CantMUN 2019

ECOSOC

The Digital Divide

Study guide

Your chairs

Dawn Chai

Hello! I'm Dawn, one of your chairs for ECOSOC! I am a first year psychology student at the University of Kent coming from a small country called Brunei. This will be my second time chairing a high school conference, and I'm super excited for this because the Digital Divide truly is a captivating and intellectually stimulating discussion as it is so relevant to our lives in this day and age. I have also attended 2 MUN conferences so far and will be attending more in 2019!!

Me and Prateek hope that this study guide will help you get a general idea of what this topic is all about (but do further research too!) My email is dc573@kent.ac.uk if you have any questions :) See you all soon!!!!

Prateek Didwania

Hello ECOSOC Delegate!,

I am 19, Indian, and currently studying Actuarial Science (Maths) at the University of Kent. Though I am studying Maths, my ever- continuing and growing interest in global politics has kept me well informed and made me a natural candidate to be involved in MUN.

My MUN Career started only last year when I joined University of Kent Model United Nations Society, and I have had the best time since. I have been to 6 + conference winning awards at 4 of them. I chaired at the previous Canterbury MUN, and can't wait to chair this year! I hope you guys are as excited as me! See you guys soon.

ABOUT ECOSOC

ECOSOC – the Economic and Social Council – has been established in 1945 as one of the six main organs of the UN. Its main focus is on economic, social, sustainable development, health, education and environmental issues. Its mandate is set out in Chapter X of the UN Charter.1 ECOSOC may:

- Initiate reports and studies concerning issues relating to its mandate;

- Make recommendations to the General Assembly and to the specialized agencies concerning mandated topics as well as human rights and fundamental freedoms

- Prepare draft resolutions for the General Assembly on issues relating to its mandate; - Call for international conferences on issues relating to its mandate

- Enter into agreements with other agencies – subject to the approval by the General Assembly and to Article 57

- Coordinate the actions of specialized agencies through communication with the agencies and recommendations;

- May take appropriate steps to obtain reports from other agencies;

- May report its findings on reports from other agencies to the General Assembly; - Provide information to the Security Council as well as assist the Security Council if requested;

- Carry out the recommendations by the General Assembly within its power;

- Carry out requests by Member States or specialized agencies with the permission of the General Assembly.

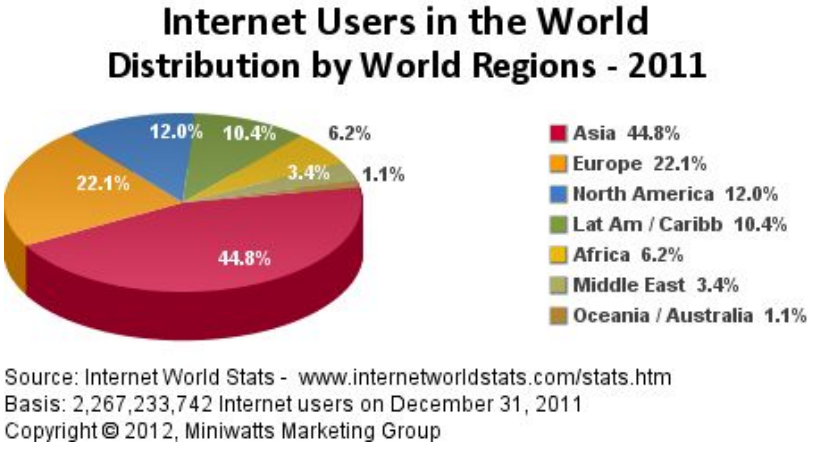
ECOSOC only has 54 members at all times which are elected by the General Assembly. Every year, 18 members are retired and 18 new members are elected. A country is eligible for re-election immediately after retirement.3 Each member of ECOSOC has one vote. Decisions are made by the majority of votes.However, most of ECOSOC's work is carried out in sub-commissions such as the Human Rights Council, the Commission of the Status of Women, regional commissions as well as commissions of issues such as statistics, narcotics and science and technology.

TOPIC A: The Digital Divide

Introduction

Information and Communication Technology (ICT), whether it be in the form of television, mobile phones, radios, or computers, has transformed our society by improving our understanding of the world around us, realizing a truly free and democratic world society". ICT is also important for emergency reliefs and is realized to be crucial to quality civic life. Yet, there are many countries that lack ICT such as sufficient telephone lines and affordable, quality internet access.

This social issue is known as ***the digital divide***. It refers to the differences (gaps) between individuals, groups and countries who have to the access to information and communication technologies (ICT) and the Internet (especially broadband access) compared to those who do not. The gap in access to ICT leads to many consequences and deficits, particularly in opportunities, education, career prospects and countries' potential for economic growth.



