# Media use among young people with intellectual disabilities

Swedish Media Council

# Foreword

The development of digital media has led to a revolution, not least in terms of active participation. While not so long ago the use of media was about mass media one-way communication, accessible technology and interactive communication protocols have opened up a world of opportunities: theoretically, the vast majority of Swedish children and young people today can be part of this, whether it is to seek knowledge, socialise or communicate an opinion.

In practice, the reality has proved to be different.

As technology and design change the conditions, various types of gaps are growing. Some lag behind – or are left outside.

Many of us feel that development is so tremendously fast that it is difficult to keep up-to-date – new platforms, services and programmes are added every day and the complexity of the media landscape is increasing. How difficult is it then for anyone who has any kind of psychiatric or intellectual impairment?

The Swedish Media Council is working with the academic community to continuously increase our knowledge in these areas. Children and young people with neuropsychiatric or intellectual disabilities are examples of groups we have particularly focused on in recent years, in order to deepen our understanding of variations in media use and participation, and thus enable various kinds of initiatives.

This study focuses on media use among young people with intellectual disabilities in special school education. The variations are many and great, which makes it difficult to put forward general conclusions. But one result is that children and young people in special schools make less use of interactive media than the national average. In spite of this, they are more vulnerable to bullying and malice.

Does this mean that we need to invest more in research and develop new interfaces, specially designed for this target group? Or is it about the attitude of adults around these young people, what advice and what guidance they give?

Regardless of how we move forward, the conclusions raise important issues for both parents and professionals working with these young people. Questions we need to work on – if media development is not to be the cause of unperceived exclusion for some. We want everyone to be able to participate on their own terms and will therefore continue to identify and put the spotlight on imbalances. Without this work, the rights and freedoms of some young people are likely to be quietly trimmed back.

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# Contents

# Background, method and reading directions

## Background

In 2014, the Swedish Media Council conducted an inventory of the knowledge of media use among children with cognitive and intellectual disabilities. It showed major shortcomings, especially in terms of quantitative data – Swedish quantitative data was entirely missing. In 2015, the agency launched a collaboration with Nätkoll, a Heritage Fund financed project focusing on media use among young people with neuropsychiatric disorders (abbreviated to NPF in Swedish). The collaboration resulted in the report *More, more often and longer: Children and young people with NPF online (Mer, oftare och längre tid: Barn och unga med NPF på nätet)*, where media use among children aged between 13 and 16 years with NPF was compared to the media use of the nationally representative sample in Young People & Media 2015 (see below). The report showed significant differences between the two groups.

The experience of this study realised a need to find out more about the group of young people with intellectual disabilities (abbreviated to IF in Swedish). This group is far too small to be captured by randomly selected national surveys, such as Young People & Media, which is why targeted data collection was needed.

In spring 2016 a collaboration was started between Linköping University (Kristin Alfredsson Ågren, doctoral student at the Department of Social and Welfare studies, docent Anette Kjellberg and professor Helena Habi) and the Swedish Media Council. The aim was to conduct a survey on media use among young people with IF in special school and a survey aimed at their parents on attitudes towards their children's media use. Ethical approval from the Linköping Regional Ethical Review Board for such a survey was obtained within the framework of the doctoral student's thesis work (serial no. 2014/370-31).

## Survey

The Swedish Media Council conducts a survey called Young People & Media every two years. The survey covers a randomly selected sample of children and young people aged 0 to 18 and data collection is carried out by Statistics Sweden. The questionnaire used in this survey was adapted in several stages to make it accessible to the target group of young people with IF. The questionnaire was also used in three pilot tests with young people in special school. As part of Young People & Media, a study of parents' and guardians' attitudes towards children's media use is also carried out; this is called Parents & Media. The questionnaire for this was kept, with the addition of demographic issues. It was pilot tested by a parent with a child in special school.

The adaptations are based on a literature search on the design of quantitative questionnaires for the inclusion of people with cognitive and/or intellectual disabilities. In addition, experiences from a qualitative study conducted at Linköping University[1] and the doctoral student's practical experience of the target group from ten years of work as an occupational therapist were made use of.

The questionnaire adjustments were made in six stages:

1. Some questions were removed, as they were judged to contain concepts that were far too abstract for the target group.[2] However, several variables were retained to allow comparisons with data collected by the Swedish Media Council in the context of Young People & Media.
2. Adaptation of the text to easy-to-read Swedish.

[1] Alfredsson Ågren, Kjellberg & Hemmingsson 2018
[2] Finlay & Lyons 2001

3. The response options were converted to a Likert scale of 2 – 4 points. More than 3 points have proved possible for the target group to manage but five may be too difficult for people with moderate IF.[3] These three stages of adaptations led to the easy-to-read paper questionnaire that was distributed.
4. Sound support: questions and response options were loaded by employees at the technology company Neonova AB.
5. Image support: adaptation and Pictogram images using the software Pict-O-Stat were chosen by the doctoral student with consultative support from the technology company. There were 2–4 images per question and 1 image per response option.
6. The final stage of the adaptation was that a support person could come to pupils' schools with a tablet for support when logging in to answer the survey. In total, the questionnaire for young people contained 45 questions/variables, three of which had three supplementary questions. Five questions were of a demographic nature.

*Validity test*

All questionnaires have been pilot tested with the Think Aloud method (Patton, 2015), which meant that those who pilot tested the questionnaire performed a reasoning together with the researcher on understanding of questions, instructions, etc. Both the paper version and the web version of the young people's survey have been pilot tested for validity and usability for the target group on three occasions with a total of five pupils. Changes in the formulation of questions were made after each occasion and the language was simplified. The parents' survey was pilot tested by one parent of a child in the target group, after which a question on disability was added.

## Selection and participants

The selection process has been decided in consultation with statisticians at Linköping University. Since there are no registries available where young people with IF can be searched for, the selection was made via a stratified selection of four municipalities in two counties with special school units.

Initially, two counties were selected. One county was chosen as a convenience selection to enable the sixth adaptation of the young persons' survey, with the visit of the support person to the school to log on to the questionnaire. The second county was chosen from the perspective that it was more densely populated than the first. A stratified selection of two municipalities per county was done from the outside: different sizes of municipalities; fewer-more residents (Statistics Sweden, 2016). The reason for the selection is the possibility that different municipalities may have different investments in the field of IT, in schools for example, which might affect the outcome. One municipality declined participation via the head of its special school unit. For this reason, another municipality was finally recruited within that county, where data collection began in the autumn of 2017. In the four municipalities, the questionnaires were sent to a total selection of pupils, as well as guardians/parents at all special school units in each municipality with the inclusion criteria that the pupils were 13 – 20 years of age. A total of eleven special school units were included, of which five were primary/lower secondary schools and six were upper secondary schools, with a total of 318 pupils with parents being selected.

According to the National Agency for Education's information, in the academic year 2016/17 there were 4,099 senior level pupils in primary/lower secondary special schools and 5,920 in upper secondary special schools. Of this total of 10,019 young people, 4,123 were in the form of school (training school or individual programme) applying to pupils with moderate to serious IF.[4]

[3] Hartley & MacLean 2006

[4] https://www.skolverket.se/skolutveckling/statistik/sok-statistik-om-forskola-skola-och-vuxenutbildning

## Implementation

The special schools in each municipality were identified by the National Agency for Education's open school unit register and the heads of each school were contacted by the doctoral student. Firstly by e-mail, then by telephone. This work began in October 2016 and has taken place in instalments due to difficulties in reaching the school heads. In two of the municipalities, the school head chose to contact the municipality's education office, which was then contacted by the doctoral student. At eight of the schools, the head delegated to an administrator to send the address details of the guardians/parents of pupils to the university; at the other three schools, the head sent address details. The information obtained was pupils' names, postal addresses and form of school. Distribution to the respective guardians/parents and pupils was done in batches between 25/11/2016 and 25/10/2017; see table 1. One reason for this was that obtaining correct address lists required many repeated contacts with school heads and administrators. The online questionnaire was open to answer until 30/11/2017. Data collection was performed by Kristin Alfredsson Ågren with assistance from Valerie Tegelström.

In total, 114 young people out of the 318 responded to the questionnaire, giving a response rate of 36.2%. This is in line with the response rate of 38.7% that the 2016 survey "Young People & Media" had, distributed by Statistics Sweden. Since comparative data in the Young People & Media survey only covers young people up to and including 18 years of age, all special school pupils over the age of 18 were excluded, resulting in a net basis of 95 informants aged 13 to 18 years, 59% boys and 41% girls. Since age is one of the most important factors for young people's media use,[5] the analyses have been carried out in accordance with age subdivision in Young People & Media: a group of young people aged 13 to 16 (60 individuals) and a group of young people aged 17 to 18 ( 35 individuals).

However, it was shown that the degree of disability was unevenly distributed among the respondents over 17; significantly more boys had a mild IF and more girls had a moderate one (see below). This means that breaking down the older age range by gender was been judged to be irrelevant – it is likely to reflect mainly the degree of disability. However, the age range 13 to 16 years is broken down by gender. This group consists of 60% boys, 40% girls. According to the National Agency for Education statistics from 2017, 38% of pupils in primary/lower secondary special schools were girls, which means the selection is representative for gender.[6] 62% of the respondents in the age range 13 to 16 years had mild IF and 38% moderate. Broken down by gender, 64% of boys had mild IF compared to 58% of girls.

Comparison data from *Young People & Media 2017* (data collection 2016, see above) consists of responses from 1,161 respondents, 45% boys and 55% girls. The purpose of the comparisons is to see in what way – if any – media use among young people in special school differs from the average in young people of the same age. The study of young people with IF has a relatively small data base, but as has been mentioned, the group is difficult to reach as there are no registries available. It should be pointed out that Young People & Media also includes young people with disabilities. Eight per cent of the respondents in Young People & Media stated that they have some disability. The most commonly stated diagnoses were ADHD, ADD, Autism, Asperger's syndrome and dyslexia.[7] Only two individuals (0.2%) stated that they have mild IF and mild developmental disorder respectively. Given that about 1% of the country's primary/lower secondary school pupils went to special schools in 2017, it can be noted that

[5] See e.g. Davidsson 2018, Ohlsson 2018, Young People & Media 2017 (2017).

