

Chinese net users getting increasingly younger

There's an increasing trend for Chinese children to go online at ever younger ages, reports Guangzhou Daily.



A schoolgirl making a speech at the Guangdong Internet Security for Children Forum, September 23, 2017. [Photo: Guangzhou Daily]

Some children use social media at the age of 3, go online shopping at 7, and surpass their parents level of internet skills by the age of 14, according to a survey released at the Guangdong Internet Security for Children Forum on September 23, 2017.

The survey shows over 23% of preschool children (aged 3 to 6) go online for more than half an hour per day.

Like their adult counterparts, children engage in a diverse number of online activities including entertainment, consuming and publishing information. Among the 7-year-old children surveyed, over 60% of them have downloaded games, videos or music on their own; 8.5% of them have shopped online; around 15% of them have posted pictures, videos or words on the internet; and 4.7% of them even claim to have fans.

The survey also shows the extent to which children use social media at younger ages. Some children start to use QQ or WeChat, China's two largest social communication platforms, at the age of 3. Around 10% of 7-year-old children use QQ or WeChat, while over 70% of children aged 12 use social media.

"At the age of 14, children surpass their parents in key digital skills, which shows those 'digital natives' (children born after 2000) have advantages in employing internet tools," said Zhang Haibo, from the authority

that conducted the survey. "This poses a great challenge to traditional methods of education as well as cyber security."

The survey also explored the reasons why children go online. Most children said they wanted to be accompanied by their parents rather than to play online games. "I'm really in sports, but no one plays with me," said one boy surveyed," so I can only play with my cellphone at home."

It has also become a trend for children to do their homework on some internet platforms, although there are concerns that children lacking self-control might simply go looking for the answers to questions on the internet.