

A snapshot of children's views from around the world



Our Rights in a Digital World

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About 5Rights Foundation

5Rights Foundation develops new policy, creates innovative projects and challenges received narratives to ensure governments, the tech sector and society understand, recognise and prioritise children's needs and rights in the digital world. Our work is pragmatic and implementable, allowing us to work with governments, intergovernmental institutions, professional associations, academics, and young people across the globe to build the digital world that young people deserve.

5rightsfoundation.com

About the Young and Resilient Research Centre at Western Sydney University

The Young and Resilient Research Centre in the Institute for Culture and Society at Western Sydney University, Australia, embraces user-centred, participatory and collaborative methods to research and develop technology-based products, services and policies that strengthen the resilience of children, young people and their communities, enabling them to live well and participate fully in social and economic life.

The Centre is deeply committed to supporting children to realise their rights in relation to the digital environment. In partnership with child-facing organisations around the world, the Centre has led a series of cross-national consultations with children in over 70 countries to channel their insights and experiences into the decision-making that impacts their everyday lives in the digital age.

westernsydney.edu.au/young-and-resilient

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Preface

This short paper summarises the key findings of a major, international consultation undertaken by Professor Amanda Third and Lilly Moody from the Young and Resilient Research Centre at Western Sydney University, on behalf of the 5Rights Foundation, and with the support of 27 partner organisations around the world.¹ The full findings of the consultation will be published in Spring 2021.

Croatia, girl, 12: **Technology is very important, and it will continue to be in the future. It is hard to communicate without it. Everything is here, on the cellphone. I can find information about almost anything. I can talk to my friends whenever and wherever I want to. The world is moving forward, and so we must do the same.**



As children around the globe come online, the digital world becomes their reality; its culture and practice inseparable from any other aspect of their childhood. It is for that reason that we welcome the creation of the General Comment on Children’s Rights in Relation to the Digital Environment. Our thanks go to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, to those who are part of or have supported the 5Rights Steering Group, to the team at Western Sydney University, Kathryn Snowden, Imagist, and each of the 27 partner organisations that ran workshops. Above all, our thanks go to the children who participated in the consultation: your views will form part of the General Comment, which we hope will give children and young people around the globe the digital world they deserve.

Baroness Beeban Kidron OBE
Chair, 5Rights Foundation

¹ A full list of partner organisations can be found in the Appendix

Background

5Rights Foundation Steering Group

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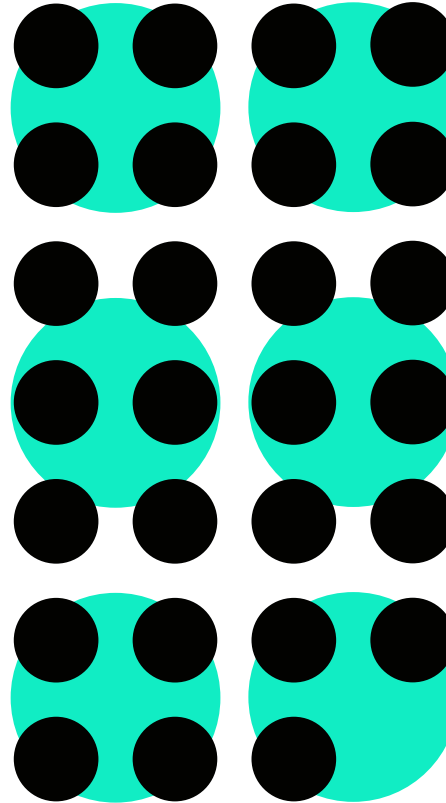
The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted in 1989. Its 196 signatories make it the most ratified treaty in history. Its 40+ articles codify the obligations of nation states to recognise and realise children's rights. 1989 was also the year that saw the invention of the communication system that we now know as the world wide web. At the time it was unimaginable how the digital world would transform every area of society, including childhood. Now, nearly half of the world's population is online, including over a billion children, and the impact of the digital world on their ability to access information, on government services, on their privacy and security, and on their opportunities to participate cannot be overestimated.

At the beginning of 2018, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child decided to create a General Comment which would set out the relevance of the Convention to the digital world. 5Rights Foundation was appointed as the Committee's consultant. 5Rights formed an expert steering group to undertake the work of drafting the General Comment over several iterations. This work was led by Professor Sonia Livingstone OBE of London School of Economics and Political Science, with input from multiple consultations with nation states, experts in both digital technology and children's rights, and other interested parties. Among these key stakeholders are children themselves and, throughout the process, efforts were made to consult children from all parts of the world to ensure their insights informed both the content and form of the General Comment.