[6] http://www.jmftal.artisan.se/databas.aspx?sf=os&hg=L0&vg=Elever&sy=0&varid=1&varid=2&varid=5&varid=3 &year=2017&area=&area=-99&render=true&mode=1#tab-1

[7] In Statistics Sweden's survey of children's living conditions in 2014 – 16, 24% of children aged 12 – 18 were reported to have some form of disability. These include 11% with asthma or allergy. In Young People & Media 2017, only 0.2% of respondents have answered asthma or allergy to the question of whether they have a disability, which means we can assume that they do not perceive this as a real disability.

young people with IF appear to be under-represented among those who responded to the Young People & Media study.[8]

The investigated individuals are were mainly reported as a homogeneous group, i.e. children with intellectual disabilities. However, the group is highly differentiated. Some have mild IF while others have moderate IF. This can have a significant impact on the outcome. The reader should keep in mind that the base, however, is too small to allow the separation of these two groups.

Mild IF means that you can handle most things yourself but need help with some practical things such as managing your finances. Many can read and write simple language.[9]

With moderate IF, you can usually speak and understand things that are simple and connected with everyday life. You need the support of people who make sure that you are well and can help with, for example, food, clothes, times and finances.[10]

## Reading directions

All diagrams in this report show comparisons of media usage among 13 to 16 year-olds with IF and children of the same age range from Young People & Media 2017. The former group is alternately referred to for stylistic reasons as “young people with IF” and “pupils in special school “, which shall thus be seen as synonymous. The group of children included in Young People & Media 2017 is commonly referred to as the "average" because they represent a nationally representative average of the age group in question. For reasons of space, Young People & Media has been shortened to U & M in the diagrams. All results are presented in percentages, for all respondents in the groups young people with IF and the average, as well as broken down by gender.

[8] https://www.skolverket.se/skolutveckling/statistik/sok-statistik-om-forskola-skola-och-vuxenutbildning

[9] https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=2ahUKEwinpIHihLHfAhXBkCwKHezrCfMQFjAAegQICRAC&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.spsm.se%2Fglobalassets%2Fproduktionsstodswebben%2Fbehovsbeskrivningar%2Futvecklingsstorning.pdf&usg=AOvVaw0um88P894J1a7uID5MG2yA

[10] https://www.1177.se/Stockholm/Fakta-och-rad/Sjukdomar/Utvecklingsstorning/

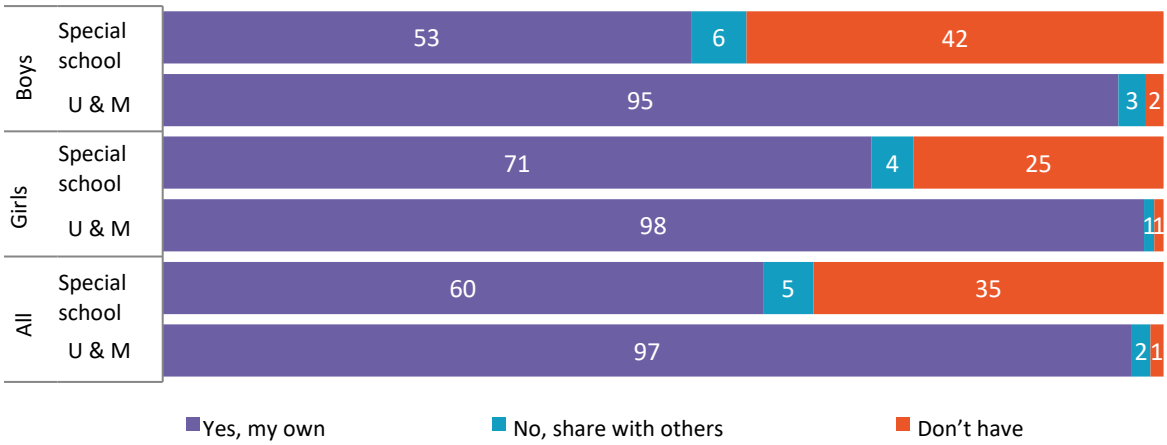
# Report of results

In the following, the survey questions are presented where there is comparable data on pupils in special school and Young People & Media 2017.

## Technology in use

Initially, a number of questions were asked about the respondents' possession of different types of media technology.

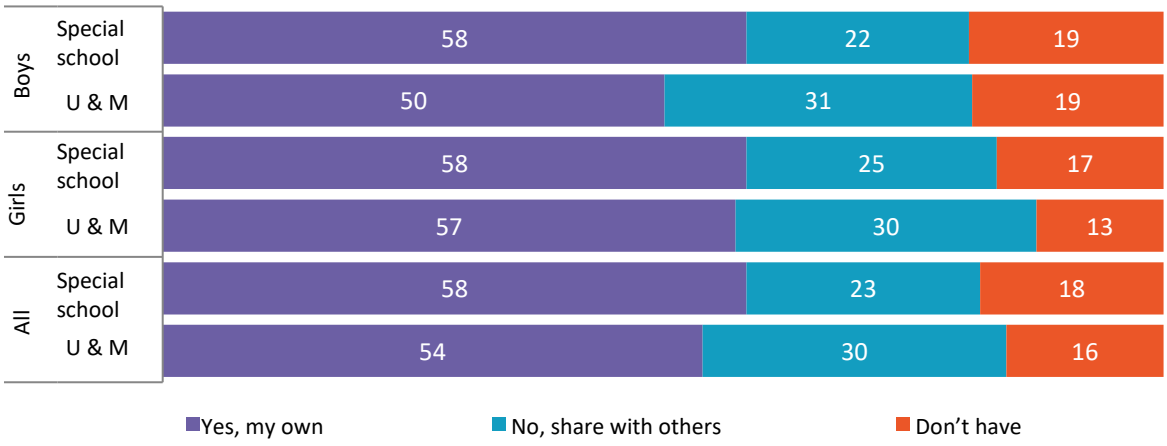
**1. Do you have your own mobile with apps? 13–16 years.**




In Young People & Media 2017, young people were asked if they had access to a smart phone or mobile with buttons, in order to highlight differences in possession of newer and older types of mobile phone. In the questionnaire for young people with IF, the expressions "mobile with apps" and "mobile with buttons" were used instead, as those leading the survey considered this a clearer distinction for the respondents. In the diagram, therefore, mobile with apps means smartphone. While nearly all 13 to 16 year-olds in the Young People & Media survey have their own smart phones/mobiles with apps, only 60% of young people with IF have these. There is also a clear gender difference in phone possession among the latter: 71% of girls have such a mobile, compared with 53% of boys.

Among 17 to 18 year-olds, the proportion of young people with IF with their own mobile phone has increased to 74%, which is still fewer than the Young People & Media respondents with 97%. Having a mobile with buttons is very unusual in Young People & Media: 7% of 13 – 16s and 9% of 17 – 18s have one. By contrast, 26% and 21% respectively of pupils in special school have such telephones.

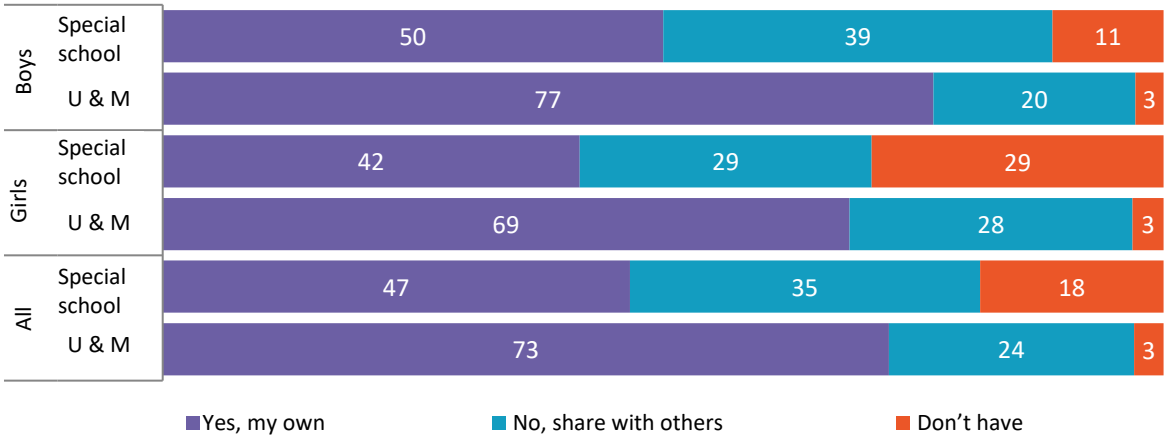
**2. Do you have your own tablet, such as an iPad? 13–16 years.**



While the possession of mobiles is unevenly distributed between the two groups, it is very similar for tablets, at least among the 13 – 16s. In fact, they are more common among pupils in special school. However, the gender differences are small.

Among 17 to 18 year-olds, it is much more common for young people with IF to have their own tablets (63% compared to the average 38%). That 25 percentage points more of the pupils in special school have a tablet is by far the biggest difference in the possession of media technology. While the possession of tablets is lower among the average in the upper teens, it increases with rising age among the special school pupils.

