Access to and use of the Internet among adolescents and young adults with intellectual disabilities in everyday settings

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## Topics

* Learning
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* Internet usage, practices and engagement
* Access, inequalities and vulnerabilities
* Digital and socio-cultural environment
* Literacy and skills

## Sample

15 adolescents and young adults with mild and moderate intellectual disabilities aged 13 to 25, from six Swedish municipalities.

## Implications For Parents About

## Other Parent Implication

Need for greater digital literacy and understanding of Internet and digital challenges and strategies of people with ID.

## Implications For Educators About

## Implications For Policy Makers About

Other

## Other PolicyMaker Implication

Promoting digital citizenship and participation of adolescents with ID

## Implications For Stakeholders About

Other

## Other Stakeholder Implication

Professionals (daycare personnel, etc.) need greater understanding of Internet and digital challenges and strategies of people with ID.

# Abstract

Background: The aim of this study was to explore and describe access to the Internet and how it is used among adolescents and young adults with mild and moderate intellectual disabilities in their everyday settings.
Method: Data were collected through observations of and interviews with 15 participants with intellectual disabilities, aged 13–25 years, on access and use of the Internet in school or work and at home or in their free time. A qualitative content analysis was used.
Results: Main findings were categorised into: access to the Internet in different settings, challenges when using the Internet and strategies to handle the digital environment and take part in Internet activities.
Conclusions: This study revealed that participants had access to Internet connections and to a high number of Internet-enabled devices. Participants used the Internet through strategies when doing Internet activities, for example using pictures and reducing the number of Internet-enabled devices used in their everyday settings.

# Outcome

Participants had access to more Internet-enabled devices at work, school, and home than they actually used. Internet connectivity, however, was not as common, often due to prohibite cost or support persons'/staffs' lack of knowledge to assist people with ID with the Internet. The Internet was used by participants through various strategies that enabled their participation in Internet activities, such as reducing the number of Internet-enabled devices and preferring the use of personal, as a directly adaptation to handle the rapidly changing digital environment with different codes on devices and new software to navigate. Yet very few participants had specially and individually adapted Internet-enabled devices with assistive devices. Word, picture, and voice-based strategies were used e.g. when searching on the Internet, as a strategy of environmental compensation for lacking digital skills and competencies. Although strategies in the physical environment were used, support from others was needed to access and use the Internet to enable taking part in Internet-activities.