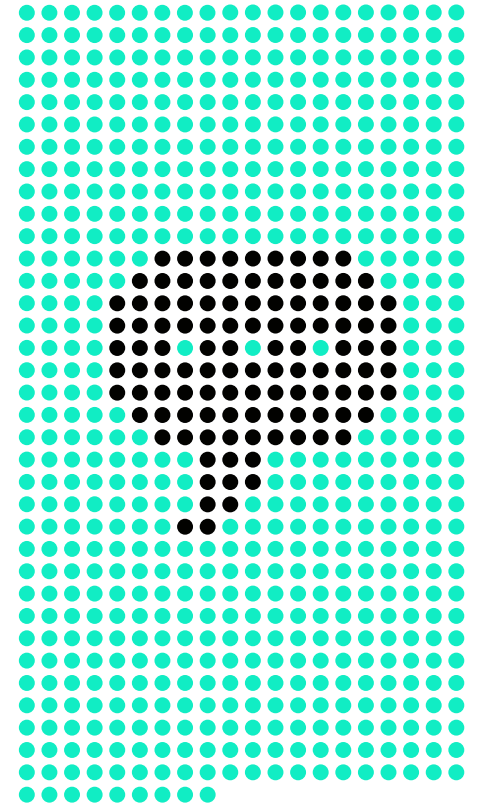
Summary

Some 709 children and young people aged between nine and 22 years old were consulted in 27 countries on six continents to input into the General Comment on Children's Rights in Relation to the Digital Environment. They offered insights into how digital technology impacts their rights, and what action they want to see taken to protect them.

27 countries in 6 continents



709 children and young people



Of particular concern to children are:

Affordable, accessible and reliable **access** to devices and connectivity

Age-appropriate content in their own language

Action to **prevent** and remedy discriminatory or aggressive behaviour

Trusted and truthful information, including less inappropriate content and **transparent information** from online services themselves

Greater **privacy**, in particular less surveillance by commercial entities and parents

Greater **understanding** from, and better digital literacy for, their parents

Services that are designed to **protect** them from predators and abuse

Access to confidential and trustworthy sources of **health information**

Pakistan, boy, 13: **Digital technology plays a role because with [its] help... we can connect ourselves to the world and we can make an identity in the world.**



Overwhelmingly, children are passionately keen to be part of the digital world, but they are frustrated by its faults and feel it should serve them better.

Methodology

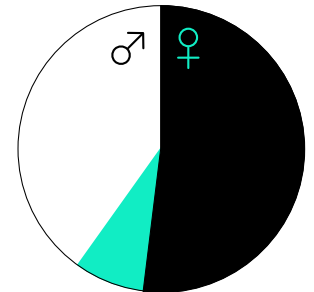
Using a workshop process designed by the Young and Resilient Research Centre at Western Sydney University, partner organisations were identified to conduct three- to five-hour face-to-face workshops with children in their local settings. The key themes that structure the report are the themes from those workshops that children were most keen to speak about.

Children completed a range of individual and group-based activities, including short-answer responses, creative writing, drawings, cut-and-paste, scenario-based activities and group discussions. The methodology produces rich, qualitative data on children's perceptions and experiences of their rights in relation to digital media. Importantly the workshops enabled children to offer their insights in a deliberative process that allowed them to ask questions, discuss and explore their online lives, in order to capture their experience and views.

In total, **69 workshops** were held in **19 languages**.

12 of the 69 workshops were conducted in English, and **15** were conducted in Arabic.

52% of the participants identified as female, **40%** identified as male and **8%** chose not to specify their gender.



Key Themes

- 1 **Access to the internet as a right**
- 2 **Information**
- 3 **Expression, identity and culture**
- 4 **Leisure and play**
- 5 **Privacy**
- 6 **Role of parents**
- 7 **Protection**
- 8 **Health**

1

Access to the internet as a right

Children tended to see access to the internet as a right, but many of those consulted reported that they had a lack of or limited access to it. Barriers include affordability, gender, language and disability.

1.1 Affordability

Children cite affordability as the key barrier to their access to the internet, particularly those in low-income countries. They said that costs of devices and data are often prohibitive.