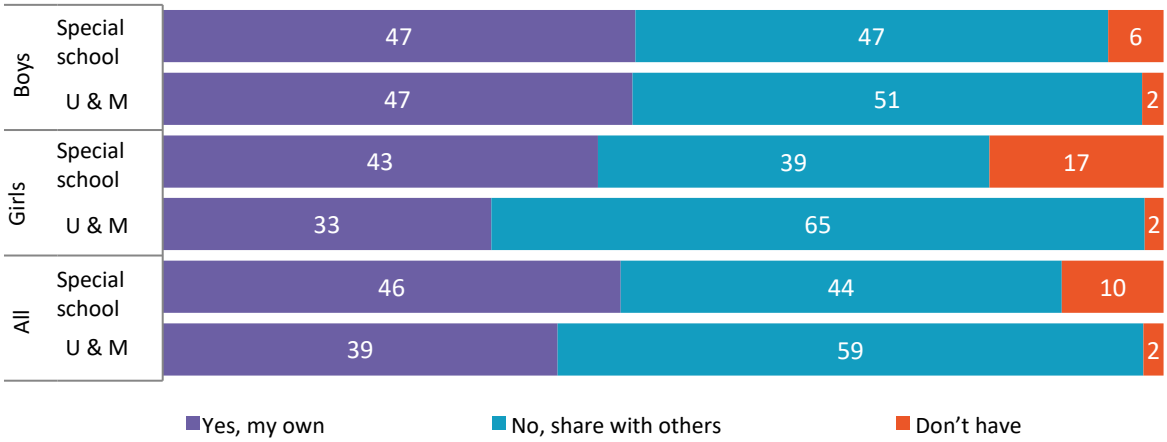
**3. Do you have your own computer? 13–16 years.**




Among 13 to 16 year-olds, computer possession is significantly lower (47%) among pupils in special school compared to the average (73%). It is also somewhat more common for boys to have computers, regardless of disability.

The difference is not quite as large among 17 – 18s, but even in this age range, computer possession is lower among young people with IF (66%) compared to the average (86%). Comparing the development of tablet and computer possession, two different trends can be seen. In the average group, possession of tablets decreases with age, while computer ownership increases. It can be assumed that the computers will to some extent replace the tablets, possibly as the demands for school work increase – a computer is a lot better suited for writing longer texts than a tablet – and also as young people play more advanced games that require greater computing capacity. Among the pupils in special school, possession of both tablets and computers increases with rising age. While among 17 – 18 year-olds it is about equally common for young people with IF to have their own tablet (63%) and computer (66%), having a tablet (38%) is not even half as common as having a computer (86%) among the average group.

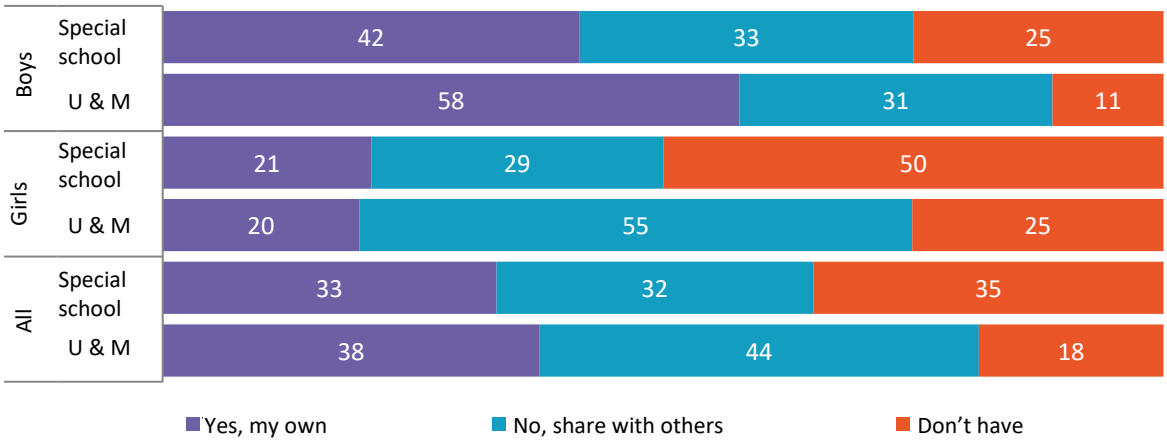
**4. Do you have your own TV? 13–16 years.**




The question relates to technology possession, i.e. not the ability to watch streamed TV via a computer, for example. The differences are small in the age range 13 – 16. It is somewhat more common that young people with IF have a TV (46%, average: 39%). It is more common for girls in special school to have their own TV (43%) compared to girls on average (33%), but there is no difference between the boys. It can be noted that boys in both groups are more likely to have a TV than the girls. The explanation for the boys more often having a TV is possibly to be found in the next question, on the possession of game consoles.

Among 17 to 18 year-olds too, it is somewhat more common for pupils in special school to have their own TV (46%, average: 42%).

**5. Do you have your own Xbox, Playstation or Wii? 13–16 years.**




In total, the differences between young people with IF and the average are only 5 percentage points, but with both the average and the pupils in special school it is much more common for boys to have game consoles than to girls. The great gender differences in console holdings can at least partially explain the differences in TV ownership, since a television is often used as a screen for a console.

Among 17 to 18 year-olds, the differences between the two groups are larger, 32% of the average group has a game console, compared with 46% of pupils in special school.

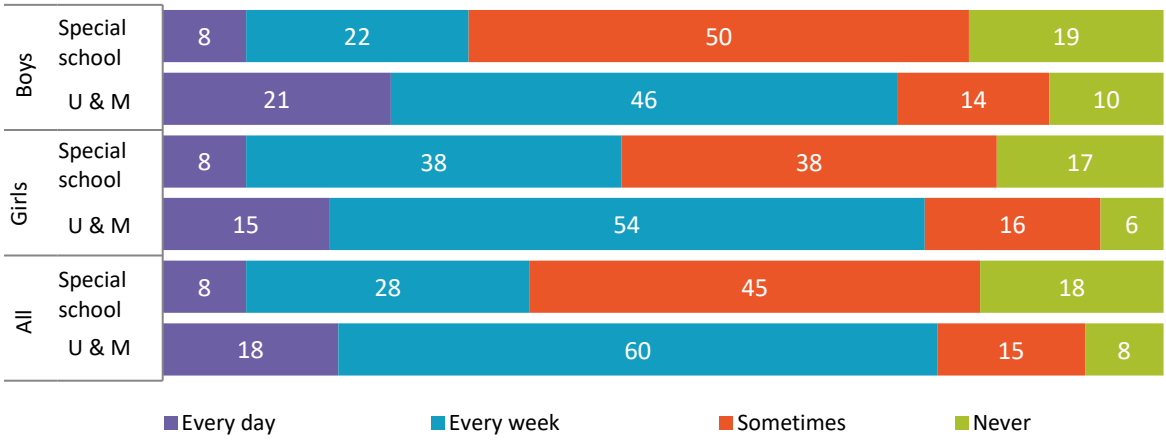
In conclusion, it can be noted that the average group more often has technology that is either mainly communicative – smart mobiles – or more complex to use – computers. However, it is more common

for young people with IF to have devices that have simpler interfaces – tablets – or require little or no input from the user – TVs.

## Leisure activities

The respondents were asked not only questions about technology possession, but also about what activities they devote their leisure time to and how often.

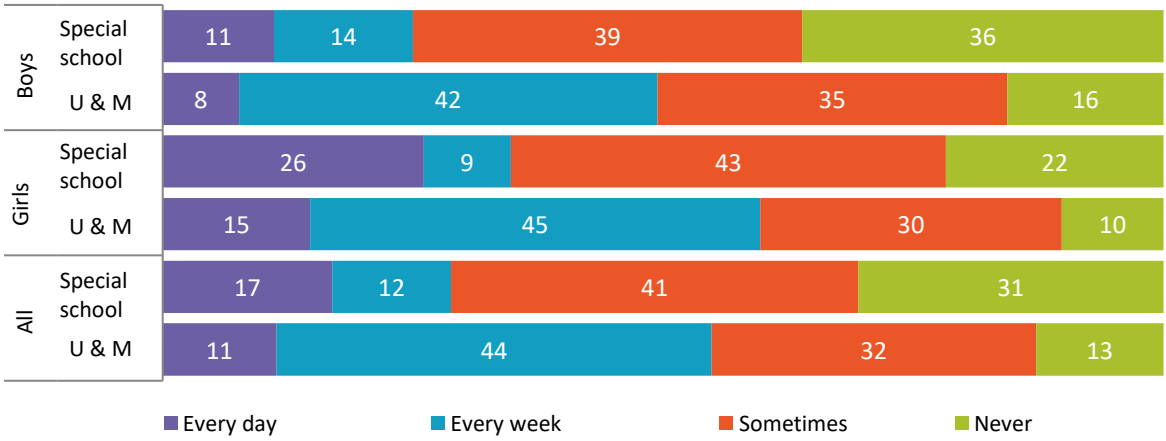
**6. Do you do sport and training? 13–16 years.**




The average group does sport and training much more often (78% do it weekly or more) than pupils in special school (36%). The gender differences are small in the average group (67% of boys training weekly or more compared to 69% of girls), but relatively large among young people with IF (30% of boys training weekly or more compared to 46% of girls).

In the older age range, the differences between the average group and the pupils in special school are smaller. 70% of the former train every week or more compared with 63% of the latter.

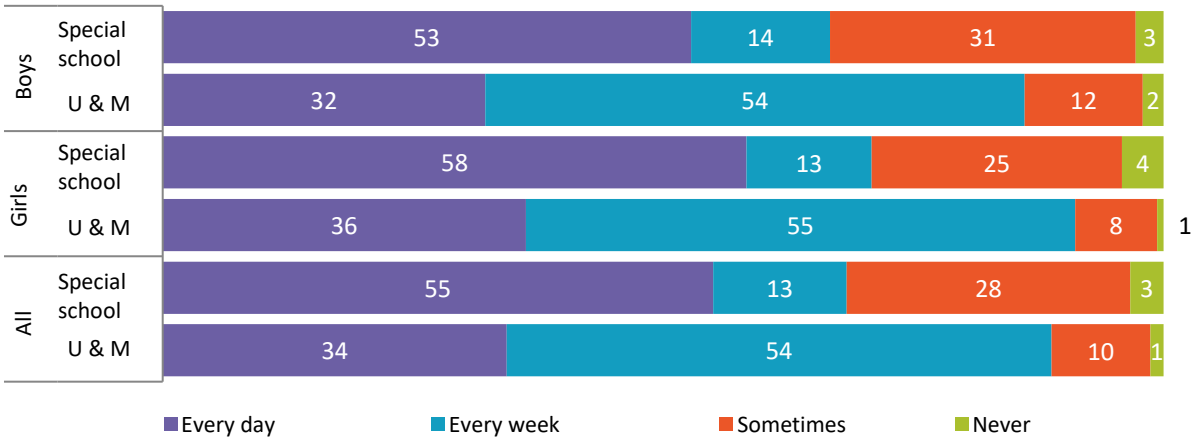
**7. Do you read books and magazines? 13–16 years.**




Reading habits differ in several interesting ways. A greater proportion of young people with IF (17%) read every day compared to the average (11%). At the same time, there is a higher proportion of pupils in special school who never read (31%) than in the average group (13%). If we consider reading weekly or more often, this is much more common in the average group (55%) than in young people with IF (29%). Regardless of disability, the same gender difference occurs: girls read much more often than boys.