The digital divide and its disadvantages takes shape on various dimensions, such as but not limited to:

- Internet access
- Lower-quality but more expensive connections (e.g: narrowband or dial-up connection, satellite dishes)
- Difficulty of obtaining technical assistance
- Existing bandwidth per individual (kbit/s per capita)
- Lower access to subscription-based content

Key terms

Information and communication technologies- All forms of technology used to handle telecommunications, broadcast media, intelligent building management systems, and network-based control and monitoring functions & much more!

Telecommunication- the transmission of signs, signals, messages, sounds and information of any form through wire, radio, optical or electromagnetic systems

Internet- The globally connected network system that transmits data via various media types; a network of global exchanges (private, public, business, academic, government networks) connected by wireless, guided and fiber-optic technologies

Bandwidth- The transmission capacity over a network communication system

Digital literacy- How capable an individual is able to properly use digital platforms to find, evaluate, interpret and compose information

Infrastructure- Basic, physical and organizational structures, facilities and systems needed for a society to function. Examples include buildings, roads, and power supplies.

Internet service provider (ISP)- organization that provides services for accessing, using, or participating in the Internet

The different types of internet connections

Dial up- Cheap but slow, a modem connects to the internet after the computer dials a phone number. The converted digital signal is sent over a landline serviced by a public telephone network. When in use, other devices that share the same line cannot be active in the same time. 28Kbps - 56 KBps speed.

Digital Subscriber Line (DSL): This internet connection is always "on" and uses a line separate from your phone. Uses a router to transport data. Connection speed ranges from 128Kbps to 8Mbps.

Cable- Faster internet access and greater bandwidth than dial-up and DSL. Internet connection provided via cable modem. 512Kbps - 20Mbps.

Satellite- Delayed connection compared to cable and DSL. Internet access via satellite in Earth's orbit. 512Kbps - 2 Mbps speed.

Wireless aka Wi-Fi- Cableless as it uses radio frequency to connect to the internet. Accessible within a large range depending on coverage areas 5Mbps - 20Mbps

Cellular- Provides Wi-Fi through cellphones. 3G (3rd generation cellular network) and 4G (4th generation) where costs and speeds varying amongst providers. They have mobile speeds of 2 Mbps and 21 Mbps respectively.

Reasons why the digital divide still exists

Socioeconomic factors

Developing countries like Bangladesh have struggled to bridge the digital gap due to insufficient funds to build proper and sufficient infrastructures.

The very first reason for Digital Divide in Bangladesh is that the telecommunications infrastructure is deficient. In Bangladesh, the telephone density is only about 0.5%, which is the main reason for insignificant internet connection in the country.

The economic condition of the people is one of the vital issue for computer use and internet connectivity. Generally, on average wealthy and educated as well as young, urban and male have the internet access, which appears that economic solvency & education (especially

digital literacy) are the major factor during internet diffusion.

Income inequality is also a factor. For example, ¼ of Americans are living without broadband due to not being able to pay monthly for this service. Less than half of households who are living under $20k are connected to a broadband.

Affordability and cost of sufficient internet connection

Pew surveys from 2016 found more people have smartphones (77%) than have broadband (73%). However, smartphones aren't as reliable as laptops to complete online assignments on as due to data usage limits. Because of this, many students frequently go to McDonalds to utilize their free internet service to complete their schoolwork.

Rural areas & location

The digital divide in rural areas is often due to the lack of telephone lines and high access prices. To overcome this problem, power lines and satellite communications have allowed citizens living in rural areas to obtain internet access. However, many rural areas still do not have sufficient internet access and telecommunication infrastructures. There are some methods for broadband internet access in rural areas, such as mobile internet, power-line internet, satellite internet, ADSL loop extender, terrestrial wireless internet and white space internet.

The situation of the digital divide

Technological devices & access

The digital divide increased during the late 1990s and 2003-2004 due to the massive diffusion of narrow-band internet and mobile phones and introduction of broadband DSLs and cable modems respectively. This is because these new methods of connectivity were introduced slowly through social networks instead of instantaneously and uniformly to society. Now, digital equality is associated with the widespread introduction with the latest digital innovations such as 3G, 4G and fiber optics.

Another issue is that while educational institutions such as Conotton Valley High School in Ohio, USA, are beginning to implement digital means of teaching and provide students access to computers or laptops during class, there are still a number of students who are unable to do their homework due to not being able to access computers at home. This possess a major disadvantage to students as not only are their marks at risk, but they are unable to further develop their skills and knowledge beyond the classroom.

