

Public opinion on funded research on PUI  
International Festival of Science and Arts: “Problematic Use of the Internet - Raising the  
Public Voice”  
28<sup>th</sup> April 2021

A total of 369 people registered for the festival. The majority of registrants came from Macedonia and Lithuania, while other well-represented countries were the United Kingdom and Portugal (see figure 1).

*Figure 1: Total number of people registered for the festival, sorted by their country of origin.*

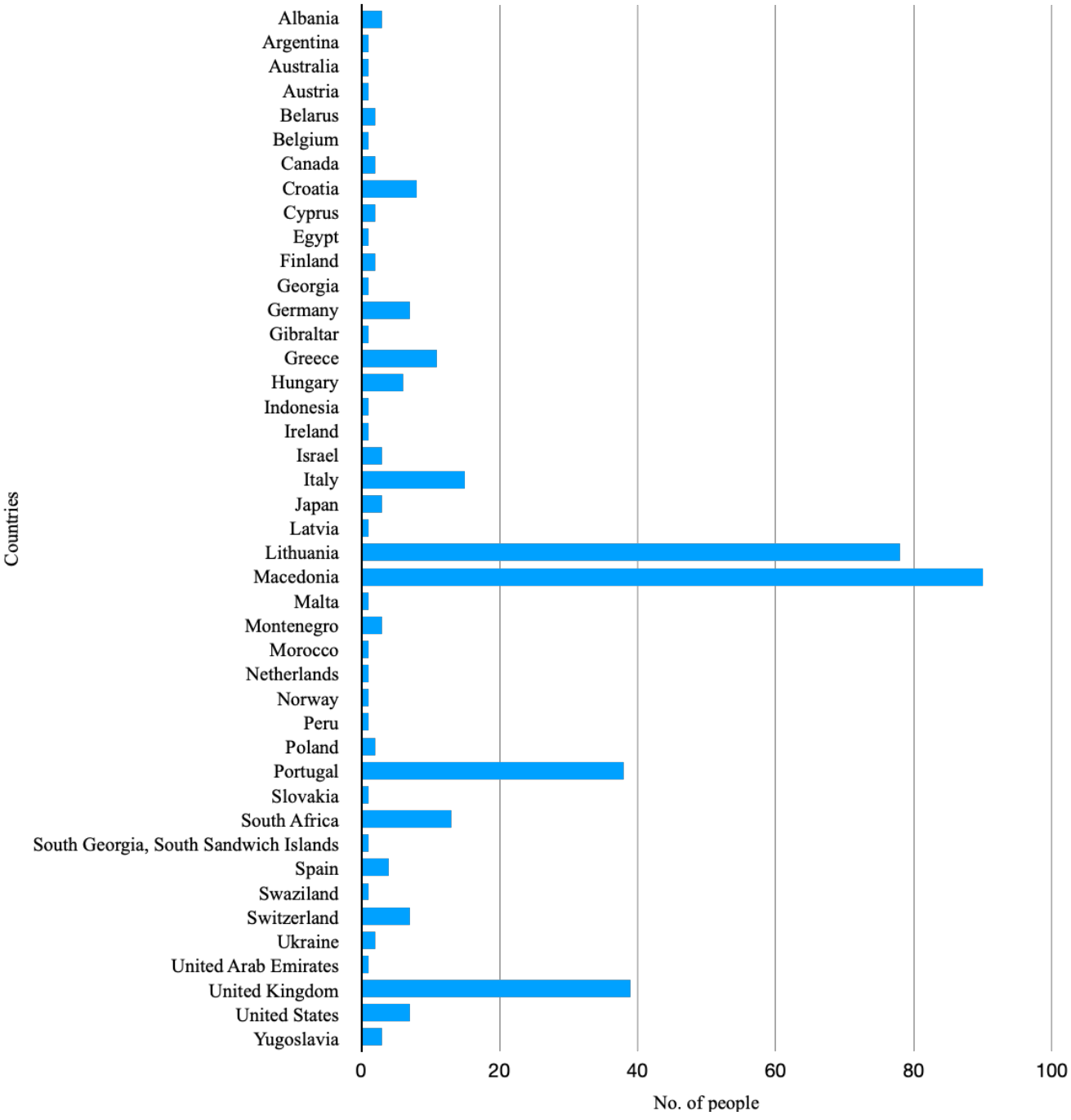


Table 1: Total number of people registered for the festival, sorted by their country of origin.