In the age range 17 to 18, the difference in daily reading is marginal between pupils in special school (14%) than the average (15%). However, reading every week is significantly less common in the first group (25%) than in the latter (62%). There is also a higher proportion of young people with IF who never read (29%) than the average (19%).

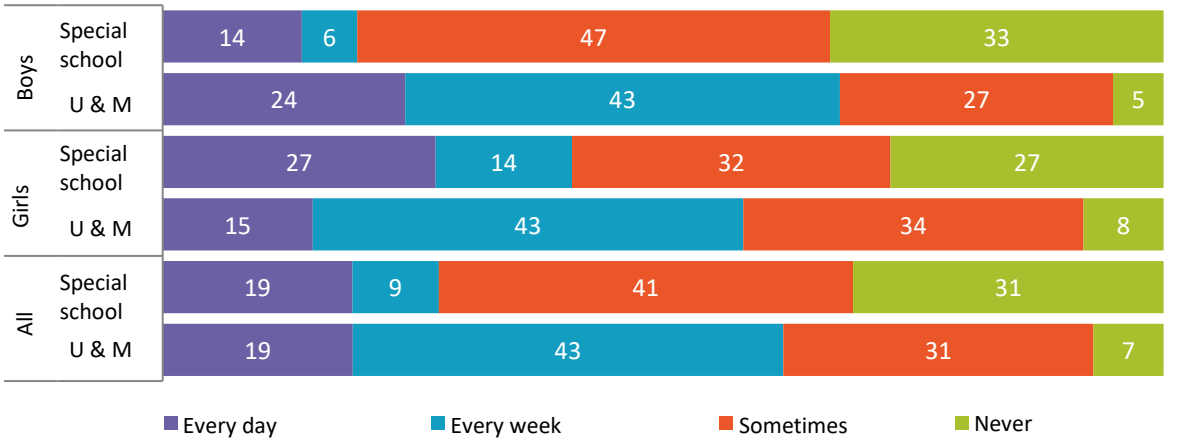
**8. Do you watch films or TV programmes? 13–16 years**




There is a great difference in how often pupils in special school and the average watch films and TV programmes. (Note that the question refers to films and TV programmes, i.e. content regardless of platform.) 55% of the former watch every day, compared with 34% of the latter. At the same time, there is also a significant group of young people with IF who watch less than once a week or never: 31% compared to 11% in the average group. The gender differences are small or non-existent.

The same pattern can be observed in the age range 17 – 18 years, but with slightly less difference in daily viewing. 54% of pupils in special school watch films or TV programmes every day, compared with the average 40%.

**18. Do you watch TV news or read newspapers? 13–16 years.**

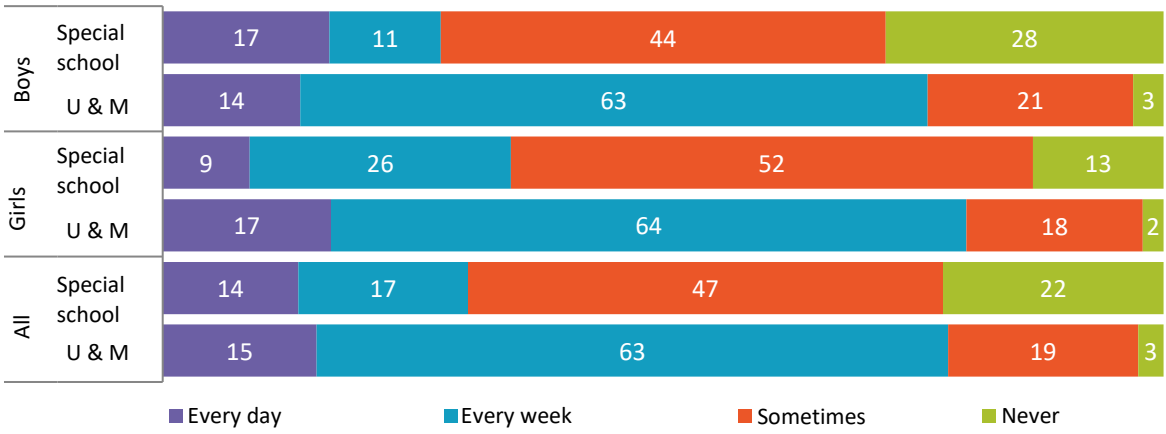



Among the younger group, daily news consumption via television and newspapers is most common among girls in special school (27%). Following the news every week is significantly less common among young people with IF. In this respect, the boys in special school stand out: only 20% of them follow news via TV and newspapers every week. It is also much more common for young people with IF to never follow the news compared to the average. However, here it must be noted that the most common way to obtain news, according to *Young People & Media 2017*, is via smartphones, which

was not included in the questions to the special school pupils. Overall news consumption is thus higher than shown by the diagram among young people in the average group and it may also be higher among young people with IF.

In the older age range too, it is on average more common to follow news every week (62%) compared to pupils in special school (20%).

**10. Do you meet friends at home or out? 13–16 years.**

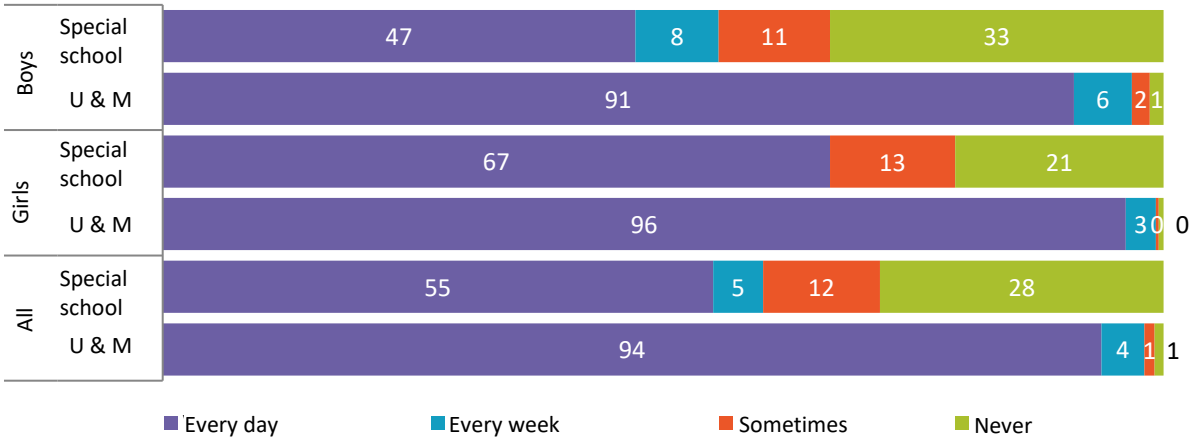



When it comes to meeting friends every day, the differences are small with the exception of girls in special school (9%) who do this less often than girls on average (17%). However, there are very large differences in meeting friends at least weekly, with 78% of the average doing this, compared to 31% of young people with IF. It is also much more common among pupils in special school to never meet friends (22%), compared with the average 3%.

The differences are even greater in the older age range. While 86% of the average meet friends every week, only 22% of young people with IF do so.

Previous research has shown that young people with IF feel lonely more than others do.[11] This is probably a consequence of meeting friends less often. In the same study, however, no differences were seen when it comes to the experience of loneliness in relation to socialising on the Internet. It can therefore be assumed that social contacts on the internet fulfil a compensatory social function for this group.

**11. Do you use a mobile phone? 13–16 years.**

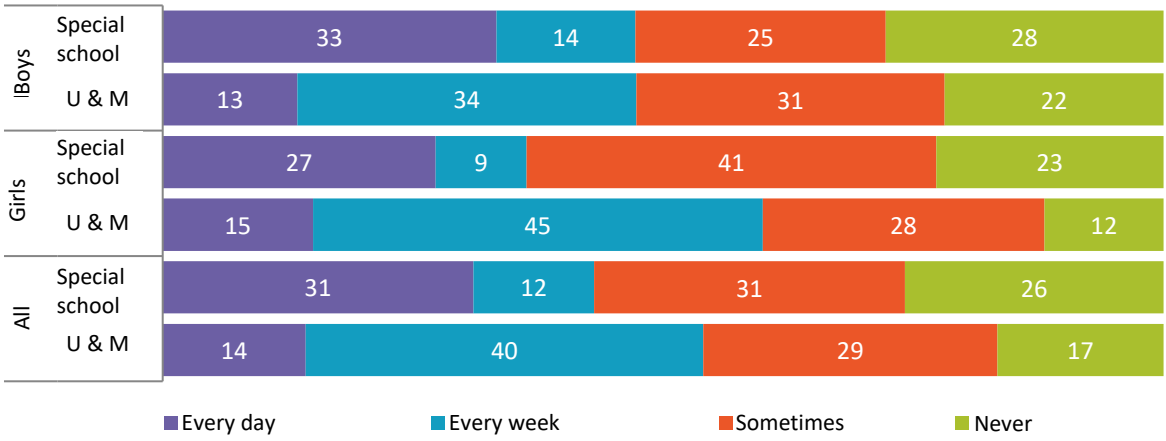



[11] Sharabi & Margalit 2011

As with the possession of mobile phones, the use of mobiles is very unevenly distributed, which is logical because it is difficult to use a mobile phone you do not have. 94% of the average group use a mobile phone daily, compared with 55% of young people with IF. There is also a big difference between boys' and girls' daily use in the special school group, at 47% and 67% respectively. While only 1% of the average group never uses a mobile phone, the corresponding proportion among pupils in special school is 28%.

