Microsoft Digital Civility Index (DCI) 2017 – Belgium



The 2017 Civility, Safety and Interaction Online study examines the extent of negative behaviors and online interactions and their consequences. These results build on last year’s study and were based on interviews with teens ages 13-17 and adults ages 18-74. The scope of research increased to encompass 23 countries and 20 online risks (nine newly included countries, three added risks).[[1]](#endnote-1)

Themes for 2017

Risk exposure below the global averages

1. Belgians reported exposure to online risks for themselves, family or friends at levels significantly below the global averages.
2. Targets of online risks often named acquaintances, friends or family as perpetrators.
3. Encouraging signs emerged as people began to evolve their approaches towards the challenges of negative online interactions.
4. Millennials (ages 18-34) had the highest lifetime exposure to online risks while Baby Boomers (ages 50-74) reported the highest level of civil behavior.
5. Consequences from bullying and harassment were higher for females than males.

Intrusive category driven higher by new risks

 1 Belgium DCI was 61%

DCI increased two points YOY placing Belgium eighth out of 23 countries surveyed. In 2017, we maintained and added two risks to the Intrusive category and one risk to Behavioral. Without these changes, DCI would have fallen three points to 56%.

**Intrusive:** The addition of Hoaxes, Scams & Frauds (20%) and Misogyny (6%) lifted the category up seven points YOY. Unwanted Contact (36%) remained the top risk overall, but was lower than the global average.

**Behavioral:** Behavioral risks fell six points YOY led by seven point declines in being Treated Mean, Trolling and Online Harassment. Each of these three risks were below their respective global average. Microaggression (13%), new in 2017 came in a point over the global average.

**Sexual:** Slightly under three in 10 had experienced a Sexual risk like 2016. Unwanted Sexting Received (17%) remained the top risk but dropped 4 points YOY.

**Reputational:** Reputational risks fell 3 points YOY, virtually equal with the global average. Damage to Personal Reputation (10%) was the most common risk.

2Targets of online risks often named people they knew as perpetrators

28% of perpetrators were family, friends or acquaintances

(among those who said they were treated unsafely or uncivilly)

Although many believe online risks are facilitated by the anonymity provided by the internet, these experiences often involved people they knew personally including family and friends (28%) compared to 36% globally. 45% had met their perpetrator in real life which was up three points from 2016 and eight points less than the global average (53%). Among those who had met their perpetrator, 74% met before the risk occurred. Familiarity with the perpetrator in real life was related to an increased exposure to online risks. The average number of risks was 80% higher among those who had met the perpetrator in real life vs. those who had not (4.5 vs. 2.5).

Familiarity with the perpetrator in real life also affected exposure to consequences. Over six in 10 respondents (64%, +2 points YOY) suffered at least one consequence from online risks with loss of trust online and offline being the most common. Among those who had met their perpetrator in real life, 61% lost trust in others online and 57% lost trust in others offline. This compared to lost trust in people online (37%) and offline (13%) for those who had not met the perpetrator in real life.

Loss of trust was the biggest consequence

3 Encouraging signs emerged

Belgians scored at or below the global averages for civil behavior as defined by the Microsoft Digital Civility Challenge, announced in 2017. They matched the global averages for actively trying to treat others with respect and dignity (69%, 71%) and standing up for others (27%, 27%). Pausing before replying to something they did not agree with fell significantly short of the global average (33%, 46%).

Reports of civil behavior were widespread

41% of respondents said they were extremely or very confident in managing online risks up five points YOY but lower than the global average (46%). A significantly greater number of Belgians knew where to find help if needed (39%, +13 points); six points below the global average (45%).

Females were more likely than males to pause before replying to something they disagreed with (71%, 61%). Respondents ages 50-74 reported the highest levels of civil behavior.

4 Millennials had the highest lifetime risk exposure

Nearly seven in 10 Millennials experienced a consequence from online risks

Millennial generation respondents (ages 18-34) had the highest levels of risk exposure as measured by DCI (67%) and average number of risks (2.4). One possible explanation for these high levels is that Millennials were the first generation to grow up in a digital, media-saturated world with abundant free time to explore and experiment. However, they had the second lowest rate of consequences. Three in 10 Millennials (30%) were extremely or very concerned about online risks and 15% said they were not treated in a safe or civil manner online.