Country	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Country	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Albania	3	0.8	Macedonia	90	24.4
Argentina	1	0.3	Malta	1	0.3
Australia	1	0.3	Montenegro	3	0.8
Austria	1	0.3	Morocco	1	0.3
Belarus	2	0.5	Netherlands	1	0.3
Belgium	1	0.3	Norway	1	0.3
Canada	2	0.5	Peru	1	0.3
Croatia	8	2.2	Poland	2	0.5
Cyprus	2	0.5	Portugal	38	10.3
Egypt	1	0.3	Slovakia	1	0.3
Finland	2	0.5	South Africa	13	3.5
Georgia	1	0.3	South Georgia	1	0.3
Germany	7	1.9	Spain	4	1.1
Gibraltar	1	0.3	Swaziland	1	0.3
Greece	11	3.0	Switzerland	7	1.9
Hungary	6	1.6	Ukraine	2	0.5
Indonesia	1	0.3	United Arab Emirates	1	0.3
Ireland	1	0.3	United Kingdom	39	10.6
Israel	3	0.8	United States	7	1.9
Italy	15	4.1	Yugoslavia	3	0.8
Japan	3	0.8			
Latvia	1	0.3			
Lithuania	78	21.1			

All 369 registrants provided their demographic details before the event (see table 2). Almost half of the registrants came from various professional backgrounds, and approximately a third had Psychology-related professions, suggesting a good mix of experience. Regarding involvement of Inclusiveness Target Countries (ITC) countries, almost two thirds of the registrants were from ITC countries.

Table 2: Demographic frequencies for the registrants.

		N	Percentage (%)
Profession	Educational	53	14.4
	Neuroscience	2	0.5
	Medical	15	4.1
	Psychology	125	33.9
	Technology	2	0.5
	Other	172	46.6
COST Membership status of Registrant's country	Full Member	93	25.2
	ITC Member	233	63.1
	Other	43	11.7

Additionally, during registration, registrants were asked their opinion on the importance of research on problematic usage of the internet (PUI), and which form they felt is the most concerning.

The majority of registrants felt that it would be important to learn more about how PUI affects the brain and that researchers should also investigate the impact of different forms of PUI on people's lifestyles. Similarly, the majority of registrants indicated that PUI should be more of a concern for the Government and Health agencies (see table 3).

Table 3: Opinions on the importance of investigating PUI before the event, measured as frequency N (%).

	Yes	No
Is problematic usage of the Internet (PUI) something that you think the Government and Health agencies should be concerned about?	353 (95.7%)	14 (3.8%)
Do you think we need to invest in learning more about the impact of different forms of PUI on people's lifestyles via research?	360 (97.6%)	7 (1.9%)
Would it be important to learn more about how PUI affects the brain?	363 (98.4%)	4 (1.1%)

Note: Missing responses were not reported

Furthermore, nearly half of the registrants indicated that social media use is the most important form of PUI that needs to be understood better, and approximately a fifth of registrants were concerned about gaming (see table 4). Other forms of PUI that were also considered important by a large number of registrants were cyberchondria, gambling, and pornography viewing.

Registrants indicating ‘Other’ suggested cyberbullying, cyberstalking, online-paedophilia and spending nights online instead of sleeping as forms of PUI that need further investigation.

*Table 4: Forms of PUI the registrants believed were important to investigate before the event, measured as a percentage.*

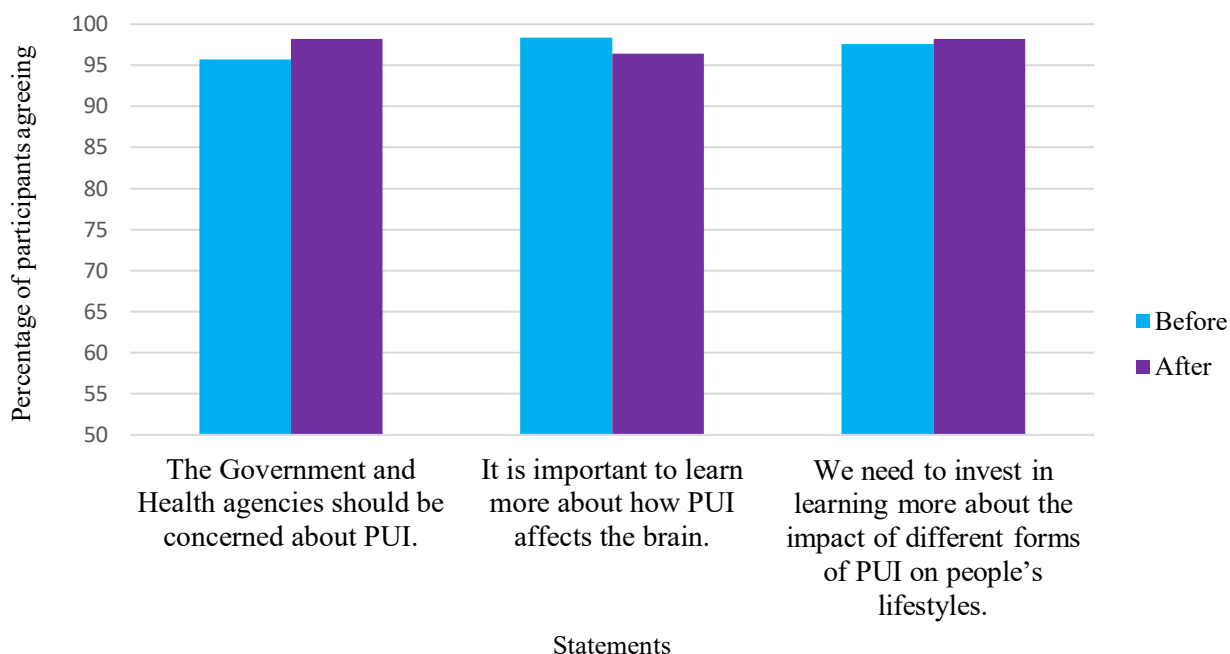
Form of PUI	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Digital Hoarding	3	0.8
Email Checking	5	1.4
Gambling	34	9.3
Gaming	68	18.5
Cyberchondria	35	9.5
Pornography Viewing	29	7.9
Shopping	7	1.9
Social Media Use	170	46.3
Video Streaming	7	1.9
Other	9	2.5

