



United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
Division for Inclusive Social Development



COMMISSION for SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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Department of
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Concept Note

Digital Technologies and Families: Focus on Work-Family Balance

10 February 2021

11:30 am - 1:15 pm (EST, New York time)

**Online Side Event of the Commission for Social Development
organized by the Division for Inclusive Social Development,
Department of Economic and Social Affairs, DISD/UNDESA**

The Secretary-General has identified digital transformation as a seismic shift shaping the 21st century. The impact of new technologies, including digital technologies on families and family policy development are important for the achievement of several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets. Among them are SDG 3, (Good health and well-being); SDG 4 (Quality education), SDG 9 (Foster innovation) and SDG 12 (Ensure sustainable consumption). These inter-related goals depend on how well new technologies are harnessed to benefit families, improve work-family balance and empower families to carry out their functions to advance the goals above.

Rapid technological advancements changed the lives of families over the past three decades. One of the most noticeable changes can be seen in the use of technologies at work and at home and their impact on work-family-life balance. Moreover, current COVID-19 pandemic brought into sharp focus the growing role of digital technologies enabling parents to work from home and children to learn remotely. Thus, expanding flexible working arrangements, including through the use of new information and communication technologies, is rising in importance considering the mounting challenges families have been experiencing recently.

The aim of the event on [Digital Technologies and Families](#) is to offer a family perspective on the theme of the 59th session of the Commission for Social Development: **“Socially just transition towards sustainable development: the role of digital technologies on social development and well-being of all”**. In particular, the side event will focus on the impact of digital technologies on work-family balance and overall family-well-being. It will address the issues of fostering innovation and improving flexible working arrangements. It will also emphasize how new technologies can be harnessed to advance family well-being.

As individuals and institutions worldwide are pursuing work-family balance, and technology plays a fundamental role in this pursuit, the first presentation by **Professor Joseph Grzywacz**, aims to equip participants with ideas and strategies to enact initiatives to help individuals, particularly women, achieve work-family balance. His presentation pursues this goal by first articulating predominant views of what “work-family balance” is. It then describes how alternative views of work-family balance translate into distinctive strategies for achieving work-family balance. Finally, it discusses how emerging technology may threaten or enable work-family balance in specific cultural contexts.

Technology, or more specifically information and communications technology and digital media, offer families and employers new tools to fulfill roles and responsibilities, across traditional boundaries of space and time. “New ways of working” also means new ways to balance work and family demands. Perhaps at no better time, the COVID-19 pandemic has raised our collective awareness of the opportunities and challenges technology offers. **Professor Susan Walker’s** presentation identifies what work-family balance in the digital age looks like in its many iterations globally and culturally, and the complications in crafting a policy and practice response. Nevertheless, recommendations aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals can be offered to move us forward.

Mega trends including new technologies, demographic change, urbanization, migration and climate change and their impact on families will be explored in the coming years as part of the **preparations for the 30th anniversary of the International Year of the Family (IYF+30)** to be observed in 2024.