



INTERNET AND RIGHT TO PRIVACY

SITUATION OF CHILDREN IN THE PHILIPPINES REPORT



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OF
CHILDREN
IN THE PHILIPPINES



Publication Date

2023

Reports available at situationofchildren.org/latest-evidence

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Every child has the right to information. Children have the right to access information from any source — books, newspapers, television, radio, the Internet, and other sources.

Digital connectivity has increasingly become an essential facilitator for children and young people’s social participation and inclusion as well as in their engagement in educational, recreational, and employment activities.

However, some information may be harmful and access to digital platforms like the internet

may also put to risk children's right to privacy. It is incumbent of children's parents, guardians, or caregivers and the institutions mandated to protect them to make sure the information they are getting poses no harm.

Access to internet in the Philippines has been reported in media reports as generally limited and relatively slow compared to that in many countries. Ironically, the country has also been recognized to have among the highest social network penetration or number social media users globally. Increased and wide exposure to social media has raised concerns especially for children which include increased risk of

violation of their right to privacy and victimization from online violence, for which the Philippines has been cited in studies as global epicenter of OSAEC and child sex abuse material production.

Despite the dangers posed by online platforms, there is a huge, yet untapped potential for children and young people to benefit from digital connectivity. Foremost of these opportunities is the increasing availability of internet access in schools including public schools which can facilitate learning delivery toward better learning outcomes.

Child Rights Situation Analysis

The indicators presented in this subdimension are the proportion of households without access to the internet, the proportion of schools with internet access, and the proportion of the population who use a cell phone.

At least eight of every ten households do not have access to the internet, according to the 2019 National ICT Household Survey. It was revealed that 82.3 per cent of households reported to have no access to the internet in the country in 2019. In BARMM, only a very small proportion of households had internet access as 95.5 per cent reported not having internet access.

Internet access is a pervasive challenge across the country, as in five more regions, over 90 per cent of households lack internet access. The NCR had the least percentage of households without internet access at 66.8 per cent.

Despite the digital divide, 79 per cent of the respondents have used a cell phone in 2019, in the last three months preceding the survey.

CALABARZON had the highest proportion of 89 per cent while Regions VII and XII with 64 per cent and 69 per cent, respectively, posted the lowest percentages.

Public schools with access to internet has significantly increased by 2023 from barely half of all public schools at any level in 2015. As of the school year 2022-2023, 63.3 per cent of elementary schools, 71.4 per cent of junior high schools, and 68 per cent of senior high schools in the country had internet access for pedagogical purposes.

The year before, barely half of schools had internet access, with 46.9 per cent of elementary schools, 47.3 per cent of junior high schools, and 48 per cent of senior high schools. While far from the SDG target of 100 per cent by 2030, the proportion of schools

with internet access significantly increased from only 8 per cent of elementary schools and

32.7 per cent of junior high schools in 2015 and 16.1 per cent of senior high schools in 2016.

Equity & Risk

EQUITY

Gender	This situation analysis has not been able to determine any data which disaggregates by gender under this subdimension.
Disability	This situation analysis has not been able to determine any data which disaggregates by gender under this subdimension.
Subnational	The BARMM region has the lowest number of households with internet access. However, internet access is generally poor across the Philippines, meaning the BARMM is not particularly deprived in this regard.

RISKS

Natural hazards	No natural hazard-related risks were identified as yet under this subdimension, other than the potential for damage to internet infrastructure as a result of extreme weather events.
Conflict	No conflict-related risks were identified as yet under this subdimension.
Health Crisis/Pandemic	No health-related risks were identified as yet under this subdimension.

Legislation & Policy Analysis

In 2012, the Philippines passed Republic Act No. 10173 or the Data Privacy Act. The aim of the act is “to protect the fundamental human right to privacy

of communication while ensuring free flow of information to promote innovation and growth [and] the [State’s] inherent obligation to ensure that personal information in information and communications systems in government and in the private sector are secured and protected.”

The Act also aims to keep the Philippines in line with international standards on data privacy. Established four years after the passing of the Data Privacy Act in 2016, the National Privacy Commission is the body responsible for the implementation of the Data Privacy Act. The following principles regarding the collection of personal data and data privacy are espoused in the Act: collection must be for a declared, specified and legitimate purpose; personal data should be processed fairly and lawfully; processing should ensure data quality; personal data shall not be retained longer than necessary; and any authorized further processing shall have adequate safeguards.

Additionally, in July 2022, Republic Act No. 11930, also known as the Anti-Online Sexual Abuse or Exploitation of Children and Anti-Child Sexual Abuse or Exploitation Materials (CSAEM) Act, was passed. This built on the provisions laid out in the Republic Act No. 9160 (Anti-Money-Laundering Act) of 2001 and Republic Act No. 9775 (Anti-Child Pornography Act) of 2009, both of which were repealed.

Bottleneck Analysis

Demand	Poverty is a key personal and household barrier to internet access. Due to limited internet infrastructure in the Philippines, many access the internet through data on mobile phones and handheld devices. This is less likely to be an option for some poorer individuals and households.
Supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weak digital infrastructure in rural locations and communities. The challenge of poor internet and digital infrastructure is particularly acute in rural areas. • Weak digital infrastructure, internet connectivity and a lack of digital competence among teachers in schools. This bottleneck was found to be particularly pertinent in regions including BARMM, Region V and Region IX.
Enabling environment	Lack of infrastructure for internet connectivity. Connectivity is low across the Philippines which limits the extent to which children and young people in the country can engage on civic issues, as well as engage in the other opportunities afforded or facilities by internet connectivity like educational opportunities, particularly during the pandemic.

References

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