

## The Global Digital Divide and the Internet

As computers become more pervasive in the western world, it can be easy to forget that not every country has equal access to key digital resources and infrastructure. Broadband speed Internet is almost considered a necessity in many developed countries today, and yet many people in parts of the developing world do not have any ability to go online at all. This difference in ability of accessing digital and information technology is commonly referred to as the digital divide.

This gap between people exists for a number of reasons; some of them due to physical and resource imbalances and some of them based on an imbalance in knowledge and education standards. The divide can be illustrated within many different groups across the entire spectrum of the world's population. Socioeconomic and generational gaps definitely exist within countries, however when the digital dividing line is studied in the context of geographical and racial factors, a real global disparity rises to the surface.

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The global digital divide in the context of the Internet is perhaps the most striking example, as countries that are well connected reap enormous benefits while leaving other parts of the world trailing behind. Developed nations who have the economic ability to invest into digital infrastructures are reaping rewards due to fast communication speeds and complex networking. The countries that can't afford to invest are not keeping up and are missing out, leaving the developed world to forge ahead at break neck speed.

Western Europe, North America, Australasia and a few parts of Asia like South Korea and Japan are those on the right side of the tracks, digitally speaking. While much of South America, Africa and South East Asia are the ones currently in the slow lane. The Internet and the nature of digital data in general promises much in terms of acting as a common global equaliser. The truth however is that this data is dependent on many other factors including material resources for transmission and language for comprehension . Data only travels at equal speeds through the exact same cables and can only be useful if it is understood by the person at the end of the line.

The global digital divide is a complex problem that is probably not going to be sorted out any time soon. There are many obstacles in the way of a genuine solution, and these obstacles are extremely entrenched within the global economies and political realities of the places involved. It is in the most basic of terms a problem of not enough money, developing countries require computers and they need ways of linking them together effectively. This is a problem of resources. People also need to be trained in order to access and be able to use digital information and to understand the default language of the Internet, English, this is a problem of education.

The digital divide is easy to see in the context of many different groupings, but between countries the effect is impossible to ignore. While this global divide can refer to any digital device or technology, it is the Internet where it is probably felt the most. For a variety of reasons developing nations are missing out on the many benefits of fast and reliable online activity, and it is crucial that effort is made both now and into the future to try and fill this gap.