Canada, boy, 12: **Money flows [are a barrier]. Technology is costly. Lots of people can't afford [it].**

Pakistan, gender and age unknown: **[Children] don't have smartphones, because of financial constraints.**

Children also pointed to infrastructural barriers, including lack of or unreliable power sources and slow internet speeds, older or no devices, limited battery life and a lack of connectivity. Children from low-income countries also noted the barriers of poor knowledge, skills and education.

Kenya, boy, 15: **[There is] no power in our area.**

Ethiopia, gender and age unknown: **Currently we are not using any of the digital technology to express ourselves but would like/wish to if we have knowledge or access to it in the future.**

Malaysia, girl, 13: **I wish that children in rural areas could enjoy the benefits of the internet just like others.**

A language barrier... prevents us from better using internet service.

Ethiopia, boy, 18

Romania, girl, 16: **[I have not learned programming because] the high school I go to doesn't offer classes where I could learn this.**

Lebanon, gender and age unknown: **[I have not learned website development because] there are no teachers or specialists.**

Children – especially those in low-income countries – frequently raised time constraints as an important barrier to their regular access to the digital environment. In particular, they highlighted that their obligations to contribute to household chores and study conflicted with their desire to go online or connect with friends.

Children across the world want governments and technology providers internationally to resolve the challenges they face of uneven and unequal access.

1.2 Language

The view that there should be greater availability of relevant content in other foreign languages was widely expressed, including by children who specifically called for accessibility tools in other languages.

Egypt, gender and age unknown: **The Arabic language is not well spread over the internet. The language must be spread more widely through... increasing the Arabic content and improving the translation of foreign websites.**

Children across the world want governments and technology providers internationally to provide age-appropriate and culturally relevant material in their own languages.

1.3 Disability

Children from many countries passionately advocated for changes to make technology more accessible for those with disabilities. Specific suggestions were made by a group of children from Portugal with hearing impairments. But the view that accessibility tools should be broadly available and easier to use was widely expressed by many children, including those with no specific accessibility requirements.

Portugal, boy with hearing impairment, 15: **I, like all of the deaf community, really want to call the government and the Prime-Minister's attention to explain our problems with accessibility. We try to fight to get the listening community not to see us as nothing and Portugal to listen to the problems of the deaf community.**

United Kingdom, girl, 15: **Why don't they just have the subtitles on and then we can switch them off if we don't need them? That would be easier for the people that actually needed some help!**

Portugal, boy, 16: **All sites could use an app to translate what is written or to translate what is spoken on YouTube.**

Children across the world want governments and technology providers internationally to create easier access for a range of users with different accessibility needs, including providing easy to use accessibility tools by default.

1.4 Gender

Globally, particularly in low-income countries, girls encounter significant gender-based barriers to access.² In the workshops in Jordan, girls described how boys are able to access the internet in public places, such as internet cafes, whereas it is not seen as appropriate for girls to do so. Girls also face challenges within their families, with tighter restrictions on when, where and with whom they access the internet.

Pakistan, girl, age unknown: **[People say that] girls should avoid using the internet.**

Canada, boy, 12: **Certain people are discriminative [and this] limits access. For example, the professor doesn't give technology to girls.**

Children across the world are concerned that girls do not have equal access to digital technologies, and that may affect their rights and maybe even their life chances.

² ITU & UNESCO, 2013; Raftree & Bachan, 2013; World Bank, 2016.

Girls seem to have less access to internet than boys... There is a **discrimination** in access based on gender... Girls do not actually own their own phone and have limited access to the internet compared to boys, who might access it through the internet cafes that are generally only for boys. It might also be related to restricting girls' access to the internet by family members (parents/husband).

Jordan, workshop facilitator's notes

2

Information

On the whole, children are excited that the internet improves their access to information – but children from all over the world pointed out that false and misleading information circulates online.

Nepal, boy, 13: **By the means of digital technology we can get information from all around the world by sitting in one corner of the room.**

Ethiopia, boy, 18: **Adolescents can access information about the situation of their region and their country from Facebook and television. For instance, the recent... coup in Amhara region was heard through television.**

Philippines, boy, age unknown: **Right to information is one of the most important in the digital age because [the internet] really helps us to access information easier. But we all need to keep in mind that not all information on social media is true and reliable.**

Indonesia, girl, 14: **Because as time and technology grows, we can easily access and get information. But it's hard to know whether the information is valid or not.**

Ghana, group of children: **We would like the government, technology companies and teachers to help us manage untrustworthy information online.**

Generally it is a gigantic riddle what happens to our data, as it is hidden in complex data protection agreements and legal texts. I would like to obtain clarity about what really happens with my data.