The differences are smaller, but similar, in the older age range: 66% of young people with IF use a mobile phone daily compared to 94% of the average group. 20% of pupils in special school never use a mobile phone, compared to 0% of the average group.

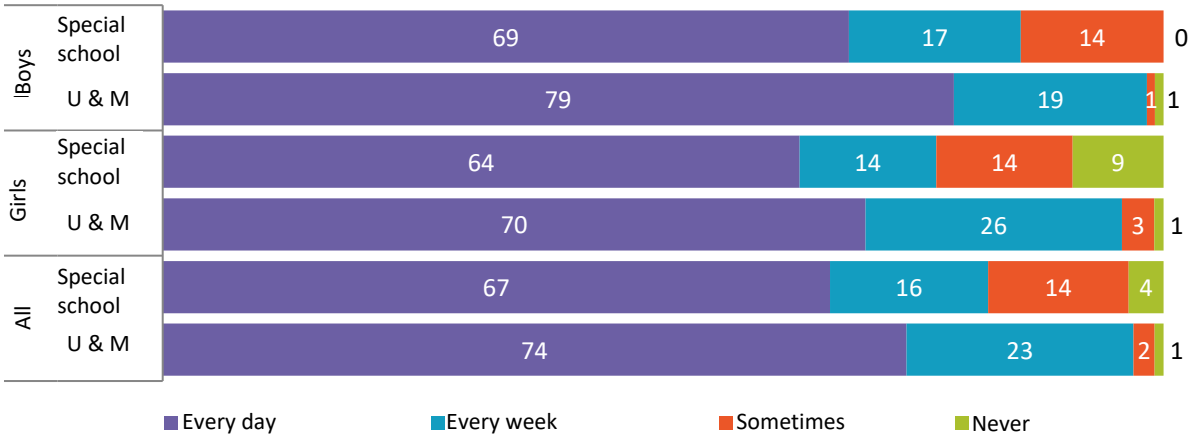
**12. Do you watch TV programmes or films online, such as SVT Play? 13–16 years**




A significantly higher proportion of young people with IF (31%) watch internet streamed TV daily, compared to the average (14%). However, there is a greater proportion of special school pupils who sometimes or never watch streamed TV. While the girls in the average group more often watch streamed TV compared to the boys, the ratio is the opposite among young people with IF.

The same trends appear in the age range 17 – 18: a higher proportion of pupils in special school watch daily (24% compared to the average 16%) and a higher proportion watch sometimes or never (56% compared to the average 39%).

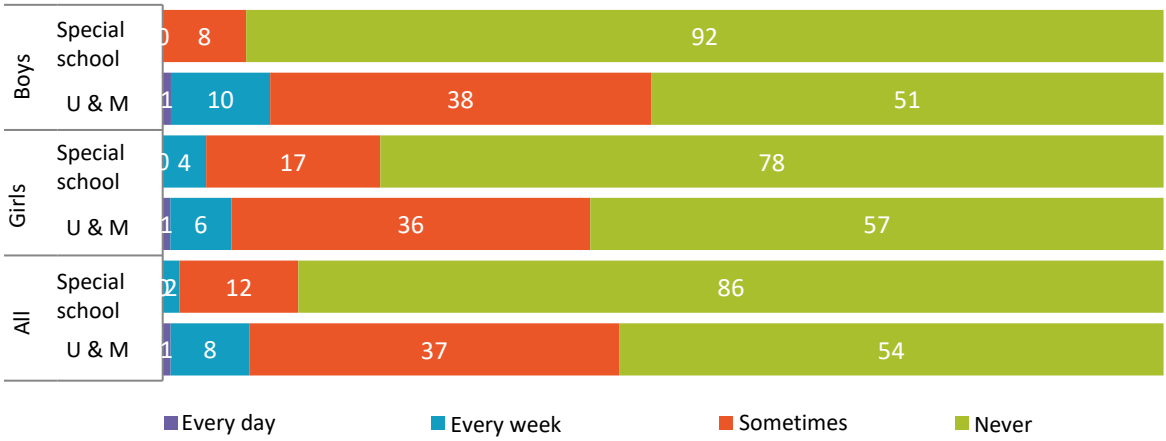
**13. Do you watch film clips, such as on YouTube? 13–16 years.**



While a greater proportion of special school pupils watch internet streamed TV daily, the ratio is the reverse when it comes to film clips on YouTube: 74% of the average group do this, compared to 67% of young people with IF. In both groups, it is somewhat more common for boys to watch daily.

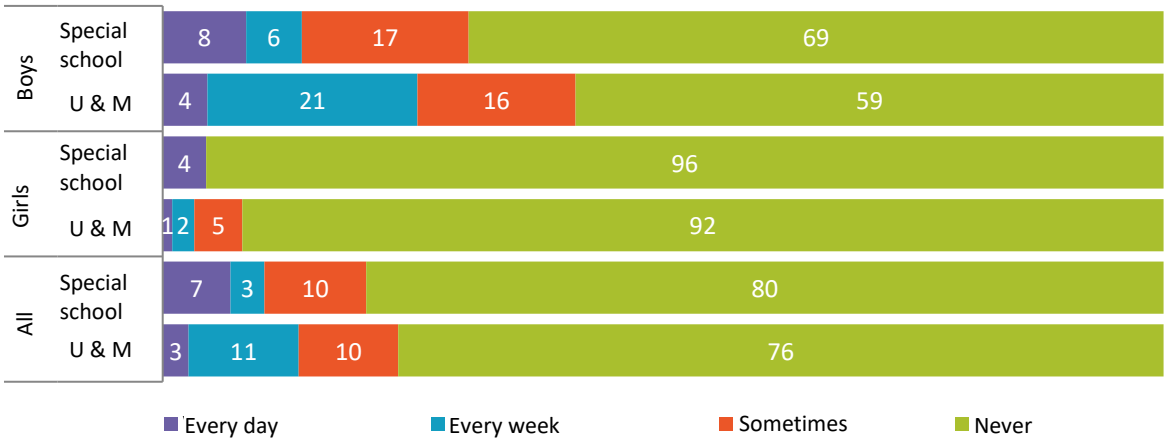
Among 17 – 18 year-olds too, pupils in special school watch slightly less often (56% daily) compared to others (65% daily).

**14. Do you buy things online with a mobile phone, tablet or computer? 13–16 years.**




One of the biggest differences between the groups in this report is in buying things online. While 46% of the average group does this, only 14% of pupils in special school have ever shopped on the internet. The gender differences are small in the first group, while girls with IF more often bought something online (21%) than the boys (8%). Among the older ones too, the differences are large: 24% of pupils in special school have bought something online compared to 59% of the average.

**15. Do you watch porn online, on mobile phone, tablet or computer? 13–16 years**

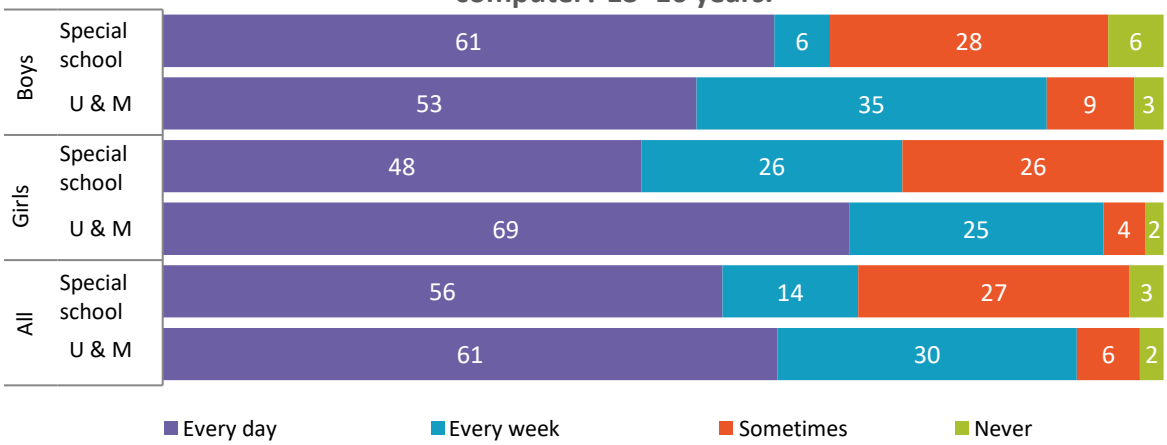



Overall, the pornography use of both groups does not differ very greatly (4 percentage points). However, there are major gender differences in both groups. The gap between boys (41%) and girls (8%) in the average group who watch porn is 33 percentage points and the difference between boys (31%) and girls (4%) among pupils in special school is 27 percentage points.

As has been pointed out, it is not possible to distinguish by gender in the older group, but the difference between the pornography consumption of young people with IF (24% watching sometimes) and the average (38% watching sometimes) is bigger.

In a interview study with parents of and staff who work with young people with IF, several said that the group's relative immaturity results in a later interest in sexuality, which may have affected the result.[12]

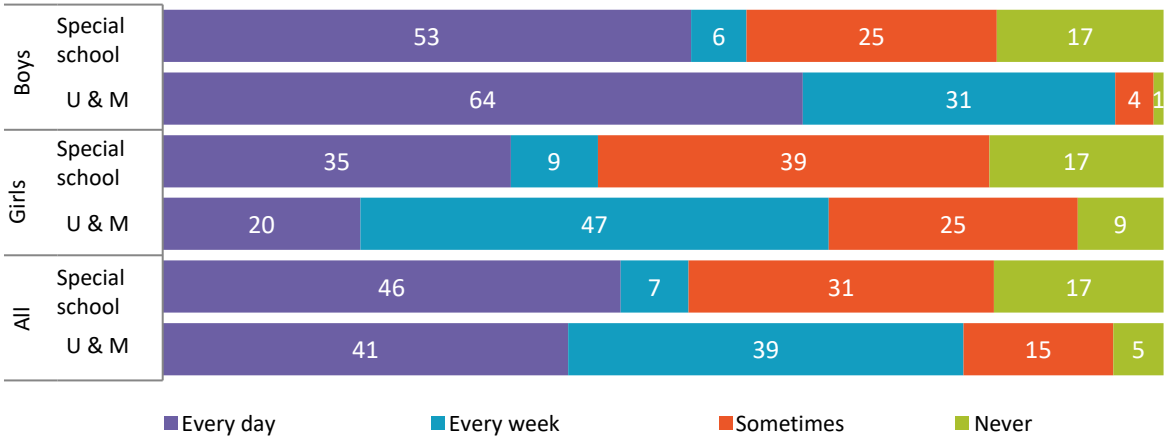
**16. Do you listen to music online, on mobile phone, tablet or computer? 13–16 years.**




Daily listening to music is similar in both groups. However, the proportion of young people with IF (30%) who only listen sometimes or never is significantly higher than among the average group (8%). Among the average group, girls listen daily more often (69%) than the boys do (53%). The opposite applies to pupils in special school, where 61% of boys listen daily against 48% of girls.