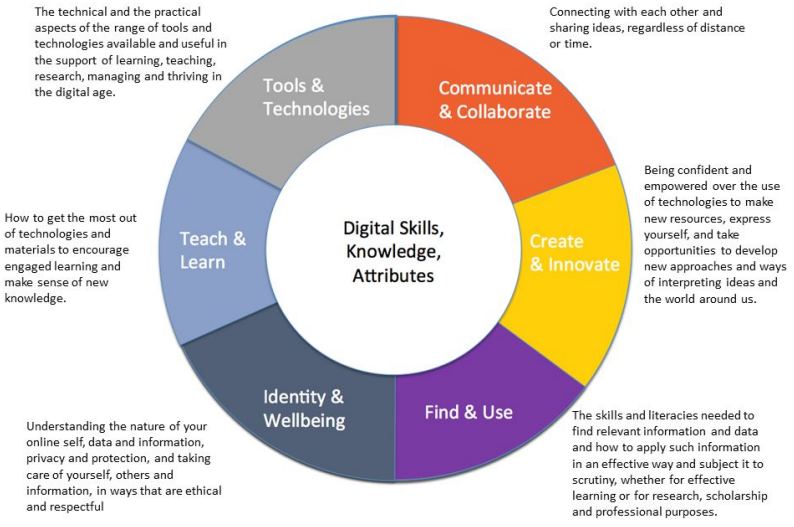
Kbit/s per capita

Initially, the digital divide was calculated via counting technological devices. In terms of kbit/s per capita, the digital divide is widening. The average individual living in a developed country counted 3Mbit/s more than an average member in developing countries, a significant increase from 40Kbit/s in 2008.

Digital literacy

The digital divide is not simply an access issue. Even if individuals are given sufficient technological equipment and tools, they need to be educated on how to utilize these.

Thomas' (2008) research study echoes this. The study found that while the digital divide is closing in school settings and homes, there is still a gap in computer access and use at home as well as a gap between the skill level between low socioeconomic areas and middle/upper socioeconomic areas. This is why it is important to not only provide access to ICTs, but to also provide sufficient reference and information services that allows individuals to be educated on how to use ICTs to their full potentials. (Image from http://allaboardhe.org/digital-skills/)



Here are some statistics and figures sourced from the International Telecommunication Union.

Broadband subscriptions by region

Fixed subscriptions:	2007	2010	2014[a]
Africa	0.1%	0.2%	0.4%
Americas	11%	14%	17%
Arab States	1%	2%	3%
Asia and Pacific	3%	6%	8%
Commonwealth of Independent States	2%	8%	14%
Europe	18%	24%	28%
Mobile subscriptions:	**2007**	**2010**	**2014[a]**
Africa	0.2%	2%	19%
Americas	6%	23%	59%
Arab States	0.8%	5%	25%
Asia and Pacific	3%	7%	23%
Commonwealth of Independent States	0.2%	22%	49%
Europe	15%	29%	64%

[a] Estimate.

Worldwide broadband subscriptions

	2007	2010	2016[a]
World population[86]	6.6 billion	6.9 billion	7.3 billion
Fixed broadband	5%	8%	11.9%
Developing world	2%	4%	8.2%
Developed world	18%	24%	30.1%
Mobile broadband	4%	11%	49.4%
Developing world	1%	4%	40.9%
Developed world	19%	43%	90.3%

[a] Estimate.

Worldwide Internet users

	2005	2010	2017[a]
World population[5]	6.5 billion	6.9 billion	7.4 billion
Users worldwide	16%	30%	48%
Users in the developing world	8%	21%	41.3%
Users in the developed world	51%	67%	81%

[a] Estimate.

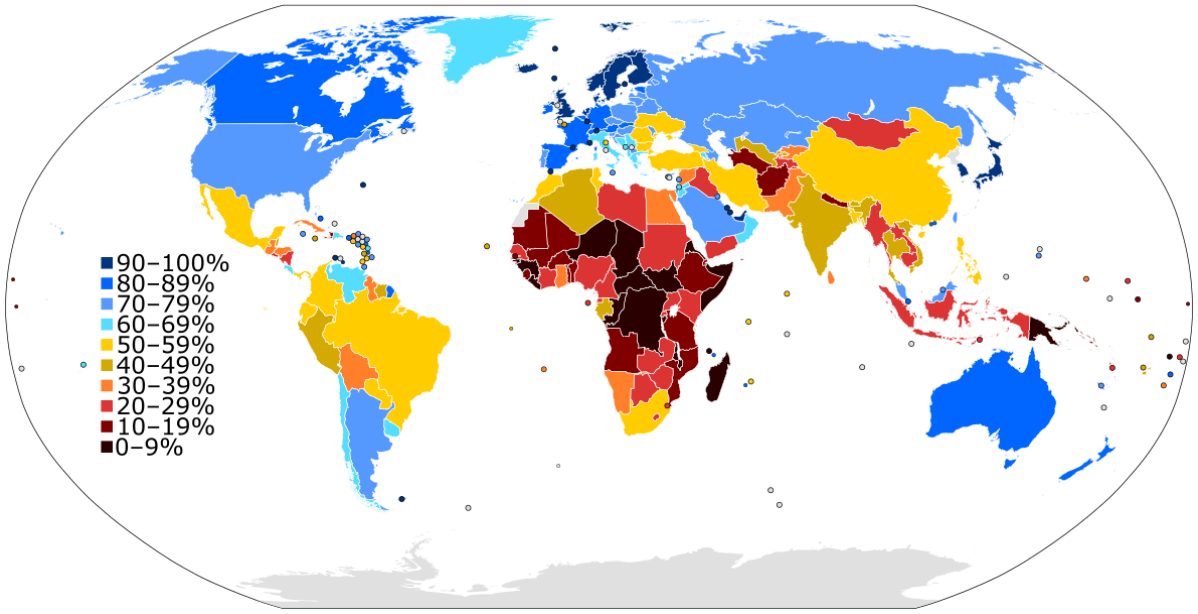
Source: International Telecommunications Union.[6]