Germany, girl, 16

In expressing their desire for more 'truthful and trustworthy' information, children also repeatedly highlighted the terms and conditions of the digital services themselves. Many were critical of their opaque nature, and often made a link between poor information online and poor terms of service.

Germany, boy, 17: **[We need] youth-friendly terms and conditions with a summary of the most relevant points.**

Canada, girl, 15: **Websites and apps take and use our information, sometimes with our consent. But really, the fine print is so hidden that most people don't know what they've signed on to.**

New Zealand, boy, 17: **Governments and businesses need to be much more transparent about data use and collection. Why collect it? How is it being collected?**

Children across the world welcome the ability to get information from a wide range of sources, but are concerned that it should be more reliable, including the information from digital services themselves.

3

Expression, identity and culture

3.1 Expression

Children were clear that interacting online, posting on social media, taking photos and playing games allowed them to express themselves and their views.

Philippines, girl, age unknown:
Through digital tech[nology], children can express themselves more. We can share our opinions, thoughts, reactions, suggestions and problems.

Canada, girl, 15: **Talking to friends and family – I use technology to communicate with them by using memes to relate to our lives and friendship. I express my love for our friendship and how much I value them in my life.**

Pakistan, boy, 13: **[I'm] blogging... my life story so [other people] can know.**

Lebanon, boy, 17: **[Through] rap (sharing YouTube videos)... I express the needs of the community and the suffering of the citizens and weaknesses of politics, and... [uncertain] security situation, and... the youth's future and feelings.**

Building confidence, overcoming shyness, airing views and finding validation are some of the ways children said the online world empowered them. Children said it allowed them to reach a wider – even international – audience. It also offered some psychological benefits.

Malaysia, girl, 14: **[It] enables us to speak out about something that we may be shy to say face-to-face.**

South Korea, girl, 13: **I can say what I think on the internet.**

Philippines, gender and age unknown: **Because we can express ourselves on different social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, it helps prevent depression and makes us face our problems.**

Set against these very positive views was an undercurrent about facing discrimination and criticism, which many children said discourages them from expressing themselves freely. They fear negative feedback from others.

Brazil, girl, 14: **In the digital world, we have a lot of space to express our opinion, however, it is not always received with the due respect that should be ensured as our right.**

Pakistan, boy, 16: **I am affected too much by other people and how they would view me.**

Germany, girl, 18: **[I don't express myself online because] I fear of being bullied.**

New Zealand, gender and age unknown: **On the internet we're more susceptible to people judging our thoughts and opinions, which makes it harder for us to have freedom of expression. We tend to suppress our thoughts in order to fit ourselves in a mould in order to not be judged by the internet. This shows that this right is often violated due to the access of the internet.**

Children across the world value the opportunities for expression online but find that the hostility and exposure that can characterise the digital environment is inhibiting.

Many people have inner talents but they feel shy showing it in front of other people... Digital technology has made a **platform** for these kinds of people as well as others.

Nepal, girl, 14

Frequently I am more **open** on the web than in real life. [It's] more straightforward on the web.

Germany, boy, 16

3.2 Identity

Some children said that digital technologies provide avenues for them to question, formulate and explore who they want to be – both online and offline.

Romania, girl, 15: **With the help of the internet, you can carve your own personality.**

Canada, girl, 15: **[Digital technology] introduced me to major aspects of how I identify myself, such as feminism [and] equal rights for all.**

Canada, girl, 15: **[Digital technology enables me to] learn about the environmental issues that take place around the world, which is something I find important. This is how social media helps grow my identity.**

Germany, girl, 16: **On the internet I find more acceptance than in my real life surroundings which showed me that it is okay to be different.**

Others said they felt social media and networking impacted their sense of identity negatively, limiting their capacity to be themselves.

Canada, girl, 18: **It pigeonholes who I am supposed to be and what I believe in. Through social media I am unable to live my authentic self because I know what others think and believe I am, even if it is different from who I really am.**

Brazil, girl, 14: **Because we are exposed to several types of content and judged based on our social networking website profiles, we can end up losing our identity because of changes in how others see us.**

Following positivity blogs/accounts helps remind me that I am **not alone** as a biracial child. Being able to hear/read their stories and connect with other biracial people /teens help a lot.

