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Overview on Global Digital Divide

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Editorial

The global digital gap refers to discrepancies in access to computing and information resources such as the Internet, particularly between industrialized and developing countries, as well as the opportunities that such access providers. This gap, like a smaller unit of analysis, describes an existing inequity on a global scale. The Internet is rapidly spreading, and not all countries, particularly developing countries, are able to keep up with the rapid developments. The term "digital divide" does not always imply that someone does not have access to technology; it could simply refer to a technological gap. These distinctions can apply to high-quality computers, fast Internet, technical support, or telephone services, for example. The distinction between all of these is also referred to as a gap [1].

The distribution of installed telecommunication bandwidth is highly unequal over the world. In 2014, only three countries (China, the United States, and Japan) accounted for half of the world's installed bandwidth capacity. This concentration is nothing new; traditionally, only ten countries accounted for 70–75 percent of worldwide telecommunication capacity. In 2011, the United States lost its global leadership in terms of installed bandwidth to China, which now has more than twice as much national bandwidth potential (29 percent versus 13 percent of the global total).

Versus the digital divide

The global digital gap is a subset of the digital divide, with the focus on how "the Internet has developed unevenly throughout the world, causing certain countries to fall behind in technology, education, labor, democracy, and tourism." The digital gap was first popularized in relation to the disparity in Internet connection between rural and urban parts of the United States; the global digital divide reflects this disparity on a global scale [2,3].

The global digital divide also adds to inequity in access to technologically enabled goods and services. Persons living in countries with limited access to computers and the Internet benefit from greater education, which can lead to higher pay; as a result, people living in countries with limited access are disadvantaged. The North–South divide, which divides "northern" wealthy nations from "southern" impoverished nations, is often used to describe this worldwide divide [4]. Some people argue that necessities need to be considered before achieving digital inclusion, such as an ample food supply and quality health care. Minimizing the global digital divide requires considering and addressing the following types of access:

Physical access: "The distribution of ICT devices per capita and land lines per thousands," according to the study. In order to access the Internet, people must have access to computers, landlines, and networks. This impediment to access is also addressed in Article 21 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Financial access: The cost of ICT devices, traffic, applications, technician and educator training, software, maintenance, and infrastructures require ongoing financial means. Financial access and "the levels of household income play a significant role in widening the gap".

Socio-demographic access: Several socio-demographic variables have been found to promote or hinder ICT access and usage in empirical experiments. Educational levels and income are the most powerful explanatory variables across countries, with age coming in third.

While there is a global gender gap in access to and use of ICTs, empirical research suggests that this is due to unfavourable work, education, and economic conditions, rather than technophobia or lesser aptitude. Women having the conditions for access and usage were found to be more active users of digital technologies than men in the circumstances studied. In the United States, for example, 89 percent of males and 88 percent of women use the Internet in 2018 [5].

Cognitive access: A certain level of information literacy is required to use computer technology. Information overload and the ability to find and use credible information are two further issues.

Design access: In the United States, computers must be accessible to people with varying learning and physical abilities, as required by Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, as revised by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998.

Institutional access: Wilson explains that "whether access is offered only through individual homes or whether access is offered through schools, community centres, religious institutions, cybercafés, or post offices, especially in poor countries where computer access at work or home is highly limited, the numbers of users are greatly affected.

Political access: "Democratic political regimes facilitate quicker Internet expansion than authoritarian or totalitarian regimes, Guillen and Suarez suggest. The Internet is regarded as a type of e-democracy, and seeking to regulate what citizens can and cannot read runs against to this. People in Iran and China have recently been denied access to particular websites and the capacity to share information. In order to avoid the influence of Western culture, such as music and television, Iran has banned the use of high-speed Internet and destroyed many satellite dishes.

Cultural access: Many experts believe that simply bridging the digital divide is insufficient, and that visuals and language must be delivered in a language and format that can be read across cultural boundaries. According to a Pew Research Center research from 2013, people who took the survey in Spanish were roughly twice as likely not to use the internet.

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