

International Network for School Social Work

<http://internationalnetwork-schoolsocialwork.htmlplanet.com>

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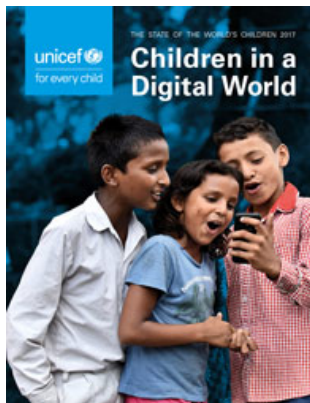
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The State of the World's Children 2017: Children in a Digital World

<https://www.unicef.org/sowc2017/>

Every year UNICEF publishes a report on a key aspect of children's lives. The report appears in English, French, Spanish, Arabic and Chinese and includes plentiful statistics for supporting data. In



recent years the Report has covered crucial issues such children's rights, gender, disabilities and newborn health. The 2017 report, reflecting the immense impact of technology on the lives of children, focuses on the rapid emergence of digital technology, with its many benefits and also some risks for their well-being and social lives.

Blog, Chat, Creative Commons, Crowdsourcing, Flickr, Hashtag, HTML, LinkedIn, Livestreaming, Podcast, Retweet, RSS Feed, Snapchat, Tag, Trending Topic, Troll, Twitter, Viral, Webinar

All children alive today were born into a digitally connected world, unlike many of their elders who remember life when media consisted only of books, newspapers, radio and television, with no Internet, social messaging, personal computers or smart phones. Information and Communications Technology (ICT) has opened up the possibility for all children to escape poverty and disadvantage. Children are the most connected of all age groups, online most days with access to learning that is not otherwise available.

The UNESCO report includes:

- Digital Opportunity: Children disadvantaged by poverty, exclusion, conflicts and disabilities have more educational opportunity thanks to ICT's.
- Digital Divides: Nearly one third of all youth worldwide – around 346 million 15–24 year olds – are *not* online. In Africa, 3 out of 5 youth are offline, compared with 1 in 25 in Europe. Many lack both the skills and devices like laptops to benefit from online opportunity.
- Digital Dangers: The risks and potential harms of life online and the Internet's impact on children are covered. Cyberbullying, sexual predation and threats to the privacy and identity of children are explored.

Bandwidth, Bit, Cache, Cloud computing, Cookie, Download, Firewall, FTP, GIF, HTML, Malware, Phishing, Read, Search Engine, URL, Viral, Virus, Zip

- **Digital Childhoods:** This section explores how digitalization is changing childhood, including how children form and define friendships, maintain contact with peers, and how they spend leisure time. There is concern that excessive screen time is isolating children from family and the environment, contributing to obesity and contributing to mental health problems. Other concerns are digital dependency and the effects of technology on a child's brain.
- **Digital Priorities:** Recommendations are given for increasing the benefit for the most disadvantaged children and reducing the harm for all, especially the most vulnerable. This includes:
 1. Provide all children with affordable access to high-quality online resources
 2. Protect children from harm online
 3. Safeguard children's privacy
 4. Teach digital literacy to keep children informed, engaged and safe online
 5. Leverage the power of the private sector to advance ethical standards and practices that protect and benefit children online
 6. Put children at the centre of digital policy

Relevance to School Social Work Practice

Technology has as many benefits for school social workers as for every other occupation. It has, for example, made it possible for school social workers to connect with peers around the world. There are applications for every aspect of the work.

Meanwhile, traditional social work methods become even more valuable in a digital age. Social work promotes improved social relations through direct contact between people meeting face-to-face. Now that young people increasingly make connections using online social media such as Facebook, blogs, Utube, Twitter and anonymous social networks there is a greater need for opportunities for face-to-face contact in traditional social work formats such as one-on-one and group counseling. The school social work role using these traditional formats and traditional activities offer youth an opportunity for face-to-face interaction that every child needs. The importance for youth to learn social skills, conflict resolution, problem-solving, empathy etc. is greater than ever before. Face-to-face communication can help young people develop deeper relationships and a more accurate understanding of the feelings of other people.

Concerns about the impact of social media on young people's mental health

The Royal Society for Public Health and Young Health Movement, have published a new report, *#StatusOfMind*, examining the positive and negative effects of social media on young people's health. Their study, *#StatusofMind*, surveyed almost 1,500 young people aged 14 to 24 on how certain social media platforms impact their health and well-being including anxiety, depression, self-identity and body image.

This short video shows how young people view the impact of social media on their wellbeing.

<https://www.rsph.org.uk/our-work/policy/social-media-and-young-people-s-mental-health-and-wellbeing.html>.

The report also includes a listing of social media platforms rated by their impact on young people's mental health. YouTube is the most positive with Instagram and Snapchat coming out as the most detrimental to young people's mental health and wellbeing. Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook and Twitter all demonstrated negative effects overall on young people's mental health.