13.1%	14.4%	9.3%
Engaged on social media with false information	16.7%	18.6%	11.6%
Used others' passwords to log into their profiles	5.1%	5.7%	3.5%
Sent messages that could be nasty or could hurt someone's feelings	24.8%	27.4%	17.6%
Contact (any of the following three actions):	41.3%		
Accepted chat requests from strangers	21.9%	24.6%	14.4%
Shared photo with a stranger	14.3%	17.2%	6.3%
Shared personal information with a stranger	8.0%	9.3%	4.5%
Commerce: Engaged in inappropriate online shopping	30.9%	35.4%	18.5%
Excessive use: Using the Internet several times a day	28.7%	34.0%	13.7%

Some explanatory notes on these indicators are provided below.

Our children's safety in Cyberspace?(cont.)

Around 27.9% of children in online had physically met people that they had first met online. Another 25.2% online-IT users anticipated meeting in person in the future. Of the children who had physically met online-strangers, 18.2% (boys and girls) had done so without informing anyone, and another 36.3 per cent had only informed a friend⁶.

Action Taken	Total	Boys	Girls
Did not tell anyone.....	18.3%	18.2%	19.2%
Told a friend.....	36.3%	38.1%	24.0%
Told a family member.....	32.4%	33.0%	28.0%
Other*.....	13.0%	10.7%	28.8%
Total.....	100%	100%	100%

*Note: Meeting under different circumstances, such as the stranger coming to see the children or the children meeting them accompanied by relatives and friends, indicating that the meeting was not alone.

Most social media platforms offer users the option to manage their privacy settings since the default privacy setting is low. Nearly one in four boys and one in three girls were not at all aware of 'privacy settings' for their online accounts. Around eight per cent did not know how to change privacy settings.

Table 26: Children's sources for learning how to protect personal information and privacy online as a percentage of sampled population

Source	Total (2,560)	Boys (1,879)	Girls (681)
Not aware of any source	10.5%	11.3%	8.5%
From school teachers and ICT centres	11.5%	6.7%	25.0%
From parents	23.6%	18.4%	38.0%
From siblings	34.7%	31.5%	43.6%
From friends	41.0%	46.4%	28.1%
From mass media (TV, radio, newspapers)	24.0%	24.9%	21.4%
From websites	18.0%	21.2%	9.1%

Children did not have a clear idea of the sources for reliable information on online security. In this context, the majority of children depended on their siblings (34.7 per cent) and friends (41 per cent) to learn about online security⁶.

Children were very poorly informed about which authorities they should approach in the event of being a victim of online abuse, with 83.7 percent indicating they were unaware of where to report online issues. When they were asked to name the responsible authorities/organizations they could report to, only 2.6 per cent of the children were able to do so⁶.

References:

1. [ISO/IEC 27032:2012](#) — Information technology — Security techniques — Guidelines for cyber security, IsecT Ltd
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6. Keeping Children in Sri Lanka Safe and Empowered Online – UNICEF
7. Database of Top Sites Accessed in Sri Lanka - eNovation4D Ltd