Canada, girl, 17

Importantly the majority of all children who responded about identity (92%) felt that they were not always the same online and off. Some reported that being online gives them opportunity to experiment with different ways of being and relating to others. Others reported that they felt pressure to present a curated self.

Canada, boy, 14: **Online I have different accounts and I act differently.**

Canada, boy, 12: **I act like I do better things than I do in real life. [On social media it looks like] I do things that I usually would not do in real life.**

Canada, girl, 15: **[My online self is] 'my best self'.**

For some children, the digital environment offers an extraordinary opportunity to build the identity of their choosing, but many find the pressure to be or have an acceptable persona online time consuming and burdensome.

3.3 Culture and religion

Nearly two-thirds of participants felt as though digital technology supported and promoted their cultural and religious identities. They said that the internet provided opportunities for them to connect to and learn about their culture – especially if separated geographically or physically from those who share their cultural identities.

Philippines, gender and age unknown: **Digital media strengthens [my cultural identity]. [It] makes us learn what we don't know about our culture. You can see what Islam is online.**

Pakistan, boy, 15: **Today's digital age provides a platform, a voice for the minorities of a country... By means of digital tech[nology], you can keep your religion and culture alive.**

There are people who disregard their culture because of social media. They **change** their views to copy what is popular instead.

Philippines, girl,
age unknown

But more than a third said that digital technology can undermine their cultural identity, including being bullied in relation to their religious or cultural identities online.

Canada, boy, 17: **Sometimes [people on social media] really pick on your religion.**

Canada, girl, 12: **Sometimes there are jokes about things [that relate to my identity] and sometimes it makes me second guess myself.**

Pakistan, boy, 16: **[Digital] media has undermined our cultural identity by introducing different new fashions or hairstyle and the youth is forgetting their culture.**

Children across the world value learning about and sharing their culture with others online. Many feel vulnerable to online abuse because of their language, religion or personal beliefs. Some worry that digital technology undermines local or less dominant cultural norms.

4

Leisure and play

Play emerged as a complex area; for some children it set them in conflict with adults.

Pakistan, gender and age unknown:
I am not allowed to install the games I want to play.

Croatia, gender and age unknown:
I am not allowed to play before I learn everything for the next day in school.

Other children expressed reservations, which echoed those that adults often voice.

Lebanon, gender and age unknown:
[Video games cause] addiction, not growing up with the family, isolation, loneliness.

Canada, girl, 17: **[Digital technology] makes me keep to myself and spend more time alone on my phone whereas my mum never did that growing up.**

Overall, children's comments highlighted the important role of technology for their right to leisure and play. Some suggested the need to avoid overly simplified arguments which equate increased digital play with less time spent outside.

Brazil, boy, 15: **It has changed, because the concept of leisure has changed. In the past, leisure meant playing outside, talking, being with others. Today it can be Netflix, YouTube, among other forms of fun that entertain you.**

Brazil, boy, 13: **When you are sad, the internet can help you see something that brings you joy.**

Children want to play online, and often feel their leisure choices are misunderstood. In all parts of the world, the tension between time online and other activities – such as playing outside, or completing homework or household duties – was palpable.

I think people stopped playing in the street not only because the internet came into being, but because the country and the cities got more violent as well. It may be interesting to evaluate not only the internet, but the **environment** in which people who use the internet most often are. Certainly, in the countryside, which is safer, teenagers and children use the internet less than we do in the capital.

Brazil, girl, age unknown

5

Privacy

Many children were generally attuned to privacy issues and held strong views about the multiple ways their privacy might be infringed by commercial enterprises, institutions, strangers and parents.

Children who identified privacy as a significant right in the digital environment said it is under threat due to digital technologies.

Nepal, girl 13: **Nowadays, in the digital era, people are... losing their personal privacy.**

Brazil, girl, 13: **On the internet, people share their information... This can be dangerous if an ill-intended person has access to it.**

Canada, girl, 15: **There are matters of identity theft, stalkers, employers checking your records, blackmail, you name it.**

Why wouldn't you be worried? Think about it. You get social media for free, yet the companies **owning** these platforms are swimming in cash. Surely there's a reason for their income, and it's most likely related to what they do with our data.

Canada, girl, 15

5.1 Privacy from commercial entities

Children's concerns around commercial privacy centred mainly on social media, as well as apps and websites. Some children said they were aware of companies collecting their data because they could see algorithms producing certain kinds of advertising and other content.

