Los niños y niñas de la brecha digital en España

Engl. transl.: The Children of the Digital Divide in Spain

# Keywords

* vulnerability
* children's rights
* internet
* digital world
* digital divide
* risk perception
* risks
* prevention
* violence
* children
* adolescents
* cyberbullying
* sexting
* digital competences
* parental and school mediation
* migrants

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## Topics

* Digital and socio-cultural environment
* Wellbeing
* Social mediation
* Literacy and skills
* Risks and harms
* Access, inequalities and vulnerabilities
* Internet usage, practices and engagement
* Learning
* Content-related issues
* Online safety and policy regulation

## Sample

This research sample is divided into three fieldworks:

1. Migrant Children and Roma/gitano children in the Roma/gitano children protection system.

In order to get a true picture of this childhood, qualitative methodology was used, with in-depth interviews and discussion groups following a semi-structured conversation guide with children from 8 to 18 years old. Ninety-one people were interviewed in Andalusia, Canary Islands, Catalonia, Valencian Community, Madrid and the Basque Country: 8 educators and 83 children. 52 of foreign origin (Ecuadorian, 11; Maghrebi, 30; Sub-Saharan; 11). 17 were children of Roma ethnicity, 12 were children in government protection or shelter centres.
Gender and disability were cross-cutting variables taken into account throughout the fieldwork. The identification of participants in the fieldwork of this study was made on the basis of institutions and NGOs that provide support to children or to the groups analysed,
considered particularly vulnerable.
This implies a certain bias: there is a part of the children at risk of exclusion who do not even enjoy the protection of these intermediary agents, with whom it is practically impossible to contact and whose situation with regard to ICTs could have been even more worrying.
Considering different scenarios of potential vulnerability among children in Spain, three aspects that influence exclusion were considered as a cause of exclusion:
1. Origin. Hence, fieldwork was carried out by interviewing girls and boys of Ecuadorian, North African and sub-Saharan Ecuadorian, North African and Sub-Saharan origin.
2. Belonging to minority ethnic groups, pointing out Roma ethnicity as one of the main sources of school exclusion (UNICEF, 2017).
3. Foster care status. Includes accounts of children living in care.
Access to centres and families was possible thanks to the support and collaboration of different organisations dedicated to children in situations or at risk of exclusion in Spain. In this
UNICEF is grateful for their collaboration.

2. Panel of Experts

This block brings together the different points of view of a group of 11 experts in the digital sector on the opportunities and
the digital sector on the opportunities and risks that imply the access to and use of the
and use of the internet can have for children, especially for the most vulnerable.
This panel, whose list of member, is composed of individuals with a deep understanding of children's relationship with technology from different perspectives who have expressed their views through a questionnaire.
They include people with responsibilities in the telecommunications sector, researchers with proven experience in the field, and professionals who work in the first and professionals working at the frontline of childcare in the frontline of childcare on the Internet.

3. Consultation with children of participation councils

This consultation was carried out in focus groups with discussion groups with 218 boys and girls aged between 8 and 17 years old in the Principality of Asturias, Cataluña, Castilla La Mancha and Castilla León (from 34 municipalities). The consultation is based on how children perceive risks on the internet, the training and support they receive and their proposals for action. The full results of the consultation can be found in the report: Risk Perceptions and
proposals in a digital world: child and adolescent participation councils in action.

## Implications For Parents About

* Parental digital literacy
* Parenting guidance / support
* Other

## Other Parent Implication

The need of media literacy for Spanish migrant and Roma/gitano families, digital literacy for migrant, Roma/gitano and other vulnerable families according to their specific circumstances

## Implications For Educators About

Other

## Implications For Policy Makers About

* Creating a safe environment for children online
* Fighting against child sexual abuse and child exploitation
* High-quality content online for children and young people
* Stepping up awareness and empowerment
* Other

## Other PolicyMaker Implication

To develop specific policies for communities and schools which allow migrant and Roma/gitano children and their families to take advantage of online opportunities