Internet users by region

	2005	2010	2017[a]
Africa	2%	10%	21.8%
Americas	36%	49%	65.9%
Arab States	8%	26%	43.7%
Asia and Pacific	9%	23%	43.9%
Commonwealth of Independent States	10%	34%	67.7%
Europe	46%	67%	79.6%

[a] Estimate.

Source: International Telecommunication Union.[7]



Internet users in 2016 as a percentage of a country's population

Complete statistics can be found here:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_number_of_Internet_users

Why we need to close the digital divide

Social mobility and equal opportunities

ICT, particularly computer and internet networks, are increasingly important to individuals' education, and careers. With the digital divide, socioeconomically challenged individuals' education and career opportunities are disadvantaged. This is apparent in a recent study found that 50% of students say that they are unable to complete their homework due to inability to connect to the Internet or access a computer beyond school facilities, and 42% of students state that they have received a lower grade because of this. This has resulted in an educational achievement gap between black and hispanic children compared to native-born white children in the United States.

Democracy

Public participation may increase if the digital divide is bridged as people will be more likely to participate in online election processes, resulting in a healthier democracy.

Economic growth

Active usage of ICT has generally been associated with productivity improvements and competitive advantages in certain industries in some countries. Therefore, by bridging the digital divide by developing reliable information infrastructure and actively using it might be the way to stimulate economic growth in less developed countries.

A BCG Report observed that in countries where the digital connection among communities are made more efficient, such as Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom, populations obtain a larger share of the economies via digital business by approximately 2.5 % points higher. In a world where E-commerce is rising in popularity, it urges for an even stronger need to close the digital divide.

Closing the digital divide

Reliable access to ICT and the Internet is not enough to close the digital divide. Countries need to provide adequate infrastructure and means of education that allows individuals to know what ICTs and the Internet can provide them with, as well as knowing how to comprehend the information the Internet and ICT provides.

Some current actions to close the digital divide include:

- Incorporating training and assistance facilities to help individuals learn how to utilize ICTs properly
- Implementing more digital platforms such as computers in public libraries
- Implementing policies to achieve more affordable internet access
- NGOs & charities
- Foreign funding to build sufficient ICT infrastructure in developing countries
- Increasing the availability of public wifi
- Increasing digital literacy amongst elementary and middle school students

Some of the many things to consider in your resolution

- Who will fund ICT development in respective nations, particularly Less Economically Developed Countries?
- Are there cheaper Alternatives or new technologies to consider when implementing ICT solutions?
- What logistical, geographical, sociocultural or factors other than financial are there to consider when introducing ICTs to certain areas?
- Should Governments work alongside corporations to solve these issues if so how, and what are the issues to consider there?
- Should ICTs be implemented in schools/larger scales, who will be responsible for its maintenance and repairs?
- How can digital literacy be promoted amongst individuals who are not currently in school?

- What can be done to ensure that digital literacy continues to be at a certain (high) level, particularly in developing nations?
- Should high internet speed be a right? Or is it not a necessity? What is the extent of it being a right?
- To what extent are ICTs, particularly high tech ones, necessary & important to close the education achievement gap?

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Bibliography and useful links

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Tips

Wikipedia your country to get a general idea of its overall stance, political and economical situation and more

Continue to do this on the CIA world factbook

Wikipedia of the digital divide is always a good start

Google terms you don't understand, especially the types of internet connections and infrastructures

Google "(your country) digital divide/digital literacy/internet" on news outlets especially

Go on the UN site and search the same

Think about possible aspects other nations would disagree with/criticize and think of how to counter their disagreements in advanced.