Canada, girl, 18: **I am... worried about my data being shared because, despite having my privacy settings on, I can see my preferences in ads and often get spam mail due to my email being shared.**

Canada, boy, 14: **You should not completely trust big companies since they could easily sell your info.**

Norway, girl, 17: **It's a bit scary to think about why free apps have so much money. I also wonder about their motives when they make a free app. Maybe they sell my pictures, data etc.**

Philippines, girl, age unknown: **Just because I can use social media for free... [social media companies shouldn't be able to] use my data for free too. My personal data is still my privacy.**

Brazil, girl, 14: **Advertisers'... objectives were never to preserve or improve people's lives, but to get rich and gain control.**

Children want commercial entities to be much more transparent about how they collect, store and use their data. And they want much greater control over how their data are used. Although children recognised they should exercise some responsibility to protect their privacy, they said the onus rests with governments and technology companies to guarantee their privacy in the digital environment. Half of the children who discussed the need to protect their privacy said they have had little or no formal opportunities to learn how to protect their personal data online.

Ghana, gender and age unknown: **[I need to learn more about] security and protection... but I don't have a teacher [who can teach this].**

Portugal, boy, 15: **No one ever told me what the best techniques are to protect my data.**

Children, especially those in high-income countries, want governments to introduce legislation or regulations on how companies can access and use their data.

United Kingdom, boy, 15: **More legislation especially for [those] under 18; you should get the choice of what is stored.**

Canada, girl, 15: **I would change the law about what companies can and can't collect and distribute.**

New Zealand, girl, 16: **I would change... laws [to ensure] companies don't have the power to use and share people's personal information without their permission.**

Children across the world are demanding that commercial entities explain how they are collecting, storing and using children's data. Children want guarantees that they will not be subject to commercial exploitation. Many called on governments to use the law to protect their data and to curb industry surveillance of children online.

Governments will **protect** important information about the country. Companies will protect data about the company or about how much their income is.

United Arab Emirates, girl, 17

5.2 Privacy from government Institutions

Children tended to be far more trusting of governments than commercial entities when it came to data collection, believing governments to be more open about the information they gather. But in low-, middle- and high-income countries, some children reported concerns about governments gathering and using sensitive information – particularly biometric data.

New Zealand, boy, 17: **Governments are more transparent about what they collect.**

Romania, girl, 16: **[Governments] will [use], without people's consent, the data collected with... biometric surveillance technologies.**

Children are more comfortable with government data collection than that of private companies or parents but want greater transparency about what data governments collect and why.

5.3 Security

Children also expressed concerns about hackers and other third parties stealing their identities. Some share limited versions of themselves online because of security concerns.

Pakistan, girl, 12: **In this digital age, cybercrime is very common and the most common cyber-crime of them all is identity theft by making a fake profile.**

Chile, group response: **It is our right to have a name. On Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp they ask for your name/false identity – someone can find information about you on the Internet and hurt you.**

Children across the world want the digital world to afford them privacy and security.

In the digital age, the right to an identity is, in many cases, **neglected**. Personal profiles are often hacked, and fake accounts are created with personal photos and data. Hackers pretend to be the owners of the profiles and spread rumours and can cause serious problems.

Brazil, girl, 15

5.4 Privacy from parents

Children said they wanted greater privacy from their parents. They wanted their parents to refrain from reading their messages, and to allow them to keep their passwords secret.

Croatia, gender and age unknown:
I don't want my parents to read my messages.

Croatia, boy, 11: **I want to be able to use private windows in Google. I don't want my parents to spy on my networks.**

Croatia, girl, 11: **In two years I can open my Instagram account. I don't want my parents to know my passwords.**

Children also said that parents sometimes overstep boundaries or infringe on their privacy by sharing photos of them online.

Pakistan, gender and age unknown:
Tell parents to consult you and not post without your permission.

Croatia, gender and age unknown:
I want them to ask permission before they upload a photo of me.

Children are adamant that the privacy they crave should include privacy from parents.

6

Role of parents

Children want parental oversight to mitigate a range of harms, from neglecting schoolwork to more serious harms, such as being exposed to pornography or being put at risk of child predators and other crimes.

Philippines, gender and age unknown:
If a child does not have a parent to guide him/her when using social media or the internet, they might end up watching bad content and this will affect them [into] adulthood.

Croatia, girl, 12: **Sometimes kids do what they shouldn't on the internet and their parents need to help them.**

Philippines, gender and age unknown:
We need guidance from our parents but they should not control us in all the things that we do.