In the older age range, daily listening is much more common in the average group (80%) than in young people with IF (62%).

**17. Do you play games on mobile phone, tablet or computer? 13–16 years.**

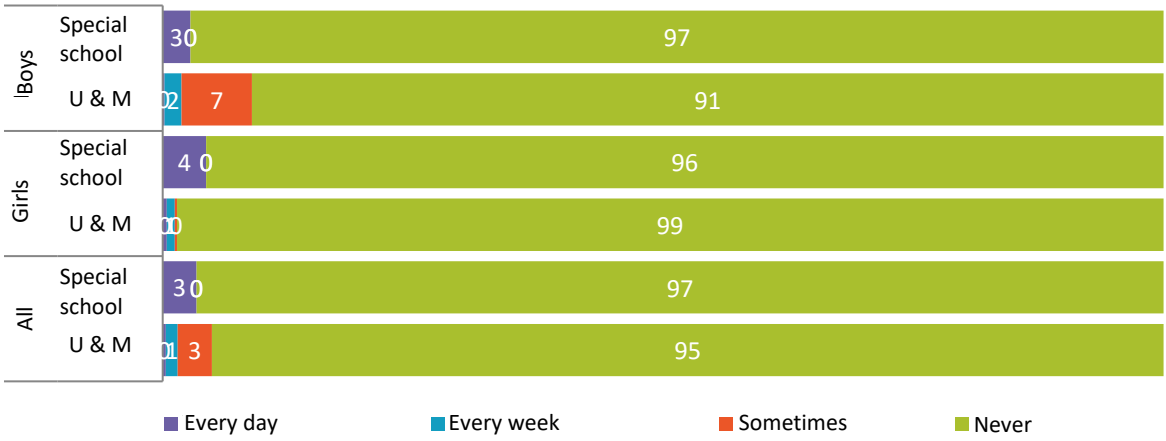



In the case of daily digital gaming, the difference between the groups is only 5 percentage points. On the other hand, there is a significantly higher percentage playing each week in the average group (80%) than among young people with IF (53%). Boys play more often than girls, but gender differences are significantly higher in the average group (daily play among boys: 64%, among girls: 20%) than among pupils in special school (daily play among boys: 53%, among girls: 35%). There are also more young people with IF who play sometimes or never.

[12] Löfgren-Mårtensson, Sorbring & Molin 2015

In the older age range, daily play is more common among pupils in special school (40%) than among the average group (32%).

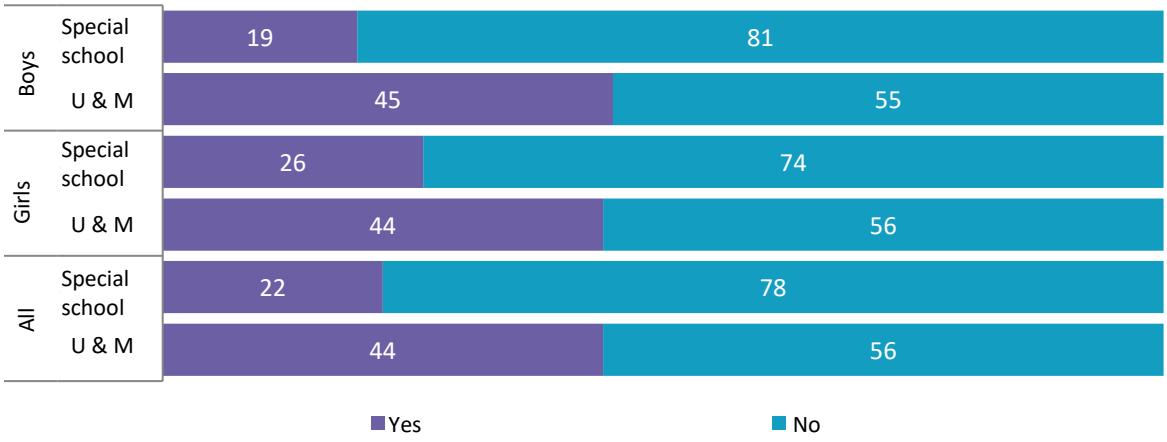
**18. Do you play for real money online? 13–16 years.**




Playing for money is very rare in the age range 13 – 16 years. The only notable difference is that slightly more boys in the average group (9%) play sometimes, compared to boys with IF (3%).

In the older age range too, playing for money is a marginal phenomenon, 9% of pupils in special school play sometimes and 6% of the average group.

**19. Do you use maps and GPS on your mobile phone via the web? 13–16 years.**




It is twice as common for the average group to use maps and GPS on mobile phones (44%) than the special school pupils. The gender differences are small.

In the older age range too, it is much more common for these functions to be used by the average group (71%) than the special school group (43%).

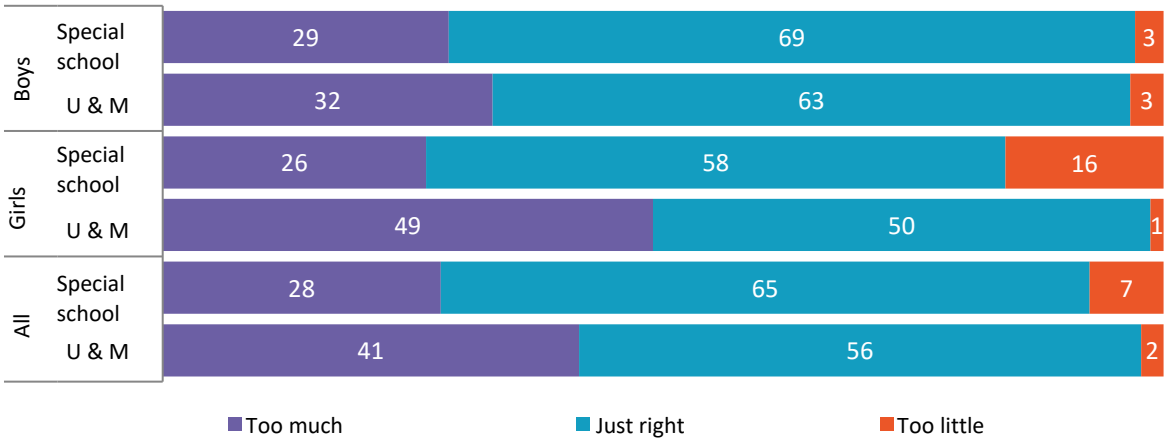
Overall, differences in patterns of use between children with IF and the average can be seen, including when it comes to buying things on the internet, mobile phone use and sport and training. In all three respects, it is less frequent among children with IF compared to the average. Given that young people with IF do not have their own mobile phones to the same extent as the average group, it is no surprise that the use is also significantly lower. There is also a large group, 28%, who never use the mobile phone compared to 1% on average. One explanation may be that they use a tablet

instead of a mobile phone, partly because of the clearer user interface and that it is easier to use if you also have a physical disability. It may also be that they often have an assistant with them and therefore do not need a mobile phone.

However, TV viewing – both linear and streamed – is more frequent among children with IF compared to the average. Daily television viewing is much more common among pupils in special school (55%) than among the average (34%). Daily television viewing is generally most common among children under 10 years of age, and the fact is that watching among young people with IF is comparable to children aged 2 – 8 years in the Young People & Media studies. This may have to do with the intellectual development of children with IF: Consuming media is simpler than producing it and as an anonymous consumer you also don't have to be afraid of exposing yourself - you can relax.

## Self-perceived time and vulnerability on the Internet

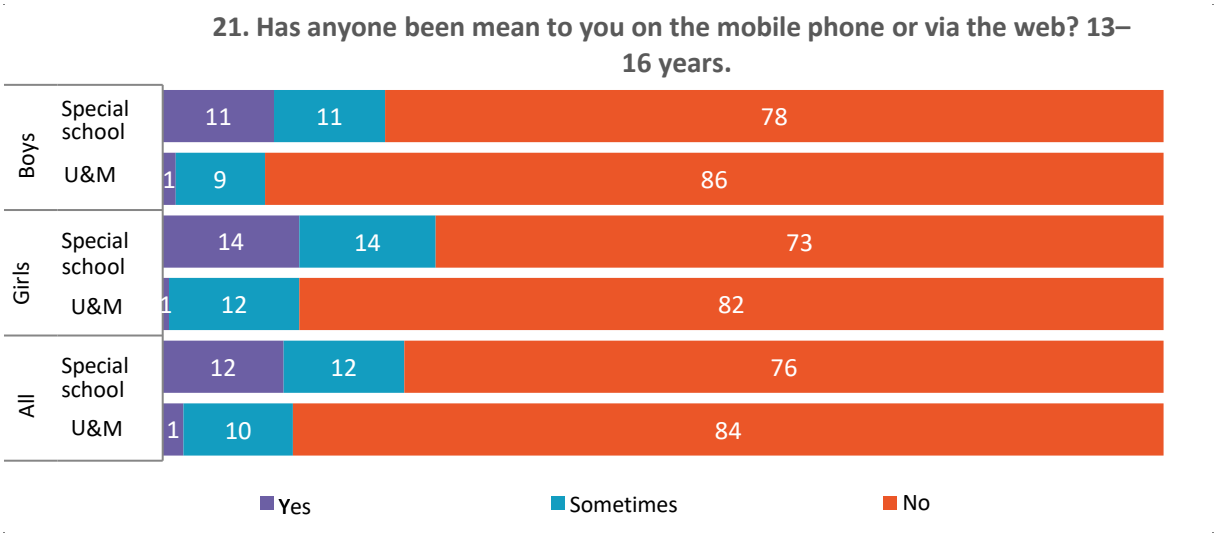
**20. How much do you think you use the web on your mobile phone, tablet or computer? 13–16 years.**




Respondents were also asked to indicate if they think they are using their digital technology too much, just enough or too little. Overall, it is more common for the average group to consider they use the mobile phone, tablet and computer too much (41%, special school group: 28%). Among the boys there are no major differences between the groups, but it is much more common for girls from the average group to consider that they use the devices too much (49%) than do girls with IF (26%). The latter group also includes a share that think they use these devices too little (16%).

