

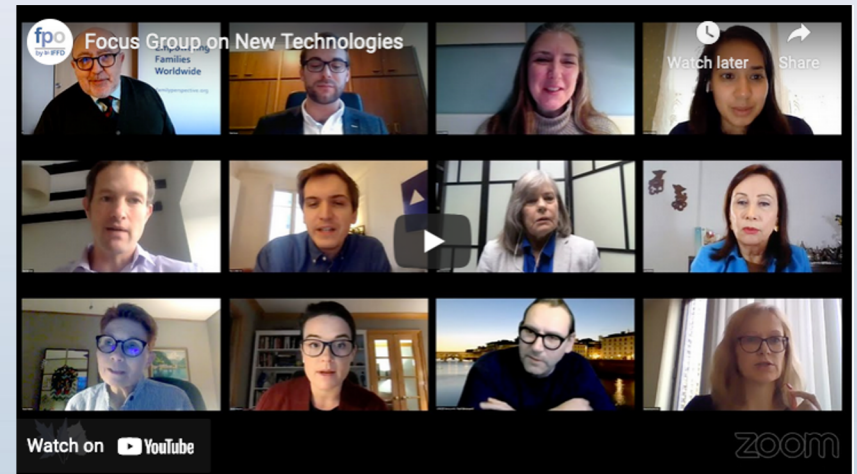


# **Families and Technology: Preliminary Findings from an International Focus Group**

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- Online focus group of experts from around the world (January 2021)
- 2024 – 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the International Year of the Family
- 8 questions posed to all participants



**How is technology shaping the lives of children and families in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?**

# 1. Should the universal coverage of the internet be considered a human right?

- Yes... all participants agreed access should be a human right
- Access to the internet increasingly essential for:
  - Education, communication, business, health care, employment, public services, civic participation, global collaboration
- Telecommunications infrastructure crucial
- In addition to access, training equally important
  - Societies should provide training to increase citizens' digital literacy
- Potential to reduce disparities, if appropriately implemented

## 2. What are the best indicators to measure households' access to new technologies?

- Broad measures of access important, but can be misleading
  - Proportion of household with broadband internet access
- Functional equipment to access internet and participate
  - Computers vs. smartphones
- Devices per person in the household
- Demographics of household related to digital needs
- Digital skills and knowledge
- Bandwidth
- Global perspective – social norms related to access

### 3. Does teleworking contribute to work-family balance or is it just a way to work more?

- Positive and negative affordances
- Positive: flexibility, reduces commuting, multitasking, efficiency, opportunities for individuals with impairments
- Negative: social interaction, juggling multiple roles, boundary permeability, schedules extended, problems “logging out”
- COVID-19 implications
- Gender – women disproportionately burdened
- Class and North-centered problem
- Government and organizational responsibility to set
- guidelines

## 4. Can the remote learning experiences of COVID-19 help to improve education?

- Many lessons learned to carry forward
- Innovation based on pedagogy
- Greater emphasis on socioemotional wellbeing in online classrooms
- Digital inclusion
  - Consider low connectivity contexts
  - Access to the internet & digital devices
- Developmental perspective – less appropriate for younger learners?
- Educators and policymakers
  - Training for teachers
  - Resources

## 5. Which specific policies can help to bridge the intergenerational digital divide?

- Access and training for older generations
- Intergenerational programming
- Education for family professionals
- Socioeconomic disparities amplify intergenerational differences
- Further research needed

## 6. Should coding be introduced as a classroom subject, like other languages?

- Not a language, but a useful skill
- Access and devices necessary
- But technologies change... focus on learning to learn
  - Logic and computational thinking
  - “understand” vs. “know”
- Opportunities offered to broad audience
- Creators of content, beyond coding
- North-centered perspective



## 7. What instruments should be developed to ban child abuse materials online? What tools can parents use?

- Challenges related to legislation and regulation
- Parents
  - Strong parent-child relationships
  - Learn about online contexts themselves
  - Parents discussing risks
  - Source of advice and support
- Teachers & educators – digital citizenship education
- Industry and policy-makers responsible as well

## 8. Additional topics?

- Concern re: exacerbation of disparities
- Opportunities for training beyond children & adolescents
  - New training opportunities for the unemployed
- Training of family professionals to include technology