However, children also make the point that parents often don't have the necessary digital skills to support them online.

Pakistan, gender and age unknown:
Our parents and siblings do not support [our use of] digital technology because it comes with many risks.

Kenya, boy, 15: **I want to always get updated on movies and trending issues but my parents won't let me stay long in front of the screen.**

Nepal, girl, 14: **Sometimes our parents avoid us using digital technology but if we need to do our project works and important research we can't do it.**

Croatia, boy, 12: **Let me watch educational content. It helps me.**

I want you to talk to our parents on our behalf and inform them that they should have **trust** in us whenever we are using technology.

Kenya, girl, 16

Children mostly said parents' restrictions were in their best interests, and that it is within the responsibilities of parents to protect them.

Pakistan, gender and age unknown:
It is our parents' right to put restrictions on us, so that we sleep on time and don't use the internet late at night.

Canada, girl, 11: **Our parents have the right to tell us that we can't put any personal info online.**

Croatia, boy, 12: **They should check my messages from time to time. They should be aware of all the people I come into contact with. They should check all the photos and everything we share on social media.**

Pakistan, gender and age unknown:
[My parents] tell me to express my political view but not in such a way that I may receive unnecessary backlash.

Lebanon, girl, 17: **[My parents] stop me from [making mistakes] and advise me how to do the right thing... This is because parents love us.**

Croatia, gender and age unknown:
Do you know what your children are doing on the internet? Nobody knows your children as well as you do. Communicate with them and advise them so nobody could hurt them.

Children from all parts of the world want parental involvement, but they feel that parents are hampered by a lack of knowledge and skills.

Many parents and adults worry too much about kids being exposed to technology as they worry for our safety. Well, I don't disagree with them for that but just want them to at least be **informed** that children are educated concerning technology in schools and they know how to deal with that.

Kenya, boy, 15

7

Protection

Children want the digital world to protect them directly, not just through their parents.

7.1 Grooming and kidnapping

Children perceived experiences of violence to be common on the internet. They are concerned that location sharing, tracking and catfishing have made kidnapping easier for perpetrators.

Nepal, girl, 14: **Due to the digital environment many social crimes like rape, kidnapping, murder etc are happening. The technologies like laptop, mobile phone, Facebook, computer etc are major sources of this crime.**

Indonesia, girl, 16: **Through digital media kidnapping can occur, not only in the social environment, kidnappers can track us from a location that we share.**

Brazil, girl, 15: **Technology has made kidnapping easier because some teenagers meet up with people in secret.**

Canada, girl, 14: **Nowadays it's unbelievably easy to catfish people and kids are very impressionable, making them an easy target if they have an online personality and it's important to remember that they have the right to protection from kidnapping, which may occur more by them being catfished into meeting someone in person.**

Philippines, girl, age unknown: **Nowadays, children are much exposed in social media, some syndicate[s]... use social media to exploit children for their own benefit.**

Children worry that social media is a tool for predators to groom, exploit and abduct children. Children want to know they will be safe when they are online.

We should not show our location.
Anyone can track you. We should not
trust anyone on the internet. We should
not add **strangers** on the internet.

Pakistan, gender and age unknown

Internet violence is a type of psychological violence via messages, social media etc. It is a lot worse than physical violence, because it leaves much deeper scars.

Croatia, girl, 13

7.2 Violent and adult content

Almost without exception, children said there should be greater efforts made to prevent violence and sexual contact and content.

Lebanon, gender and age unknown:
Harms online, [like]... verbal violence, ... sexual harassment) [and] bullying... can lead to problems in real life.

Philippines, girl, age unknown:
You can also encounter disturbing photos or videos that show inappropriate, abusive and sexual acts... There are cases that someone uses another's identity to talk to the other person or to negotiate with online sexual pornography.

Croatia, boy, 12: **A child can be a victim of sexual, psychological (online) and physical abuse. Violence online is when somebody harasses children via messages.**

South Africa, gender and age unknown: **Naked pics can go viral without your intentions.**

Canada, girl, 17: **In the modern day, there are so many negative and exploiting/degrading content/pages that exploit minority groups, women and children which can have negative and dangerous effects on those being exploited.**

Children across the world want greater protection from inappropriate and violent material and more support for victims.

Cyberbullying is when people send you messages like 'I hate you', 'You are ugly!'. It is when somebody asks you to send inappropriate photos of yourself, or when people use your data against you. Also, cyberbullying is making hate groups, calling people names, make fun of them.

