

## **10th lesson : Digital divide**

### **introduction :**

the advantages of ICT are not reaching to the people who need it most. Its benefit is going mostly to those who are already well placed. It has given birth to a new kind of division not only at international even at national level. This division is between those who have access to ICT and those who don't have. This division is popularly referred as 'Digital Divide' .

### **objectives :**

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- explain what is Digital Divide;
- state the reasons for the existence of digital divide;
- describe the different dimensions of the digital divide;
- list the problems created by the divide;

#### **1. définition of Digital divide :**

Digital divide refers to the distinction between those who have internet access and are able to make use of new services offered on the World Wide Web, and those who are excluded from these services. At a basic level, the participation of citizens and enterprises in the information society depends on access to information and communication technology (ICT), i.e. the presence of electronic devices, such as computers, and internet connections. The term explicitly includes access to ICTs, as well as the related skills that are needed to take part in the information society.

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The digital divide can be classified according to criteria that describe the difference in participation according to gender, age, education, income, social groups or geographic location<sup>2</sup>. the problem that exists because some groups of people have the opportunity and knowledge to use computer technology and some do not<sup>3</sup>.

## **2. Causes of digital divide :**

The digital divide is due to a combination of several factors. These include the cost of devices and services for connecting to the Internet, impeding access for low-income earners; insufficient knowledge and skills to use the necessary devices and technologies easily; and the difficulty in implementing infrastructures that facilitate the adoption of ICTs in certain areas<sup>4</sup>.

## **3. types of digital divide :**

Let's distinguish between what types of digital divides exist and who they affect.

### **3. 1. Usage gap :**

This is the first example of a digital divide. This refers to the lack of sufficient digital skills to use ICTs on a personal or professional level. For example, people who have more difficulty using the Internet face an additional obstacle when performing everyday tasks (such as making an online doctor's appointment or accessing electronic banking, among others).

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### **3. 2. Access gap :**

This is one of the main causes of the digital divide. This is related to certain population groups being unable to access ICTs. This is usually due to socioeconomic inequalities among individuals and different regions, as public funding is not available everywhere to implement infrastructures that facilitate Internet access, and not everybody has sufficient resources to afford the devices and services that would enable them to connect.

### **3. 3 . Generation gap :**

According to Eurostat data, almost half of the population between 65 and 74 years of age has low digital skills, which has been further highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, this gap tends to widen among people with lower purchasing power or those who live in rural areas.

### **3.4 .Digital gender gap :**

This leads to women having reduced access to ICT, which in turn results in fewer girls choosing STEM careers. Although in Spain Internet connection is equal between the sexes, worldwide, 62% of men use the Internet compared to 57% of women. In certain countries (such as Africa or the Arab States), the gender gap is more pronounced<sup>5</sup>.

## **4 .Consequences of the digital divide :**

Difficulty in accessing ICTs increases inequality among different groups, as it prevents part of the population from accessing the possibilities they offer. For example, during the lockdown, where many schoolchildren were forced to continue their classes online, the

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lack of a stable connection and the appropriate devices meant some students were unable to keep up their schooling as normal. The same happened with working from home: adults who lacked the right tools and know-how were limited in their ability to work as normal.

Therefore, let's take a look at the different causes of the digital divide are:

- Isolation: Social isolation is one of the characteristics of the digital divide, especially as a result of the pandemic, has increased among people who do not have access to the Internet. Additionally, people living in rural areas without reception are virtually cut off from communication services.
- Difficulty in accessing education: The lack of access to ICTs makes it difficult for both children and adults to access education. According to a report by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), published together with UNICEF, 63% of young people between 15 and 24 years of age do not have an internet connection at home.
- A barrier to accessing work: People face greater difficulties in finding a job, not only because digital know-how is increasingly necessary but also because they are unable to check online job websites where these offers are published.
- Social differences: The obstacles to connecting to the digital world make the differences between groups more evident.
- Geographical differences: These are also intensified between regions and countries, which directly affects their possibilities for growth.
- Dependence and vulnerability: Technological discrimination means that some people have less independence in performing

certain tasks, which in turn makes them more vulnerable (e.g., digital crime)<sup>6</sup>.