## Implications For Stakeholders About

* Researchers
* Industry
* Other

## Other Stakeholder Implication

Family and Children welfares, Public and private digital literacy initiatives

# Abstract

Access to the internet has become a tool that can boost children's rights and has revolutionised their lives, especially those of the most vulnerable, helping them to develop their potential, integrate or find and has revolutionised children's lives, especially those of the most vulnerable, helping them to fulfil their potential, to integrate or to find referrals and support.
Access to the internet has influenced so much children's lives that today the internet must also be seen as a tool to promote children's rights. Moreover, in the case of the most vulnerable children, the internet can play a fundamental role in enabling them to develop their full potential, improve their integration and even seek referrals and help. However, in Spain these opportunities are still far from being enjoyed by all children in an equitable way.
If we want to transform opportunities into real benefits for learning, participation, and social inclusion, it is essential to understand the context of different digital experiences in order to provide the right support. At the same time, online risks also make them more susceptible to bullying, abuse, exploitation, or trafficking. Interactivity means amplifying the threats and harms that many children are already facing offline, making them vulnerable and exposed to more online risks.
For this new generation, it is natural to be part of a digital environment. Most Spanish children have been regular internet users for years and are starting to use the internet at an increasingly younger age.
The focus of this work, commissioned by UNICEF Spanish Committee to EU Kids Online Spain - Public University of the Basque Country (UPV-EHU), is based on children´s recognition as active agents, capable of facing, reacting and overcoming situations in a digital world that is already theirs and from which risks will hardly disappear. In this environment, our double challenge is to mitigate the harm and maximise the benefits for each child, especially for the most vulnerable.
In a world where everything is digital, being outside ICTs is yet another form of exclusion. Despite improved access to the internet, there are many children who have no or very limited access. These situations are largely related to the socio-economic status of families and the resources they can devote to internet access. Even if the Internet is available, in many families the possibilities of using it are very limited, either due to the lack of appropriate devices, or the lack of adequate support or digital training. This leads us to talk of situations of exclusion also among children who can access the internet.
We address from a broad perspective how the lives of migrant children, those living in shelter or protection centres or Roma/gitano children in Spain have changed. In short, we want to make the most vulnerable children, those children of the digital divide in Spain, visible through their voices and testimonies.

# Outcome

The most relevant conclusions of this study and contained in this report are included below.

As far as internet access is concerned, it should be noted that internet access enhances full compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and, at the same time, limited access could imply the violation of other rights of the Convention. Attention must be paid both to access and to the correct use of the tools and the full benefits of its opportunities: children have the right to access information and knowledge, to express their opinions, and to be heard. The Internet offers them the possibility to enjoy these rights.

The authors highlight that there is progress in terms of the percentage of children with access to the internet, but it is still not universal, nor do all children know how to use it effectively and without being exposed to risks. Casado et al. (2018) point out that it is important to distinguish between having only a smartphone and also having other devices that allow a diversified and beneficial use of ICTs, adding that "there are children among whom there is a very high penetration of mobile phones for connection but very little use of computers and tablets, which allow them to do homework, create content or access information" (p. 57). The authors also highlight that having access to the internet does not imply having the skills and knowledge to go online in optimal conditions, in a safe way, and benefiting from the opportunities. They add that a deficit in digital skills, abilities, and competences in ICT use "is a source of inequality and can lead to exclusion in the future" (Casado et al., 2018: 57). The lack of digital skills in children makes it difficult for them to find a job or to carry out part of their school work, especially when they are in higher academic years when such activities require the use of more equipment.

The results show the need to establish informed and safe access to new technologies for minors, beyond establishing age limits, and allude to the role of adults in guaranteeing gradual access that helps minors to develop their autonomy in the use of technologies.

The results also show that for these most vulnerable minors, technology offers them opportunities that make even more sense, as in addition to being a source of entertainment, socialization, and knowledge, minors can find role-models that they cannot find offline and connect with children with whom they identify and integrate into other social spheres.

The results of this study show that the circumstances of these specific children make them as vulnerable in their online life as they are offline. Casado et al. (2018: 67) highlight that "if training and awareness-raising about bullying or contact with strangers is important for every child, it is even more so for vulnerable children, given that in almost all the groups analysed there is a lack of accompaniment of the family on the Internet". This is a key element in preventing and managing risks and inappropriate use and preventing them from turning into harm.

This study makes a special appeal with regard to children belonging to communities that have traditionally been target of hate - Roma/gitano and immigrants - where hate content and hate speech against their communities has a negative impact on children's attitudes and behaviour. This situation has a negative impact on children as it perpetuates stereotypes and the role of victim, hindering their integration.

The authors point out that the lack of digital skills is a burden for integration and future employment given that "adolescents and young people of foreign origin who want to join the labour market have difficulties, as they do not know how to use the internet to search for jobs or access training courses and resources" Casado et al. (2018: 67). The authors give special importance to digital tools as a tool for integration. WhatsApp and other social networks allow children socialising with their classmates outside of school, putting them on an equal level with those living in 'normal' homes.

The study also highlights that the democratisation of access to and ease of use of smartphones facilitates contact between boys and girls of immigrant origin and their home environments. Even if they are away from their families, technology allows them to maintain their culture, mitigate uprooting and cultivate their sense of belonging.

[Translated by coder]