Conversely, the Baby Boom generation (ages 50-74) had the lowest DCI, average number of risks (1.6) and consequences from risks (57%). More importantly, this age group reported some of the highest levels of civil behavior online as defined by the Microsoft Digital Civility Challenge, announced in 2017. They were more likely to treat others with respect and dignity and to be thoughtful in online exchanges when people disagreed. Teens were more likely than Boomers to stand up for themselves and for others.

Boomers were the most respectful & civil

5 Consequences from harassment were more likely to affect females and teens

Belgium had the sixth lowest rate of harassment (46%) among the 23 countries surveyed. This study defined harassment as Unwanted Contact, Unwanted Sexting, Online Harassment, Cyberbullying or Misogyny. Females reported higher rates of harassment versus males (51%, 42%) driven primarily by Unwanted Contact. Adults said they encountered Unwanted Contact more often than teens.

Over four in 10 people were harassed

The severity of consequences from all forms of harassment were higher for females than males. Females were eight points higher than males on lost trust in people offline and six points higher on lost trust in people online. Similarly, consequences for teens were higher than adults on life became more stressful (41%, 22%) and lost trust in people offline (46%, 41%).

Definitions of online risks

1. **Cyberbullying:** When the Internet, phones or other devices are used to send or post text, images, or video intended to hurt, embarrass or intimidate another person.
2. **Damage to Personal reputation:** Damage or destruction to the image created of you through PERSONAL information you or others shared online in blogs, postings, pictures, tweets, videos, etc.
3. **Damage to Professional/Work reputation:** Damage or destruction to the image created of you through work information you or others shared online in blogs, postings, pictures, tweets, videos, etc.
4. **Discrimination:** A person who is discriminated against or excluded based on gender, ethnic origin, religion, race, disability, or sexual orientation.
5. **Doxxing:** The process of collecting and distributing or posting information about a person (e.g., name, age, email, address, phone number, photographs, etc.) without their permission.
6. **Hate speech:** speech that attacks a person or group based on gender, ethnic origin, religion, race, disability, or sexual orientation.
7. **Hoaxes, scams, frauds:** The spreading of false rumors (e.g., chain letters), criminal attempts to obtain personal information often for monetary gain (e.g., phishing scams), malicious emails disguised as someone you know (e.g. virus).
8. **Microaggression:** Casual insults made towards any marginalized group in society (e.g., religious or ethnic minorities, women, LGBT, people with disabilities, etc.).
9. **Misogyny**: An expression or demonstration of dislike, contempt for, or ingrained prejudice against women.
10. **Online harassment:** Threats or other offensive behavior (not sexual solicitation) sent online or posted online for others to see.
11. **Revenge pornography:** A sexually explicit portrayal of one or more people distributed without their consent.
12. **Sextortion:** When someone threatens to distribute your private and sensitive material if you don’t provide them images of a sexual nature, sexual favors, or money. The perpetrator may also threaten to harm your friends or relatives by using information they have obtained from your electronic devices unless you comply with their demands.
13. **Sexual solicitation:** A person who requests to engage in sexual activities or sexual talk or to give personal sexual information that is unwanted.
14. **Swatting:** The act of deceiving emergency services (e.g., police, fire, medical) into sending an emergency response based on the false report of an ongoing critical incident or crime.
15. **Terrorism recruiting:** An attempt by a terrorist or terrorist organization to recruit a person for the purposes of causing harm.
16. **Treated Mean:** Words or messages sent to another person online that are unkind, unfair or malicious.
17. **Trolling:** A deliberate act to make someone mad or angry using online or social media comments in a clever, but deceitful manner.
18. **Unwanted Sexting Sent:** I sent unwanted sexually explicit messages and imagery.
19. **Unwanted Sexting Received:** Received unwanted sexually explicit messages and imagery.
20. **Unwanted contact:** Being personally contacted (by phone or in person) by someone who obtained your information online but without inviting them to contact you.
1. 9 new countries: Argentina, Colombia, Peru, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Vietnam

14 Wave 1 countries: Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Chile, China, France, Germany, India, Mexico, Russia, South Africa, Turkey, UK, U.S.

3 new online risks: Hoaxes, Frauds and Scams as one collective risk, Microaggression, Misogyny [↑](#endnote-ref-1)