Among 17 to 18 year-olds, the difference between the groups is even greater: while 43% of the average group think they use the media too much, only 19% of the pupils in special school think the same. This may be due to the fact that young people with IF generally actually use media to a lesser extent. It can also be explained by the parents who say that the internet gives the children social contacts that they would not otherwise have had, and thus conveys to the children that their media use is positive.[13]

[13] Löfgren-Mårtensson, Sorbring & Molin 2015, Molin, Sorbring & Löfgren-Mårtensson 2015



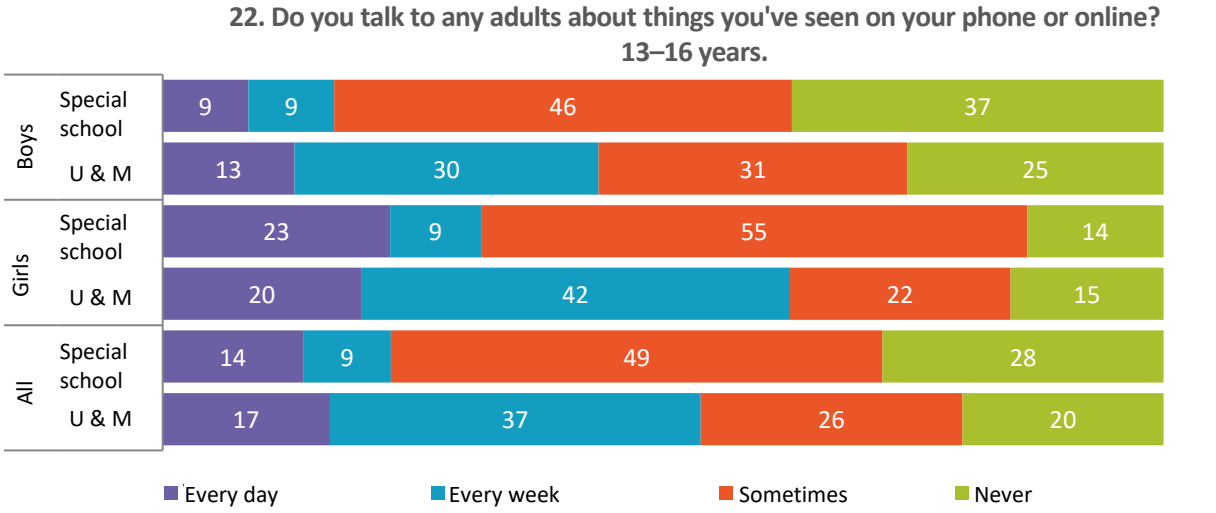

It is more than twice as common for young people with IF to have found that someone has been mean to them on a mobile phone or online (24%), compared to the average (11%). In both groups, this is more common among girls than among boys.

In the older age range, it is more than three times as common for young people with IF to have experienced this (30%) compared to the average (9%).

The reason why people have acted mean towards pupils in special school is not apparent from this study. However, research from Spain, Chile and Mexico has shown that 97.7% of e-bullying directed at young people with IF is because they are "different".[14]

## Communication with adults

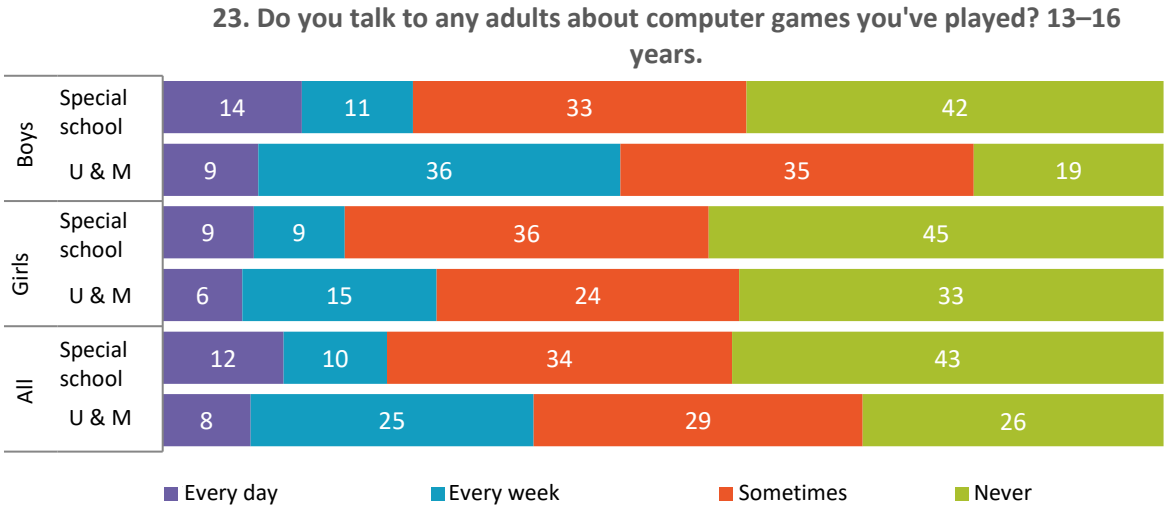
To measure the extent to which the informants communicate with adults about their media use, two questions were asked: about how often they talk to adults about things they have seen on the internet and about computer games they played.




[14] Jenaro et al (2018).

The daily communication about experiences on the internet or the mobile phone is not very different between the two groups. However, the proportion that communicates every week does differ. While 23% of pupils in special school talk to adults, the proportion of the average group is 54%. In both groups, the boys communicate less than the girls about this. It can also be noted that girls with IF talk to adults slightly more often (23%) than the girls from the average group (20%).

In the older age range, the differences are even greater: while 21% of pupils in special school talk about internet experiences each week, the proportion of the average group is 64%. In a Swedish study of parents of young people with IF, several respondents explained that they did not worry especially about what the children did online, because they did not think they could end up in problematic situations. The parents who really worried, asked more. The parents also pointed out that the web provided an opportunity for children to act without being perceived as disabled.[15]




When it comes to computer games, daily communication with adults is slightly more common among young people with IF (12%) compared to the average (9%). The ratio is the reverse however when it comes to talking every week (young people with IF: 22%, average: 33%). There are also considerably more pupils in special school who never talk to an adult about this (43% compared to the average 26%). In both groups the boys talk more with adults than the girls do, which may be explained by boys playing far more than girls and thus having more to talk about.

The same trends can be observed in the older age range: daily communication with adults is somewhat more common among young people with IF (15% compared to the average 8%) while weekly is less common in the same group (15% compared with 26%).

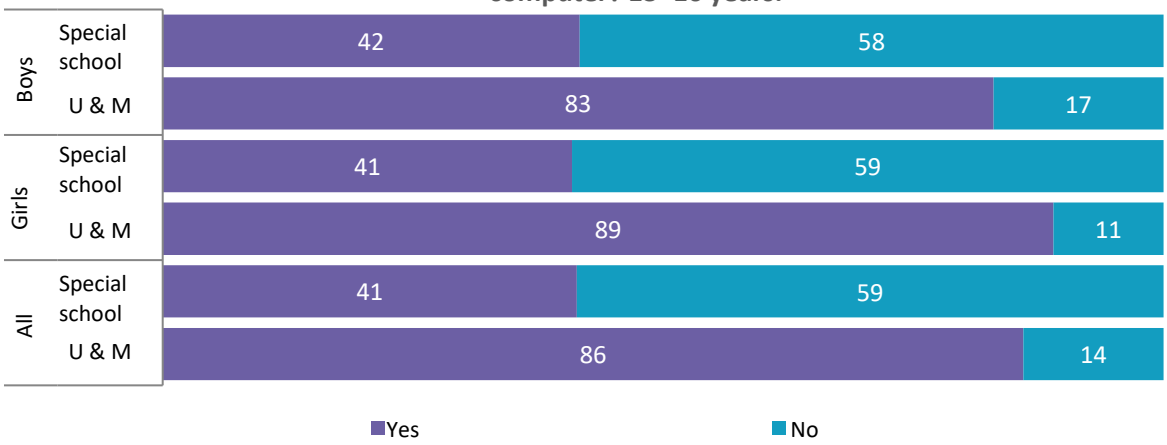
## Deliberate online exposure

Finally, a number of questions were asked about how much personal information is deliberately shared on the internet. In Young People & Media, the issues related to exposure in social media, but in the questionnaire to young people with IF, the questions were simplified to apply "online" in general. The questions are therefore not 100% comparable, but since the lion's share of any deliberate exposure on the internet (at least where the user is not a public figure and has at least a rudimentary control over how and which personal data to show) is done in social media, there is reason to report the answers. The use of social media differs greatly between groups. While 92% of the 13 – 16

[15] Molin, Sorbring & Löfgren-Mårtensson 2015

year-olds and 97% of 17 – 18 year-olds in the average group use social media, the corresponding proportion among young people with IF is only 44% and 61% respectively.

