



# Digital environment

**#CovidUnder19:** Life Under Coronavirus is an initiative to meaningfully involve children in responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. 26,258 children from 137 countries across all five UN regions responded to our survey. More detail on this can be found at the end of this paper. This briefing presents our findings on the digital environment.

To read: the **UN Committee on the Rights of the Child** asserts that rights apply online as offline. In the digital age, internet access is increasingly vital for the realisation of children's rights - and it can result in the violation of rights.



## INTERNET ACCESS

During Covid-19, while only **13%** of all children said that they had **hardly any or no access to internet**, and more than half (**55%**) had regular access, children identifying as migrants and asylum seekers had significantly lower access (**38%** and **27%** respectively).

Also, **62%** of children in detention centres, refugee camps and homeless centres said they had no access or hardly any access to internet.

There were **big regional differences** in who could access the internet often or very often - **20%** in Africa, **35%** in Asia-Pacific, **61%** in Latin American and Caribbean, **77%** in Western Europe and Other, and **86%** in Eastern Europe.

'A huge number of children are more and more becoming victims of the insensitive digital learning and of poverty. During these times, the parents of children are losing their jobs, many households are unable to have food to eat, many do not afford to even support their families' needs, and many do not have access to the internet and technological devices. Many children will be left behind!'

(Girl, 17, Philippines)



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## ONLINE EDUCATION

The majority of children who responded to the survey felt that **education had been better before the pandemic** (61%). However, children with no access to internet (74%) or with poor internet access (63%) were more likely to say that they were getting a good education before the outbreak than children who can access the internet often (61%).

Children with no or reduced access to the internet were much more likely to report negative consequences of the pandemic on their education. When asked about if they could get **support from their teachers** when they needed it, children with no access to the internet were more likely to report that support was better before the pandemic (68%) compared to children who accessed the internet very often (40%).

Similarly, children with no access to the internet were much more likely (63%) to say that they were more confident that **they would get the grades they deserved before the pandemic**, compared to children with regular internet access (38%).

'Some are not getting to join online classes because of no internet access and even some are getting to join it they are not having good studies as before.'

(Boy, 14, Nepal)

'I miss my classmates. In a classroom at school, I learn more than online.

Personal communication and feedback are very important for me.'

(Girl, 14, Russia)

'I like the online lessons; I have problems with anxiety, so being able to turn off my microphone and/or camera sometimes makes me feel much safer and makes it easier for me to pay attention.'

(Girl, 15, South Africa)

'For some subjects like math it's harder to understand since we are not directly taught by the teacher and the teacher don't even bother setting up an online meeting to teach us '

(Girl, 17, Indonesia)



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## STAYING IN TOUCH

'During Covid, children have relied on **social media to keep in touch with family and friends** using WhatsApp (75%), Facebook (41%), Instagram (33%), Snapchat (12%), Text (10%), none of these or other means asked about (10%).

**Meeting online with friends is easy and fun and you actually talk to them more than before Corona.'**  
(Girl, 8, Netherlands)

**'Now, more than ever, teenagers are suffering from anxiety. We have to do too much work for school... I have no internet connection and can't talk to my friends, that makes me feel very depressed.'**  
(Girl, 14, Costa Rica)

## GETTING INFORMATION

Children's access to the internet does not significantly impact on **their most trusted source of reliable information: family.**

Children generally turn first to their family to get trustworthy information about Coronavirus, whether they can never (59%) or very often (64%) access the internet when they want to.

But if they have **good internet access**, they are less likely to turn to friends and social workers for such information. For children who can access the internet very often when they want to, **websites are their second most common place to turn for information (52%).**

**'Talk to children about how some stories on COVID-19 on the Internet and social media may be based on rumors and inaccurate information.'**

(Boy, (doesn't know age) Somaliland)

**'Using social media, I have been able to learn lots more about politics, privilege and world issues which I have not previously considered.'**

(Girl, 17, England)



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## ONLINE SAFETY



While the majority of children reported **feeling safer (14%)** or as safe **(70%)** online during Coronavirus, **17%** reported feeling less safe.

Almost **one in five** children aged 8-10 years **(19%)** **felt less safe online.**

Children who hardly ever went online were almost three times more likely **(28%)** to report feeling unsafe online since the beginning of coronavirus compared to children who went online very often **(11%)**.

In addition, children who hardly ever accessed the internet **(14%)** and children who never had access to the internet **(26%)** were much more likely to say **they didn't know how to seek help** if they feel unsafe or worried, compared to children who went online very often **(7%)**.

**'The online is sometimes unsafe and there are many anonymous messages who speak vulgar to you. I know how to report or block them but many don't. We need to make a change.'**  
(Girl, 15, India)

## WHAT WOULD YOU TELL GOVERNMENT TO DO?



**'Due to social distancing, we hardly go out. We need entertainment and play. If our government can stream a free child-friendly, eco-friendly version of Kids TV Channel. In this way, children can still enjoy their time at home. But right before that, the government must make sure every child in the country has access to electricity. Please.'**  
(Girl, 17, Myanmar)

**'No typical school activities, nothing really. If schools are still closed, I am not sure how much of a decent education I will get from Zoom. This deeply worries me. Quite a number of zoom lessons are interrupted with teacher's having bad WiFi or audio problems, etc. I think online learning has its benefits, but I don't think it can be a primary source of education. I just wish us students were at least consulted.'**  
(Girl, 16, Malta)