Croatia, girl, 12

7.3 Bullying

Children raised a number of ways online bullying can be harmful, including how it affects mental health and educational performance.

Philippines, girl, age unknown:
I know that cyberbullying is one of the reasons why children and teens lead to depression not just bullying but of what they see online or in their social media accounts. Some of them are motivated to commit suicide because of what they read and watch.

Brazil, girl, 15: **The internet allows for broader discussions about existing violence, but it increases the possibility of violence, such as cyberbullying.**

Children across the world want to see greater protection from bullying and more support for victims.

Health

Many children said access to digital technology helps them maintain their health, as they can seek information online, particularly about taboo subjects that they are uncomfortable discussing with parents and adults.

Brazil, boy, 14: **[I] use technology dynamically, while performing daily activities, such as going to work and talking on the phone, running while listening to music, and all this instead of being locked in a room playing video games.**

Indonesia, girl, age unknown: **[I learned] how to clean up my body after menstruation based on my religion.**

Brazil, boy, age unknown: **So, I looked up when a little bump appeared on my groin next to my testicle and I thought it was disease, but I searched on the internet and I saw that it was just an ingrown hair. This gave me a lot of relief.**

Russia, girl, age unknown: **I used to ask about things I felt ashamed to ask mom about, [like] different woman things, and the internet helped me.**

Portugal, boy, age unknown: **I already felt uncomfortable asking an adult about my health, the question was about what high cholesterol could do to me. I went to YouTube to understand what cholesterol was... It was very useful because I was able to figure out what could happen to me if I do not take the necessary precautions.**

I researched about mental illness, depression and anxiety, out of curiosity, because **nobody** talked about it and I wanted to know more.

Brazil, boy, age unknown

Romania, girl, 15: **If it is about general... illnesses – such as a cold or coughing or nutrition, [it’s helpful]. But on a more detailed scales ([like] troubles about the cortex or mucus membranes) I don’t think it is trustworthy – better to see a specialist.**

Children across the world value being able to access health information online, particularly about issues they would prefer not to discuss with their parents.

Some children raised concerns around the impact digital technology can have on children’s physical and mental health. Access to illegal and harmful material were some of the key concerns, as well as the effects digital technology can have on self-image and the body.

South Korea, gender and age unknown: **You can buy strange ingredients such as cocaine and marijuana on the internet.**

China, gender and age unknown: **You can find drugs and guns on the internet.**

Brazil, boy, 13: **Spending too much time on the phone... can impact your eyesight and give you headaches, and also... your neck or back can hurt.**

Portugal, girl, 12: **The minute we get home, we are on the cell phone. The cell phone may cause depression and bullying.**

Brazil, girl, 13: **Spending too much time on the internet causes people to not play, not socialize with parents and friends, and causes lack of sleep and mental illness.**

Brazil, girl, 13: **[You can get] low self-esteem because you’re not doing what others are doing, or you don’t think you’re pretty enough.**

Children across the world are concerned about the impact of their digital technology use on their physical and mental health.

Conclusion

Children provide a clear vision of the digital world they want. They want a more private, protective and transparent digital world: one that is age-appropriate and enabling of their interests, relationships and opportunities. They are determined that parents, governments and commercial companies should respect their rights, in particular those that would give them access to truthful information in their own language, to privacy and to protection from violence and inappropriate content. They also want to maximise the benefits of being online; in particular to create and shape a better world.

The issues upon which children agree *far outweigh* the differences brought about by their specific circumstance and context, which may be as a result of the fact that irrespective of their context they are largely using the same products and services – which in large part determine their experience.

The consultation undertaken by Professor Third and Lilly Moody, in partnership with organisations in 27 countries, captured children's views about their experience

from a broad range of contexts and countries. However, it is important to note that digital technologies also impact on children without their active participation, for example by automating decisions about the distribution of public services or predicting educational outcomes. In this context children's rights have a part to play, not only where children are active participants, but in all circumstances in which digital technology impacts on their lives.

Children want – and need – to be a part of the digital world; not just as users of digital products, services and platforms, but as creators, decision-makers and as citizens, both now and in the future. It is hoped that the insights documented in this report relay what children want and deserve from digital technologies and that steps will be taken to ensure that their needs will be met.

A full report from Professor Amanda Third and the Young and Resilient Research Centre at Western Sydney University on the findings of the children's consultation will be published in Spring, 2021.

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