Note: Missing responses were not reported

A total of 278 people attended the event live and recordings of the day are available on our website for post event viewing (<https://www.internetandme.eu/events-and-workshops/>). After the event, 56 attendees completed the statements regarding the importance of investigating PUI that were also presented before the event.

The majority of attendees agreed both before and after the event that PUI should be more of a concern for the Government and Health agencies. Furthermore, they also agreed that effects of PUI on the brain should be investigated, as well as the impact of PUI on people’s lifestyles. While there were mainly minor differences in opinions before and after the event, it appears that after the event attendees felt more strongly that PUI should be a concern of the Government than before (see figure 2).

Figure 2: Percentage of participants agreeing with statements regarding PUI research before and after the event.



The attendees were presented with additional statements in a poll after the event, in which 56 attendees participated. All participating attendees felt that it is important to understand who might be most vulnerable to developing problematic usage of the internet. The majority of attendees agreed that protective strategies against the harms of PUI and new treatments for people suffering because of PUI should be investigated (see table 5).

*Table 5: Additional statements for attendees, completed after the event.*

	Agree	Disagree
It is important to explore the ‘generation gap’ in knowledge and attitudes about the benefits and risks of digital technology, to help families adapt in the new digital age	53 (94.6%)	3 (5.4%)
It would be helpful to understand better what strategies people can take to protect themselves from the harms of problematic usage of the Internet.	55 (98.2%)	1 (1.8%)
It is important to investigate new treatments for people who have developed problematic usage of the Internet and are suffering.	55 (98.2%)	1 (1.8%)
Should information about problematic use of the Internet be taught in schools and colleges in a balanced and relevant way?	54 (96.4%)	2 (3.6%)
It is important to understand better who might be most vulnerable to developing problematic usage of the Internet	56 (100%)	N/A
It is more important that we explore a range of problematic online activities as opposed to one or two specific kinds of problematic online activity.	47 (83.9%)	9 (16%)

Additionally, more than a third of attendees thought that those aged 10 to 16 years should be prioritised in PUI research. However, another third of attendees believed all age groups of people who use the Internet should be prioritised equally (see table 6).

*Table 6: Additional question for attendees regarding which age group should be prioritised in PUI research.*

	Those under 10 years	Those aged 10 – 16 years	Those aged 17 – 30 years	All age groups of people who use the Internet
What age groups should we prioritise for research into problematic usage of the Internet?	6 (10.7%)	20 (35.7%)	11 (19.6%)	19 (33.9%)

In conclusion, this event discussing the Problematic Uses of the Internet (PUI) helped to highlight opinions of the public on PUI research. The attendees felt that research should focus on understanding the internet more and the effect it can have on people's lifestyles and the human brain (with special emphasis on investigating PUI in young people). This can help to raise awareness and to spread information about the benefits and risks of the new digital age. The majority of the attendees named social media as the most important form of PUI to investigate and understand. However, other forms such as gambling, gaming and cyberchondria should also be included in the range of problematic online activities which need further investigation. Finally, the attendees agreed that identifying those who are most vulnerable to developing PUI is important, as well as understanding strategies to protect people from the harms of PUI and finding new treatments for people who have developed PUI.



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