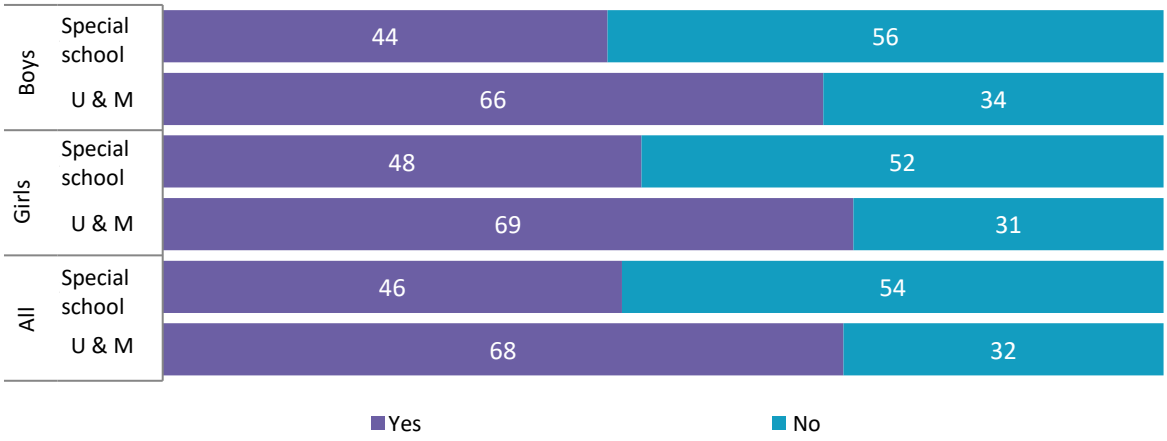
**24. Do you show pictures of yourself online, on your mobile, tablet or computer? 13–16 years.**




Significantly fewer pupils in special school (41%) show images of themselves compared to the average (86%). The gender differences are small in both groups.

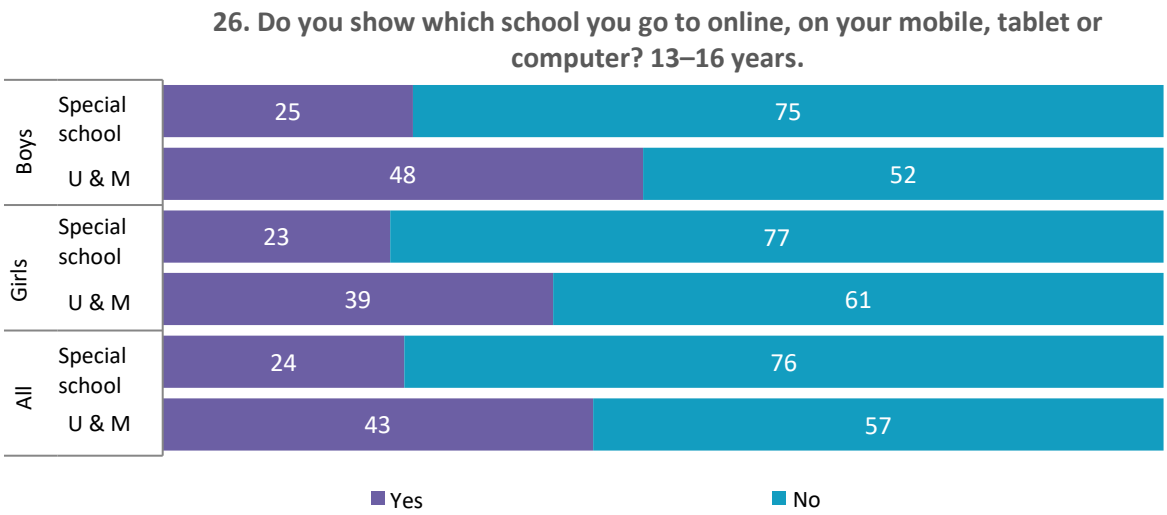
The same tendency can be observed among 17 to 18 year-olds: 89% of the average group show pictures of themselves compared to 53% of young people with IF.

**25. Do you give out your real name online, on your phone, tablet or computer? 13–16 years.**




When it comes to giving their real name too, the pupils in special school are more restrictive (46%) than the average (68%). Here too, gender differences are small.

The same tendency is found in the older age range where 47% of the young people with IF give their own name compared to 89% of the average group.




The differences are smaller between the two groups when it comes to stating which school they go to – but it is also generally significantly fewer who do this, 43% of the average group compared to 24% of young people with IF. In the average group, it is more common for boys to state this (48%) than girls (39%).

Significantly more state their school's name in the older age range, and it is still more common among the average group (62%) than among pupils in special school (41%).

Qualitative studies have shown that young people with IF rarely let either their disability or that they go to special school be included in their self-presentation in social media.[16] Since, as previously noted, they are more exposed to malice online, and this malice is likely to be motivated by their disability, it is a fully logical strategy to try to conceal this. There are also signs that the more young people with IF interact with non-disabled online, the more negative experiences they have. This leads to both reduced social media activity and reduced general internet usage.[17]

## Mild and moderate intellectual disabilities

This report mainly focuses on the group young people with IF as a homogeneous group. However, the sample includes young people with both mild and moderate IF, so differences between these two groups need a brief illustration. Unfortunately, the number of respondents is too few to be able to break down the results by both degree of IF and gender.

In most questions, young people with mild IF are higher than those with moderate IF. This applies both to possession and to the different uses and other experiences of media. However, there are some exceptions. Young people with moderate IF own a tablet (61%) and a TV (50%) somewhat more often than young people with mild IF (57% and 43% respectively). Daily television viewing is significantly more common among young people with moderate IF (70% compared to 46% among young people with mild IF), as is daily listening to music (68% compared to 49%% among young people with mild IF). Pupils with moderate IF also talk more often with adults about things they've seen on the mobile phone or online (weekly: 38% compared with 14% among young people with mild IF) and computer games they played (weekly: 29% compared to 19% of young people with mild IF). Young people with moderate IF have also been significantly less exposed to someone acting stupidly towards them on mobile phone or online (10% compared to 32% among young people with mild IF).

[16] Löfgren-Mårtensson 2008, Molin, Sorbring & Löfgren-Mårtensson 2015
[17] Molin, Sorbring & Löfgren-Mårtensson 2017

All in all, this points to the media forms that require little input from the user (music, TV programmes) being dominant in the group with moderate IF. The media technology that is more common among them than among young people with mild IF is relatively easy to use (TV, tablet). That those with moderate IF speak more with parents than young people with mild IF can be interpreted as their requiring more support in their media usage. That they are significantly less exposed to malice online is certainly explained by their use of social media to a much lesser extent (23% compared to 57% among young people with mild IF).

Compared to data from Young People & Media, an image emerges in which the media use of young people with moderate IF deviates more from the average than those with mild IF, depending on the degree of disability.

## Summary and conclusions

The Swedish Media Council has, among other things, the task of monitoring media development in relation to children and young people and of disseminating information and providing guidance on the media situation of children and young people. This task is for all children and young people in Sweden, the average, but also for groups with special needs. The aim of this study is to contribute to an increased understanding of how children with intellectual disabilities use media – so that adults around them have a current factual basis that can facilitate their support function. When comparing with the data from the Young People & Media surveys, the clearest difference in the everyday media life of young people with IF is that a large group consistently responds that they infrequently or never use a technology or media service. This applies to all the media activities that have been asked about, including those where daily activities (e.g. watching films or TV programmes) are more common among pupils in special school. The same applies to the possession of media technology: although it is more common for young people with IF to own tablets and televisions, there is also a large proportion of them who have no access to them at all.

Much of the media use among young people with IF is similar to that which can be observed among younger children in the Young People & Media studies. For example, it is more common for an average 9 – 12 year-old to have his or her own mobile phone (85% ) than young people of 17 – 18 with IF (74%). In the case of computers and game consoles too, possession is lower among pupils in special school, while they have their own tablets and television sets slightly more often than average. Thus, they more often have devices that have simpler user interfaces or require little or no input from the user. More complex interfaces can make it too difficult for the group to use media technology. In a Swedish qualitative study of media usage among young people with IF, software updates appeared to cause problems for the group. While software updates often have the supposed purpose of adding new features and improving the user experience, several find that when they have just learned a game or other programme, everything changes and nothing works as they are accustomed any more.[18] The user experience is thus degraded by the update.

Qualitative studies have also shown that the use of social media among young people with IF is more consumption-centred than actively productive. Many are content to follow the interaction of others, but post little or nothing themselves.[19]

It is well-attested in research that age is a highly discriminatory factor for children's media use. The intellectual disability means, however, that media use among young people with IF more closely resembles that of younger children than that of peers without IF. In fact, this report only shows two areas where media use among pupils in special school differs strongly from that of children aged between 9 and 12 years.

Firstly, it is a question of vulnerability on the Internet. Children in the average group are significantly less exposed to malice and bullying online before reaching adolescence – such phenomena usually culminate in the early teenage years. Young people with IF are not only exposed to this more often than the younger members of the average group. Such abuse is almost twice as common compared to those of similar age.

Secondly, it is about the consumption of pornography, where daily consumption among those with IF is higher than the average, and thus significantly higher than among the average group of 9 to 12 year-olds.

[18] Alfredsson Åberg, Kjellberg & Hemmingsson 2018
[19] Molin, Sorbring & Löfgren-Mårtensson 2015

On the basis of the data, it is not possible to say anything about the personal importance of media use for young people with IF, or whether it differs from other children's experiences. However, other studies have shown that the group's online communications can be said to have two different sides. On the one hand, many young people with IF are socially isolated and the web can serve as a help to socialising. On the other hand, they are also more vulnerable than average to e-bullying, being deceived and sometimes sexually exploited online.[20]

Young people with IF use social media to a significantly lesser extent than the average group. They are far more restrictive about showing pictures of themselves, using their real name and showing which school they go to than the average group. Given that they have been more exposed to malice online, it is not surprising that they are more cautious. Another, more speculative, interpretation is that this is because they experience their disabilities as stigmatising.

This report is – as far as we know – the first quantitative mapping of media use among young people with intellectual disabilities. This shows that the group in question not only has more difficulty in exploiting the potential of the digital information society, but that it is also more vulnerable to the downside of life online. It is clear that more knowledge is needed about their conditions and what efforts are needed to enable an already exposed group to be able to participate in the contemporary information society on the same terms as everyone else.

[20] Löfgren-Mårtensson, Molin & Sorbring 2018

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